PART TWO

Consolidation: The Formation of the Eight Trigrams
INSURGENT PREDECESSORS

TO DATE, no one has assembled the primary sources necessary to write a history of White Lotus sects. The secondary source material presently available yields a meager picture, no more than a spattering of unconnected names and dates. Even so, each sect member had his own access to parts of a collective history, through the chains of pupils and teachers reaching back into the past and through the names of the sects themselves that echoed with each successive usage. The Eight Trigrams of 1813 were not the first followers of the Eternal Mother to proclaim the arrival of Maitreya, nor were they the first to be disappointed in their expectations. Before concentrating on their rebellion, let us survey briefly the violent history to which they were heir.

One of the first White Lotus rebellions about which there is information in some detail is that led by members of the Wang family of Stone-buddha village in northern Chihli. This family was discussed previously as an example of hereditary sect teachers whose role in the coming kalpa had been foretold in religious scriptures. The sect leader and family founder Wang Sen had been teaching what he called the Incense Smelling (Wen-hsiang) sect from the 1590s or earlier until his death in prison in 1619. His pupils had branched into several different sects with members in many places in north China. In 1622 his son Wang Hao-hsien and another believer named Hsu Hung-ju spread the word that the kalpa would arrive on midautumn day (the 15th day of the 8th month) of that year. Government investigations forced them to alter their timing, however, and in the 5th month followers of these men donned red turbans and attacked four cities in western Shantung (Yun-ch’eng, Teng, I, and Tsou). The rebels gathered many supporters but were eventually surrounded and besieged in Tsou district city. There they held out for three months before the siege was finally broken and the rebellion shattered.¹

After the Ch’ing conquest White Lotus teachings continued to be transmitted quietly and, from all available evidence, there were few violent outbreaks in the first century of Ch’ing rule. During the reign of the Ch’ien-lung Emperor (1736–95), for reasons that are not entirely clear, prophecies about the coming millennium and arrival of Maitreya Buddha caught hold once more and were translated into
Districts and cities of the north China plain
open uprisings. A sect in Hupei that had previously confined itself to teaching fighting skills, curing illnesses, and holding small meetings, began to prepare for the coming kalpa in 1768 (CL 33) by notifying members to prepare red turbans. The government learned of these activities and, before any violence could take place, arrested at least two hundred persons.²

In 1774 (CL 39) sect members were more successful. Wang Lun 王倫 was a healer from Shou-chang district in western Shantung, skilled in the arts of boxing and meditation and the leader of a Clear Water (Ch’ing-shui 清水) sect. This group had made plans for an uprising to coincide with the new kalpa, but when a local official learned of their plans, they were forced to act prematurely. On 8/28 of that year, these believers initiated a series of strikes on the district cities of Shou-chang, Yang-ku, Tung-ch’ang, T’ang-i, and Lin-ch’ing, all in western Shantung. The rebels gathered and were quickly besieged in the old city of Lin-ch’ing and within a month the siege was ended, Wang Lun killed, and the rebels defeated.³

In 1786 (CL 51), in fulfillment of a prophecy about the kalpa’s arriving on the 15th day of the 8th month, an attack was carried out on the government offices in Ta-ming prefecture in southern Chihli (the attack actually took place on the 15th day of the intercalary 7th month). The sect-members-turned-rebels killed more than a dozen official personnel, broke open the treasury and jail, and left the city. At least forty men were subsequently arrested and found to be part of an Eight Trigrams (Pa-kua) sect whose membership came from the Ta-ming area and had links to sects in western and southwestern Shantung. There had been a disastrous drought in the plain north of the Yellow River that year.⁴

The largest of the sect uprisings of this period, the well-known White Lotus (Pai-lien 白蓮) rebellion, looked in its early stages like its less successful predecessors. Members of a Pai-lien sect practiced healing arts, ate a vegetarian diet, and recited chants. One of the leaders had been banished to Kansu in 1775 (CL 40) during government investigation of his sect, but he had maintained contact with his pupils and money had been delivered regularly to him while in exile for twenty years. Other members of the same sect were arrested in 1793 (CL 58). Sect leaders then proclaimed that the turn in the kalpa was about to arrive; they declared two young men, sons of leaders, surnamed Liu and Wang, to be the reincarnated Maitreya and a descendant of the Ming royal family, respectively. Uprisings scheduled by these sect members took place in Hupei in 1796
The rebels, pressed by government forces, moved westward into the mountainous border area between Hubei, Honan, Shensi, and Szechwan. There they met with unprecedented success, finding mass support among the poor and immigrant people of this region. Backed by popular support in a terrain more suited to guerrilla than to conventional warfare, the rebels held out against government suppression campaigns with diminishing vigor for eight years (1796–1803, CC 1–8). It is unfortunately not clear how much of the leadership and direction of this rebellion in its later stages came from sect members and how much from the discontented people who had joined them afterward. Regardless of its mixed leadership and ultimate defeat, this rebellion was a powerful advertisement for all White Lotus sects. Equally important, because the military campaigns took place in the mountains to the west of the north China plain, sect networks in Honan, Chihli, and Shantung remained undisturbed by the suppression.

The 1813 uprising of the Eight Trigrams came as part of this surge of millenarian activity. Resemblances among these uprisings are striking, and both the Eight Trigrams and their predecessors confronted many of the same problems: the difficulties of converting a religious sect into a rebel organization, the tension generated by government investigations into plans determined by prophetic inspiration, and the necessity for tactical choices between surgical strikes on government offices, occupation of urban areas, or flight into the mountains.

**Building Blocks**

In the first decade of the nineteenth century there were several White Lotus sects active in the area around the capital city of Peking. Although believers had been arrested periodically, there had been no sect-organized violence in that area. The Eight Trigrams leader Lin Ch'ing united several of these sects and with them built an organization that he would later lead in rebellion. Although our knowledge of the history of these sects is rather shallow, it is instructive to piece together a picture of what they looked like originally, for these sects are important as examples of "normal" sects in "normal" times, the building blocks of higher level sect organizations.

One of these sects called itself the Lao-li (Venerable Doctrine) Assembly. It had been transmitted five teachers back by a man
named Liu Hung from Shantung. Liu Hung's rescue from prison, where he was serving a sentence for previous involvement in another sect case, had been one goal of the Eight Trigrams uprising in southern Chihli in 1786.7 Around 1810 this small branch of Liu Hung's sect was being practiced under the leadership of a father and son surnamed Wang from Hsin-ch'eng district in Chihli. They transmitted the eight-character mantra, "Eternal Progenitor in Our Original Home in the World of True Emptiness," collected money from their followers, and had four volumes listing the names of all their members.8

Not far away in at least eight villages of northwestern Hsiung district, there were members of a Ta-sheng 大乘 (Greater Vehicle) sect. The sect leader, Yang Pao, who was addressed as Venerable Teacher, had been active since at least 1809 and probably for about thirty years. This sect was an offshoot of those Ta-sheng sects in Ch'uli described above that were prosecuted by the government in 1811 and 1812; the Hsiung district group had escaped attention, but members had suspended their congregational activities and the ranks were probably depleted because of this trouble.9

Closer to Peking in Ku-an district there was a larger sect under a teacher called Chang T'ien-sheng. Chang was over sixty years old and made his living collecting rents from lands worked by Manchu bannermen; his chief pupil, a man called Li Wu 李五, was from a family that "had money."10 Although this sect had probably been active for some time, there is no information about them before 1809. The name they were using in that year was Jung-hua 華華 (Flourishing Flower) Assembly.11 At that time, the second generation teacher Li Wu, himself in his fifties, was a well-established figure in his own right who collected money from his pupils, held regular meetings, and transmitted the eight-character chant. Sect members lived in Ku-an and adjacent Hsin-ch'eng district.12

Most of the other sects mobilized by Lin Ch'ing in 1813 were located within a twenty-five-mile radius on the southern side of the capital. In a small village outside and to the southeast of Peking lived an elderly sect head named Li Kuo-yu 李概有 and his pupil Liu Hsing-li 劉馨澧. They had learned a Hung-yang 紅陽 (Red Sun) sect from a man called Tu Ch'eng-k'uei. In addition to transmitting the eight-character chant, these two men had learned and then taught to their pupils a variety of healing arts, primarily boxing, fencing, and massage. Li Kuo-yu was better known as Li Lao 李老, "Old Li." He was eighty years old in 1813 and had been practicing and trans-
Hsin-ch'eng 25 km, 25 miles

Peking and vicinity
mitting this sect for nearly fifty years. He had chosen a new name for his group, calling it the Pai-yang 白陽 (White Sun) sect, and had at least a dozen major pupils, all of whom had at least one further generation of pupils under them. Li Lao also had a large number of relatives who belonged to the sect, including a son, two daughters, two grandsons, and two brothers (or first cousins), through whom he had six nephews in their forties and fifties and at least five great-nephews in their twenties and thirties. All lived in Yang-hsiu village, where the family had enough land to support this large group and at least four semipermanent hired laborers. Three of Li Lao’s older pupils specialized in curing illness, and those pupils who lived nearby would often assemble in the courtyard of a temple near Li Lao’s house to practice the boxing and fencing skills he taught them.13

Li Lao’s pupil Liu Hsing-li was in his eighties, older than his teacher; he had been in a sect for about forty years.14 Liu Hsing-li had an even more extensive network of pupils than Li Lao, at least one hundred people, and, to mark his independence, Liu had reinstated the old name of Hung-yang sect. Liu made his reputation primarily as a healer of illness, and a great many of his pupils had been cured by him before joining his sect. Although Liu Hsing-li was from a village near that of his teacher, most of his pupils lived elsewhere.

