

CHAPTER SIX

Struggle for Jing Province

Introductory summary

Liu Bei in the west (211-214)

The second settlement of Jing province (215)

The great betrayal (219)

Introductory summary:

After the victory at the Red Cliffs, Liu Bei had obtained control of the southern commanderies of Jing province, with access to the Yangzi by Nan province. In 211 he was invited into Yi province, present-day Sichuan, to assist the local ruler, Liu Zhang, against the threat from the theocratic ruler Zhang Lu, who occupied Hanzhong commandery. Soon after his arrival, however, Liu Bei turned against Liu Zhang and took the territory for himself.

With Liu Bei thus established in the west, and with his own forces quite unsuccessful in their attempts to expand north of the Yangzi, Sun Quan became increasingly dissatisfied with the arrangements in Jing province. His claim was rejected by Liu Bei, but in 215, after a brief campaign, a new treaty was drawn up which gave him some additional territory. Thereafter, the alliance was confirmed.

In 219, Liu Bei captured Hanzhong and proclaimed himself King, and in the latter part of the year his general in Jing province, Guan Yu attacked Cao Cao's positions on the Han River. Destroying an enemy army, he laid siege to Cao Ren in Fan city.

While Guan Yu was thus engaged, however, Sun Quan and his general Lü Meng attacked his rear positions. Guan Yu was killed by Sun Quan's forces, and Sun Quan was able to take over all the territory of Jing province which he had formerly held for Liu Bei.

Liu Bei in the west (211-214):

The agreement concluded in 210 between Liu Bei and Sun Quan had given Liu Bei control of all the southern commanderies of Jing province in the basin of the Xiang River and its tributaries, together with the "loan" of Nan commandery controlling the course of the Yangzi upstream from the Dongting Lake. The territory held directly by Sun Quan covered the southern part of Jiangxia commandery, governed by Cheng Pu and facing the forces of Cao Cao's Grand Administrator Wen Ping, and the reach of the Yangzi between the Dongting Lake and the junction with the Han, including the area of the Red Cliffs: this was held by Lu Su as Grand Administrator of Hanchang.¹

For a time, there was no further discussion of this arrangement. Liu Bei was content with what he had and was looking for opportunity elsewhere, while Sun Quan was primarily concerned with control of Yang province and the territory north of the Yangzi

¹ See Chapter 5.

CHAPTER SIX

towards the Huai. Cheng Pu died, and Lu Su was for a time transferred to the northern front, where he took part in the capture of Huan city in Lujiang in 214. In the following year, however, Sun Quan turned his attention once more to the west.

These few years had seen a remarkable development in Liu Bei's position. He and his advisers, notably Zhuge Liang, had successfully combined his personal prestige, political opportunity and a ruthless hypocrisy to seize Yi province in present-day Sichuan and establish a new government of considerable military strength.

When Liu Zhang, the Governor of Yi province, succeeded to the position of his father Liu Yan in 194, we are told that he was chosen because he was gentle and amenable,² and he was always considered a weak ruler. Nonetheless, though there had been a number of rebellions and other disturbances during his government, and it was clear that he might be vulnerable to a strong rival, Liu Zhang had so far managed to hold his own. In 211, however, he issued an invitation to Liu Bei in Jing province that he should bring an army to assist him against the Taoist Zhang Lu.

Zhang Lu's family came originally from Pei, in the eastern part of the empire, but his grandfather Zhang Ling had migrated to the west, where he established a religious sect based upon Haoming Mountain west of Chengdu.³ According to Zhang Lu's biography, Zhang Ling taught the people from scriptures which he wrote himself, and he required of his followers an offering of rice: the sect was therefore known as the "Way of the Five *Dou* of Rice," or "Rice Sect."⁴ When Zhang Ling died, his son Zhang Heng followed him as chief of the sect, and when Zhang Heng died Zhang Lu succeeded him.

About the time of the Yellow Turban rebellion of Zhang Jue in the east of China in 184, there was short-lived rebellion under a certain Zhang Xiu, described as a man from Ba commandery, who was evidently associated with the Rice Sect.⁵ The trouble, however,

² See Chapters 4 and 5, and *SGZ* 31/Shu 1, 867.

Liu Zhang and his two elder brothers, Liu Fan and Liu Dan, had accompanied the imperial court under Dong Zhuo when it moved to Chang'an in 190. Liu Zhang was later able to join his father, but Liu Fan and Liu Dan were killed at the time of an attempted coup by the north-western warlord Ma Teng against Dong Zhuo's successors Li Jue and others in 194. It was soon after this Liu Yan died.

³ There is a biography of Zhang Lu in *SGZ* 8, 263-66, and a parallel account of him in *HHS* 75/65, 2435-37. The account of Zhang Ling, also known as Zhang Daoling, is given at the beginning of those texts. See also note 5 below. The history is considerably confused, not only through the normal lack of interest shown by traditional Chinese historians for such heterodox sects, but also through the hagiographic tradition which came to surround the founders of the modern Taoist church. It should be observed, moreover, that the teachings and practices of a sect could change very considerably in the course of evolution under different leadership at different times, and it is extremely difficult to judge what stage of development is described in any particular passage of a text.

Among the many and detailed discussions of the sect of Zhang Lu and his predecessors, I would mention in particular those of Maspero, Eichhorn, Fukui, Miyakawa, Michaud, Seidel and (with caution) Levy.

⁴ I have discussed this religious group briefly in note 87 to Chapter 3. I refer to it hereafter as the Rice Sect. The *dou* measure of capacity in Han times was a fraction under two litres. There is, however, some debate among modern scholars whether the reference to *dou* (which can also indicate the constellation of the Big Dipper, Ursa Major) was not more symbolic than practical.

⁵ The *Dian lue* of Yu Huan, quoted in commentary to *HHS* 75/65, 2436, and in *SGZ* 8, 264 PC note 1, has a comparatively detailed account of the organisation and beliefs of the Rice Sect, to which the leadership is attributed first to Zhang Xiu, and then to Zhang Lu. There is some variation between the texts, presumably due to corruption in transmission: the version preserved in *SGZ* PC is very much better.

HHS 8, 349, notes that in the seventh month of 184 the religious leader Zhang Xiu of Ba commandery made a rising. Commentary to that passage quotes the [*Lingdi*] *ji* of Liu Ai, a contemporary, which describes Zhang Xiu as a leader of the Rice Sect, and this is supported by *Dian lue*.

JING PROVINCE

was brought under control without great bloodshed, and Zhang Xiu was permitted to make his peace with the authorities.

A few years later in 188, another group, calling themselves Yellow Turbans, brought trouble to Yi province and killed the Inspector Chi Jian, but the Rice Sect were not implicated in this disturbance.⁶ On the contrary, when Liu Yan became Governor soon afterwards he gave frequent audience to Zhang Lu's mother, who was also an adept of the sect. About 190, moreover, he gave a joint military command to Zhang Lu and the former rebel Zhang Xiu⁷ that they should attack the Grand Administrator of Hanzhong, who had been reluctant to accept Liu Yan's authority. The campaign was successful, but then Zhang Lu killed Zhang Xiu, took over their combined forces, and established his own theocratic government.⁸

In commentary at the end of the latter passage, however, Pei Songzhi argues that the personal name of Zhang Xiu has been miswritten for that of Zhang Heng. He evidently bases this comment upon the main text of *SGZ* 8, 263, which describes how the son of Zhang Ling, Zhang Heng, carried on the teachings of his father, and was succeeded in this by his own son Zhang Lu: in this lineage, there seems no room for Zhang Xiu. The *Kaoyi* commentary of Sima Guang to *ZZTJ* 58, 1872, moreover, notes that Zhang Lu later killed Zhang Xiu (see below), and it is thus highly unlikely that Zhang Xiu should be identified with Zhang Heng. In the main text of *ZZTJ* 58, Sima Guang accepts the plain statement of *HHS* 8, and evidently discounts the statement of Liu Ai connecting Zhang Xiu with the Rice Sect.

It seems possible, as I suggest in my discussion of the text of *ZZTJ* 58 (de Crespigny, *Huan and Ling II*, 557-558), that Zhang Xiu had at some time taken an active position of leadership in the Rice Sect, parallel and in rivalry to the spiritual authority of Zhang Heng; and he was later killed by Zhang Lu, inheriting his father's position.

Eichhorn, "Chang Jio und Chang Lu," 317-318, noting the passage in *Dian lue* which says that when Zhang Lu was in Hanzhong after he had killed Zhang Xiu he was obliged to maintain Zhang Xiu's teachings in order to keep the support of the people, has the imaginative proposal that Zhang Lu was not in fact particularly concerned with Taoist beliefs until that time, and that it was Zhang Xiu who had always been the effective leader of the Rice Sect.

There could be a good deal of truth in this, though Zhang Ling presumably was a Taoist teacher, and we are told that his mother was an adept. It is by no means impossible, however, that Zhang Xiu was the real founder and leader of the Rice Sect until the time Zhang Lu seized it from him and killed him, and that Zhang Ling and his son Zhang Heng had been teachers of a separate, less important group. The references to the foundation and leadership of the Rice Sect by Zhang Ling and Zhang Heng would then be later interpolations, designed to give a legitimate tradition to the claims of Zhang Lu. In any event, Eichhorn is surely correct when he remarks that Zhang Ling and Zhang Heng owe their later fame and glory simply to the success of Zhang Lu; without him, they would have remained nameless nobodies.

There is evidence, notably in the Dunhuang text of the *Laozi bianhua jing* "Sutra of the Transformation of Laozi" (MS. Stein 2295), discussed by Seidel, "Image of the Perfect Ruler," 222-227, for the existence of a number of competing, potentially rebellious groups in the region of present-day Sichuan during the latter part of the second century AD. Zhang Lu, with his predecessors, associates and rivals, were thus a few amongst many.

⁶ Though Maspero, *Mélanges posthumes II*, 152 note 4, also 44 and 152, and some other scholars have suggested a fairly close connection between the followers of Zhang Lu in the west and those of Zhang Jue's Yellow Turbans in the east, Zhang Lu and his group do not appear to have been involved with the activities of the local Yellow Turbans in 188. And even if the rising of Zhang Xiu in 184 did involve the Rice Sect, it is not described as Yellow Turban activity, it was not co-ordinated with Zhang Jue's activities, and it was apparently not regarded so seriously: Zhang Xiu was permitted to surrender rather than suffering execution. The Rice Sect and Zhang Lu were not necessarily rebellious, and in this respect they did not resemble the Yellow Turbans, neither those of Zhang Jue in the east of the empire nor the group closer home in Yi province itself.

⁷ Fukui [1958], 4, suggests that Zhang Xiu the rebel of 184 and Zhang Xiu the officer of Liu Yan were two different men; *cf.* however, Eichhorn, "Chang Jio und Chang Lu," 317 note 81.

⁸ It should be noted that this was Zhang Lu's first recorded act of insurrection.

CHAPTER SIX

In the religious history of China, Zhang Ling is recognised as the founder of the Taoist "papacy," the school of the Heavenly Masters of the present day, and Zhang Lu is one of the foremost patriarchs. His biography notes that he taught the people spiritual arts, describing himself as "Lord Teacher"⁹. Among his doctrines there was an association of illness with wrong-doing, requiring the sick to confess their sins,¹⁰ and in this and other matters there were similarities with the eastern schools of popular Taoist religion. From the evidence in the histories, these various sects may best be considered as local extensions and developments from a common base of ritual and belief, centred for the most part on the north China plain, but adapting their expression to different circumstances, customs and leadership.¹¹

For Liu Yan, Zhang Lu's declaration of independence was a modified misfortune. Hanzhong commandery controlled the upper reaches of the Han River in the south of present-day Shenxi, and Zhang Lu now blocked communications through the mountains to the Wei River valley. Liu Yan was thus able to excuse himself from any dealings with the imperial government, and behind the buffer of Zhang Lu's insubordination he established a personal authority in the rest of Yi province.

