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MUNI XXIII

All Under Heaven: The Royal Court of the Taiping

Heavenly Kingdom

天下 太平天国的王朝



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Letter from the Director

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MUNI XXIII! My name is Gabriel Wacks. I'm a senior at the University of Illinois, where I study East Asian Languages and Cultures. I'll be the crisis director for MUNI's joint crisis committee, which I hope will be our most memorable yet! I'm looking forward to a few days of learning, excitement, and abject chaos.

The Taiping Rebellion is one of the most fascinating and destructive wars in human history. It reads like a novel: corrupt ministers, great armies, foreign invaders, fanatical god-kings, and so much more. Some of the most interesting and complicated historical figures can be found in the two rival courts of the Qing and Taiping states. I hope that this will be an informative and challenging experience. If you have any questions about the history of Taiping Rebellion or the committee itself, please don't hesitate to email me. I look forward to seeing you all at court.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Wacks

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All Under Heaven

The year is 1856. The Taiping Rebellion, led by Hong Xiuquan, the Heavenly King and the second son of God, has fallen into chaos. Once having nearly taken the Qing capital of Beijing, the fanatical Taiping warrior-kings have turned on each other, laying waste to the heavenly capital in the process. Hong, the self-proclaimed younger brother of Jesus Christ, has been left without his war council. As his leadership crumbles, so too does his sanity. With tens of thousands of people lying dead in the streets of the capital and most of the military leadership gone, the rebellion has been left with a yawning power-vacuum. A new royal court has been convened, which is composed of hastily-promoted generals and the siblings of the Heavenly King. It is up to this heavily divided group of warlords and zealots to take initiative and lead the armies of God in the final conquest of all that lies under Heaven.

Research Suggestions:

Collecting research on the Taiping Rebellion can be very difficult. There is a relative scarcity of English-language works on the court at this time, and many records were destroyed at the end of the war. I recommend that delegates focus their research on the social and military aspects of the 19th century China in broad terms, such as how war was waged and how Chinese states functioned. A general understanding of this time period and the situation both inside and outside of China will also be critical. For reference, this committee will begin in the autumn of 1856, shortly after the Taiping Civil War (also known as the Tianjing Incident).

Additionally, this committee will use the Pinyin system of romanization. This is the most widely-used system of transliterating Chinese into Latin script. However, there are some sounds in Chinese that do not have exact English equivalents, and the Pinyin system often uses odd combinations of letters to represent sounds. Delegates are expected to at least make a solid attempt at pronouncing Chinese names and terms. Below is a helpful chart:

Pinyin	Pronunciation Rule
Z	Pronounced “dz”
Zh	Pronounced similar to an English “j”
Q	Similar to an English “ch,” but curling the tongue
X	Similar to an English “sh,” but curling the tongue
C	Pronounced “ts”
Chi	The ending “i” is pronounced “err”
Shi	The ending “i” is pronounced “err”
Zhi	The ending “i” is pronounced “err”

Committee Structure:

This committee will function as a standard joint crisis committee with a few modified rules of procedure. The committee will be chaired by Lai Hanying. The head of government will be the Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan. Directives and other decisions will be approved by a simple majority of 50% +1 of the committee. The Heavenly King can veto any decision made by the court. The court's primary powers will be to create and change laws, to handle international relations, and to command and deploy the various Taiping armies.

Additionally, the court will have a number of additional powers that can be used. The committee can vote to suspend the rules of procedure in order to sign a treaty or to command an army for a major battle. The court can also vote to put a delegate on trial, as per the MUNI rules of procedure.

As a joint crisis committee, the actions taken in this committee will influence what occurs in the Qing committee, and vice-versa. Frequent press releases will be given to update delegates on the situation. While direct contact between the two committees will most likely be limited, they will have a profound influence on one another through the directives that they pass.

Lastly, at the end of the committee, delegates will be given awards for their performance. There will be four awards given: Best Delegate (1st place), Outstanding Representation (2nd place), Honorable Mention (3rd place), and Verbal Commendation (4th place). Delegate performance will be determined based on front-room presence (speaking), back-room presence (personal directives/crisis notes), and the quality of the committee directives that are passed. These will be weighed equally. Delegates are, of course, expected to behave professionally.

Background

The man who would become Hong Xiuquan was born in 1814 into a poor peasant family of the Hakka ethnic minority. He was born in Huaxian village, in the Guangxi province of southern China. As a young boy, he showed academic promise and attended school to



prepare for the Confucianism-based civil service exam.¹ The Confucian exams were the most promising route to power and influence during the late Qing dynasty, and had an extremely low success rate. Those who passed were guaranteed prestigious government positions. In 1827, Hong Xiuquan participated in his first imperial exam, but did not pass.² He would go on to take the exam multiple times, with each attempt ending in failure. In 1836, during this period of failure, he was introduced to Christianity through the pamphlet “Good Words to Admonish the Ages” by Chinese preacher Liang Afa.³ This nine-volume booklet, a “translated” version of the Bible, was one of the most prominent Chinese-language religious pamphlets. Liang Afa’s version of the Bible excluded topics that clashed with his interpretation of Christianity on an

¹ Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 66.

² Lee Nathan Feigon, "Hong Xiuquan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified May 17, 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hong-Xiuquan>.

³ Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 66.

economic or social level. He also excluded passages that did not highlight the individualistic Protestant approach to Christianity.⁴ Hong is said to have briefly perused the pamphlet before setting it aside in disinterest. In 1837, after failing the exam yet another time, he suffered a mental breakdown, collapsed into a delirious state, and experienced a series of hallucinations. In one vision, he met with a figure that he addressed as his “Heavenly Father,” who wore a black dragon robe and had a long golden beard. His “Father” ordered Hong to slay the demons that ruled China and assume control over the imperial throne.⁵ In another vision, he met with a man who addressed Hong as his “younger brother” and gave him religious instructions. In these visions, he fought demons and journeyed through heaven for what felt like years.

After recovering, Hong slowly returned to his former life as a teacher and continued to study for the imperial exam. In 1843, after failing the exam for the last time, he isolated himself and became focused on interpreting his visions. Hong Xiuquan’s cousin helped him discover the connection between “Good Words to Admonish the Ages” and his hallucinations. Believing that his visions were a message sent from Heaven, Hong and his cousin baptized themselves. They immediately set out with their cousins Hong Rengan and Feng Yunshan to preach their message from God to provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi.⁶ They set up their main center of operations at Thistle Mountain, in Guangxi. Hong stressed the importance of worshipping and obeying the wrathful Old Testament God. He believed that smoking opium, gambling, and prostitution were evil practices. He made promises of ultimate rewards to those who followed the teachings of the Lord, whom he called Shangdi, after the mythical single god of one of the earliest dynasties of

⁴ Ibid., 61 - 66.