One large group of Hung-yang sect members lived in a small market town called Ma-chü-ch’iao southeast of Peking; they were pupils of Li Ch’ao-tso, who was Liu Hsing-li’s pupil and a resident of that village. This group of about a dozen families (between twenty and forty men and women) attended regular meetings of the sect in one another’s houses, usually on the 1st and 15th of each month. On these occasions they meditated and had a feast. One member who is of particular interest had been given out in adoption and from his youth had served as a eunuch in the Forbidden City in Peking. This eunuch, Yang Chin-chung 楊進忠 by name, had been ill in 1809 (when he was at least forty years old), and a close friend had cured him and brought him into the Hung-yang sect as Li Ch’ao-tso’s pupil. Through Yang Chin-chung, the sect had been extended to at least four other eunuchs who worked with Yang in the Fruit Office of the Imperial Household.15

These eunuchs were not the first pupils under Liu Hsing-li who resided in the city of Peking. Many years earlier two brothers, Manchu bannermen and members of the imperial clan itself, had been cured by Liu and joined his sect. Hai-chung, the eldest brother,
used the skills he had learned to cure other people but claimed to have taken no pupils and had only distant contact with sect members. His younger brother Hai-k’ang, on the other hand, definitely brought at least a dozen people into the Hung-yang sect, curing most of them first. His pupils were all closely associated with the Peking Manchu elite and included relatives, petty metropolitan officials, eunuchs, and Chinese bondservants. Using his skill at curing illness, the sect leader Liu Hsing-li had built up a following that included both Chinese and Manchu and the bondservants, eunuchs, and servants who formed links between the two.

In addition to the Lao-li Assembly, the Ta-sheng sect, the Jung-hua Assembly of Li Wu, and the Pai-yang and Hung-yang sects, there was at least one other White Lotus sect active around Peking in the years prior to 1808, and it was this sect that was to form the nucleus of the Eight Trigrams rebellion of 1813. Known also as the Jung-hua Assembly, this sect was propagated by the healer Ku Liang 阜亮. Unfortunately, we do not know where Ku Liang came from or the name of his teacher. We do know that as early as 1796 he had taken pupils in the Tung village area southeast of Peking (the most active of whom was a man called Ch’ü Ssu). The majority of Ku Liang’s followers came, however, from an area south and west of the capital, in and around Sung-chia village. Ku Liang had come to this village (probably in 1797 but at least by 1804) to stay with some members of the Sung family who were his relatives by marriage. In the 8th month of 1804 Ku Liang took one of his relatives, Sung Chin-hui 来進會, as his pupil, and other brothers and cousins subsequently followed suit. Ku Liang instructed his pupils in curing illness and in the art of meditation, and he gave them the eight-character chant “Eternal Progenitor in Our Original Home in the World of True Emptiness.” He told them to abstain from wine, sex, greed, and anger, and to help out any fellow sect member who was in distress. The group would often meet and meditate together, or they would gather and listen to Ku Liang tell stories about “buddhas and immortals” (probably including tales about the Eternal Mother), leaving the front gate open for the benefit of a regular group of passersby who would stop and listen. By the time of Ku Liang’s death in 1807, the sect had at least seventy members, many of them members of the Sung family and most of them from Sung-chia village. One of these followers, a pupil of a pupil of Ku Liang, was Lin Ch’ing 林清, the future organizer of the Eight Trigrams.

In the spring of 1808 (CC 13), the existence of this Jung-hua As-
The subsequent disruption of the sect and prosecution of some of its members might be considered the first in a series of events that led these men from meditation and storytelling into violence and rebellion. The trouble had begun with a classic quarrel between two brothers over their patrimony. The younger brother, who felt he had been cheated, reported the Jung-hua Assembly, of which his brother was a member, to the Office of the Gendarmerie. He charged that certain individuals had founded a heretical sect and were using "wrong ideas" to hoodwink people, a crime punishable by banishment to Heilungkiang.  

The case was routinely investigated, and by the 6th month of that year, sixteen members of the sect had been arrested and transferred to the provincial capital at Pao-ting (nearly one hundred miles away) for trial. They remained there, apparently not in prison, until early in the 8th month, when the case was formally reviewed by the governor-general of the province and the sentences memorialized to, and approved by, the emperor. The sect founder and "chief criminal" Ku Liang had died the year before and so he was not punished. Three of his pupils who had extended the sect by taking pupils of their own were sentenced to one hundred blows (with the heavy bamboo) and penal servitude for three years. Thirteen others, including both the elder brother and Lin Ch'ing, were sentenced to beatings. The investigators had uncovered no evidence of heretical ideas and concluded that this group was concerned primarily with mutual assistance, charity, and good deeds. For this reason, the sentences were not especially severe. In fact, because of a general amnesty on New Year's Day of 1809 (CC 14/1/1), those three men sentenced to penal servitude were allowed to return home.  

Although the sixteen Jung-hua Assembly members from Sungchia village had escaped with light sentences, this encounter with the law had had a considerable effect on them. Many believers left the sect and refused to have further contact with its members for fear of being implicated; those who chose to remain in the sect despite the danger were correspondingly more committed. More important perhaps, the leadership crisis that had begun to develop when Ku Liang died was intensified when three of his logical successors were sentenced to penal servitude. The issue was finally resolved in early 1809 when the Jung-hua Assembly split. The smaller group followed a sixty-year-old pupil of Ku Liang named Kuo Ch'ao-ch'iu who had escaped involvement in the 1808 case, and the others followed the forty-year-old Lin Ch'ing. It was Lin Ch'ing's assumption of the
role of sect leader in 1809 immediately following his experiences as a criminal on trial in the provincial capital that marks the next stage of the transformation of the Jung-hua Assembly from a religious sect into its alter ego, a vehicle for millenarian rebellion. Before describing this transformation, it is useful to look back at Lin Ch'ing's story prior to this decisive moment in his life. It is fortunately possible to reconstruct from the sources this rather unusual Ch'ing biography.

LIN CH'ING COMES INTO HIS OWN

Lin Ch'ing's father had originally come from Shao-hsing prefecture in Chekiang province and had moved to the Peking area where he had served as a clerk in two local governmental offices. Both offices were located in Huang village, about ten miles southwest of Peking, where Lin Ch'ing's father lived with his wife and family. Lin Ch'ing was born in 1770 (CL 35). He had three older sisters and was the only son. He grew up on the outskirts of Peking and learned to read and write by studying with a clerk who worked with his father. When he was about seventeen Lin Ch'ing was apprenticed at an herb-medicine shop located in the southwest corner of the northern section of Peking. (See map p. 169.) He spent three years there, studying the trade and learning about life in the capital. When he finished his apprenticeship, Lin Ch'ing took a job as a clerk in another apothecary shop where he earned a monthly salary. Then, according to his nephew, "because he often visited prostitutes, ugly sores appeared on his body" and so the herb-medicine shop fired him. Lin Ch'ing then found employment beating out the night watches outside the southwestern (Shunch'eng) gate that divided the northern and southern sections of the capital.

Despite this rather inauspicious beginning, Lin Ch'ing was fortunate in finding another job. When his father died, his mother had arranged for his post as clerk in the subprefect's office to be filled by a person who paid her a substantial sum for the privilege. This man had eventually become impatient with the arrangement and had refused to pay her further. Mrs. Lin, undaunted, filed a charge against him in the very yamen where he worked, asserting her family's right to the post and requesting that it be given to her son.
instead. Her petition was approved, and thus Lin Ch'ing was able to give up his job as night watchman and take over his father's clerkship.