When Liu Zhang succeeded his father in 194, the relationship with the Rice Sect was yet undetermined, for Zhang Lu had taken no action against the provincial government,

During the time Zhang Lu was independent in Hanzhong commandery, he gave the territory the name of Hanning, but after his surrender to Cao Cao in 215, the name was changed back to Hanzhong: (SGZ 8, 263, and SGZ 1, 45). For convenience, I refer to the place consistently as Hanzhong.

⁹ The accounts of Zhang Lu in HHS 75/65, 2435, and SGZ 8, 263, say that those who first came to him were called "spirit soldiers" (*guizu*) and were later named Libationers (*jijiu*). Of these titles, that of Libationer was used in certain offices by the imperial government of Han: Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 250 *sub voce*. The use of the term in the context of Zhang Lu's organisation, however, is probably related rather to their ideal ritual functions than to any deliberate patterning on Han administration.

It has been argued that the use of the character *gui* in much of the terminology of the sect indicates some despite against the non-Chinese people of the region who came to join it. It is more probable, however, that the term *gui* may be understood rather in a general sense of supernatural forces than of disapproved "demons." On the other hand, it does seem likely that much of the basis of the creed was concerned with fear and propitiation of powerful and potentially hostile spiritual forces. See Eichhorn, "Chang Jio und Chang Lu," 322-324, including note 102.

¹⁰ The doctrines of Zhang Lu are described by SGZ 8, and those of the earlier sect under Zhang Xiu by *Dian lue*, as cited in note 5 above. Since it was believed wrong-doing would bring sickness, Zhang Lu's administration of the law was comparatively lenient. An offender was pardoned three times, and only then was formal punishment administered: it was presumably expected that the spirits should be given the opportunity to inflict their own justice first.

Dian lue adds that under the administration of Zhang Lu, after he had taken over from Zhang Xiu, those who had committed a small fault were required to pave one hundred paces of roadway. And there was also a custom of establishing "houses of charity" (*yi she*), like way-stations by the roads, with rice and meat set out for travellers to help themselves to what they needed.

Besides this, we are told that Zhang Lu's doctrine accepted the cycle prescribed by *Yue ling* "The Ordinances of the Months," the ritual calendar popular among the scholars of Han: (*Yue ling* was included in the anthology *Lüshi chunqiu*, 1-12; translated by Wilhelm, *Frühhung und Herbst*, 1-156, and was later incorporated as chapter 4 of *Li ji*; Couvreur, *Mémoires* I, 330-410, and see Bodde, *Festivals*, 16 and *passim*). Among the prohibitions of Zhang Lu, no slaughtering was permitted in spring or summer, and alcohol was forbidden.

¹¹ As discussed in note 87 to Chapter 3, Gan Ji of Langye, dealt with by Sun Ce in the lands of the lower Yangzi, treated illness by casting charms over water for people to drink, a technique associated with Zhang Jue. He also established "spirit houses," which probably performed the same function as the "houses of purity" established by Zhang Xiu. It may be suggested that Zhang Xiu and Zhang Lu, Zhang Jue and Gan Ji had each made a slightly different selection from the common heritage.

JING PROVINCE

and members of his family still attended court in Chengdu. Some time later, however, about 200, there was a formal break. Zhang Lu claimed Hanzhong as his own territory, and sought to expand his authority southwards into the upper tributaries of the Jialing Jiang, the northern part of Ba commandery of Han. Liu Zhang, for his part, executed Zhang Lu's mother and other members of the sect, and placed an army in Lanzhong county to oppose him.

By 210, some fifteen years after his accession to power, the government of Liu Zhang in Yi province appeared weak, disunited and in imminent danger of collapse. A man from Jiangxia in Jing province, Liu Yan had acquired contacts and associates in the region of the imperial capital, and he had established his government in the early 190s by the firm suppression of local leaders whose authority might rival his own. Later, when refugees came into Yi province from the capital district and from Nanyang, they were organised into a fighting force known as the Dongzhou troops - men from the eastern provinces - but the local government did little to assist them, and they proved insubordinate, disruptive and a source of instability. In personal terms, several of the men who had assisted Liu Yan and supported the accession of Liu Zhang later turned against him. Zhao Wei, for example, had taken a leading role in securing the appointment of Liu Zhang as Governor in 194, but a few years afterwards, taking advantage of local resentments, he led a rebellion and laid siege to Chengdu city before he was eventually driven back, defeated and killed. Pang Xi, who had been a close friend of Liu Yan, also joined Zhao Wei's rebellion, but was able to make peace with Liu Zhang. He was then given command of the troops operating against Zhang Lu, where he achieved only limited success.

The histories describe Liu Zhang as an indecisive man, and the judgement may be fair. Certainly, he had not established a reliable base of support: he had no strong allies among the local leadership, he had alienated many of his father's former associates, and he had no authority over the refugees from the north and the east, who might have given personal allegiance. In a sense, Liu Zhang was holding power in Yi province as much through local political inertia as through any sense of government, for there was no single figure in the region who might offer a serious challenge.

By 211, however, it appeared that the situation was going to change. In the autumn of that year, Cao Cao achieved a notable victory over the combined forces of the warlords of Liang province at the battle of Huayin, on the Wei River just west of the junction with the great bend of the Yellow River.¹² From this success, Cao Cao's forces controlled the valley of the Wei as far as Chang'an, and he was able to move north against Anding commandery and south against Hanzhong. By the end of the year Cao Cao had received the surrender of Yang Qiu, warlord in Anding, he had begun the settlement of the region about Chang'an, and his general Zhong Yao had been given orders to prepare for operations against Zhang Lu in Hanzhong.

For Liu Zhang in Yi province, this threat to his old enemy presented both opportunity and danger. On the one hand, if he could take advantage of Zhang Lu's preoccupation with the north he could recover a great deal of territory and strengthen his own authority. On the other hand, if Zhang Lu surrendered to Cao Cao, Liu Zhang would be brought face to face with the dominant military power in the empire, and he would be attempting to maintain his independence with only the rump of Yi province, without natural defences. Once Cao Cao's forces had crossed the barrier of the Qin Ling ranges, the mountain

¹² On this campaign, see de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 163-165.

CHAPTER SIX

country between the Han River and the Sichuan basin would present far less of a problem, while the armies which Cao Cao could put into the field were much greater than those of Zhang Lu. It was unlikely that Liu Zhang could survive such an assault.

Liu Zhang had few personal or administrative resources to deal with this developing crisis. The situation from that perspective was summed up for him by his adviser Zhang Song:

The military commanders within this province, men such as Pang Xi and Li Yi, think only of their own achievements and their own position. They may well prove unreliable.

You must obtain assistance from [Liu Bei of] Yuzhou. If you do not, you will have enemies attacking you from outside and your own people turning against you within your borders: that is the road to certain defeat.¹³

The argument presented to Liu Zhang was that he should use the prestige and military authority of Liu Bei to provide himself with a base of loyal support. He was assured that Liu Bei would respect him and serve him because they were both members of the imperial clan, so he would obtain an access of military strength sufficient to defeat Zhang Lu and a core of personal support which would enable him to dominate the various factions in Yi province thereafter.

Such advice was valid, however, only on the assumption that Liu Bei would remain loyal and be content to take second position to Liu Zhang, and in this respect the argument was at least doubtful and at worst dishonest. Doubtful, because with the best will in the world it must have been hard to imagine that Liu Bei, who already controlled a significant territory of his own in Jing province, would be prepared to abandon that position of independence in order to assist a weak ruler such as Liu Zhang. Dishonest, because we have repeated statements in the histories that many of Liu Zhang's advisers were in close communication with Liu Bei, and were urging him to come and take over in Yi province.

In this debate, besides Zhang Song, the advisers supporting the alliance with Liu Bei included Fa Zheng and Meng Da, both originally from Youfufeng near Chang'an. Those who argued that Liu Zhang should attempt to solve his problems with his own resources appear to have been local men, such as Huang Quan of Baxi commandery and Wang Lei of Guanghan.¹⁴ These latter, however, were overruled, and the invitation was issued to Liu Bei.

¹³ *SGZ* 31/Shu 1, 868, and see also *SGZ* 32/Shu 2, 881. On the term "Yuzhou" as a reference to Liu Bei, see note 67 to Chapter 4.

Zhang Song, it may be recalled, was the man sent to Cao Cao at the time of the Red Cliffs campaign in 208, who subsequently became a supporter of Liu Bei (note 28 to Chapter 5).

¹⁴ The biography of Fa Zheng is in *SGZ* 37/Shu 7, 957-62, and that of Huang Quan is in *SGZ* 43/Shu 13, 1043-45.

Huang Quan was a man from Langzhong county, near the present-day city of the same name. Langzhong had been made the capital of a new commandery which was established by Liu Zhang in 194 and given the name Baxi in 201.

The administrative geography of the region of Ba commandery of Later Han became somewhat complicated at this time, and a summary explanation may be helpful.

Ba commandery of Later Han had occupied the valleys of the Jialing River and its eastern tributaries the Qu and the Ba, together with the basin of the Yangzi downstream from the region of present-day Chongqing. The capital was at Jiangzhou, close to the river junction by present-day Chongqing.

In 194, however, Liu Zhang divided that territory:

1 the valley of the Jialing, with the Qu and the Ba became (truncated) Ba commandery, with capital at Langzhong;

JING PROVINCE

Liu Zhang gave orders for preparations to welcome Liu Bei, but the formalities of the reception were rivalled by the popularity which accompanied the newcomer's great reputation, and the history says that Liu Bei came into Yi province for the first time as if he was returning to his native home.¹⁵ With an army of his own, supplemented by an escort sent from Liu Zhang and quantities of supplies and presents provided also by his host, Liu Bei advanced up the Yangzi to Jiangzhou, near present-day Chongqing, then followed the Jialing and Fu rivers north to the city of Fu, by present-day Mianyang. Here Liu Zhang came to meet him, and in a scene like the Field of Cloth of Gold, with chariots and canopies brilliant as the sun, the two leaders held festival.

As Liu Bei passed by Jiangzhou, the Grand Administrator of Ba commandery, Yan Yan, loyal to Liu Zhang, observed in despair, "This is like a man sitting alone on a little hill, and he calls out a tiger to protect himself."¹⁶ And already during the meeting at Fu, Zhang Song, Fa Zheng and some of Liu Bei's own advisers were telling him that he should take Liu Zhang captive immediately. Liu Bei replied that it was too early for such a step, that his reputation as a man of honour would suffer if he betrayed Liu Zhang so quickly, and he had not yet established a following among the people of the province. For the time being, he and Liu Zhang recommended one another with honourable titles. Liu Zhang allocated Liu Bei still more troops and quantities of supplies, then sent him north to Jiameng to take command of all operations against Zhang Lu. Liu Bei, for his part, gave generous donations and showed most gracious behaviour, to win the hearts of the people to himself.