⁵ Ibid., 66 - 67.

⁶ Ibid, 66 - 67.

China.⁷ And, critically, he identified the demons ruling China as the Manchu-led Qing dynasty, which ruled over China at the time. The core of the religion was monotheistic, with Protestant Christian influences and a strong hatred of Manchu and its cultural traditions.⁸

China had been ruled by the Qing dynasty since 1644. This dynasty, which was centered in the city of Beijing, was dominated by the Manchu people, who hailed from northeastern China. In contrast, the majority of Chinese people were ethnically Han. Most of the historical dynasties had been ruled by Han Chinese emperors, and the Manchus were regarded by the majority of the population of China as foreign rulers. Even non-Han ethnic groups, such as the Hakka, still viewed the Manchus as oppressors. Hong Xiuquan's connection between the demons of his vision and the Manchus would allow him to tap into the growing political anger against the Qing, and many joined his movement due to their own anti-Manchu sentiments.

Hong's support base would come from the Hakka. The Hakka are an ethnic group of China originating from the north; however, they migrated to southern China during the fall of Song dynasty in 1270s. They are a minority group and were considered outsiders in the regions that they settled in. During the 18th and 19th century in Guangxi province, arable land became infertile and scarce. This often led to land feuds. These conflicts would build the resentment that would fuel the Taiping Rebellion.⁹ The dramatic increase in population from 100 million people in the 17th century to 400 million people in the mid-19th century increased demand for dwindling amounts of arable land. For the Hakka and other peasants, Hong Xiuquan's

⁷ Lee Nathan Feigon, "Hong Xiuquan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified May 17, 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hong-Xiuquan>.

⁸ "The First Opium War and Its Aftermath," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified October 18, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/place/China/The-first-Opium-War-and-its-aftermath#ref590503>.

⁹ "Hakka," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified February 26, 2013, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hakka>.

preachings of radical land reforms to ensure that the poor received farmable plots of land were extremely attractive. This vision of equality and shared land ownership presented an alternative from the hopelessness in which the poor lived. The life of a 19th century peasant was plagued with famine and poverty due to the infertility of the land. The peasants who joined the movement often had nothing to lose.

In the fall of 1844, Hong returned to Huaxian while his disciples stayed to spread his teachings. In 1847, during his tutelage under the American evangelist Reverend I.J. Roberts, Hong took a short trip back to Thistle Mountain. There he discovered that Feng Yunshan had created the God Worshipping Society (Bai Shangdi Hui), which was both a religious sect and secret society. By this time, it was made up of several thousand Hakka believers. The members of the God Worshipping Society consisted mostly of miners, charcoal workers, and poor Hakka peasants.¹⁰ It wasn't until the winter of 1849, after his father's death, that Hong officially relocated to Thistle Mountain to join his followers.¹¹

After permanently moving to the Thistle Mountain, Hong and Feng started to plot their rebellion against the Qing dynasty. They gained many supporters due to the terrible countryside living conditions.¹² As a result, in the autumn of 1850, the God Worshipping Society came into conflict with the local militia. In January of 1851, Hong declared the establishment of the "Taiping Heavenly Kingdom" (Taiping roughly translates to "Great Peace") in Jintian, Guangxi, with himself as the "Heavenly King." Taiping forces attacked and defeated the local Qing

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 66 - 67.

¹² Lee Nathan Feigon, "Hong Xiuquan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified May 17, 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hong-Xiuquan>.

garrison and began open war with the Qing army. After failing to take the city of Guilin, they began marching north, accompanied by a growing number of converts and a small river fleet.

The Taiping forces eventually reached Yangtze River Valley and gained tens of thousands of followers as they passed through the countryside. Their army had grown from a few thousand followers to a highly disciplined force hundreds of thousands strong.¹³ By 1853, the Taiping had conquered vast territories near the Yangzi River Valley and captured the great city of Nanjing, which Hong decided to establish as his



permanent capital. The city was renamed “Heavenly Capital” (Tianjing, as it will be referred to as from now on).¹⁴ After the capture of Tianjing, Hong began to retreat to his religious study and indulge himself more with his harem. He issued orders in the name of the Heavenly Father, which were at times incredibly impractical and even contradictory. Following the fall of Tianjing, Taiping forces continued north to capture Beijing and crush the Qing once and for all. However, they were defeated at Tianjin (not to be confused with Tianjing), a city 70 miles southeast of Beijing.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 66 - 67.

¹⁵ Lee Nathan Feigon, "Hong Xiuquan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified May 17, 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hong-Xiuquan>.

Government and Society of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

Hong created a centralized, theocratic state with himself as the undisputed leader. After establishing his capital at Tianjing, Hong implemented a series of legislative reforms, including the establishment of a complex bureaucracy, a new calendar, land reform, the banning of alcohol, opium, and sexual relations (which led to widespread confusion and resentment). This would have wide-ranging impacts on Chinese society within the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

Taiping Reforms

Anyone who resided in a Taiping-controlled city would be required to comply with Taiping religious and social practices. For example, Tianjing's social life was organized around a 25-member unit. Each resident of the city would eat in a communal hall where rations were distributed out of the "sacred granary" and residents were expected to attend communal prayers every morning and evening. Taiping officials regularly checked on the citizens to ensure they were reciting the correct scriptures and chanting the approved hymns. This was recorded on a massive household registry. In the countryside, expectations were less rigid; however, all inhabitants of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were required to participate to some degree in this religious life. In the countryside, this mainly consisted of listening to Taiping sermons and offering grain to soldiers.¹⁶

As the army moved through the countryside, it propagated Taiping religious and social ideas. Each army had two land distributors (one chief and one assistant), two judges, two treasurers, two receivers, and two disbursers. These posts were filled by brigade commanders

¹⁶ Reilly, Thomas H. *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, Chapter 4, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

and battalion commanders. There existed an army district where each family had to provide one member as a common soldier who would be used as a state-controlled farmer in peacetime.

Land reform was a major goal of the Taiping Rebellion. Land was divided into 9 categories according to its ability to produce crops, and each family would receive different qualities of land depending on the size of their family. Starting at the age of 16, a person would be eligible to receive land. The Taiping, for the first time in Chinese history, allowed women to participate in the civil service exams. They promoted an egalitarian, communal lifestyle.¹⁷

Taiping Administration and Civil War

Hong Xiuquan divided the territory into five jurisdictions under the control of five different kings: north, south, east, west, and flank (border). Yang Xiuqing, the East King, was a former charcoal seller and claimed to be the voice of the Heavenly Father, or Shangdi. He was very ambitious and actively tried to replace Hong Xiuquan as the center of the Taiping religion. Feng Yunshan, the South King, was the Hong's first convert and created the God Worshipping Society. Unfortunately, he died early in the rebellion due to a lucky shot from a Qing sniper. Xiao Chaogui, the West King, was a poor Hakka farmer who was also killed early in the rebellion. Wei Changhui, the North King, was the son of a rich landlord family. He was considered mentally unstable.¹⁸ Shi Dakai, the Flank King, was a well-educated man from a wealthy farming family. The youngest of the kings, he was a brilliant military leader and extremely loyal to Hong Xiuquan. However, due to his compassionate personality and fair rule he gained widespread popularity, and Hong became highly suspicious of him.