Unfortunately, and no doubt to the dismay of his mother, who had gone to such lengths to secure this position for her family, Lin Ch'ing was soon fired. Not even a year had passed before an investigation revealed that he had been embezzling money allocated for repair work on the Grand Canal. For this Lin Ch'ing was apparently not prosecuted, but the Lin family claim to the clerkship was terminated. Lin Ch'ing took the money that he had appropriated, having somehow avoided paying it back, and used it to open a teashop in his home village; he even persuaded one of his brothers-in-law to become his partner. During the next six months, however, Lin Ch'ing neglected the teashop and spent every day gambling. When he had gambled away all his capital, his brother-in-law, furious, threw him out of the business.

Unemployed again (and probably unable to turn to his mother for any further sympathy or assistance), Lin Ch'ing decided to try Manchuria, technically closed to Chinese immigrants but in fact a virtually open frontier for those in search of work or opportunity within easy reach of northern Chihli. There Lin found a job organizing a construction project for a Manchu official. But as soon as he had accumulated a surplus he quit and came home. Living off these earnings, Lin Ch'ing continued to do as he pleased for as long as he could, spending his money on food, drink, gambling, and women.

Not yet thirty, without money or firm plans and still restless, Lin Ch'ing next decided to go south and look up another brother-in-law who lived in the city of Soochow, over five hundred miles away in Kiangsu province. Through this relative, he found a position as a personal attendant for the grain intendant stationed in that city. His failure to keep his father's clerkship apparently did not mean that Lin Ch'ing shunned association with the government bureaucracy; quite the contrary, for now he chose deliberately to be part of official life again. When the grain intendant went into mourning and left his post, Lin Ch'ing was able to find another position, again as a personal attendant, this time for the magistrate of Tan-yang district in Kiangsu. Later this magistrate left his post on an assignment and Lin Ch'ing then gave up this type of work.

Lin found that he was able to support himself by using the skills he had learned years before in the herb-medicine shops in Peking. For
the first time since then, he cured illnesses professionally. Neverthe­
less, he continued to spend his money as fast as he earned it, and
finally he decided to leave the south and to return home. In or before
1797 he hired himself out to haul the grain boats up the Grand Canal
to Peking, and by means of this tedious and exhausting labor made
his way home. His nephew describes Lin Ch'ing's arrival:

I was only nine years old when he returned. I was out guarding
the melons in our melon patch about a li from our house. My
uncle was coming toward our village from the east. His face and
skin were dark and wrinkled, he hadn't shaved recently, and his
pants were in rags. He knew me, called me by my nickname, and
said, "Hey, Dumbhead, your uncle's back!" I didn't recognize
him, and called him a dirty beggar. But he said, "Go and tell
your mother and grandmother and they'll tell you I really am
your uncle." So I went back home and told them, and then my
father and I took a pair of trousers back to the melon patch for
my uncle to put on, and we all came back to our house to­
gether.

Lin Ch'ing rested for a while and then set out once more to find
work. Always persuasive, he was able to obtain gambling quails on
credit from a bannerman he knew who ran a bird shop in Peking;
these he took out and peddled on the streets of the capital, probably
renewing old acquaintances from his earlier gambling days. One of
his customers, a former military officer named Wang, was very
impressed with Lin. Looking at his long face and sharply slanting
eyebrows, Mr. Wang decided that Lin Ch'ing had a promising
future. He loaned him some money and together they opened a shop
selling small birds in the same area of Peking where Lin Ch'ing had
previously beaten out the night watch.

Lin took advantage of his relatively stable situation and got mar­
rried. He and his wife, a former prostitute, adopted a child and lived
in a rented room near the bird shop. It was clearly not Lin Ch'ing's
fate to become a shop owner, however, and his good luck soon
turned to bad. His adopted child became ill and died. The bird shop
received substantial damage from flooding after some heavy rains.
Then Lin Ch'ing's partner and patron died; his son was less enthu­
siastic about Lin Ch'ing's potential and wanted to sue Lin for
mismanagement of the joint funds. Lin was again able to talk his way
out of trouble and persuaded young Wang simply to dissolve the
partnership and not go to the authorities.
Out of work again, Lin Ch’ing turned to the youngest of his older sisters, the mother of his young nephew, who lived in Sung-chia village, located not very far from their old home in Huang village. Lin rented a room in a temple in Huang village, and he and his wife lived there while he did work for his sister’s household. But his troubles were not over. Shortly thereafter his wife died, and it was difficult to find enough money for her funeral. Lin finally managed to collect some back debts from his quail-peddling days; then, in 1806, having buried his wife, he moved into a room in his sister’s house in Sung-chia village. His brother-in-law had recently died, and so Lin Ch’ing helped his sister manage her household. Thus he became acquainted with his in-laws and with the other men in that village, many of whom happened to belong to Ku Liang’s Jung-hua Assembly.

The relationship between Lin Ch’ing and this White Lotus sect, an apparent attraction of opposites, changed them both significantly. Lin Ch’ing was at thirty-seven a widower, still childless, a drifter and a hustler whose restless life, a series of failures and fresh starts, had been lived in the cities and on the margins of respectable society. The Jung-hua Assembly provided for its members solidarity and mutual support, as well as a sense of exclusiveness and private purpose, and it is easy to see why Lin Ch’ing might have been attracted to it. Here was a new set of friends and acquaintances eager to make converts. Lin Ch’ing could build on his past experience and learn new techniques for curing illness. Moreover, he was apparently stimulated by the religious ideas of the sect and excited by the possibilities for discussion and debate. It was a whole new world.

This is not to say that Lin Ch’ing had nothing to contribute. He was well traveled, having journeyed across the north China plain and spent years in the lush land and cities of the Soochow region; moreover, in addition to having lived for many years in Peking itself, he had crossed the Great Wall and seen the frontier lands of Manchuria. He had worked as a pharmacist-cum-doctor, construction worker, shop owner, peddler, gambler, yamen clerk, and magistrate’s attendant and had acquired a variety of skills and experience. Lin Ch’ing was familiar with the city and the countryside, with the life styles of government officials, urban bourgeoisie, peasantry, and hired laborers both rural and urban. It is true that he had no capital, no social position, only a small network of relatives, and a questionable reputation; nevertheless, he did have contacts, much experience, and substantial persuasive ability. He was clearly
bright and a man of some presence. He had bounced back from many difficulties and had energy and ability. The sect gave him a structure and purpose, and he developed its potential and transformed it.

When Lin Ch'ing joined Ku Liang's sect, the old teacher was still alive and active. Since many of his oldest pupils were members of the Sung family and lived in the village with Lin Ch'ing's sister, Lin probably heard about the sect as soon as he moved there if not before. Lin Ch'ing's sister's household included her deceased husband's brother and his wife and children and the wife, children, and second husband of her deceased husband's other brother. It was this second husband, one Tung Po-wang, who formally introduced Lin Ch'ing to his teacher Sung Chin-yao 末鶠papers; and in the late spring of 1806 Lin joined the sect.

In his first two years as a believer, Lin Ch'ing became familiar with sect ideas and religious practices, but he did not, that we know of, take any pupils. His nephew says that during these years Lin lived at their house and "taught school" (perhaps elementary reading and writing) at home. When Ch'en Mao-kung filed charges against the sect in the spring of 1808, he named Lin Ch'ing as a member of the Jung-hua Assembly. Lin was arrested with the others and taken to Pao-ting for trial. Despite his various escapades, this was, as far as we know, his first experience as a convicted criminal.

It appears that though the sect members were formally interrogated they were not put in prison in Pao-ting; rather they stayed together at an inn run by the Ma family on T'ang-chia alley in the provincial capital. At this time there was a man named Niu Liang-ch'en working as a waiter in the Ma family inn. This Niu Liang-ch'en was in his early forties and from a milieu resembling that of Lin Ch'ing's. He had been a treasury clerk in the magistrate's yamen in the district of Hua in northern Honan; he had stolen money and grain from official stores and had left his job and come to Pao-ting in order to avoid being found out. Niu Liang-ch'en and Lin Ch'ing became friends during the months when the sect members were being investigated, and the two used to sit and talk and drink wine. Lin impressed Niu with his knowledge of the legal system and, in the process, related how he himself had come to be on trial. Lin explained the Jung-hua Assembly to Niu Liang-ch'en:

It has been transmitted by a man from south of Peking named Ku. Every day at dawn we pay respects to the sun and recite the Sacred Words. By doing this we can escape the dangers of fire, flood, and war, and if there should come a time
of calamity and disorder, then we can use that opportunity to plan and organize the Great Undertaking.\textsuperscript{32}

It is probable that Niu Liang-ch’en had been in a White Lotus sect previously;\textsuperscript{33} in any case, he was impressed with Lin Ch’ing and wanted to become his pupil.