From such a record there seems no question that Liu Bei was merely waiting for the opportunity to take over Liu Zhang's position. On his side, Liu Zhang was presumably hopeful that the alliance with Liu Bei would give credit to his government against the disparate forces which he had attempted with limited success to control, and at the same time he might expect that the presents and patronage which he gave Liu Bei would be sufficient to keep his associate in second position. In his capital at Chengdu, Liu Zhang still controlled the treasury and taxation resources of the province and Liu Bei, isolated in

2 the valley of the Yangzi in the region of the Gorges became Guling commandery, with capital at Yufu, by present-day Fengjie;

3 the basin of the Yangzi about Chongqing and the lower reaches of the Jialing River became Yongning commandery, with capital at Jiangzhou;

4 the south-eastern segment of the commandery, in the hill country about the lower valley of the Wu River, was established as the Dependent State of Badong, with headquarters at Fuling near present-day Pengshui.

In 201, the names of the three commanderies were changed about:

1 the truncated Ba commandery, as in 1 above, was renamed Baxi;

2 Guling commandery, as in 2 above, was renamed Badong;

3 Yongning commandery, as in 3 above, was renamed Ba commandery.

Thus the city of Jiangzhou by present-day Chongqing was capital of the large Ba commandery of Later Han until 194, then became the capital of the small commandery of Yongning, and then in 201 became again the capital of (a reduced) Ba commandery. And the county of Langzhong, home territory of Huang Quan, was a regular county in the large Ba commandery of Later Han until 194, then became the capital of truncated Ba commandery, and then in 201 became the capital of Baxi commandery.

Later again, in the time of Liu Bei, the Dependent State of Badong was established as an independent commandery named Fuling.

On these and other variations, see in particular the tables of Wu Zengjin and Yang Shoujing, 2920-22, and 2927-28.

¹⁵ SGZ 31/Shu 1, 868. The text has the expression (*ru gui*); Liu Bei had never been in the province before.

¹⁶ SGZ 36/Shu 6, 943 PC note 1 quoting *Huayang guo zhi*.

CHAPTER SIX

the north from his base in Jing province, might be reluctant to embark upon open insurrection. It is doubtful, however, if Liu Zhang appreciated the degree to which his own supporters and counsellors were prepared to serve the interloper's cause.

Rather more than a year after Liu Bei had arrived in Yi province, his opportunity came. The pretext, curiously enough, was the attack mounted by Cao Cao against Sun Quan's positions on the lower Yangzi in the winter and early spring of 212-213. In that region, though Sun Quan was compelled to give ground, his defence line of the Yangzi, based primarily on the new fortress at Ruxu and his local naval supremacy, held firm against the invader, but there were no doubt anxious moments for Sun Quan and his ministers as Cao Cao's strategy developed. In any event, it is said that Sun Quan wrote to Liu Bei to ask for his assistance, and Liu Bei asked leave to join his old ally.¹⁷

The biography of Liu Bei says that Sun Quan specifically asked him for aid, but one must have some doubts about that. The campaign was taking place a thousand kilometres away in a direct line, and far more than that by the natural route of the Yangzi. It is possible that Sun Quan proposed Liu Bei's lieutenant Guan Yu, who had remained in Jing province, should make some sortie north along the valley of the Han in order to relieve the military pressure further east. Certainly, in his letter to Liu Zhang, Liu Bei emphasised that Guan Yu was in trouble in Jing province, and that he should return to lend his support against Cao Cao and his armies. Zhang Lu, remarked Liu Bei, is firmly on the defensive and presents no immediate threat.

Predictably, Liu Zhang was reluctant to support this move. He had, after all, brought Liu Bei into his territory to attack and conquer Zhang Lu's territory, and a year after the operations had begun Liu Bei was still on the same line. Now he was proposing to take not only his own forces, but also the men he had been given by Liu Zhang, to embark on a different campaign quite outside Liu Zhang's area of interest or control. So Liu Zhang basically rejected the proposal, allocated Liu Bei less than half of the troops that he asked for, and similarly reduced his supplies.

Now, however, Liu Bei could claim to hold a *casus belli* against Liu Zhang. In a fiery proclamation, emphasising his wider responsibilities to his old allies and his subordinates, and with telling phrases about the manner in which he and his men had laboured in the service of the ungrateful Liu Zhang, Liu Bei turned his men against Chengdu. The fact that Cao Cao's attacks had been limited and generally unsuccessful on both fronts along the Yangzi might seem to have proven Liu Zhang's point, that Liu Bei's presence there was unnecessary. Liu Bei, however, was operating on the principle that because he had been given inadequate support for his expedition to the east, he was therefore entitled to turn west against his patron and employer. Logically, this was meaningless double-think; in practical terms, it was excellent propaganda, giving Liu Bei and his supporters all the justification they needed for the rebellion against Liu Zhang.

Once the decision was made, Liu Zhang's power was ended, though the result was due at least in part to his own lack of ruthlessness. He may not have been a decisive man, but he was also not a cruel one, and he rejected plans for isolating Liu Bei with a scorched earth policy along the approaches to Chengdu. Though a number of his generals deserted or were betrayed to Liu Bei, there were many people who remained loyal. The city of Luo, capital of Guanghan commandery but close to Chengdu, maintained its defence for a year under the command of Liu Zhang's son Liu Xun, while Yan Yan in Jiangzhou, who controlled the essential communications between Liu Bei and his base in Jing province,

¹⁷ See Chapter 5, and *SGZ* 32/Shu 2, 881.

JING PROVINCE

held firm until he was overwhelmed by an attack from the forces of Zhuge Liang, Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun, advancing west along the Yangzi.¹⁸ Liu Zhang, however, failed to take the chances which these isolated acts of loyalty might have offered him, and he was betrayed by too many deserters and false advisers.

By the summer of 214, Liu Zhang was trapped in Chengdu, faced with a combined attack by Liu Bei, the reinforcements from the east, and also the army of Ma Chao, soldier of fortune from the north whom Liu Bei had enticed to join him.¹⁹ After a few weeks siege, rather than subject his people to further miseries of storm and sack, Liu Zhang came out from Chengdu and surrendered to Liu Bei. He was allowed to retain the title of a general and a great part of his treasure, but he was sent downstream, out of Yi province, to Gong'an on the middle Yangzi. In the meanwhile, Liu Bei held a splendid feast at Chengdu, showered honours on his old and new supporters, and handed the official treasury over for pillage to his victorious soldiers.

The second settlement of Jing province (215):

It is difficult to believe that Sun Quan gained any sense of vicarious achievement or satisfaction from Liu Bei's takeover of Yi province. It was, after all, a territory for which he had had held ambitions of his own, and once it was in Liu Bei's hands it was permanently barred to Sun Quan. Liu Bei, moreover, who had formerly been the junior partner in their alliance, now controlled the better part of two provinces, and he and his men were clearly energetic military operators. Though Sun Quan was decidedly more secure in his own territory than Liu Zhang had ever been in his, the demonstration of Liu Bei's adaptability was not designed to make any colleague feel secure. And Liu Bei, thanks to the arrangements made after the death of Zhou Yu, held an excellent position in Jing province. In the traditional pattern often followed by diplomats of nineteenth century Europe, Sun Quan sought some "compensation" from his successful ally.

There were obvious signs of difficulty as early as 211, when Liu Bei first went to Jing province. The Lady Sun, sister to Sun Quan and chief wife to Liu Bei, returned at that time to her brother's court, and she attempted to take Liu Bei's son and heir, Liu Shan, with her. She was escorted by a flotilla of ships from Sun Quan, but Liu Bei's commanders Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei intercepted the convoy. We know nothing of the details of the negotiations, which must have been delicate and tense, but the result was that the boy Liu Shan remained behind while the Lady Sun continued her journey. The marriage, and the alliance at that level, were effectively ended.²⁰

Over the next years Sun Quan was pre-occupied with Yang province and his defences against Cao Cao on the lower Yangzi, while the greater part of Liu Bei's troops continued to be stationed in Jing province. By the latter part of 214, however, the situation between

¹⁸ We may note that the dispatch of this force from Jing province must have left Guan Yu, Liu Bei's commander there, with limited troops to face any attack from Cao Cao - further evidence that Liu Bei was actually more concerned to seize Yi province from Liu Zhang than to support his ally Sun Quan in the east.

¹⁹ The biography of Ma Chao is in *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 944-47. He was the son of Ma Teng, a man of mixed Chinese and Qiang parentage, who had been a leader of rebels in Liang province in the 180s. Ma Chao succeeded to his father's position, but was driven from the north after the battle of Huayin in 211: de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 161-165. Ma Chao later became one of Liu Bei's chief commanders in Hanzhong.

²⁰ *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 949 PC note 2 quoting *Zhao Yun biezhuàn*.

CHAPTER SIX

the Yangzi and the Huai was temporarily stable: Sun Quan had seized Huan city and the south of Lujiang commandery, and though Cao Cao made a brief military demonstration in the region of the Huai, he soon abandoned plans for a further attack and returned to Xu city. At the same time, to effect his conquest and settlement of Yi province, Liu Bei had called the greater part of his army to the west, and Guan Yu held command of diminished forces in Jing province.

Early in 215, therefore, Sun Quan sent a formal note to Liu Bei, in the hands of his minister Zhuge Jin, elder brother of Zhuge Liang,²¹ asking that the commanderies of Jing province should be handed over to him. The request was put in terms of the territory being "returned" to Sun Quan, though it would seem that Liu Bei had taken possession of the southern territories in his own right after the victory at the Red Cliffs, and Nan commandery was the one territory which could be said to have been "loaned" by Sun Quan. Nan commandery, however, was the vital link in the communications between Jing province and Yi province through the Yangzi Gorges, and Jiangling, capital of the commandery, was the headquarters of Guan Yu.

Liu Bei had no intention of giving up any territory, but his reply was prevarication: he was making plans for a campaign in the north to conquer Liang province, but as soon as he had control of that region he would hand over all his holdings in Jing province. Sun Quan was quite unimpressed, and remarked in disgust, "This is borrowing and not returning."²² He issued letters of appointment for officials in his service to take over Changsha, Lingling and Guiyang commanderies, and when Guan Yu, predictably, refused to allow these men entry, Sun Quan sent Lü Meng with twenty thousand men to back his claim.

The strategy of the campaign was well-planned, and executed with a neat sense of timing. Sun Quan's forces operated in two divisions: Lu Su remained at his headquarters, Lukou in Hanchang, to face and fix Guan Yu upstream at Gongan; covered by this, Lü Meng was able to advance unimpeded to the south and deal with the three commanderies one by one. Liu Bei's grand administrators in Changsha and Guiyang surrendered to the overwhelming local force, but by the time Lü Meng reached Lingling, to the west of Guiyang and with some communication to the north, Liu Bei had come with reinforcements to Gongan and Guan Yu was free to intervene.

By this time Sun Quan had advanced to Lukou, and Lu Su moved south and west to intercept Guan Yu's relief force, facing him again at Yiyang in western Changsha. The two armies were halted, and the leaders accused one another of false dealing, while urgent messages were sent south for Lü Meng to return and join the confrontation before Lu Su and he were attacked and destroyed separately.

Lü Meng, however, was able to play one last game of bluff. With the orders for retreat already in his hands, he announced to his officers that he would storm the city of Quanling, capital of Lingling commandery, the very next day, and he had an envoy sent to the Grand Administrator, Hao Pu, describing the situation quite falsely: that Liu Bei was under attack in Hanzhong, far to the west, while Guan Yu was held in the north of Jing province by the advance of Sun Quan; there was thus no hope of relief. Hao Pu

²¹ The biography of Zhuge Jin is in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1231-36.