¹⁷ Chen, J. C. *Taiping Rebellion 1850-1864*, Chapter 3, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1963.

¹⁸“The Players,” *Taiping Rebellion*, <http://taipingrebellion.com/players.htm>.

The kings (with the exception of Shi Dakai), were highly corrupt. Yang Xiuqing (East King) gained enormous amounts of political and military power during his rule. By 1854, Yang had an extensive network of spies set up throughout the kingdom, was named head of state affairs (a position akin to prime minister), and was becoming more and more powerful as he took over Hong's responsibilities.¹⁹ He exerted his newfound power on the other kings, even calling for their punishments by flogging if they disobeyed him.²⁰ It was due to acts such as these that Yang grew unpopular among the other kings and high-ranking officers, who themselves were not spared from Yang's punishments.

In 1856, Qing general Xiang Rong died after 3 years of attempting to besiege Tianjing and his army was crushed. Yang, who had played a key role in this victory, used this as an excuse to gain more power.²¹ He routinely feigned his possession by the Heavenly Father, making him the most powerful man in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Chen Chengrong, an official who'd been flogged on Yang's orders, convinced Hong that Yang was working in his own interest, and that he wished to kill Hong and take over the throne. Hong then ordered for the execution of Yang and his family by the hands of Wei Changhui, Shi Dakai, and Qin Rigang (another military leader). Wei Changhui also went on to kill thousands of Yang's followers.²² Wei and Shi disagreed over this act, causing Shi to flee out of concern for his own safety. Wei attempted to arrest him, but when he was unable to, he killed Shi's family. Shi then started a rebellion outside Tianjing. Wei attempted to escape by seizing control of the kingdom by killing

¹⁹ "Yang Xiuqing," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated Sept. 5th, 2008, Web, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yang-Xiuqing>

²⁰ Jonathan D. Spence, "God's Chinese Son" 223, 236 (1996).

²¹ Franz H. Michael, "The Taiping Rebellion: History" (1966

²² Ibid.

Hong Xiuquan. This attempt failed, and Wei was killed as a result. Qin Ringang and Chen Chengrong were also executed for aiding Wei in attempting regicide against Hong²³. This series of events became known as the Tianjing Incident. It led to the destruction of most of the Taiping leadership, and shattered the morale of the Taiping forces.

Reformation

Following the civil war, Hong Xiuquan continued to withdraw from political life and appointed many young generals and family members to his royal court. The remaining political and military leadership, along with Hong's siblings, largely took control of the kingdom. This royal court was faced with the daunting responsibility of continuing the war against the Qing, addressing widespread discontent with the Taiping religious strictures, and building alliances with other countries or rebellions. Nevertheless, the court was also given broad legislative power, with Hong only intervening in the case of religious disputes. Additionally, following the capture of Tianjing, Hong had grown increasingly reclusive, and his mental stability had slowly deteriorated. This committee will be centered around this informal court, which has taken on most of the responsibilities of governing. The court will have to deal with the aftermath of the civil war, simmering social tensions, and Hong's growing madness.

Institutions

For the purposes of this committee, there will be three major institutions (besides the court) that will largely control the Taiping government. These institutions are the Bureaucracy,

²³ Jonathan D. Spence, "God's Chinese Son" 244 (1996).

the Palace Guard, and the God Worshipping Society. In the Taiping state, these institutions were highly corrupt, and as such, many court members used them to further their own personal goals. The delegates may interact with these government organs either through committee directives or through personal directives.

The Bureaucracy was the logistical engine that kept the sprawling Taiping state running. It handled everything from administrative records to more complex matters, like tax collection or weapons manufacturing. The Bureaucracy was still a new and poorly-organized institution. Those who wished to join had to pass the highly competitive civil service examinations, which were based primarily on Hong Xiuquan's edited versions of the Bible.²⁴ Contacts in the Bureaucracy will allow delegates access to government support in the form of specific goods, financial assistance, or other methods of support.



The Palace Guard was a group of highly-trained soldiers, specifically loyal to the Taiping court. The Palace Guard patrolled the Palace of the Heavenly King, a massive complex of buildings and courtyards that housed the Taiping government. The Palace, walled off from the rest of Tianjing, was the center of the Taiping state, and as it housed the royal family, the Palace Guard was designed to help defend it. Contacts in the Palace Guard will allow delegates to

²⁴ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Wobbling Pivot: China Since 1800* 105 (2010)

recruit support to defend themselves or their allies in the government, or will allow them to shape the events in the Palace by force of arms.²⁵

Originally, the God Worshipping Society was the religious movement that would become the Taiping Rebellion. However, following the declaration of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the capture of Tianjing, the God Worshipping Society was transformed into the official Church of the Taiping state. This body managed religious life in the kingdom and punished those who violated Hong's religious edicts.²⁶ The God Worshipping Society functioned as a *de facto* judicial system for the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. For the purposes of this committee, the God Worshipping Society will function as the institution to put delegates on trial. Putting a delegate on trial will require a simple majority and a legitimate reason provided to the Heavenly, or head of state, and should be used only in the most dire of situations. Contacts in the God Worshipping Society would allow delegates to gain the support of religious authorities or to investigate their enemies for religious violations.

Life under the Taiping

The Taiping implemented a number of social reforms, such as gender equality, the abolition of social classes, and the end foot-binding (a practice where many women in China would "bind" their feet to deform them, leaving them artificially small). The extremely zealous manner in which the Taiping enforced their policies hurt their ability to expand their rule. The controversial policies alienated potential supporters. Many violations carried the death penalty,

²⁵ God's Chinese Son by Jonathan, Spence D. *God's Chinese Son*, Chapter 16, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

²⁶ Michael, Franz H. (1966). *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*. Seattle,: University of Washington Press. ISBN 0295739592.

such as alcohol, gambling, opium, and tobacco. The Taiping aggressively spread their brand of Christianity and persecuted Confucianism and Buddhism. The abolition of private land ownership angered the landowners in areas that they passed through. The enforced separation of sexes, even separating husbands from wives, fathers from daughters, and mothers from sons, enraged nearly everyone that came under Taiping rule.²⁷ The prohibition on sex was finally repealed in 1853, but women and men were still largely segregated. Throughout the territory that the Taiping controlled, their rule was mostly focused on the urban centers, with little true enforcement or regulation in the rural areas. This urban-centric rule resulted in the neglect of the countryside, leading to an increase in poverty. The Taiping enforced a total war policy in which all the citizens that lived within their domain could be conscripted into the military and given military training, regardless of gender or ethnicity.²⁸

Taiping Christianity was characterized as being a combination of Chinese folklore, Christian missionary teachings, and reconstructed ancient Chinese beliefs. The Taiping religion was used wielded to radicalize and rally the minorities and lower classes to fight against the Qing.²⁹ The entire faith was centered around Hong Xiuquan and a cult of personality dedicated to him was promoted. In addition to persecuting Confucians and Buddhists, the Taiping also suppressed other Christians that they encountered, namely because they did not accept Hong as the second son of God.