When the legal proceedings were concluded, Lin received his sentence of one hundred blows with the heavy bamboo.\textsuperscript{34} He and the other sect members who had received similar punishments then returned to their homes near Peking, and Lin invited Niu Liang-ch’en to come back with him. In the middle of the 9th month of that year (1808), at Lin’s home, Niu burned incense and swore a vow; Lin Ch’ing put his hand on the place between Niu’s eyebrows and explained that his nature (hsing \(\#\)) was located there. He then transmitted the eight-character sacred words, “Eternal Progenitor in Our Original Home in the World of True Emptiness.” Niu kotowed to his new teacher. Lin Ch’ing had taken his first pupil.

Lin found employment for Niu as a tutor for an old friend who had run a bird shop in Peking years before and who now lived in a village nearby. Niu Liang-ch’en stayed and worked there for about a year, but early in 1810 he was discharged (the students had become exasperated with his Honan accent) and decided to return home. He asked Lin Ch’ing to come soon to pay him a visit there and meet other sect members from Honan.\textsuperscript{35}

In the meantime, Lin Ch’ing and other members of the Jung-hua Assembly were still recovering from the government investigations of 1808. As was indicated above, one effect of this prosecution was to complicate the problem of succession that had developed after Ku Liang’s death in the fall of the preceding year. At first Sung Chin-yao—Lin Ch’ing’s teacher and one of the earliest converts in Sung-chia village—had more or less taken over direction of the sect, but a year later he was among three arrested and sentenced to penal servitude. In the fall of 1808 (and probably during the preceding months), Kuo Ch’ao-chün, a first-generation pupil of Ku Liang’s who had not been arrested, took over as sect head, preventing the sect from fragmenting completely.

That autumn Lin Ch’ing returned home, his ambition and interest in sect activities seemingly stimulated by his experiences in Pao-ting. He challenged Kuo Ch’ao-chün and the latter gave way. By one account, Kuo “was unable to manage things well” and, recognizing that Lin Ch’ing’s “influence was great” and that Lin “had a great destiny,” he yielded power to his more worthy successor.
A blunter account says that Lin Ch'ing simply "made himself sect head" and forced Kuo Ch'ao-ch'un out. Lin Ch'ing explained the transfer of power by saying that it was because he was a "good speaker" that the others had "asked" him to be sect head. In any case, Kuo withdrew and took at least five of his pupils with him; they no longer met with or considered themselves part of Lin Ch'ing's sect. Most of the other believers, those who had not been frightened off by the government investigations, kotowed to Lin Ch'ing and formally acknowledged him as teacher and sect head. By the time that Sung Chin-yao returned in the spring of 1809, freed by the amnesty, his pupil was firmly in control.36

This change of leadership resulted in a realignment of the pre-existing teacher-pupil relationships. Lin Ch'ing had previously held a position two generations below Ku Liang. Now those generationally his senior within the sect (at least ten men) with their pupils under them formally acknowledged him as teacher. This placed Lin Ch'ing at the top of a sizable pyramid of followers. He had come into his own as a sect leader and "man of respect."

During a period when normal religious practices were disrupted, the old leaders gone, and most followers uneasy, Lin Ch'ing's ability to inspire confidence, convince the doubtful, and convert the skeptic, made him a natural leader. Nevertheless, despite the speed with which he moved to establish himself and was recognized as a leader by others, it should not be assumed that Lin Ch'ing had begun to talk of leading a rebellion. His takeover and subsequent efforts to reach out and contact other sect groups may not have been motivated by anything beyond a desire to ride the wave of power and respect as far as it would take him. While it is certainly possible that Lin had already begun to talk of a coming kalpa and used this idea to clear a path to power and then to inspire an expansion of the sect, there is no evidence that this was the case.

Lin Ch'ing had become familiar with sect practices and religious literature and was serious about reinvigorating the group and about making converts. Once established as head of the Jung-hua Assembly, Lin began to make contact with other sects active in and around Peking. Because of their interest in religious matters, members of one sect were apparently aware, if only vaguely, of the existence of other White Lotus groups. Nevertheless, it took a positive effort, as in this case under Lin Ch'ing's leadership, to find and then activate the connections between the sects. Lin tried deliberately to get in touch
with and talk to other sect groups, and at the same time he encouraged his own followers to recruit pupils of their own. Again, it is possible that talk of rebellion and the coming kalpa was used at this stage to arouse interest and to obtain new followers for Lin. His efforts to convert not merely individuals but whole groups does imply that Lin was interested in building a powerful network. Each of the groups whom he now contacted and eventually persuaded to acknowledge his authority was later made part of the attack on the Forbidden City in Peking which was to be Lin Ch’ing’s responsibility during the 1813 rebellion. It was at this time that he decided to grow what would eventually become a long black beard, a reflection perhaps of Lin’s growing sense of self-confidence and awareness of the necessity of impressing others.37

There is relatively little information about exactly how the links between the Jung-hua and other sects were originally formed, or about what spatial or personal networks formed the media for such contacts. It appears that very often it was the man who had lived in several places or been in two or more sects who formed these links. For example, there was a beancurd seller from Hsiung district south of Peking named Liu Chin-t’ing 𪟝進生. He had previously been the pupil of Yang Pao, the leader of the Ta-sheng sect that was active in that area. Later Liu Chin-t’ing met the son of a pupil of Ku Liang (we do not know how), became his pupil, and joined the Jung-hua Assembly. He did not, however, forget his past sect associations. On the contrary, Liu Chin-t’ing went to his former teacher and colleagues to persuade them to follow his example and become part of Lin Ch’ing’s Jung-hua Assembly. Liu’s relationship with Lin Ch’ing appears to have added to Liu’s stature at home, and it was he (rather than his former teacher) who organized the Hsiung contingent in the 1813 uprising.38

At the same time that Lin Ch’ing was developing this link with the Ta-sheng sect, he also became acquainted (we do not know how) with the sect leader Li Wu 进 from Ku-an district. Although Li Wu’s teacher was still alive at this time and also met and discussed religious matters with Lin Ch’ing, it was Li Wu, the younger man (though older than Lin Ching), who was the real link between the two groups. Like Liu Chin-t’ing, Li Wu used this association to become more influential than his teacher within their sect. Lin Ch’ing often went south to the Hsiung and Ku-an area to see these two men, Li and Liu, and to talk with them about their beliefs
and religious organization. He apparently learned much from these sessions, but his nephew says that Lin was no match for either of them in their discussions of religious doctrine.\footnote{39}

Prior to this time there are no references to the collection of money in Lin Ch'ing's Jung-hua Assembly. Li Wu on the other hand had been collecting money in his sect for some time. Using these donations and his own resources, he made an effort to gain influence with Lin Ch'ing not only by discussing doctrine but also by acting as a proper pupil and frequently giving money to Lin. Lin in turn used this new income to help his friends, relatives, and pupils, and to better his own life. His financial position certainly improved, although probably gradually, once he had taken over the sect. His nephew Tung Kuo-t'ai said that after Lin Ch'ing became head of the Jung-hua Assembly, he (Lin) had become financially independent.\footnote{40}

It was during these years when his position was steadily improving that Lin Ch'ing decided to marry again. Previously, when his prospects had been less than good, Lin Ch'ing had chosen a prostitute for his wife. Now his situation had improved dramatically. It was the sect that formed his world, and it was from among his new acquaintances that he chose his second wife. The object of his attentions was a Miss Chao, the recently widowed wife of a sect member from a nearby village who had by him two daughters of marriageable age. Tung Kuo-t'ai relates: "So my uncle said to the wife of Liu Ch'eng-hsiang, 'I had a dream, and in the dream I was married to Miss Chao.' That woman told Miss Chao this and the latter said, 'I had a dream too, and it was exactly the same.' So they became engaged, and were later married." Miss Chao's younger daughter, who was in her late teens, came with her mother and moved into Lin Ch'ing's quarters in the Tung family compound.\footnote{41}

In addition to setting up close relationships with and a regular channel of funds from some similar sects in the capital area, Lin Ch'ing simultaneously used his new status to attract his own followers and to cement old friendships. One of those with whom he renewed his acquaintance was Ts'ao Lun 了伦, a Chinese banner-man whom he had met in Kiangsu fifteen years before. Ts'ao Lun was only two years younger than Lin Ch'ing; by 1805 he had risen up the Banner hierarchy and had the fourth-rank title of captain but no active position. During these years Ts'ao was living in Peking, inside the Shun-ch'eng Gate in the same area where Lin Ch'ing had had his bird shop.
In the spring of 1807, still without employment, Ts’ao Lun found himself in a relatively impoverished state. According to his own testimony, his clothing was so ragged that he was embarrassed to go out in public and seek other employment. It was at this time that Lin Ch’ing and another old friend of Ts’ao’s came to help out, and Lin Ch’ing redeemed some clothing that Ts’ao had been forced to pawn. Soon thereafter Lin Ch’ing and some other friends invited Ts’ao Lun to become their sworn brother, saying, “You are now in difficult straits. Why don’t the four of us swear brotherhood and then we can all help you?” One of these four was also in Lin Ch’ing’s sect, while the other was a laborer who worked near Peking. Ts’ao agreed and he and Lin would often have dinner together in a little restaurant outside the Shun-ch’eng Gate, an area of the capital they both knew well. In the winter of 1808, Lin Ch’ing sent watermelon and charcoal to Ts’ao Lun as gifts. When Ts’ao had an opportunity to go along on the Chia-ch’ing Emperor’s Jehol hunting trip in that same year, Lin Ch’ing supplied him with a horse, a mule, and some money. Lin Ch’ing’s financial status improved after he took over leadership in the Jung-hua Assembly, and in the spring of 1809 he was able to loan Ts’ao Lun more money. Ts’ao returned some of these favors by using his official seal to authorize Lin to transport rice to outside Peking during the winters of 1808 and 1809 (when such permits were necessary), falsely stating that Lin Ch’ing was carrying soldiers’ rations. By 1811 the two men were good friends.