Born in 174, he was seven years older than Zhuge Liang. The family came from Langye, but when their father died Zhuge Liang was still young. He accompanied his uncle, who was Grand Administrator of Yuzhang during the mid-190s, and he later went to join Liu Biao: Chapter 4. Zhuge Jin had evidently gone his own way before that, and became a member of Sun Quan's personal staff.

²² On the transfer of territory to Liu Bei and Guan Yu in previous years, see Chapter 5 at note 17.

JING PROVINCE

believed him, and came out to surrender. Lü Meng received him with courtesy, and escorted him to the river bank to board the ship which would take him away to the north - but then, as a parting cut, he showed Hao Pu the orders which he had received and which explained the true situation - and as Hao Pu read the document Lü Meng was roaring with laughter at his own success.²³

The capture of Lingling was useful, though it did not prove a permanent gain at this stage. Sun Quan was naturally worried about the consequences of a long campaign in Jing province, and he was primarily concerned to hold what he could of his new gains, not necessarily all of them. On the other hand, much to Sun Quan's advantage, Cao Cao at this time was moving south into the upper valley of the Han. Long expected and now a reality, that threat was enough to persuade Liu Bei that his best policy lay in some swift agreement so that he could turn his chief attention to the north of his newly-acquired territory in Yi province.

So the two erstwhile allies renegotiated their division of Jing province. Lingling was returned to Liu Bei and Guan Yu, but it was agreed that the Xiang River would now form the frontier between the two, and Sun Quan thus gained Guiyang and the major part of Changsha.²⁴

The settlement was surely recognised as incomplete and unstable. The commanders on each side had convinced themselves of the righteousness of their claim, and the Xiang River was a communications route north and south rather than a barrier east and west. For the moment, however, both sides had more to concern them in the north, dealing with their common enemy Cao Cao on one front or the other from the upper Han to the lower Huai.

In the autumn of 215, Cao Cao launched his attack on Hanzhong, and in the winter, after a short and confused campaign, Zhang Lu surrendered. He was granted honours by Cao Cao, his church received official approval, and he ended his days as comfortable pensioner.²⁵

²³ The major account of this campaign is in the biography of Lü Meng, *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1276-77, which includes the account of his embassy to Hao Pu.

Hao Pu later entered Sun Quan's service, and was appointed Commandant of Justice, a ministerial position. In 230, however, he was forced to commit suicide for his credulous support of the traitor Yin Fan. See *SGZ* 62/Wu 17, 1418 and PC note 1 quoting *Wu lu* and *Wu li*; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 321-322, with 334 and 336.

²⁴ *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1119-20, and *SGZ* 32/Shu 2, 883, indicate that the three commanderies of Jiangxia, Changsha and Guiyang were now held by Sun Quan; *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, states that the Xiang River was now the boundary.

Under Later Han, Changsha commandery extended considerably to the west of the Xiang River (*Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* II, 49-50). If all the commandery had been transferred to Sun Quan at this time, it would have made an awkward salient into Liu Bei's territory, and interrupted his communications with Lingling in the south. *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* III, 29-30, shows a Hengyang commandery controlling the western part of earlier Changsha. The commandery of Hengyang was established by the state of Wu only in 257 (*SGZ* 48/Wu 3, 1153), but it seems possible that the division had been made for a short time at this period.

The negotiations surrounding this settlement are dramatised in a play "With a Single Sword, Lord Guan Goes to the Feast" by the celebrated Yuan composer Guan Hanqing, a work of which variant editions survive, and which presents a summary the facts with strong favour to the achievements of Guan Yu and to the detriment of Lu Su and Sun Quan's other counsellors. See Liu Ching-chih [1980], chapter 3, *Peking Opera Texts*, 2409, and *Jingju jumu chutan*, 96, also *Romance* chapter 66.

²⁵ An account of the campaign appears in the biography of Zhang Lu, *SGZ* 8, 264-65. There was short period of resistance by Zhang Lu's younger brother Zhang Wei, and Zhang Lu took temporary refuge in Ba commandery, south of Hanzhong, before his final surrender.

CHAPTER SIX

Some of Cao Cao's advisers now urged him to follow this success by moving into the main part of Yi province. They argued that Liu Bei had not yet established his regime, that the overthrow of Zhang Lu must have unnerved his supporters, and he would thus be vulnerable to a swift attack. In the region of Ba, moreover, south of Hanzhong, there were non-Chinese people interested in their own independence and prepared to support Cao Cao if they could obtain it with his support, and Zhang Lu had held considerable influence there.²⁶

To move south from Hanzhong, however, Cao Cao would have been advancing into isolated territory, across the grain of the mountain ridges, and the consequences of defeat, or even a lesser set-back, would have been far more serious for his army and even for his state than the misfortune at the Red Cliffs seven years earlier. So his moves in that direction were only tentative. A probing advance into Ba commandery by his commander Zhang Ge was defeated and driven back by Liu Bei's general Zhang Fei at Dangqu, near present-day Quxian,²⁷ and Cao Cao thereafter sought only to confirm the frontier in the upper valley of the Han. Leaving his senior general Xiahou Yuan in command, he returned to the east. Liu Bei, for his part, remained at Chengdu to establish his government.

While Cao Cao and Liu Bei were thus occupied in the west, Sun Quan had sought to follow his moderate success in Jing province with a renewed attack north of the Yangzi against the Huai. In the summer of 215, soon after the second settlement with Liu Bei, he took personal command of a major assault on Hefei city.

The expedition, however, resulted only in a humiliating disaster. Zhang Liao and his colleagues, commanders of Cao Cao's local forces in Hefei, were outnumbered several times by the army from the south, but they put forth a sortie against Sun Quan's men before the siege had been properly joined, and they caused such disruption that the attackers were compelled to retreat within a matter of days.

The major source on the campaign is the biography of Zhang Liao in *Sanguo zhi*, which emphasises his personal prowess, and his total rout of the enemy: neither Sun Quan nor any of his followers dared to stand against him.²⁸ On the other side, however, even the records of the Wu section of *Sanguo zhi* support the tale of misfortune. The biography of Lü Meng, who accompanied the expedition, says that he fought gallantly, with the aid of Ling Tong, as rearguard to protect the army during its retreat. And the biography of Sun Quan tells how he was cut off by the enemy at a river crossing close to Hefei city, and was almost captured by Zhang Liao. The commentary quotes *Xiandi chunqiu*:

Zhang Liao asked one of the men from Wu who had surrendered, "There was a commander there with a purple beard, long body and short legs, good with a horse and expert with a bow; who was that?"

The prisoner replied, "That was Sun of Kuaiji."

Seidel, "Image of the Perfect Ruler," 227 and note 35, notes that Zhang Lu appears to have acknowledged Cao Cao as the rightful master of the empire, and claimed the authority of the Taoist religion to do so.

²⁶ SGZ 1, 45-46.

²⁷ SGZ 32/Shu 2, 883, and SGZ 36/Shu 6, 943.

²⁸ SGZ 17, 518-19. There is an account of the campaign in ZZTJ 67, 2141-42; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 493-495.

JING PROVINCE

Zhang Liao and [his fellow general] Yu Jin met later, and they agreed that if they had only known who the man was they would have pressed the attack harder and caught him. All the army was unhappy to have missed the opportunity.²⁹

And *Jiangbiao zhuan* tells how:

Sun Quan rode a swift horse to the bridge of the crossing, but the southern end had already been broken down, and there was a gap ten feet across.

Gu Li got behind the horse, and he had Sun Quan grasp hold of the saddle and loosen the reins, and then Gu Li used a whip to encourage the animal forward, and so it managed to jump across and Sun Quan was able to escape.³⁰

Finally, He Qi with three thousand men came to give cover to Sun Quan and he was escorted back to headquarters on board ship. Sun Quan gave a banquet to his officers, and He Qi spoke on their behalf,

Your honour is a ruler of men, and you should always be most carefully guarded. In the action today, when you almost suffered misfortune, your servants were frightened and afraid as if Heaven and Earth might fall to ruin. We beg that you take this as the warning for a lifetime.

Sun Quan reassured him, "I am grateful and ashamed. I have now engraved caution upon my heart, and it is not just a note on my girdle."³¹

Two particular items may be noted in accounts of this campaign. Firstly, the biography of Gan Ning, which tells of his intervention to assist the escape of Sun Quan, mentions in passing that there was sickness in the army, and this was a reason for the withdrawal. The story may be correct, and such a misfortune could have serious effect on the morale and capacity of a large army such as Sun Quan had gathered.³²

Secondly, at the end of the biography of Sun Quan's officer Chen Wu, who died on this campaign, *Jiangbiao zhuan* tells us that Sun Quan attended his funeral in person to show him honour, and arranged for his favourite concubine to be buried in the tomb with him. This was a strange revival of a thoroughly unattractive custom, and the commentator Sun Sheng is predictably scathing:

²⁹ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1120 PC note 2 quoting *Xiandi chunqiu*.

³⁰ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1120 PC note 2 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*. This text goes on to say that Gu Li had originally been a junior servant in attendance on Sun Quan, but because of his honesty and courtesy he had been made Inspector of Companions, an officer of the bodyguard; on the Companions, a system which had evidently now been formalised, see Chapter 2 at note 30. In reward for his services on this occasion, Sun Quan enfeoffed Gu Li as marquis of a chief village.

Jiangbiao zhuan, quoted in SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1133 PC note 2, tells of another, later, time when Sun Quan was sailing on the Yangzi near Wuchang in his great ship the "Chang'an." A storm blew up, and although Sun Quan believed the ship could sail safely before the wind, Gu Li drew his sword and compelled the helmsman to steer for shelter at Fankou. Sun Quan, presumably somewhat put out by the fact that Gu Li had over-ridden his orders, twitted him, "A-li, were you so frightened of the water?" Gu Li, however, knelt down and said, "The great king is master of ten thousand chariots. You treat lightly the unfathomable deep, and you make sport of the furious waves. But your ship was built too high, and if you should meet with some unexpected misfortune, what would become of our nation? That is why I dared threaten death [to the helmsman]." Sun Quan now admired him all the more, and from this time on, as a sign of respect, he never called Gu Li by his personal name, but would always address him by his surname.

³¹ SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1380 and PC note 1 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*. The reference to the girdle is evidently taken from *Lunyu* 15.5; Legge, *CC* I, 296, which tells how the disciple Zizhang noted down Confucius' teachings on the end of his sash.

³² SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1295. Cf. also note 83 to Chapter 4.

CHAPTER SIX

When Sun Quan had the living follow the dead like this, it is surely only appropriate that the prosperity of his dynasty should have been short-lived.³³

In general terms, the debacle at Hefei did nothing for the morale and position of Sun Quan's forces on this northern front, nor for his own reputation as a military commander. Though the propaganda of Zhang Liao's biography claims that at one stage Sun Quan was too frightened to come down and fight, other records describe him as a competent, even courageous, warrior, with appropriate skills of horsemanship and archery. Unlike his elder brother, however, Sun Quan could claim no significant success as a general on active service. He was capable of commanding an army, and he had maintained a competent defence against Cao Cao's attacks in earlier years, but he had never been involved in a notable offensive. At the time of the Red Cliffs, Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu commanded the troops directly engaged against Cao Cao, and Sun Quan was in charge of the army in reserve. For the attack on Huan city in 214, Lü Meng appears to have taken the leading role; and in the recent campaign against Guan Yu and Liu Bei in Jing province, the mobile force was commanded by Lü Meng, with Lu Su in support, and Sun Quan again as the reserve.