²⁷ Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 140.

²⁸ "The True Colors of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom." 中国报道周刊. October 14, 2003. <http://www.china-week.com/html/1938.htm>.

²⁹ Gao, James Z. (2009). *Historical Dictionary of Modern China (1800-1949)*. Scarecrow Press., 136-137.

While Taiping society was highly religious, it was also very corrupt. Despite a ban on polygamy, many Taiping leaders took many concubines and frequently ignored religious restrictions. This only inflamed resentment towards the religious and political leaders.

Taiping Military

The Taiping military began as a small group of Hakka fanatics. Under Hong's guidance, they formed the God Worshipping Society and began gathering or stealing weapons, forming the core of what would become the Taiping army. The group was initially established with the help of the poor and the outcast. However, as the movement made its way towards central China, Hong Xiuquan and his recruits gradually built up an army and a political organization that incorporated people of different ethnicities and social status.³⁰

By 1853, the Taiping army numbered half a million recruits and conscripts.³¹ These troops were highly trained and deeply loyal. However, as the rebellion spread further north and grew increasingly more radical, the sect began forcing local farmers to join by threatening or murdering the reluctant.³²

The Taiping military was marked by its high level of discipline and fanaticism. The movement was well-known for its fervor and destructive violence. Taiping soldiers attacked the Qing dynasty's Manchu commanders, troops, and civilians with a fury. Because they viewed the Manchus as demons who had enslaved China, Taiping soldiers committed numerous massacres

³⁰ "Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864)," *Asia for Educators Columbia University*, last modified 2009, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_taiping.htm.

³¹ "Taiping Rebellion," *Facts and Details*, last modified November, 2016, <http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat2/sub4/item54.html>.

³² Jonathan, Spence D. *God's Chinese Son*, Chapter 7, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

of the Manchu population. Under the orders of the Heavenly Father, the rebellion focused on exterminating ethnic Manchus in areas that the Taiping armies captured by killing the men and burning the women.³³ This inflamed ethnic tensions throughout China, terrifying the Qing leadership and weakening the control that the Manchus wielded in Chinese society.

The Taiping had limited access to advanced Western weapons, such as modern rifles or artillery. Hong Xiuquan attempted to use his contacts in Hong Kong and elsewhere to gain access to Western weapons. Imported weapons could be smuggled into Taiping territory via the Yangtze River.³⁴ Taiping commanders enthusiastically adopted Western weaponry and military tactics. The Taiping army was initially structured into eight regiments called “duan ying,” which originally totaled around 30,000 soldiers. It was made up of members of the Taiping religious society itself and other secret societies that had joined the Taiping cause. This would later be developed into the Taiping Army. The Taiping did not develop one unified military force. Instead, there were kings which controlled their army in conjunction with the territory they controlled. With this devolution of power, the position of the Heavenly King as the leader of the movement became more and more symbolic. This also meant that military organizations took over local and regional administrations.³⁵

³³ Reilly, Thomas H. *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, Chapter 4, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

³⁴ God's Chinese Son by Jonathan, Spence D. *God's Chinese Son*, Chapter 7, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

³⁵ Michael, Franz. "Military Organization and Power Structure of China During the Taiping Rebellion." *Pacific Historical Review* 18, no. 4 (1949): 469-83. doi:10.2307/3635664. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3635664?seq=15#page_scan_tab_contents.

Campaign History

Taiping forces excelled at moving swiftly and rapidly capturing territory. However, despite their iron discipline, troop loyalties were torn between different kings, which would eventually lead to the civil war. In 1853, the Taiping armies raced north to conquer the areas surrounding the Yangtze River Valley. The Taiping were arguably at their strongest at this point, with a powerful and dedicated military, a strong central command chain, and large sections of southern and eastern China under their control. In May of 1853, the Taiping pushed troops further north towards the Qing capital of Beijing. Other troops marched west, up the Yangtze River Valley. These expeditions proved to be far less successful than anticipated. The westward expedition captured Jiujiang, Xiangtan, Anqing, Pengze, Hukou, and other smaller areas by 1854.³⁶ The northern expedition reached Huaiqing before it was brutally weakened by Qing resistance. This northern force continued into Zhili province, where Beijing was located. Taiping forces turned eastward to attack Tianjin, which was the last major city on the road to the Qing capital. A desperate Qing counterattack commenced, culminating in the battle of Tianjin. Taiping reinforcements did not arrive in time, resulting in the defeat of the northern expedition and the retreat of Taiping forces.³⁷ Additionally, cold weather, something that the predominantly southern Chinese-based army was not used to, took its toll on the Taiping army. Taiping forces suffered massive casualties. From this point, the Taiping began to focus on defense, attempting to hold captured territory rather than conquer new areas. The Qing besieged the Taiping capital at Tianjing, and a three-year siege commenced. However, in 1856, Taiping forces scored a

³⁶ Chinasage, "Taiping Rebellion 1850-1864," last updated December 6th, 2016, Web, <http://www.chinasage.info/taiping.htm>

³⁷ Maochun Yu, "The Taiping Rebellion: A Military Assessment of Revolution and Counterrevolution", *A Military History of China*, 2002, (David A. Graff & Robin Higham eds., 2002).

massive victory over the Qing at the battle of Jiangnan, where the besieging armies were shattered. This victory breathed new life into the Taiping army. However, shortly after this, the Tianjing Incident occurred, throwing the rebellion into chaos.

Following the civil war, leadership in the Taiping state became more and more fragile. Relationships between leaders fractured and fear and competition in the upper ranks of Taiping leadership intensified. With the formation of the court, there was significant hope for a military revival. However, at the start of this committee, the military's morale is at an all-time low, and the armies are scattered. The court will need to redeploy the military against the Qing armies and keep the new political situation stable in order to prevent another civil war.

Military Fronts

The Taiping Rebellion raged across three major fronts. These fronts were the sites of constant conflict. Combat often broke down into multiple-year sieges. Due to the nature of the fighting, there were huge numbers of troops primarily armed with low-quality firearms and a lack of artillery. As such, fighting was brutal and often resulted in stalemates or limited victories with little territory changing hands.