Among the Jung-hua Assembly members who acknowledged Lin Ch’ing’s authority in 1809 when he became sect head was a plain-blue banner bondservant named Ch’en Shuang 陳爽. Like many bondservant families in the Peking area, Ch’en Shuang’s family was formally attached to an establishment in the capital, but many members were not employed there and lived instead outside the city as “bannermen agriculturists” (t’un-t’ien屯田) without pay or position. Ch’en Shuang’s family was attached to the household of the Yü 孝 Prince, a descendant of Dodo. Ch’en lived in Sang-fa village, near Lin Ch’ing; he made his living working the land. Ch’en Shuang had been a member of Ku Liang’s sect at least as long as Lin Ch’ing, and after Lin became head of the Jung-hua Assembly, the two men became close friends. Ch’en, who was slightly younger than Lin, soon introduced his nephew to Lin Ch’ing and arranged for the young man to become Lin Ch’ing’s godson (kan-erh-tzu 孝兒子). Lin Ch’ing used some of the money he had begun to receive from his pupils to buy clothing for the Ch’ens, and the three men often went
hunting together. Later, Ch'en Shuang and his nephew Wen-k'uei would become important leaders of the palace attack.

Ch'en Wen-k'uei was not the only person whom Lin Ch'ing had linked to himself with bonds of fictive kinship. He had at least three "adopted sons" (i-tzu) who by the summer of 1813 were spending most of their time at Lin's house. Lin Ch'ing had continued to cure illnesses, and two of these adopted sons had been healed by him and become his "sons" (and possibly his pupils) as an expression of gratitude. Both were from families of sect members, as was the other "son." Lin and his second wife remained childless and it seems he was interested in building a family for himself by making an effort to acquire fictive brothers and sons in addition to pupils.

There are no references to Lin Ch'ing's holding meetings of the Jung-hua Assembly prior to 1811. It is probable that as he became increasingly aware of his growing power Lin systematized group meetings and made them occasions for regular contributions by pupils to their teachers. By 1811, for example, Li Wu (the sect leader from Ku-an) had formally acknowledged Lin Ch'ing as sect head and thus linked his sect with Lin's. He told his pupils that there would be a meeting every year on the 1st day of the 10th month, and on that day Lin Ch'ing would come to Ku-an to meet with them. Li Wu and his followers were expected to come to the meeting and to contribute, and indeed such meetings were held on the 1st day of the 10th month in 1811 and 1812. There is also an indication of regular spring meetings in Ku-an, which Lin Ch'ing might not have attended. Lin Ch'ing's birthday was in the winter, and during these years Li Wu and his followers also used this occasion to send gifts and money to their sect head. One participant describes this event:

Li Wu sent a message that Lin Ch'ing was having a birthday and that we should send presents. I went and took with me two strings of cash as my gift, and two more from my brother. I went to Lin Ch'ing's together with . . . [five other sect members from the village]. We reached Lin Ch'ing's on the evening of that same day. We kotowed to him. He fed us noodles. There were two or three tables full of people. I returned home the following day.

There are no exact figures on how much money Lin Ch'ing was getting from his followers, or on how much lesser leaders like Li Wu were making, but one comment by Lin's nephew indicates
the general situation: "The people in the sect all contribute money to Lin Ch'ing in order to show their respect. At first Lin Ch'ing was very poor but ever since he became a sect head, he has had money for all his expenses." Lin used this income to build up his following, and it seems that he did indeed command the respect and admiration of his pupils. Tung Kuo-t'ai, when asked about his uncle's relationship with his followers, said, "My uncle's treatment of the men in the assembly was not at all harsh. There was never any violence or fighting. If a man made a mistake and someone reported this to Lin Ch'ing, he merely called in the man and scolded him a little. The person wouldn't dare reply, he would just kowtow." Lin's persuasiveness remained his most useful talent, and it was this that allowed him to grow powerful while expanding the sect. According to his nephew,

Lin Ch'ing has been trying to convert people to the sect for a long time. He was very convincing. Everyone said that he was constantly asking for money, but he said that making contributions was the same as sowing seeds for future blessings and that in the future such gifts would be multiplied tenfold. So people believed and gave him money. I never saw him give any back.

These promises of future blessings were part of Lin Ch'ing's prophecy about the coming kalpa, and we shall see how he used this beginning to build a foundation for rebellion. In the meantime, during these years between 1808 and 1811 Lin Ch'ing appears to have found a certain ease and contentment in his life. Supported financially by gifts from respectful pupils, Lin allowed himself the luxury of wine and fresh fruit every day. In the winter he went out hunting with his friends, and when the weather was warm he would sit in the courtyard of his home and play his zither or his lute, telling his godsons and nephew to join in. He might have continued to live this way indefinitely but, as he himself later explained, "It was not my fate to be a peaceful citizen (t'ai-p'ing pai-hsing 太平百姓)." Aware of the as-yet-untapped potential of sect teachings and structure and always energetic, Lin Ch'ing could not sit quietly for long.

Li Wen-ch'eng and His Followers

Having taken and consolidated power in the Jung-hua Assembly and created a network of supporters and contributors among fellow
believers in the Peking area, Lin Ch’ing initiated a series of contacts that dramatically expanded his sect. Early in 1811 he went to northern Honan—over three hundred miles away—to visit his friend and first pupil Niu Liang-ch’en. There Lin was introduced to another large White Lotus sect and to a sect head named Li Wen-ch’eng whose ambitions matched his own. Together Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng would provide the inspiration and leadership needed to unite their groups and so build an organization with branches throughout the region and aspirations to even greater power.

Although it is not possible to see into Li Wen-ch’eng’s life and personality as we can into Lin Ch’ing’s, it is possible to reconstruct the sect to which he belonged, a group which in many ways offers a contrast to the organization built up by Lin Ch’ing. Unlike Lin’s sect, which had a short history and whose members came from a few villages over a small area, the Chiu-kung (Nine Mansions) sect, to which Li Wen-ch’eng belonged, had a wide geographic base with branches in northern Honan, southern Chihli, and southwestern Shantung and closer ties with sect-led rebellions in the past. Drawing on this larger and deeper pool of experience, leaders of the Chiu-kung sect had instituted a more sophisticated system of sect organization and even before they came in contact with Lin Ch’ing had begun transforming their sect into a vehicle for rebellion.

The Chiu-kung sect had been transmitted in the southern part of the north China plain for at least fifty years and probably was involved or at least connected with those sect members who formed the Eight Trigrams of 1786 and attacked a prefectural city in southern Chihli province in that year. In 1808 the sect master was a man in his sixties called Liang Chien-chung from Chang-te prefectural city in northern Honan. Together with one of his pupils, Sect Master Liang initiated a series of organizational developments designed to increase both converts and contributions. In 1808 they started keeping a register that listed the names of all sect members and the amounts of their contributions. They devised several pseudo-official ranks, which they promised to those who contributed in sufficient amounts; they even carved seals that they then distributed to believers as symbols of membership. It is also likely that the leaders began to talk about the coming kalpa and the time when believers would be rewarded for their devotion.

These were important and dangerous steps. White Lotus sects that were small and isolated and without incriminating property
Districts and cities of the north China plain
were relatively safe from the interested eye of the Ch'ing government. Sects that emphasized the organizationally and ideologically "heretical" elements in the tradition and thus developed into widespread networks along which money and "dangerous ideas" could travel were quite another matter. For the Chiu-kung sect, seals, the registers of names, and talk of a new system of ranks and titles marked just such a new and more perilous level of development.