Sun Quan was brave, and on occasion even foolhardy. We are told that he took delight in hunting tigers, and on at least one occasion an animal got close enough to tear the saddle of his horse. Later, he was persuaded to have a special carriage made, with some protection and loopholes to shoot from inside, but it was still a dangerous sport and it is said that Sun Quan took delight in being attacked by several wild beasts at a time.³⁴

His personal character and authority, therefore, were not in question, but it was a source of some weakness for a warlord state that its commander-in-chief had no great military reputation. Despite past set-backs, Liu Bei was recognised as a fine military commander, and no-one could sensibly criticise Cao Cao on that score. Sun Quan, however, owed most of his success to his subordinates, and he continued to do so. He did not command a serious attacking force again, but he demonstrated the administrative and political skills appropriate to the ruler of a state, and even if he was not a great tactician, he had a good grasp of strategy and excellent subordinates to carry out his plans in the presence of the enemy.

In 216, after the success over Zhang Lu in Hanzhong, Cao Cao had returned to his city of Ye, and in the summer he was raised in fief to become King of Wei under the empire of Han.³⁵ In itself, this was a clear sign of the future, for in the four hundred years since the

³³ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1289 and PC note 1 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan* and the comments of Sun Sheng.

Earlier examples of burial alive, alleged to be a custom of the "semi-barbarous" state of Qin, are referred to in the celebrated "Yellow Birds" ode of *Shi jing* 1.9.6; Legge CC IV, 198-200, in *Mengzi* I.1.4.6; Legge CC II, 133-134, and in *Zuo zhuan*, Wen 6; Legge, CC V, 244. *Zuo zhuan* Xuan 15; Legge, CC V, 328, also mentions the projected burial of a widow by a gentleman of the state of Jin, though this was not carried out.

SJ 6, 265; Chavannes, *MH* II, 195, tells how the women of the harem of the First Emperor of Qin, as well as the workmen who had constructed his tomb, were killed at the time of his burial, and evidence of human sacrifice has indeed been found among the modern excavations at that site. During Former Han, however, the burial of human victims was banned: *HS* 53, 2421; Wang, *Han Civilization*, 208.

In more modern times, one particularly unattractive feature of the Ming and Qing periods was the self-immolation, often encouraged by social pressure and family interest, of "virtuous widows." See T'ien, *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity*.

³⁴ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1120, and SGZ 52/Wu 7, 1220, the biography of Sun Quan's cautious adviser Zhang Zhao.

³⁵ SGZ 1, 47. The same text notes that in the spring of that year Cao Cao had personally engaged in the ceremony of ploughing the sacred field, hitherto an imperial prerogative: Bodde, *Festivals*, 223-228 and *ff.*

JING PROVINCE

time of the founding Emperor Gao of Han, it had been an agreed convention that no person outside the imperial house of Liu should be granted royal honours.³⁶ Cao Cao had made himself Duke of Wei in 213, which was already an exceptional position,³⁷ but this new enfeoffment was still more significant.

In the winter of 216-217, little more than a year after Sun Quan's failure before Hefei, Cao Cao came south from Ye to the Huai and the Yangzi. By the eleventh month he was at Qiao, and in the spring, in the first month of 217, he brought his army forward to Juchao in Lujiang, close to the Yangzi by Huan city.

As at the time of the earlier attack by Cao Cao in 212-213, Sun Quan placed his army entirely on the defensive, notably in the Ruxu fortress. Chastened, perhaps, by the experiences of 215, he appears to have taken limited direct interest in the operations, and gave tactical command to Lü Meng, in charge of the land forces, and Jiang Qin with the fleet. Cao Cao attacked Ruxu, but had no success in the immediate fighting, and although Sun Quan's fleet was damaged by a storm, Cao Cao could not take advantage of it.³⁸

Not long afterwards, in the second month of spring, Cao Cao left the southeast. Unlike the previous occasion of 213, however, he did not withdraw all his troops; instead he left behind his senior generals Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren, the veteran Zhang Liao, and twenty-six "armies," evidently a considerable force, still at the advanced base of Juchao.³⁹

This was an interesting arrangement, and faced Sun Quan with an awkward situation. Given the strength of his fortifications at Ruxu, and his unchallenged command of the Yangzi in this region, he was not concerned with the threat of actual invasion. On the other hand, it would be difficult to dislodge such a large force of the enemy, established firmly on the defensive, and it could certainly not be done without great cost to his own men. This was no longer a matter of cutting out such an isolated city as Huan, or even an attack on Hefei. And yet, as long as Xiahou Dun kept his army in being so close to the Yangzi, Sun Quan's own movements were seriously restricted, and any operations to the east, whether in the Poyang region or in Jing province, would be under constant threat from raid or interception.

³⁶ e.g. *SJ* 9, 401; Chavannes, *MH* II, 414, and *HS* 3, 100; Dubs, *HFHD* I, 201.

There was one exception to this rule, made by the short-lived Gengshi Emperor, who enfeoffed chieftains of the Red Eyebrows and others of his supporters in AD 24: see Bielenstein, *RHD* II, 52-54. This was, however, an unusual occasion, and the later fate of the Gengshi Emperor at the hands of his over-mighty subjects did not make those enfeoffments a helpful model or precedent.

³⁷ The position of duke under the Later Han dynasty had generally been reserved for the titular descendants of the ancient royal houses of Zhou and Shang/Yin: Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 108.

At the time of his enfeoffment as Duke of Wei, Cao Cao was also granted the Nine Distinctions: *HHS* 9, 387. The last occasion that the Nine Distinctions had been awarded was in 5 AD, at the end of Former Han, when they were granted to Wang Mang, who took the imperial throne for himself for years later. For further discussion, see note 15 to Chapter 7.

Three of Cao Cao's daughters were also taken into the Emperor's harem as Honoured Ladies, the second rank after that of Empress, and 215, after the Empress Fu and her family had been destroyed on a charge of treason, one of Cao Cao's daughters became Empress: *HHS* 9, 388, and *HHS* 10B, 452-55.

³⁸ See the biography of Dong Xi, in *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1291, which tells how he refused to leave his post of command, however, and went down with his foundering flagship: also Chapter 5.

³⁹ *SGZ* 9, 268, the biography of Xiahou Dun.

The twenty-six military units are described as *jun* "armies," though it is unlikely that they were so large as this rendering would imply. They were probably separate but associated camps, perhaps of regimental size, five hundred to a thousand men each.

CHAPTER SIX

In these circumstances, Sun Quan sent Xu Xiang, who held the rank of Chief Commandant but who was really a personal aide, to negotiate terms.⁴⁰ It did not prove particularly difficult. In exchange for withdrawal of the northern armies, Sun Quan made formal "surrender" to Cao Cao, and they renewed the alliance of peace and marriage which had been broken at the time of the Red Cliffs.

The terms of the surrender appear very easy, and there is no record of any request for tribute or hostages. Xiahou Dun's forces were rather a card to play for the short term than the advance guard of a major initiative against the south, and Cao Cao would be reluctant to tie his men up in an exposed salient while there were so many other problems elsewhere. Nevertheless, the manoeuvre had shown its effectiveness against Sun Quan, and his surrender was an admission of weakness, involving some loss of face. Moreover, by acknowledging Cao Cao's authority at this time, Sun Quan acquiesced in his claim to the title of king, with all that implied for the Han dynasty. It would be difficult for him to make propaganda in future as a loyal supporter of the imperial house against the usurper. The offensive along the Yangzi had been as much a political affair as a military one, and both sides could be reasonably satisfied with their bargain.

It was also in this year 217 that Lu Su died. Sun Quan paid him all respects, and personally accompanied the cortège to his tomb. In his stead, as commander of the forces in Jing province, he appointed Lü Meng, who took over the headquarters at Lukou, with title as Grand Administrator of Hanchang, and with personal supplies allocated from the counties of Xiajun, Liuyang, Hanchang and Zhouling, the same grant as that to Lu Su. The army under his direct command numbered ten thousand men.

We have noted Lü Meng on several occasions, from first appearance among the junior leaders when Sun Quan succeeded to power in 200, to his role as commander of a detachment against Cao Ren in Nan commandery in 208, to his more recent experience on active campaigns in Jing province and north of the Yangzi. Given the distance of Jing province from Sun Quan's headquarters, and the uncertainty of the settlement there with Liu Bei and Guan Yu, Lü Meng's new appointment made him the most important military commander under Sun Quan.

Lü Meng was originally a man of Runan commandery, but he came to the south of the Yangzi in his early teens and joined his brother-in-law Deng Dang, who was an officer under Sun Ce's command. It would appear that Lü Meng's father had died and he and his mother, whatever their status may have been in the north, were poor refugees. Later, however, Lü Meng made something of a name for himself, he became an attendant to Sun Ce, and when Deng Dang died he was given command of his troop. It was about that time Sun Quan came to power, and Lü Meng was able to impress him and gain advancement by his uniformed and well-drilled men.⁴¹

Lü Meng appears always to have been energetic and aggressive, and his early reputation, like that of his friend and colleague Gan Ning, was rather that of a bullying fighter than a gentleman general. Later, we are told, as he began to be given more important commands, Sun Quan and others urged him to acquire some veneer of culture. One account, in *Jiangbiao zhuan*, describes a conversation with Sun Quan, who urged Lü Meng and Jiang Qin to study in order to improve themselves. Lü Meng replied that he was too busy with military affairs to have the leisure to read.

⁴⁰ Xu Xiang does not have a specific biography in *Sanguo zhi*, but he is mentioned several times in that of his colleague Hu Zong: *SGZ* 62/Wu 17, 1413-18.

⁴¹ See Chapter 4.

JING PROVINCE

Sun Quan said, "Why should I want you to plough through the classics like some academic. Just browse about, and take note of things that have happened in the past.

"You say you're too busy, but surely I have more responsibilities than you have. When I was young, I read the *Classic of History* and the *Classic of Poetry*, the *Ritual*, the *Zuo Chronicle* and the *Tales of the States*. The only one I have never read is the *Classic of Changes*...

"You should look at the *Art of War* by Master Sun, the *Six Stratagems*, the *Zuo Chronicle*, the *Tales of the States*, and the three histories."⁴²

With this reading list, and with other encouragement, Lü Meng did embark on a course of scholarship, and he impressed his superiors, such as Lu Su, not only with his sense of military planning but also with his skilful turn of a classical phrase.⁴³

Lü Meng, however, was not Sun Quan's first choice to succeed Lu Su on the western front. The scholar Yan Jun, an expert on the classics, had held a series of posts at headquarters, and Sun Quan intended to make him the new commander. Yan Jun, however, made firm excuses, pleading that he was only a scholar and had no training in war, and when Sun Quan examined the question further, Yan Jun confirmed his demurrals by repeatedly falling off his horse.⁴⁴

Yan Jun was admired by the people of his time for this show of sensible modesty, and he later rose to significant rank in civil offices at the court. One may suspect that he would have been a less active commander than Lü Meng.

According to Lü Meng's biography, from the time he was appointed in the west he made a fine show of respect and friendship for Guan Yu, and gave every sign that he intended to continue the policy of Lu Su in that region. We are also told, however, that he discussed future strategy with Sun Quan, and urged him to a forward policy in Jing province:

Guan Yu and all those people are boastful of their strength. They are unstable, and we cannot trust them. The reason Guan Yu has not yet turned eastwards against us is the influence of your majesty's spiritual understanding, and because I and some others are there to face him. However, if you do not act while we are strong, and then one day we are gone and you wish to muster forces again, how will you manage it?