The Taiping court will need to discuss how to deploy these various armies against the Taiping's military enemies. The 500,000 troops that the Taiping court controls are dispersed throughout the front lines. Following the abolition of the five kings military system, the formerly regional armies were divorced from their specific frontline, meaning that the court can deploy these troops wherever they see fit. For the purposes of this committee, the Taiping military is divided into 5 groups of 100,000 troops each. The court will have to decide how many troops

and which armies to send to each front over the course of the committee. These armies can be broken up as the court sees fit. (e.g, Taiping army group 1 to one front, half of Taiping army group 2 to another front, etc.)

The northern front, which was centered around a large stretch of land between Taiping-controlled Anqing and the Yellow River, was a major strategic area for both the Qing and the Taiping. The Taiping had previously advanced along this front in 1853 with its northern expedition. The northern frontlines lay just beyond the main Taiping logistical lines (both road networks and the Yangtze River) that allowed for troop movements between the eastern and western fronts. As such, the Qing dynasty repeatedly tried to advance along the northern front and cleave the Taiping kingdom in two. The northern front would be the most decisive front for the Qing to lose, as it would allow Taiping forces to threaten northern China and the core of Qing territory.

The eastern front concerned the lower Yangtze River, the area between the Taiping capital at Tianjing and the international city of Shanghai. It served as the economic heartland of China. Prior to its capture, the city of Nanjing was one of the largest cities in China and a critical economic and strategic hub. The eastern front was important to the Qing because of its logistical significance; it linked northern and southern china together and contained several major cities. It also contained a large amount of rich farmland.³⁸ For the Taiping, the eastern front began right at the farthest suburbs of Tianjing and was thus a key strategic point. For

³⁸ Williams, S. Wells. *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants*, Vol. 1, p. 107. Scribner (New York), 1904.

years, the Qing had concentrated along the eastern front and besieged Tianjing, a strategy that wore down the Qing armies. With the massive Taiping victory outside of Tianjing in 1856, the Taiping have regained the initiative on the eastern front. Should the Taiping manage to defeat the Qing on the eastern front, they could gain a seaport, and thus greater access to European military and economic assistance. If the Taiping court wishes to protect Tianjing, it will need to direct its forces to that front.

The western front was often seen as less strategically important than the first two fronts. However, it was vital for communications between northern and southern China and was one of the most vulnerable fronts for both the Qing and Taiping. It followed the course of the upper Yangtze river, from Taiping-occupied Wuhan to the Qing province of Sichuan. This territory was agriculturally rich and strategically vital.³⁹ The Taiping were heavily dependent on the Yangtze River Valley as the core of their kingdom. Many Taiping leaders wanted to focus on securing the entire length of the river as a main military objective. While a victory along the western front would not prove decisive, it would give either side a large amount of rich farmland and weaken the other's supply lines.

It should be noted that there are other, less frequently mentioned fronts. For example, sporadic fighting took place along the southern front. This area was far removed from the Taiping capital and the Yangtze river, and as such, was far less strategically vital. As such, it was generally considered to be of little strategic importance. However, the southernmost point of Taiping control was not far from the great Qing city of Canton, and this area was

³⁹ Franz H. Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: History* 93 (1966)

poorly-defended by Taiping forces. An advance along this front was conceivable, though ill-advised.

Foreign Relations of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom maintained relations with a number of foreign powers, both local and Western. They sought to improve relations with Western powers, who they perceived as their fellow Christians. They also coordinated with other rebel groups who had revolted against the Qing. The Taiping would struggle to receive recognition and support for the duration of the rebellion.

Western Powers

The leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom desperately sought to establish formal relations with Christian Western powers and obtain economic and military assistance from them. Much of the Taiping military's modern equipment was purchased from Western arms dealers and smugglers. Hong Xiuquan had prophesied that Western assistance would arrive and help lead the Taiping forces to victory. As such, the Taiping were eager to negotiate with the West.⁴⁰

The Western power most likely to offer assistance to the Taiping was the British Empire. Britain had significant economic interests in the Yangtze River Valley and a Christian ally in the region was a tempting prospect. Additionally, tensions with the Qing dynasty were at an all-time high following the Qing seizure of a British-flagged ship near Canton.⁴¹ With war looming, there

⁴⁰ God's Chinese Son by Jonathan, Spence D. God's Chinese Son, Chapter 20, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

⁴¹ Kenneth Pletcher, "Opium Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated March 29, 2017, Web, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>.

was some level of interest in the British government of offering assistance to the Taiping.

However, there were several concerns the British had regarding the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

The Taiping ban on opium was a major concern. The legalization of the opium trade was one of the major goals of the British Empire, and this ran contrary to Taiping religious law.

Britain ran a chronic trade deficit with China due to high British demand for products like tea. In order to counterbalance this, Britain began selling opium in China, which led to the First Opium War in 1839.⁴² Britain's victory had secured painful concessions from the Qing, though opium was still technically illegal. Nevertheless, opium sales made up a huge portion of British trade with China. It would be difficult for British demands for legalization to gain support in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, as this was directly opposed by Hong Xiuquan.

Additionally, religious qualms about Taiping Christianity existed. While the Taiping were ostensibly Christian, they were considered Heterodox and deeply erroneous by Western Christians. Their Old Testament-based Christianity contrasted sharply with the New Testament-based Christianity of the West. Additionally, the proclamation of Hong Xiuquan as the second son of God was viewed as completely heretical by essentially every other branch of Christianity. Western demands for the right to send missionaries into the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom would have carried the implication the the Taiping were not true Christians, something that would have sat poorly with Hong Xiuquan.

Desires to establish trade ports along the Yangtze River and spread influence into interior China were major British diplomatic and economic goals. Britain was also focused on protecting

⁴² "Opium Trade", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated January 3, 2017, Web, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/opium-trade>.

Shanghai, which was an international port and the conduit for Western influence into inner China via the Yangtze. The desire to establish formal trade and begin exporting more British goods to China was mirrored by a Taiping interest in British technology and weaponry. Nevertheless, there would need to be significant negotiation and compromise in order to make this a feasible scenario. Despite British animosity towards the Qing, the prospect of throwing China into complete chaos was something that the British wanted to avoid, for fear of total economic disruption.

Other Western Powers

There was little diplomatic contact with between the Taiping and other Western powers through formal channels. France had begun to cooperate with Britain in East Asia and had its own ambitions to trade with China. Additionally, France desired to expand into Indochina, a region that was still under heavy Qing influence. The persecution of Catholics by the Taiping had hurt the Rebellion's reputation in the Catholic portions of Europe. The United States was only just beginning to show interest in expanding its economic influence in China, and in general supported the British. However, domestic concerns largely constrained American foreign ambitions. Though tensions between the Qing and Russia had grown, Russia had not yet established a major port on the Pacific. As such, Russian influence was fairly limited. Most Western powers, at least by the start of this committee, looked to Britain for initiative regarding China.⁴³

⁴³ Kenneth Pletcher, "Opium Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated March 29, 2017, Web, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>.