During the next three years Sect Master Liang watched over and directed the expansion of his sect. Among the new converts was one man who was single-handedly responsible for the extension of the Chiu-kung sect into (eventually) at least eight districts of southern Chihli and Shantung. His name was Hsu An-kuo 黄安国 and he came from a village in Ch'ang-yuan district in the boot of southern Chihli. Like many sect members, Hsu An-kuo was a veteran seeker who had already been in at least one other sect. In 1809 Hsu was introduced to Liu Kuo-ming, Liang Chien-chung’s pupil’s pupil, and, persuaded by him of the superior efficacy of Chiu-kung sect practices, Hsu took Liu Kuo-ming as his new teacher. Hsu An-kuo made his living as a healer; he traveled from place to place, staying with pupils and former patients, curing illness and making converts. In this way he built up a following that in the next four years would reach six or seven hundred persons and would provide a base for the Eight Trigrams in the eastern north China plain.

While Hsu An-kuo was acquiring this large following in Shantung and southern Chihli, other pupils in the Chiu-kung sect responded to their teachers' urgings and were making converts (and asking for contributions) in northern Honan. Hsu’s teacher, Liu Kuo-ming, was from Hua district as were many of his other pupils, including Li Wen-ch’eng. Li Wen-ch’eng was in his forties, had a wife, teenage daughter, and an adopted son. His extended family made their living from the land, but Li’s nickname—Li Ssu-mu-chiang 李四木匠 (Li the fourth [son], wood worker)—suggests that he might once have made his living as a carpenter. By 1811 Li Wen-ch’eng, although formally four generations below Sect Master Liang, was an established sect leader in the Hua area and may already have been supported by his pupils.

It was during this period of organizational expansion in the Chiu-kung sect in the early spring of 1811 that Lin Ch’ing arrived in Hua. Lin’s pupil Niu Liang-ch’en knew Li Wen-ch’eng, and it was in order to introduce the two men that he had arranged for Lin’s visit. Lin Ch’ing spent a month in Honan, meeting and talking with Li
THE FORMATION OF THE EIGHT TRIGRAMS

and other members of the Chiu-kung sect and discussing religious matters with them at length. Circumstantial evidence suggests that they found a common interest in the problem of determining exactly when the turn in the kalpa initiating the third great historical era would come, a matter on which the attention of Chiu-kung sect members had been focused by the talk of future ranks, titles, and other benefits. Lin Ch'ing and Li Wen-ch'eng had different ideas about this problem, but apparently Lin argued very eloquently that the interpretations in which Li had been instructed by his teacher were incorrect. Lin urged Li to break with his teacher and with Sect Master Liang and to adopt instead Lin's ideas on the date of the coming kalpa and join with him in planning for "the great undertaking."

The two men may have been encouraged to consider rebellion (if indeed they needed encouragement) by Feng K'e-shan, a brother-in-law of Niu Liang-ch'en who met Lin and Li and took part in these discussions. Although a boxer and only marginally interested in religious ideas and practices, after meeting Lin Ch'ing, Feng became drawn into sect affairs; later, it was Feng K'e-shan, Li Wen-ch'eng, and Lin Ch'ing who became the three highest leaders of the Eight Trigrams. Feng introduces us to yet another type of restless, ambitious personality and potential rebel leader. Because he is also an excellent example of the semiprofessional fighter who concentrated on the military arts associated with the White Lotus tradition, it is worthwhile to pause to say a little about him.

In 1811 Feng K'e-shan was thirty-five years old and lived in Hua, probably in the district city itself. He came from a large lower gentry family and his cousins included holders of military degrees (both chü-jen and chin-shih). These more respectable branches of the family looked down on Feng K'e-shan and criticized him for being a gambler and a fighter; however, when later asked by government investigators why they had not kept a closer eye on him, the relatives replied feebly that "we each had our own livings to make, and so we couldn't discipline him." Clearly this was a family in which military arts were encouraged, and it is not surprising that although a few members had made their way into the formal elite by earning degrees, others like Feng K'e-shan would find themselves only on the fringes. Feng was a gambler and fighter, a frequenter of the wine-shop, the inn, and the market fair. His friends were restaurant owners, yamen runners, gamblers, and petty swindlers, and he was part of the small-time underworld found in the cities and towns of
China. As we have seen, Feng’s brother-in-law, Niu Liang-ch’en, was a treasury clerk in the magistrate’s yamen in Hua, and it may have been through Niu or through his relatives that Feng gained a reputation as a “strong man” and informal mediator for local disputes—although his physical skills alone made him a person to be reckoned with.

When he was twenty-one Feng K’e-shan had studied boxing and fencing with a man from Shantung called Wang Hsiang; later he studied with a man from his own district who also taught him how to fight using a spear. Neither of these men practiced a White Lotus sect, and Feng’s own “entrance” into a sect was oblique at best. Early in 1810 he simply decided to pretend that he belonged to one. At that time Niu Liang-ch’en had come back from Peking after becoming Lin Ch’ing’s pupil, and the two men discussed fighting techniques. Feng K’e-shan narrates:

My wife’s sister’s husband, Niu Liang-ch’en, noticed that in my system of boxing there were eight prescribed steps. He said to me, “Is that footwork of yours of the Eight Trigrams type?” I replied, “How did you know it was Eight Trigrams?” Niu said, “I practice the K’an Trigram, and so I understand.” So I pretended that I practiced the Li Trigram sect and told him this. Niu said, “So you’re in the Li Trigram. We are part of the K’an and Li Linked-Mansions (支分). Each one can learn what is right in his own way.” So after that, they all considered me in the Li Trigram.

When Feng K’e-shan was introduced by his brother-in-law to Lin Ch’ing in 1811, he became drawn even more into the sect network. He began to build his own following and through Lin Ch’ing became interested in the ideas of the sect. It appears to have been Feng’s willingness to gamble for high stakes, rather than his commitment to the religious purposes of the sect per se, that led him to associate himself with Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng, and as we shall see he never really stood on equal footing with either of them.

After spending only a month meeting Niu Liang-ch’en’s friends and relatives, Lin Ch’ing left Honan and returned to Peking. He was not especially pleased with the results of his trip and told his family that he had not been able to recruit even a single pupil. This pessimistic evaluation of his impact proved premature. Lin Ch’ing’s visit had had, on the contrary, a dramatic effect on sect members in Honan. Lin remained in Peking for several months, and then, per-
haps not entirely unaware that he had launched a series of far-reaching changes in sect organization, he returned to Hua during the summer of that same year (1811).

On this second visit, Lin learned that in his absence there had been a major reorganization of the Chiu-kung sect. Li Wen-ch’eng had gone to talk with the sect master, Liang Chien-chung. Li had explained the new ideas that Lin Ch’ing had expounded (and that are unfortunately not spelled out in the source material) and, debating in the presence of other members of the sect, Li used these ideas to challenge Liang for the position of sect master. The aging Liang, unable to counter Li’s arguments, admitted he was no match for his pupil and “took all his sacred scrolls and name lists and turned them over to Li Wen-ch’eng.” Thus Li Wen-ch’eng became the sect master, in possession of religious literature, and head of a realigned hierarchy of pupils. His teacher, his teacher’s teacher, and all their pupils now acknowledged Li as head of the Chiu-kung sect. In fact, Li’s teacher, Liu Kuo-ming, had been instrumental in helping his pupil during this takeover, and from this point on he acted vigorously as one of Li’s chief assistants. More important from Lin Ch’ing’s point of view, Li Wen-ch’eng’s victory was his as well. It was on the basis of Lin’s ideas that Liang Chien-chung was discredited and when Lin returned to Hua, Li Wen-ch’eng, Niu Liang-ch’en, and the others, “having questioned him and found that his doctrine was profound,” all kotowed to Lin Ch’ing and “submitted to his authority.”

The formation of the Eight Trigrams had begun in earnest, and talk of rebellion, if it had not been explicit before, became so now. Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng began to plan and organize “the great undertaking.” It is possible that these deliberations were influenced by the appearance in the sky of a great comet, a portent always taken seriously by Chinese as a reflection of the relationship between heaven, earth, and man. This comet had first appeared in the spring of 1811, and it was at its brightest during the late summer, coming closest to earth at the end of the 7th month. This was exactly when Lin Ch’ing made his second trip south. The Imperial Board of Astronomy declared the comet to be a sign of great glory for the dynasty, but it is likely that Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng considered it support for predictions about the imminent arrival of the new kalpa and an auspicious blessing for their enterprise.