Sun Quan was most impressed with this argument, but he raised with him the alternative policy, of expansion against Xu province. Lü Meng replied,

Now Cao Cao is a long way away, north of the Yellow River. He has destroyed the Yuan group, and he has collected You and Ji provinces. He does not yet have time to spare to look to the east [and deal with us here].

I have heard that the soldiers guarding Xu province are not enough even to talk about; if you go there you can take them. But that region is all dry land, and good cavalry can gallop there. If your honour takes Xu province now, Cao Cao will surely

⁴² SGZ 54/Wu 9, 1274-75 PC note 1 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*. Of the works recommended by Sun Quan, the *Six Stratagems* was a text ascribed to the Zhou period, and the "three histories" describe *Shi ji*, *Han shu* and *Dongguan Hanji*, this last being the history of Later Han compiled under that dynasty (see Chapter 9).

⁴³ *Jiangbiao zhuan, loc.cit.*, tells how Lu Su had formerly tended to discount Lü Meng's abilities but then happened to pass by his headquarters after Lü Meng had taken his special reading course. He was surprised with the new scholarship and complimented Lü Meng. Lü Meng replied with an appropriate classical proverb, and Lu Su made a point of calling upon Lü Meng's mother as earnest of his new friendship and collegiality: de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 417.

⁴⁴ SGZ 53/Wu 8, 1248 and 1249 PC note 1 quoting *Zhi lin*.

CHAPTER SIX

come to fight for it within ten days, and even if you defend the territory with seventy or eighty thousand men it would still be cause of anxiety.

The best thing to do is to take Guan Yu and seize all the Long River. Those lands are very broad.

Sun Quan felt that these words were absolutely right.⁴⁵

One must suspect that this conversation, at least in its detail, is largely imaginary. Cao Cao had defeated Yuan Shao at Guandu in 200, and destroyed the last of his family in the northern campaign of 207. Since that time he had no rival in the North China plain. In recent years, moreover, Cao Cao had found opportunity to pay a good deal of attention to the Yangzi frontiers, and Sun Quan had not found his defences in Xu province nearly so negligible as this speech of Lü Meng would imply.

Rather than trying to reconcile the anachronisms, or explain the apparent gross and misleading flattery of Lü Meng, it seems better to accept the passage as the invention of a historian, designed to bring out the contrasting strategy between the "northern" policy against Xu province and the valley of the Huai, and the "western" policy against Jing province and Guan Yu's positions there, and also to establish the position of Lü Meng as an advocate of the latter program.

The question of dry land and cavalry was obviously important, and experience had demonstrated the weakness and the scant expectation of success for Sun Quan's forces north of the Yangzi. Far from capturing Hefei, Sun Quan was now faced by an established defence line along the Huai, supported by supplies from agricultural colonies, and Cao Cao's offensive of 216-217 had largely deprived him of the initiative for the foreseeable future.

If Sun Quan was to expand and develop his state as an independent power, he must look to the west and the south. The south, as we have seen, was being colonised with energy and considerable skill, but there were limits to the aid which renegades and non-Chinese could be compelled to give, and dangers in a commitment too far in that direction. In the west, to say the least of it, expansion since the Red Cliffs triumph had been disappointing. Sun Quan still controlled less than half of the territory of Jing province, and he was faced with a powerful ally or rival who might at any time decide to turn against him. For the last several years, the advice of Lu Su had been appropriate, and Sun Quan's chief attention had been given to the struggle against Cao Cao and development of the territory in Yang province. Now, however, by force of elimination, he must consider the possibilities and dangers of the west.

The great betrayal (219):

So the death of Lu Su in 217, and the formal surrender to Cao Cao in the same year, marked a potential change of policy, and this was only confirmed by the appointment of Lü Meng as commander in Jing province. With the information available to them, Liu Bei and Guan Yu would have done well to be cautious.

In fact, for one reason or another, the men of the west do not appear to have troubled to read the signs. It is possible Guan Yu was indeed misled by Lü Meng's dissemblance, but it seems more likely that he had limited respect for his neighbour. In the ten years since the Red Cliffs, Liu Bei's power had expanded greatly, and he had achieved considerable

⁴⁵ SGZ 54/Wu 9, 1278.

JING PROVINCE

military success. Sun Quan, by contrast, had suffered a succession of defeats in his enterprises north of the Yangzi about Hefei, and his power looked much the same as it had before: a local warlord with small capacity beyond his immediate territory.

Admittedly, Sun Quan's forces had achieved some success in the campaign in Jing province in 215, but that had been a matter rather of trickery and lucky timing, and one might argue that the relative positions of the two sides could be seen from the agreement to return Lingling commandery as a condition of truce. Had Sun Quan felt strong enough to face Guan Yu and Liu Bei in the field, he would no doubt have done so, and would not have yielded territory which he had already gained. So Guan Yu and his master had reason to discount the effectiveness of any initiative taken by Lü Meng, and their first priority lay to the north. Once they had established a firm position against Cao Cao, it should not be difficult to expand eastwards against Sun Quan.

Liu Bei's chief current concern was in the north of Yi province, on the front against Hanzhong commandery. During 218 there was some skirmishing in the territory of Ba commandery between forces of Cao Cao and Liu Bei's generals Zhang Fei and Ma Chao, but by the end of that year Cao Cao's men had been driven back. Liu Bei then took command of an expedition against the upper Han valley, and Cao Cao brought an army to Chang'an, planning to cross the Qin Ling range and support Xiahou Yuan in an attack on the south.

Before Cao Cao could arrive, however, in the early spring of 219, his troops in Hanzhong were decisively defeated at Dingjun Mountain, near the Yangping Pass and Mianyang city, present-day Mian county in Shenxi. Xiahou Yuan was killed in the rout, and the remnants of the army, now commanded by Zhang Ge, could do no more than hold the passes to the north. In the third month, Cao Cao came to their support, but Liu Bei had control of the river valley. There were some minor skirmishes, but no direct entanglement, and in mid-summer Cao Cao was compelled to take his men back across the mountains to Chang'an. Liu Bei now held Hanzhong.

It was a remarkable success, and the battle at Dingjun Mountain was one of the decisive victories of the time. By that one stroke Liu Bei eliminated the immediate threat to his territory and gained an easily defensible mountain frontier against his major enemy. With his base in Yi province secure, he could plan with confidence for the future.

In the autumn of that year, to confirm his control and to make propaganda as rival to the usurper in the north, Liu Bei proclaimed himself King of Hanzhong. In doing so, he was able to create a link with his ancestor the founding Emperor Gao of Former Han, who had become King of Han in 206 BC. The ceremony was held at Mianyang city, near the scene of his victory at Dingjun Mountain, and messages were formally addressed to the Emperor of Han, assuring him of Liu Bei's intention to act on behalf of the dynasty, and returning the seals and ribbons as general and marquis which had been granted him in the past. (One may wonder how the documents were actually delivered.) The new king, however, continued to maintain his capital at Chengdu, albeit with a military post-road to the northern frontier region.⁴⁶

At the time of his accession Liu Bei gave new titles and honours to all his leading supporters, and in particular he named Guan Yu as General of the Van, first but essentially equal in rank with Zhang Fei, with Huang Zhong who had joined Liu Bei in

⁴⁶ SGZ 32/Shu 2, 884 to 887 and 887 PC note 2 quoting *Dian lue*.

CHAPTER SIX

Jing province,⁴⁷ and with the new-comer Ma Chao. It is said that Guan Yu was angry not to have been given clear distinction above his colleagues, as Liu Bei's oldest associate and leading commander, and he was only with some difficulty persuaded to accept the new title and insignia without making a public show of his indignation.⁴⁸ Besides this matter of hierarchy, moreover, it was probably a matter of some embarrassment that the striking success in Hanzhong had been gained without him. Guan Yu may well have felt some loss of prestige, and resolved to add something more to this wonderful year.

And indeed, there were signs that this twenty-fourth year of Jian'an might well prove to be an *annus mirabilis* for the enemies of Cao Cao, and notably for Liu Bei. Striking eastwards down river from his new position on the upper Han, and north from Zigui county on the Yangzi just inside Jing province, Liu Bei ordered a two-pronged attack on Cao Cao's positions in the western part of present-day Hubei, the new commanderies of Fangling and Shangyong. Both territories surrendered, and Liu Bei had thus established a position east of the main ranges which surrounded Yi province, with a threat to the lower valley of the Han about Xiangyang and to the central commandery of Nanyang.⁴⁹ In the eighth month, in the middle of autumn, Guan Yu came north with his main forces both land and river, to support these moves and launch a direct attack on Cao Cao's defences at Xiangyang.⁵⁰

Xiangyang, with its sister city Fan across the Han River on the northern bank, was a strategic centre of Jing province and had been the capital of Liu Biao's government before 208.⁵¹ It was on the southern borders of Nanyang commandery, about 120 kilometres from the old capital, Wan, and had good communications in that direction and then into the North China plain and also the region of Luoyang. In Cao Cao's hands, this territory was a barrier to any attack from the south, but if Guan Yu could capture it he would have access, either for raids or for full invasion, into the heart-land of the empire.

Cao Cao's defences in this area were commanded by his cousin Cao Ren, whose headquarters were at Fan city, on the northern bank of the Han River. When Guan Yu approached, a second army, commanded by Yu Jin, was sent to aid Cao Ren. They remained camped, in seven divisions, on open ground north of the city.

⁴⁷ The biography of Huang Zhong is in *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 948. He had held office in Changsha under Liu Biao, and joined Liu Bei when he took over the southern commanderies after the Red Cliffs campaign. He then accompanied Liu Bei into Yi province and took part in the attack on Chengdu.

⁴⁸ *SGZ* 41/Shu 11, 1015-16, the biography of Fei Shi.

⁴⁹ *SGZ* 40/Shu 10, 991, the biography of Liu Bei's adopted son, Liu Feng.

Cao Cao's Grand Administrator of Fangling, Kuai Qi, who was probably a relative of Kuai Yue, Cao Cao's supporter in Jing province in the time of Liu Zong (see Chapter 4), was killed. Shen Dan, Cao Cao's Grand Administrator of Shangyong, surrendered and sent his wife and family as hostages to Chengdu. He was given the title of a general, enfeoffed as a marquis, and appointed Grand Administrator of Shangyong as before, while his brother, Shen Yi, was also given a general's command and appointed Grand Administrator of the new commandery of Xicheng, just west of Shangyong. They probably had some local influence, and their attachment was worth maintaining.

Meng Da, who had commanded the expedition north from Zigui, was a former officer of the deposed Governor Liu Zhang, and was evidently not entirely trusted by Liu Bei: both sets of victorious troops were kept on station in the Shangyong region, with Liu Feng in overall command.

⁵⁰ For the description of the early fighting in the campaign about Xiangyang, see the biography of Guan Yu in *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 941, that of Cao Ren in *SGZ* 9, 275-76, that of Yu Jin in *SGZ* 17, 524, and that of Pang De, a hero of the defeated forces, in *SGZ* 18, 546. The story is also told in *ZZTJ* 67, 2160-62; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 532-534.

⁵¹ See Chapter 4. Sun Jian, it will be recalled, had been killed in this region fighting for Yuan Shu against Liu Biao in 192.