The Nian Rebellion

Beginning in 1851, the Nian Rebellion was concurrent with the Taiping Rebellion. The Nian were a rebel army that operated in northern China. They were driven by anger rather than ideology. Poor economic conditions across northern China stemming from mismanagement and floods had led to strong resentment against the Qing.⁴⁴ Additionally, female infanticide, which was aggravated by natural disasters and poverty, had fundamentally altered the demographics of the region. Men heavily outnumbered women in rural northern China, leaving an estimated 25% of men in the area unable to marry. The fact that the local corrupt officials often took many wives and concubines only exacerbated the problem and enraged the male populace. These men were often known as “bare branches.”⁴⁵

These factors, along with several others, culminated in a massive uprising by many of the young men of the area. The Nian rebels were primarily cavalry, meaning they were fast-moving and difficult to pin down in battle by the numerically superior Qing forces. They were also highly-trained and had managed to steal high-quality firearms. As such, The Nian proved to be incredibly difficult to defeat, and as the Taiping Rebellion proved successful, the Qing faced a shortage of funds and troops with which to properly counter the Nian rebels.

Though they were separated by a fair bit of geography and were ideologically divided (the Nian did not adopt the Taiping religion), there was a limited amount of cooperation. The two rebellions had exchanged formalities and titles and the Nian cavalry occasionally rode south to

⁴⁴ Jowett, Philip S. (2013). *China's Wars: Rousing the Dragon 1894-1949*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing. ISBN 978-1782004073.

⁴⁵ Hudson, Valerie M., Andrea Den Boer. "A Surplus of Men, A Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia's Largest States". Archived from the original on September 27, 2007

join the Taiping forces. However, despite Nian interest, no formal peace treaty was ever signed, and only small-scale cooperation occurred.

Other Rebels

There were several other rebellions that occurred around the same time as the Taiping Rebellion. The Taiping Rebellion forced the Qing to pull troops from across China to fight the Taiping, meaning that many restive areas were suddenly undergarrisoned. Additionally, the Qing raised taxes to pay for the army. This increased anger towards the Qing and helped to inflame revolutionary sentiments across China. Various others rebellions divided Qing forces and helped further undermine Qing control across the empire.

The Panthay Rebellion broke out in 1856 in Yunnan province (which is in southwestern China). This rebellion was led by the Hui Muslim people. Though the Hui were ethnically similar to the Han Chinese, they were also Muslims, and as such, were treated as a separate ethnic group and often discriminated against. The leader of this rebellion was Du Wenxiu, who proclaimed himself the Leader of Muslim Community (or alternatively “Sultan”). Though the rebellion was dominated by Muslims, Du styled it as a rebellion against the Qing and the Manchus.⁴⁶ Many non-Muslim Han Chinese joined the rebellion and were appointed to high positions. Although there was some contact between the Taiping and Panthay forces, no formal military assistance or alliance was ever agreed upon.

The Miao people of Guizhou also rose up in revolt against the Qing in 1854. This was the third rebellion of the Miao people, an ethnic group native to southern China. Ethnic tensions

⁴⁶ Atwill, David G. (2005). *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873* (illustrated ed.). Stanford University Press. p. 120. ISBN 0804751595

between Han settlers and the Miao, along with anger towards corrupt officials and an increase in taxes due to the Taiping Rebellion were the primary causes of the rebellion.⁴⁷ Because the Qing had redeployed local garrisons to fight the Taiping, they were unable to put down the Miao Rebellion before it spiraled out of control.

Mission Statement

With the blessings of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, his first son, the Royal Court of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom has been summoned to the Palace of the Heavenly King. In the wake of manifold tragedies and disasters, the paramount Son of Heaven, Heavenly King Hong Xiuquan, has called the kingdom's greatest warrior-kings and administrators together. This court must lead the Taiping armies to victory over the Manchu demons who have enslaved this blessed land. The Heavenly King, second son of God, demands that his court gather and deploy his holy armies, bring fellow Christians from the West together against the Qing, and spread the holy word across China.

May God above and his armies below secure for our King all that lies under Heaven.

⁴⁷ Jonathan, Spence D. *God's Chinese Son*, Chapter 7, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996. Jenks, Robert D. *Insurgency and Social Disorder in Guizhou: The "Miao" Rebellion, 1854-1873.*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. p. 25.

Character Biographies

Shi Dakai (Flank King)

Shi Dakai was one of the early leaders of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1831, he was an accomplished student and attracted the attention of Hong Xiuquan. In 1851, he became the Flank King, one of the five kings of the Taiping rebellion, and shortly thereafter became a general. Shi was a brilliant military commander and led the troops that captured Nanjing in 1853. He also led the forces that routed the Qing army in 1856. Later that year, his family was murdered by the North King, Wei Changhui, during the Tianjing Incident. Following the deaths of the other kings over the course of the Taiping civil war, Shi was the only living original king.

Shi was among the most popular Taiping generals due to his incredible military prowess, excellent administration skills, and loyalty. He was given control of part of the city of Anqing, which he governed well. After the Tianjing Incident, he became even more powerful and influential, soon attracting the suspicion of Hong Xiuquan. He began to clash with Hong Xiuquan's family members, who had gained powerful positions in the Taiping government. His contact is Lai Yuxin, his personal commander.

Li Xiucheng (Zhong King)

Li Xiucheng was a general and admiral of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1823, he and his cousins joined the Taiping rebellion in 1852 during the march to the Yangtze River. He quickly rose in the ranks and led troops as a frontline commander for much of his early military career. He later commanded troops during the Battle of the Jiangnan Group in 1856,

where he helped rout the Qing army. Li was a brilliant military leader and was recognized and promoted by Hong Xiuquan for his battlefield performance. He was well-known throughout the Taiping kingdom and its leadership for his unshakable loyalty to Hong and the Taiping rebellion.

Following the 1856 Tianjing Incident, Li was selected by Hong to become one of the senior generals of the Taiping forces. He was given administrative control of Nanchang, one of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's largest cities, as well as a formal kingly title. He dedicated himself to foreign policy and improving the international standing of the kingdom. Li advocated for cooperation with foreign powers, particularly the Christian Western powers, in order to build alliances against the Qing. His contact is Li Rongfa, his son, who is a marine commander.