Lin Ch’ing explained to his new pupils that he had “made a prediction according to our sacred writings, namely that Maitreya
Buddha has three sect teachings, the Ch’ing-yang, the Hung-yang, and the Pai-yang. It is now time for the Pai-yang sect teaching to flourish.” The turn in the kalpa that would initiate the Pai-yang era was imminent, and Lin explained to his followers that he “must rebel” (該起事).

This decision, it must be emphasized, came as a logical outgrowth of tendencies inherent in the ideas and structure of White Lotus sects. Certain leaders motivated by both conviction and ambition had encouraged these tendencies by stimulating the sometimes dormant anxieties of their followers about the long-predicted arrival of the apocalypse. The belief that this time of great terror and great hope might be finally at hand impelled Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng to move to prepare themselves and their followers. A great comet had indicated heavenly favor, and after five good years there had been a drought in parts of northern Honan that might be interpreted as the beginning of the period of kalpa calamities. Nevertheless, the road toward rebellion was an unpredictable and a dangerous one.

In order to provide coordinated leadership during this period of transition to the Pai-yang era, Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng pooled their ideas and settled on a new organizational framework, that of the eight trigrams. The two men decided that the sect over which Li Wen-ch’eng had recently assumed leadership would henceforth be known as the Chen Trigram sect. Lin Ch’ing’s Jung-hua Assembly would be entitled the K’an Trigram, K’an being the trigram associated with the north. Feng K’e-shan, the boxer, was brought in to fill out the threesome, and he and his followers were to keep the name Feng had been using, the Li Trigram. Other groups who might later join them could be incorporated simply by using one of the other five trigram names. In the meantime, the leaders explained the dominance of these three groups by saying that those other in fact nonexistent trigrams were “decreasing and atrophying” and had few members at the moment. On the other hand, the vigorous K’an, Li and Chen Trigrams could be considered to constitute the “three powers” (san-ts’ai), symbolizing Heaven, Earth, and Man, and would therefore be more than sufficient for their purposes.

As far as decision making and planning for the uprising were concerned, Lin Ch’ing was to have general authority over the Eight Trigram groups. He was called “the one to whom all the symbols [trigrams] submit,” and the “Overall Head of the Eight Trigrams.” Lin Ch’ing later told his followers near Peking that he had gone
south and assembled the seven trigrams, all of whom now followed
him. According to Lin (and corroborated by other evidence), "Li
Wen-ch’eng would lead all of the other seven trigrams with the
exception of the K’an Trigram, but when there was some business in
any of those seven trigrams, he was to notify me."72

Although Lin Ch’ing was the acknowledged sect master, Li
Wen-ch’eng had much to teach his new mentor. They overhauled and
expanded the system that Liang Chien-chung had initiated in the
Chiu-kung sect and, by combining this with serious discussions about
the approaching kalpa, hoped to increase significantly the num-
ber of sect members and the size of their contributions. The ranks
established by Liang were set aside and a new hierarchy was intro-
duced. As before, contributions were to be down payments on future
benefits.

It was promised that when Li Wen-ch’eng had risen up, every-
one who had given money or grain would be given land or
official rank. For every 100 cash, a person was promised 100
mou of land; for a certain amount of grain, he was promised a
certain official rank. This was all recorded in a register. More-
over, a receipt was made out and given to the donor for him to
keep as a guarantee.73

The grain would be converted to silver, and all contributions would
be passed from pupil to teacher until they reached the top. Li Wen-
ch’eng and Feng K’e-shan would forward money from their sects to
Lin Ch’ing.74

The hierarchy of ranks and titles that Li and Lin created was part
of a new system of relationships that would take effect in the coming
kalpa. Lin Ch’ing, Feng K’e-shan, and Li Wen-ch’eng were to
constitute a triad at the top of this hierarchy. To cement this new
relationship they followed the time-honored practice of swearing
brotherhood and then, in order to free themselves for these higher
positions, formally turned their respective trigram sects over to their
chief pupils to run.75 The three highest offices, derived from the
“three powers” of Heaven, Earth, and Man, were known as Con-
troller or King of Heaven (t’ien-p’an 天 盂 or t’ien-wang 天 王), Con-
troller or King of Earth (ti-p’an or ti-wang) and Controller or King of
Men (jen-p’an or jen-wang). They were to be filled by Lin Ch’ing,
Feng K’e-shan, and Li Wen-ch’eng respectively.76

Despite Lin Ch’ing’s preeminence in managing the Trigrams
prior to the rebellion, it was agreed from the beginning that the
responsibility for ruling in the future would fall to the King of Men, that is to say, Li Wen-ch’eng. Lin Ch’ing himself explained that “when the undertaking is accomplished, all-under-heaven will belong to the King of Men.” Lin Ch’ing and Feng K’e-shan were cast in the roles of sages. Lin declared that in the future, when the King of Men ruled, the Kings of Heaven and Earth “would become like the Sage Confucius and the Heavenly Master Chang,” and as sages they would “assist” Li Wen-ch’eng.

The tripartite division of power, while important and symbolically necessary, masked the fact that the real axis of power lay between Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng. These two men were to play complementary roles: the sage who was the religious authority but who turned over temporal power to the ruler, and the ruler who had political legitimacy but deferred on religious matters to the sage. Such patterned roles tapped a larger tradition of popular ideas about the ideal ruler–sage relationship dating back at least as far as the Han dynasty and a more specific White Lotus tradition that had manifested itself in previous rebellions. During the White Lotus rebellion in the early Chia-ch’ing reign, the two leaders set up by the sect rebels were a Maitreya incarnate (whose surname was Liu) and a descendant of the Ming ruling house (whose surname was Wang, but who was sometimes called Niu-pa or Chu). These two figures, the buddha and the restoration emperor, were reestablished by these Eight Trigram leaders.

Li Wen-ch’eng announced that “he was the reincarnation of the Chen Trigram leader whose surname was Wang”; he later adopted a Ming dynasty era-name and further emphasized his claim to the mandate to rule by declaring himself to be also the reincarnation of the rebel who had overthrown the Ming, Li Tzu-ch’eng. Like these predecessors, Li Wen-ch’eng would rule.

Lin Ch’ing, on the other hand, claimed the role of Maitreya, the one sent by the Eternal Mother to teach the true Way before the new kalpa arrived. The role of Maitreya was apparently blended together with that of sect patriarch and teacher and had become associated with the surname Liu. There was a person called Liu Lin who was recognized by these sects as a founder and teacher and as a previous incarnation of Maitreya Buddha; he was called the Patriarch of Former Heaven (hsien-t’ien tsu-shih). Lin Ch’ing was told by Li Wen-ch’eng during these 1811 meetings that he, Lin, had in a former life been mao-chin, that is to say, surnamed Liu, and
was in fact the reincarnation of the famous Liu Lin. Lin Ch’ing was thus to be known as the Patriarch of Latter Heaven (hou-t’ien tsu-shih 後天祖師). As Liu Lin had been one incarnation of Maitreya, so “this immortal nature” had been reborn in Lin Ch’ing. Lin was the sagely Buddha come to teach the Way, the sect master who prepared for the millennium; he was “Patriarch of Latter Heaven and Heavenly Controller in Charge of the Faith at the Time When the Eight Trigrams Begin to Practice the Law” (掌理天盤八卦開法後天祖師). When the time came, however, he would play his role and yield this power to the good ruler, the legitimate emperor, the King of Men, Li Wen-ch’eng.81

The only suggestion of anti-Manchu sentiment to be found in the ideas or actions of the Eight Trigrams is in a rhyme circulated among sect members in Honan and Shantung describing the role of Lin Ch’ing and his northern contingent in the coming uprising. The rhyme plays on his claim to the surname Liu, which was also the surname of the ruling family of the dynasty that called itself Han 漢; the same character han is used to refer to the Chinese ethnic group (in contrast with Mongols, Manchus, and other minority peoples). The rhyme was:

We wait only for the northern region to be returned
to a Han emperor,
Then all that is will again be under a single line.82

The leaders of the newly formed Eight Trigrams obviously wished to expand their claims to leadership as much as possible and did so by tapping a well-known pantheon of popular gods and heroes. Not content with being the reincarnation of several gods and men, Lin Ch’ing also announced that he was “the planet Venus (t’ai-pai chin-hsing 太白金星) come down to earth.”83 The rest of the hierarchy that Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng began to set up in the summer of 1811 will be discussed in greater detail below.

By the time Lin Ch’ing had returned to Peking the message had been sent out to all believers and to all possible converts: the devastating calamities accompanying the end of the present kalpa period were on their way; in this time of crisis the Eternal Mother had designated new leaders who would provide deliverance for all who followed their teaching. The foundations had been laid for future
growth and cooperation among these sects, and their increasing income fueled a steady expansion of the Eight Trigrams in both the northern and southern parts of the north China plain.