JING PROVINCE

At this point, however, there came seasonal but exceptionally heavy rain, not only locally but also in the mountain country of the catchment area for the Han River to the west. There was a flash flood and Yu Jin's forces were taken completely by surprise. Guan Yu commanded a considerable fleet, brought up along the course of the Han, and as the river broke its banks his sailors were in their element against the soldiers from the north. Yu Jin's men were driven onto isolated hillocks of higher ground, and Guan Yu's boats concentrated against these places of refuge one by one. Great numbers of Yu Jin's men were drowned, and almost all the rest of his army, including Yu Jin, was taken prisoner.

This was a major local disaster, and there was now a very high possibility that Guan Yu could establish a position in the north. Cao Ren's army was trapped inside Fan city, and the walls served as a defence against the floods as much as against the enemy: on some faces, Guan Yu's ships could sail right up to them. Elsewhere Guan Yu set up several lines of siege-works, and the city was cut off completely from outside. South across the Han river, the county city of Xiangyang was also isolated and under siege, and some secondary positions surrendered, but the major attention was paid to Cao Ren, and the fall of Fan city could have been a misfortune for Cao Cao even greater than the loss of Hanzhong commandery.

Cao Ren may have contemplated retreat before the siege was fully joined, but the existence of his army, even in this critical position, was enough to prevent Guan Yu from exploiting success and causing disruption further to the north. Cao Ren still had several thousand men with him, including cavalry. The horses were of little use in the floods, but they could be a source of food, and there was surely no shortage of water. In token of his determination to hold out, he held a ceremony of oath-taking and drowned a white horse to make covenant with his men.

After the initial attack and the disaster to Yu Jin, the siege and defence were maintained for several weeks, and Cao Cao gathered forces for the relief. By the tenth month, the beginning of winter, he had set up a base at Luoyang, and a force under Xu Huang had been sent forward - not strong enough to break the siege, but able to harass Guan Yu's fixed positions and offer some encouragement to Cao Ren and his men.⁵² On the other hand, Cao Cao was not yet ready to commit himself to the fray, and he was indeed advised by his attendant Huan Jie not to do so. The very fact that he held his power in reserve would encourage Cao Ren and his men to hold out, and would demonstrate his military strength.⁵³

⁵² SGZ 17, 529-530, the biography of Xu Huang, also ZZTJ 67, 2166-68; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 543-545.

⁵³ SGZ 22, 632, the biography of Huan Jie.

Huan Jie had an interesting and varied career. He came originally from Changsha, and had been recommended for office by Sun Jian when he was Grand Administrator there in the late 180s. He held office in the imperial secretariat at Luoyang, but later joined Sun Jian on his campaigns during the civil war, and when Sun Jian was killed Huan Jie was sent on embassy to request his body from Liu Biao.

He evidently returned to Changsha, and it is said that he encouraged the rebel Grand Administrator Zhang Xian to stir up trouble against Liu Biao in order to prevent him intervening in support of Yuan Shao against Cao Cao at the time of the campaign about Guandu in 200.

Some time after the defeat of the Changsha rebellion, Huan Jie was again taken into Liu Biao's service: an appointment which speaks well of Liu Biao's tolerance, or reveals his ignorance of Huan Jie's political activities. He left office again, however, pleading that he was sick, because he wished to avoid entanglement with the family of Liu Biao's wife of the Cai clan.

CHAPTER SIX

In many respects, this show of confidence was as important to Cao Cao's position as the eventual defeat of Guan Yu. His rise to power had not been without political opposition, and there had been a number of small and unsuccessful plots against him by civilians at Xu and at Ye.⁵⁴ In this transitional period, Cao Cao could never be entirely confident of any but his closest associates, and he could not afford to stretch people's divided loyalties or offer them too great temptation to turn against him. No matter what ranks and titles might obtain, his government was still that of a warlord, and it was important to maintain his military prestige.

Through late autumn, therefore, and into the winter, Guan Yu and Cao Ren were bound in the siege at Fan city, and both sides had reason for their commitment to that position.

At the beginning of Guan Yu's campaign against the north, there was limited opportunity for Sun Quan or Lü Meng to take any action. Guan Yu left garrisons along the Yangzi at Gong'an and Jiangling, and if Lü Meng had made any early move Guan Yu could have returned with his army and his fleet down the line of the Han River and offered an effective counter-attack against Jiangxia. The very success of Guan Yu's operations against Yu Jin, however, committed him more closely to the hope of ultimate success against Cao Ren, and he began to draw upon his reserve troops, thus weakening his positions along the Yangzi.

It is possible that Sun Quan made some move against Hefei about the time Guan Yu first struck against the north,⁵⁵ but if he did it was rather a demonstration or a feint than a real attempt at conquest, and the major intention was probably to reassure Guan Yu. More specifically, it was now revealed that Lü Meng was ill, and he was recalled to Sun Quan's headquarters while Lu Xun was sent to take his place as acting commander at Lukou. Lu Xun wrote effusive and encouraging letters to Guan Yu, and certainly there appeared small threat from an army which was in the process of reorganising its command structure. Guan Yu became still less concerned about his eastern front.⁵⁶

When Cao Cao captured Jing province, he took Huan Jie into his personal service, and Huan Jie later became a supporter of Cao Pi, the Heir-Apparent and successor. After the accession of Cao Pi and the proclamation of the new dynasty, Huan Jie became Prefect of the Masters of Writing of Wei, but died soon afterwards.

⁵⁴ In 214, for example, the Empress Fu of Emperor Xian of Han had been dismissed and died for attempting to incite action against Cao Cao: *HHS* 10B, 454.

In 217-218 there was a plot to seize Xu city by means of a military coup organised by a number of ministers and other officials. They planned to kill Cao Cao and call on Guan Yu to support the Han government. There was fighting but the rebellion was quickly defeated: *SGZ* 1, 50.

In the winter of 218 there was a mutiny among the garrison of Wan city in Nanyang, which was not put down until the spring three months later: *SGZ* 1, 51.

In the autumn of 219 there was a plot to seize Ye city, and several thousand people, including officials and leading gentry, were punished for their involvement: *SGZ* 1, 52 and PC note 1 *bis* quoting [*Wei-Jin*] *shi yu*; *SGZ* 8, 263; *SGZ* 21, 599; *et alii*.

None of these incidents presented immediate danger to Cao Cao's authority, but they demonstrate some tensions in the state, and serve as warning what might happen if his power should appear to be wavering.

⁵⁵ The only reference to an attack on Hefei at this time appears not in the biography of Sun Quan, but in that of the Wei officer Wen Hui, in *SGZ* 15, 479, where it appears rather as the opportunity for an anecdote describing Wen Hui's perspicacious analysis of the dangers faced by Cao Ren at Xiangyang. See also *ZZTJ* 67, 2161; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 532.

⁵⁶ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1278, the biography of Lü Meng, and *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1344-45, the biography of Lu Xun.

JING PROVINCE

Lü Meng's sickness was real, but that did not prevent him from planning operations with Sun Quan. At one stage, Sun Quan intended him to hold a joint command with Sun Jiao, but he was persuaded to grant Lü Meng full authority over the direct attack, and Sun Jiao was given command of a reserve army.⁵⁷ The main striking force was brought up to strength by gradual reinforcements, but it was gathered at Xunyang city in Lujiang commandery, well behind the frontier. Guan Yu's intelligence service gave him no warning, and he was, indeed, sufficiently disdainful of Sun Quan's reactions that he seized some supplies for his armies from one of Sun Quan's storage bases on the Xiang River.⁵⁸

At some stage Sun Quan and Cao Cao appear to have been in communication on the matter, though the anecdotes which describe their mutual plotting are contradictory. According to one version, Cao Cao invited Sun Quan to attack Guan Yu, and offered him recognition as ruler of all the lands south of the Yangzi. Another story suggests that Sun Quan took the initiative by writing to Cao Cao, advising him of his plans, but asking him to keep the matter secret so that Guan Yu would be taken by surprise. Cao Cao, believing that his interests were best served by setting Guan Yu and Sun Quan at each others' throats, sent messages to Guan Yu; but then Guan Yu refused to credit them and maintained the siege against Fan city.⁵⁹

It is possible that Cao Cao may have sought to urge Sun Quan against Guan Yu, and he may also have attempted to frighten Guan Yu away by threatening him with that possibility, but it is hard to imagine what real benefit Sun Quan could have hoped to gain by entrusting his secret plans to Cao Cao. As with other great events of the time, one suspects that tales of romance and trickery have gathered around this incident, and such stories are rather imaginative anecdotes than the records of serious diplomacy.

In the intercalary tenth month, about early December of 219, Sun Quan's forces moved against the west. Jiang Qin was in command of a fleet which moved up the Han to guard against any counter-stroke. Sun Jiao brought his men forward to the region about the junction of the two rivers, to act as a reserve and also as a holding force in case Cao Cao's forces in the northern part of Jiangxia commandery sought to intervene against their line

Lu Xun's biography tells how, when Lü Meng was returning from his post in the west, Lu Xun argued with him that he should rather take the opportunity to attack Guan Yu. His ideas fitted so well with the plans of Lü Meng and Sun Quan that he was naturally appointed to take Lü Meng's place.

Lu Xun, however, was not given the same rank as Lü Meng, for he was made only a Lieutenant-General. This further encouraged the belief that Sun Quan was planning no initiatives on that region.

Extracts from Lu Xun's congratulatory letters to Guan Yu are preserved in his biography.

⁵⁷ SGZ 51/Wu 6, 1207-08, the biography of Sun Jiao; and see note 4 to Chapter 5.

⁵⁸ The place is described as Xiangguan, "The Pass on the Xiang," but cannot be further identified. It seems most probable that it was a small fortress by a crossing place of the Xiang River, between the territories of Sun Quan and Liu Bei, probably close to the junction of the Xiang with the Yangzi, south of Guan Yu's base at Gong'an and near present-day Yueyang.

SGZ 54/Wu 9, 1278, suggests this incident was the trigger for Sun Quan to move against Guan Yu, but it is clear that preparations had been made well before. The Xiangguan incident may have served as an item of propaganda to justify the attack.

⁵⁹ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1120, has the simple story that Sun Quan wrote to Cao Cao, advising him of his plans. Cao Cao, hoping to turn Guan Yu and Sun Quan against one another to his own advantage, had the letter sent to Cao Ren in Fan city who in his turn passed it to Guan Yu.

SGZ 14, 440, the biography of Dong Zhao, an old associate of Cao Cao, tells how he advised Cao Cao to betray Sun Quan's confidence. Cao Ren's men in Fan were encouraged, but Guan Yu paid no attention. (Though Cao Ren was quite surrounded, messages were shot by arrows between his troops and those of Xu Huang operating outside Guan Yu's lines).

CHAPTER SIX

of communications. Lü Meng led the main attack, starting from the rearward position at Xunyang, and moving upstream along the Yangzi with most of his troops hidden in barges, while the ships were rowed by men dressed in plain clothes to look like merchants and traders. They took Guan Yu's outposts by surprise and captured them one by one before they could get out word.

Guan Yu's two chief defence posts were at Gongan, where the garrison was commanded by a certain Shi Ren,⁶⁰ and Jiangling, the capital of Nan commandery, held by Mi Fang. Both men, apparently, felt that they had been treated too casually by Guan Yu, and it is said that he had threatened them with punishment for some confusions in the despatch of supplies while he was in the north. Whatever the level of their disaffection, Shi Ren proved vulnerable to the diplomatic wiles of Lü Meng aided by Yu Fan, the man who had formerly persuaded Hua Xin to surrender to Sun Ce and who seems to have specialised in such diplomacy.⁶¹ Then the army came to Jiangling, and Shi Ren added his voice to persuade Mi Fang to change sides.