Li Shixian (Shi King)

Li Shixian was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1834, he and his cousins decided to join the Taiping army as it marched out of southern China. He led troops in the Taiping conquest of the lower Yangtze River. Li later commanded a cavalry regiment in 1856, when he helped lift the siege of Tianjing and destroy the Qing Green Standard Army. He was known for his military prowess and his strong defensive tactics. Li would use his forces to organize daring ambushes and sneak attacks, and after his success in 1856, he received a promotion by the Taiping leadership.

Following the Tianjing Incident in 1856, Li was recognized by Hong Xiuquan as one of the most important generals of the Taiping Rebellion. He began to pursue an education after being appointed to an administrative post, dedicating himself to studying military history and philosophy. Li was given administrative control over the city of Huangshi, where he established

a personal court of intellectuals. Li advocated for social reforms in order to modernize and strengthen the Taiping state. His contact is Chen Jueshu, a prominent and talented general.

Chen Yucheng (Ying King)

Chen Yucheng was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1836, he was conscripted into the Qing army as child laborer, but joined the Taiping rebellion as its armies marched northward towards central China. He distinguished himself on the battlefield and became well-known for his tactical skills. Chen was deeply respected and feared by both the Taiping and Qing forces. He led a brigade in a supporting role at the Battle of Jiangnan in 1856. Chen was a master of psychological warfare, preferring to defeat Qing forces with wit rather than force.

Following the 1856 Tianjing Incident, Chen was appointed as a general by Hong Xiuquan. He was also given control of the city of Jiujiang, one of the key centers of Taiping religious life. Chen was regarded by Hong as one of the most skilled military leaders of the Taiping rebellion and was considered one of the greatest military commanders in China at the time. He helped strengthen defenses around Tianjing. Chen was also a highly influential religious leader, actively participating in and increasingly leading Taiping religious life. His contact is Chen Decai, his uncle, who is also a general.

Tang Zhengcai (Hang King)

Tang Zhengcai was an admiral of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and one of its original military leaders. Born in 1816, he was originally a military commander. Tang helped guide the

Taiping army out of southern China to the city of Wuchang, where he captured a river fleet. He sailed with the Taiping armies towards the city of Nanjing, which was captured in 1853. The following year, Tang commanded the fleet that successfully destroyed most of the Qing river fleet. Highly regarded by Hong Xiuquan, he was one of the most influential military leaders in the kingdom.

Tang was known throughout the Taiping kingdom for his military and logistical prowess. He was a brilliant engineer who helped create and distribute specially-designed portable wooden bridges to allow for the easy crossing of rivers by Taiping forces. He helped improved infrastructure and transit throughout eastern China. Tang helped construct the Taiping shipyard on the Yangtze river at the city of Wuhu, which he was given administrative control over. Tang also advocated for cooperation with Western powers in order to gain technological and economic assistance for the Taiping military. His contact is Tong Zonghai, a marine commander.

Lai Wenguang (Zun King)

Lai Wenguang was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. He was trained as a cavalry warrior in southern China and was the younger brother of Lai Hanying, the Taiping prime minister. He was unable to join the Taiping rebellion at its onset due to familial obligations. Following the Tianjing Incident in 1856, much of the Taiping leadership was destroyed, and he was invited by his brother to assume an administrative post. Lai was aided by the fact that he was the brother-in-law of Hong Xiuquan, and he maintained close relations with the Hong family.

When he arrived in 1856, Hong quickly took a liking to Lai and was impressed with his intelligence and martial prowess. Lai was put in charge of the city of Shangrao and given a position as a minister in the Taiping bureaucracy. He was appointed a general later that year. Lai was a brilliant strategist, excelling in mounted combat. He was also a highly skilled diplomat and attempted to ally the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom with other rebel groups in order to build a broader anti-Qing alliance. His contact is Lan Chengchun, a highly competent general.

Tan Shaoguang (Mu King)

Tan Shaoguang was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1835, he joined the Taiping rebellion when he was only 17. He participated in the march to the Yangtze River. Tan was appointed a commander, where he led troops in the defense of Tianjing. He was regarded as a capable military leader and administrator, soon attracting the attention of Hong Xiuquan. After meeting with the Heavenly King, he and Hong became close, and Tan was awarded several prestigious awards for his work in improving the defenses of Tianjing. He helped organize the Tianjing Palace Guard, which defended the royal family in the capital.

In the wake of the 1856 Tianjing Incident, Tan became a senior general of the Taiping kingdom and was given control of the city of Chizhou. He also became a personal advisor to Hong Xiuquan, who consulted Tan on social and administrative affairs. He was deeply conservative, supporting Hong Xiuquan's religious and political position. Tan opposed any liberalization of Taiping society or law and fought against religious and social reform programs. His contact is Chen Bingwen, his brother-in-law, who is also a general.

Chen Kunshu (Hu King)

Chen Kunshu was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Rebellion. Born in 1820, he joined the God Worshipping Society shortly before Taiping armies left Guanxi. He was a prominent commander, leading troops in the defense of the Taiping capital. Chen remained fairly obscure in the Taiping military until the Tianjing Incident, when much of the Taiping leadership was destroyed. Due to his bravery in combat and his popularity among the soldiers, he was promoted by Hong Xiuquan in 1856. He quickly became known for his excellent defensive tactics.

Chen was one of the most capable Taiping generals and was known to compete with other generals for positions of power using his personal popularity and extensive contact network. He was given an administrative post and was also assigned control of the city of Liyang. He also served as an overseer of the defensive fortifications surrounding Tianjing. Chen was famous for his rivalry with the other Taiping generals. He worked hard to win the favor of the common folk and was interested in reforming Taiping society and culture to ease restrictions on the peasantry. His contact is He Menheng, a major general.

Liang Chengfu (Qi King)

Liang Chengfu was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1820, he served as a conscript in the Qing army in Guangxi. However, in 1850, he defected and joined the Taiping forces as they prepared to march north to the Yangtze River. He served as a commander in the Taiping military and fought along the northern front. He also helped serve as a logistical officer on the western front. Despite his distinguished service, Liang did not win the favor of the

religious authorities of the Taiping and became disillusioned with the military after years of stalemate along the northern and western fronts.

After the Tianjing Incident, Liang was appointed to the Taiping court. He was given a royal title, but was not awarded any personal commendations from Hong Xiuquan. Nevertheless, he was granted control over the city of Jingdezhen, which was a major production site. He was known for his loyalty to the Taiping Rebellion, but was personally critical of the growing power of Hong's family members in politics. He supported social reforms and advocated for cooperation with Western powers to improve the Taiping industry and economy. His contact is Ma Zhonger, a respected general.

Yang Fuqing (General)

Yang Fuqing was a general and administrator of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1821, he was originally a bandit in southern China. He was invited to join the Taiping forces by his brother-in-law Yang Xiuqing, the East King of the Taiping rebellion. Yang arrived at Tianjing in 1855 and was appointed a commander later that year. In 1856, his brother-in-law Yang Xiuqing was killed during the Tianjing Incident. However, Fuqing was recognized for his administrative and military skills, and surprisingly, was appointed a general. He was given control of the city of Tongling, a major Taiping city.

Yang was well-known for his ruthlessness and cunning and maintained a network of spies and personal contacts both inside and outside of Taiping territory. Yang was also famous for crushing any dissent against the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Nevertheless, he was deeply worried by the rise of Hong's family members in politics, and soon attracted the resentment of

the Hong family. Yang was also resentful of the purge of his brother-in-law and his followers. He was well-known for his rivalry with the Taiping general Wei Jun. His contact is Ji Qingyuan, a well-respected Taiping general.

Ye Yunlai (General)

Ye Yunlai was one of the earliest generals of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and one of the few who survived the Tianjing Incident. Born in 1825, he joined the Taiping rebellion in 1851 as a logistical officer. He was a capable commander and was appointed a general after the fall of Nanjing in 1853. Ye was subsequently given a position managing food rations for the Taiping armies. He helped oversee the rice harvest and rice storage system. He also helped strengthen fortifications and transportation networks between the Taiping western and eastern fronts.

Following the Tianjing Incident, Ye was one of the few generals that survived, and was granted broad powers by Hong Xiuquan. He and Hong had become close, and Ye received several prestigious awards for his bravery in combat. Ye was given control over a portion of the city of Anqing to serve as his logistical base. He also served as state policy advisor to Hong. Ye advocated for increasing cooperation with Western Christian powers. He focused on defending key Taiping logistical centers and was known for his excellent defensive military tactics. His contact is Qiu Yuncai, a prominent quartermaster and general.

Wei Jun (General)

Wei Jun was a general of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1827, he joined the Taiping rebellion shortly before the Taiping armies left Guanxi. He was the nephew of Wei Changhui, the Taiping North King. He participated in the capture of Nanjing in 1853 and distinguished himself in combat. He led the Taiping armies along the western front in 1855, where he successfully defeated the Qing armies and captured the city of Wuchang. He was widely recognized as one of the finest generals in the Taiping kingdom. Additionally, he was an astute diplomat, preferring to negotiate rather than fight whenever possible.

Following the Tianjing Incident, his uncle was killed, and he came under increased suspicion by the other Taiping leaders. He developed a bitter rivalry with Yang Fuqing, another general. Despite being promoted in 1856, he fell out of favor with Hong Xiuquan shortly thereafter, primarily due to his perceived lack of loyalty to Hong's family. Wei was also not particularly religious, which further contributed to his growing unpopularity with Hong. Nevertheless, he was popular amongst the soldiers fighting along the western front. His contact is Chen Xueqi, another excellent general.

Hong Xuanjiao (Women's Forces Commander)

Hong Xuanjiao was Hong Xiuquan's sister and the wife of Wei Changhui, the (now deceased) Taiping North King. Born in 1823, she joined Hong Xiuquan after he first began experiencing his divine visions. She married Wei Changhui in 1851 and left her home in Guanxi along with the Taiping armies on the march to the Yangtze River. In the newly-established Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, women were drafted into the Taiping military, and she was

appointed the commander of the women's forces. These women were organized into units that served both in logistical roles and front-line combat.

Following the 1856 Tianjing Incident, her husband was killed and she lost much of her political influence. Nevertheless, due to the fact that she was Hong Xiuquan's brother, Hong Xuanjiao retained her role as the women's forces commander. She organized and led her female forces into combat, winning several victories. She was revered for her bravery. Hong Xuanjiao was also infamous for her blatant disregard towards the Taiping social and religious strictures, which drew criticism from the Taiping leadership. She advocated for social reform and wider equality for women. Her contact is Qiu Jiabei, a female military commander.

Hong Renda (Blessing King)

Hong Renda was one of Hong Xiuquan's older brothers. Born in 1808, he joined Hong Xiuquan after his visions of God began. He travelled with the Taiping armies when they left southern China in 1851, where he managed relations with local converted landlords. Hong Renda served as an advisor to Hong Xiuquan during the early years of the rebellion and attempted to check the influence of the other Taiping kings.

In 1856, the Tianjing Incident occurred, destroying much of the Taiping leadership. Hong Xiuquan began promoting more of his family members to positions of power in an attempt to weaken the influence of the Taiping generals. He appointed Hong Renda to an administrative position in the devastated capital of Tianjing. Hong Renda used this position to greatly enrich himself. He was well-known for his corruption, frequently embezzling funds from the city reconstruction effort. He also appropriated funds from the Taiping military and worked to

undermine the influence of the newly-appointed court over his brother. He was also staunchly opposed to social or religious reforms and worked closely with religious authorities. His contact is Hong Rengui, one of his other brothers.

Hong Renfa (Peace King)

Hong Renfa was one of Hong Xiuquan's older brothers. Born in 1811, he was an early convert to Hong's God Worshipping Society and helped organize followers for the rebellion. He travelled north with the Taiping armies during their march to the Yangtze River in 1851. Hong Renfa helped lead the religious reforms and services that Hong Xiuquan introduced into the newly-founded Taiping kingdom. He also oversaw the enforcement of the Taiping religion among the newly-conquered peasant population.

Following the Tianjing Incident, Hong Renfa was chosen by Hong Xiuquan to serve as an administrator and foreign policy advisor. He was primarily selected to act as a counterbalance to Hong's perceived rivals. He was known for his religious and social conservatism and was deeply opposed to the growing calls for reform. He was known to be corrupt and highly influential in Tianjing, controlling much of the city's security. Hong Renfa cared little about the war with the Qing, though he advocated for cooperation with the Christian Western powers. He was also highly corrupt and attempted to steal as much money from the Taiping treasury as possible. His contact is Hong Renfu, one of his brothers.

Fu Shanxiang (Zhuangyuan)

Fu Shanxiang was one of the few top-level civil service examination graduates in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Born in 1833, she was a resident of the city of Nanjing and was remarkably educated for a Chinese woman. When Taiping forces captured the city in 1853, they held civil service examinations that were open to both men and women. Fu participated and received the highest score in the fledgling kingdom, earning her the title of *zhuangyuan*, the top graduate. Fu served as the late East King Yang Xiuqing's chancelloress, during which time she advised him on administrative and legal affairs. She was known for her disregard for the Taiping social and religious edicts and advocated for religious reform.

Following the Tianjing Incident in 1856, the East King was executed, along with most of his followers. Due to her prestigious awards and skills, Fu was spared and allowed to serve in the Taiping court. Though she was not killed, her status was greatly diminished, and she grew resentful of Hong's family members and their powerful positions. She believed in relaxing some of the religious strictures of Taiping society. Her contact is Su Lihua, a female military commander.