By this one stroke, Lü Meng had changed the military strategy of the region. Guan Yu abandoned his operations at Fan city and Xiangyang and came directly southwards. He was not followed by Cao Cao's forces, for they preferred to let their two southern enemies fight things out. It was in fact, possible, despite his disadvantage, that Guan Yu might be able to drive Lü Meng away, or at least compel another negotiated settlement. He was faced, however, not only by a military coup, but also by admirable propaganda.

With the capture of Jiangling, Lü Meng had obtained control of Guan Yu's treasury and his family, and the families also of many of his soldiers. Lü Meng and his master Sun Quan placed strong emphasis on their righteous position in Jing province, and they advertised their friendship and protection. Lü Meng enforced rigid prohibitions against looting and made public display of the civil proprieties:

One man of Lü Meng's command, who came from Runan [Lü Meng's own commandery], took a straw rain-hat from a family of the people in order to cover a coat of mail belonging to the government.

Even though the armour was public property, Lü Meng still held that the man had disobeyed his orders, and he could not remit the law simply because he came from his own district. He wept, and beheaded him.

In the army there was fear and trembling, and no-one dared even to pick up things which had been dropped on the road.

Moreover, Lü Meng sent men of his Companions morning and evening to ask after the old people and to enquire what they might lack. He gave medicine to the sick, and clothing and food to those who were hungry and cold.⁶²

As Guan Yu's army approached, he and Lü Meng sent messengers to one another, and Lü Meng showed the utmost generosity. In particular, he had the men from Guan Yu's army taken about freely, to meet with their own and their colleagues' families, so they would report back how well they were treated and how little there was to gain from fighting. Guan Yu's men from Jing province were now rather inclined to desert than to join him in an attack against their own homes and kindred.

⁶⁰ There is some confusion over the name of his man. It appears that his personal name was Ren, but the surname is given in *SGZ* 36/Shu 6, 941, as Fushi, and this is followed by *ZZTJ* 67, 2160. Other texts, however, *SGZ* 45/Shu 15, 1090, *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1120, and *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1278, refer to him as Shi Ren. It seems likely that the character *fu* is a mistaken addition to the text of *SGZ* 36.

⁶¹ See Chapter 3.

⁶² *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1278-79.

JING PROVINCE

In the mean time, Lu Xun had been sent further upstream towards the Yangzi Gorges and the route by which support must come from Yi province. He seized Yidu commandery, whose capital was near present-day Yichang on the Yangzi, and then sent detachments west against Zigui and north against Fangling. Lu Xun also put in a special order for seals of gold, silver and copper to give official appointments to the local Chinese and non-Chinese leaders who came to support him, confirming them in their new allegiance.⁶³

By the eleventh month, a few weeks after the start of the operation, Guan Yu was isolated in the region of Dangyang, between the Yangzi and the Han, with Sun Quan's forces on three sides and Cao Cao's at the north. The greater part of his army deserted him, and in a final petty skirmish he and his son Guan Ping were captured and killed.⁶⁴

It may be doubted whether Sun Quan was pleased with this last development. He had earlier offered Guan Yu the opportunity to surrender, and if he had been returned a prisoner or even escaped as a solitary refugee it would have been obviously embarrassing to Liu Bei. As it was, Guan Yu could be claimed to have received a martyr's death, and Liu Bei was bound to seek revenge.⁶⁵

In all other respects, moreover, Sun Quan continued to make his occupation of Jing province as conciliatory and bloodless as possible. Guan Yu had controlled the region as a warlord and agent from outside, the man with the most powerful army. Though Sun Quan had taken power simply by the fact that he was for the time the stronger, he did attempt to maintain as many as possible from the former local administration in office, and he came in person to take up residence in Jing province, first at Jiangling and then at the military base Gong'an. For the present, he could assume that Yang province was secure, and the gesture did a good deal to demonstrate his local authority and secure the support of the local people. To confirm his new regime, moreover, Sun Quan announced that on account of recent widespread sickness, there was remission of all taxes from the province for that year.

Among the prisoners taken on this campaign, Cao Cao's unfortunate general Yu Jin, captured amongst the floods at Fan city a few months before, and then held in Jiangling by Guan Yu, came now into Sun Quan's hands. He was treated with courtesy, but he was not yet sent back to the north.⁶⁶ The former Governor of Yi province, Liu Zhang, who had been deposed and exiled by Liu Bei, and had also been at Jiangling, was re-appointed to that title, with temporary residence at Zigui. He was evidently intended to act as a

⁶³ SGZ 58/Wu 13, 1345.

⁶⁴ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1121, SGZ 54/Wu 9, 1279, and SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1299-1300, the last being the biography of Pan Zhang, one of the commanders sent in pursuit of Guan Yu, refer to the capture of Guan Yu and the remnants of his party. SGZ 36/Shu 6, 941, tells how Guan Yu was beheaded at Linju.

⁶⁵ SGZ 47 and SGZ 55, cited in note 64 above, give credit for the capture to the major Ma Zhong, serving in the army of Pan Zhang. ZZTJ 67, 2170; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 550, takes the implication that Ma Zhong personally beheaded Guan Yu.

SGZ 36, 942 PC note 3 quoting *Shu ji*, suggests that Sun Quan had hoped to keep Guan Yu alive and use him as an assistant against Cao Cao and Liu Bei, but his attendants pointed out that Guan Yu had always remained loyal to Liu Bei and would never serve anyone else. So Sun Quan had him killed. Pei Songzhi, however, remarks that this is a most unlikely story: it is hard to imagine Sun Quan would ever believe Guan Yu might support him; and in any case the operations against Guan Yu's remnant forces were taking place a considerable distance away, so he was in no position to make detailed decisions about life or death.

⁶⁶ There was one unfortunate incident, when Sun Quan was riding with Yu Jin, and Yu Fan accosted Yu Jin, saying, "You are a surrendered prisoner. How dare you keep your horse level with our lord's?" He was about to hit him with a whip, but Sun Quan intervened to protect Yu Jin.

CHAPTER SIX

focus for opposition to Liu Bei in the west, but he died soon afterwards.⁶⁷ And Mi Fang, the man who had surrendered Jiangling, later held command in Sun Quan's forces.⁶⁸

Within the newly-conquered territory, Sun Quan appears to have met negligible opposition, which may perhaps be typified by the case of Fan Zhou, a local official in Wuling who sought to raise the people in support of Liu Bei. It was thought at first that a considerable army would be required, for Fan Zhou claimed support among the non-Chinese of the hills. Sun Quan, however, asked the advice of a certain Pan Jun, who came from Wuling, and had now changed allegiance and been appointed to Sun Quan's staff. Pan Jun assured him that quite a small force would be sufficient.

"How can you treat Fan Zhou so lightly?" asked Sun Quan.

"Fan Zhou comes from an old family in Nanyang," replied Pan Jun. "He can make good speeches, but he has absolutely no idea about making plans. The reason I know this is because Fan Zhou once arranged a feast for the local people. By midday, there was still no food, and numbers of the people got up and went away. Once you have seen a performance like that, you can guess the rest."

Sun Quan laughed, and he sent Pan Jun there with five thousand men, and they cut off heads and put down the rebellion.⁶⁹

On his own side, Sun Quan suffered two notable losses. Firstly, his officer Jiang Qin, who appears to have something of a specialist as a fleet commander, and who had been put in charge of the naval operations on the Han River, died of illness on his way back from the campaign. Secondly, still more important, Lü Meng also took ill and died soon after the end of the fighting.

Lü Meng was known to have been sick earlier in the year, and we have seen that he used his illness as a means to allay Guan Yu's anxieties. Soon after the fall of Jiangling and the arrival of Sun Quan in the province, however, even before he could receive the fief which should reward his achievements, his condition became acute. He was taken into care with lodgings next to Sun Quan's own quarters at Gong'an, and rewards of gold were offered to any doctor who could cure him.

When acupuncture was applied, Sun Quan was miserable for him. He constantly wished to see Lü Meng's face, but he was afraid to be a nuisance so he would peer through a hole in the wall to see how he looked.

If he saw that Lü Meng could eat a little, Sun Quan would turn and smile to those about him and would even laugh. If Lü Meng refused his food, Sun Quan would sigh, and at night he could not sleep.

Then Lü Meng got better, and an amnesty was given in celebration, and all Sun Quan's ministers sent in their congratulations.

Later, however, he had a relapse, and Sun Quan went to attend him personally, and he ordered Taoist masters to pray under the stars on his behalf.

Lü Meng died, at the age of forty-two, in the inner apartments. Sun Quan was struck with the utmost grief and distress.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *SGZ* 31/Shu 1, 870.

⁶⁸ He took part in operations during 223 under the command of He Qi against the Wei forces in Qichun, the eastern part of Later Han Jiangxia commandery: *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1130, and *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1380, and Chapter 7.

Since Mi Fang had initially held office under Cao Cao, but then left to follow Liu Bei, he achieved the remarkable record of serving each of the three rival states which succeeded to Han.

⁶⁹ *SGZ* 61/Wu 16, 1397-98, the biography of Pan Jun, PC note 1 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*.

JING PROVINCE

We have seen earlier, in the account of the death of Sun Ce, how the story of the magician Gan Ji and the accursed mirror proved more popular than the human account of Sun Ce's death. The death of Lü Meng is likewise ascribed by *Romance* to the majestic vengeance of Guan Yu, reaching even beyond the grave:

[Sun Quan] rewarded his soldiers and spread a great feast at which Lü Meng was in the seat of honour. He made a speech, saying,

"After long waiting, the desire of my heart has come to me very easily through the magnificent efforts of my friend Lü Meng....."

Then he filled the goblet and in person presented it to the guest of the evening.

Lü took the cup, but as he raised it a sudden change came over him. Dashing the cup to the ground, he seized Sun Quan, crying, "O green-eyed boy! O red-bearded rat! Do you know me?After I quelled the Yellow Turbans, I went hither and thither for thirty years. Now I have fallen victim to your base plots and you have overcome me. If living I have been unable to gorge upon the flesh of mine enemy, dead I will pursue the spirit of this bandit Lü. I am the Marquis of Hanshou, Guan Yunzhang."⁷¹

Terror stricken, Sun Quan was the first to fall prostrate, and all his officers followed him.

Thereupon Lü Meng fell over dead, with blood gushing from all his orifices.⁷² Many people, of course, prefer propaganda and fiction to historical fact.

⁷⁰ SGZ 54/Wu 9, 1279-80. Lü Meng's final illness, and that of the admiral Jiang Qin, may have been caused by a general sickness in Jing province, cited at this time by Sun Quan as a reason for tax relief. On the other hand, though plague had affected Sun Quan's attack on Hefei in 215 [see note 32 above], and devastated the capital of Wei in 217, there is no specific reference to disease among the contending armies in 219.

⁷¹ Yunzhang was the style of Guan Yu, who had also held the fief of Hanshou Village.

⁷² *Romance*, chapter 77; translated Brewitt-Taylor, *San kuo* II, 180-181, amending the transcription to pinyin. This incident is also dramatised in a play "The Ghosts of Lord Guan and General Zhang [Fei] Return to Sichuan" by the celebrated Yuan composer Guan Hanqing, a work of which variant editions survive. See Liu Ching-chih [1980], chapter 4, also *Peking Opera Texts*, 4415, and *Jingju jumu chutan*, 101.