**Expansion of the K’an Trigram**

Through his trips to Hua in the spring and summer of 1811 and the forging of this new relationship with Li Wen-ch’eng, Lin Ch’ing substantially increased the size of his following. By using the new and more systematic form of eliciting and recording contributions, he became the recipient of money from all of the trigram sects. Thereafter, whenever Lin Ch’ing went south he received gifts from Li Wen-ch’eng and his pupils; on other occasions, Li sent men to deliver money to Lin, “the one to whom all the trigram symbols submit.”

Lin Ch’ing’s changing mode of transportation on his journeys to Honan vividly illustrates his growing power and status. On his first trip, in early 1811, Lin Ch’ing and two pupils had walked to and from Hua. That spring they went again on foot, but their return, after Li and the others had “acknowledged Lin Ch’ing’s authority,” was financed by their new followers, and Lin Ch’ing rode a donkey that had been presented to him. That fall Lin went again to Honan, riding the donkey while his friends walked; when they returned home a month later, Lin Ch’ing had also acquired a mule. Early the following year (1812) Lin went south again, this time riding in the family cart of one of his pupils, drawn by the mule. They returned in the same cart, now pulled by a horse (and carrying with them a box full of silver ingots). Lin Ch’ing did not make another trip south until a year later, but when he did, in his time of maximum power just prior to the uprising, he rode in a proper passenger cart, with one pupil driving it, one walking as an attendant, and another riding the horse out ahead.84

In 1811, 1812, and 1813 Lin Ch’ing used his new prestige and income to expand the sect in the capital area, to regularize meetings and contributions, and to recruit members specifically for the purpose of the uprising. In the spring of 1811, between his first two trips to Honan, Lin Ch’ing introduced his sworn brother the Chinese bannerman Ts’ao Lun to the sect. Ts’ao Lun had become potentially more useful to Lin Ch’ing, for he had recently been promoted and assigned as first captain to a post at Tu-shih-k’ou, a pass north of
Peking on the Great Wall. Ts’ao had come to see Lin Ch’ing to tell him of his new job and to apologize for still being unable to pay Lin back the money he had lent him. Lin Ch’ing assured him not to worry: “I will teach you a system,” he said, “by means of which you can increase your good fortune, avoid any bad luck, and in addition be saved from poverty.” Ts’ao was interested, and so Lin Ch’ing taught him the eight-character mantra and showed him how to recite it and meditate. Contrary to usual sect practice, however, Ts’ao Lun did not become Lin Ch’ing’s pupil. But later that year when Ts’ao complained that he was not especially satisfied with the “good benefits” promised from recitation of the mantra—“the eight characters which Third-elder-brother Lin taught me to recite and which were supposed to save me from poverty don’t seem to work”—he was told that this was because he had not formally become Lin’s pupil.

A year later Ts’ao finally decided to take the step of changing the relationship. He went to Lin Ch’ing’s house and kotowed to him as a pupil. Lin, as befitting a teacher rather than a sworn brother, “merely raised his arm, and did not return the courtesy [of kotowing to Ts’ao].” Ts’ao Lun did bring others to meet Lin Ch’ing and become his pupils. One was his twenty-three-year-old son, Ts’ao Fu-ch’ang; another was a certain Wang Wu, a household servant for a retired high military official in Peking who had been Ts’ao’s sworn brother for three years. After Lin Ch’ing returned from his second visit with Li Wen-ch’eng (when the formation of the Eight Trigrams had begun), he sent Liu Ch’eng-hsiang (who was now running Lin’s sect hereafter referred to by its new name, the K’an Trigram) to contact Ts’ao Lun and the others, to tell them of Lin’s predictions about the coming kalpa and to ask if they would be willing to participate. Ts’ao Lun and Wang Wu claimed later that they had not committed themselves to assisting with a rebellion but had only asked to be notified when a date for the uprising was determined.  

During this same period Lin Ch’ing began to secure the participation of eunuchs in his sect. Sometime in 1810 or 1811 his friend Ch’en Shuang had taken as his pupil a thirty-six-year-old fellow villager named Liu Te-ts’ai. Liu had moved to the capital area and become a eunuch; since 1806 he had been working in the Great Interior (ta-nei) inside the Forbidden City. In 1809 Liu Te-ts’ai’s adopted father had joined the Jung-hua Assembly; his uncle had
followed suit, and then Liu himself became Ch'en Shuang's pupil. Ch'en taught him the eight-character mantra and instructed him to go and convert his own pupils.  

During the next few years Liu Te-ts'ai did exactly that, and we know of at least seven persons, all eunuchs, whom he brought into the sect. These men worked inside the Forbidden City in a variety of different offices and had probably been born and raised in the Peking area. One eunuch revealed the extent to which Liu Te-ts'ai was proselytizing within the walls of the palace itself as he described his own conversion.

I ran into the eunuch Liu Te-ts'ai at the doorway of the Chi-shen Office [inside the palace]. I asked him into my quarters to drink some tea. At that time there was no one else there. Liu Te-ts'ai said to me, “We are very good friends, like brothers, why don’t you join the assembly and Learn the Right (hsueh-hao).” I asked him, “What assembly?” He said, “The Pai-yang sect. In our assembly we don’t drink wine and don’t gamble, and in the future there will be money for us to spend.” I thought this seemed like Learning the Right, so I agreed. He said, “There are usually a lot of people coming and going through here, so why don’t you kotow to me right now. There is no point in putting out incense or in burning paper slips.” So right there in my room in the Chi-shen Office, I kotowed to him and took him as my teacher.

These were not the first eunuchs to join a White Lotus sect. In fact, one of the men Liu Te-ts’ai tried to convert had been in a sect before (it was this man’s uncle whose widow had married Lin Ch’ing), and as we have seen, the Hung-yang sect of the healer Liu Hsing-li already counted several eunuchs among its members. Eunuchs did not live in isolation inside the Forbidden City in Peking. Those who came from families in the capital area kept in contact with their relatives and were active links between the palace and the countryside. These eunuchs in general, and Liu Te-ts’ai and his pupils in particular, were later to play an important role in the attack on the Forbidden City, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Liu’s followers were deliberately recruited for this purpose.

There is no question that after 1811 Lin Ch’ing cultivated these eunuchs and did all he could to secure their loyalty. Contrary to normal sect practice, Lin Ch’ing continually gave gifts of silver to these pupils, in fulfillment of Liu Te-ts’ai’s promises of “money to
spend." Two of the eunuchs testified that they received money from Liu on the 1st day of every month, usually about one tael. It was Lin Ch’ing’s practice to deposit the money with a jewelry store (run by men from Shansi) located in the southern section of Peking. Liu Te-ts’ai would then go to the shop and withdraw money as he needed it. Liu told his pupils that this money had been specially given to them by the sect head Lin Ch’ing and that they were to tell no one about it.  

During 1812 Lin Ch’ing increased the size of his K’an Trigram dramatically by securing the support of the Pai-yang sect leader Li Lao and all of his pupils. This incorporation of Li Lao’s sect into Lin’s organization meant increased occupational and geographic diversity: Li Lao’s pupils were boxers and healers, eunuchs and Manchus, and they came from villages southeast of Peking and from the capital city itself. The link between Lin Ch’ing and Li Lao was a man called Liu Ti-wu 劉 fifth, who brought his teacher, Li Lao, to meet Lin Ch’ing. Lin explained about the coming kalpa and persuaded Li Lao that if he and his pupils were to join with him they too could be saved from those great calamities. He was convincing as always and both Li Lao and Liu Ti-wu kotowed to Lin Ch’ing and acknowledged his authority. Lin Ch’ing served them dinner, then they returned home. Thus Li Lao’s Pai-yang sect, and the Hung-yang sect of his pupil Liu Hsing-li, were brought under Lin Ch’ing’s direction. These men worked in the next year to convert new members in anticipation of the coming kalpa calamities and cemented their relationship with Lin Ch’ing by encouraging contributions from their pupils and passing this money on to Lin.

Liu Ti-wu became caught up in Lin Ch’ing’s preparations for the uprising and continued to work to help Lin increase his following. Liu was useful because he had belonged to two sects and because he had lived both southwest of Peking (in southern Wan-p’ing district) and southeast of Peking (in southern T’ung district). He reestablished contact with a branch sect of Ku Liang’s Jung-hua Assembly through its leader, a man called Ch’ü Ssu 趙四. Ch’ü Ssu was told about Lin Ch’ing and his plans and was asked to be a part of the K’an Trigram. Ch’ü agreed and worked to make converts in the area of his village so that by 1813 he had tripled the number of his pupils.

Lin Ch’ing was not always successful in persuading every sect he knew about to acknowledge his leadership and participate in the uprising. Contacts were made with a certain Wang Jui, the head of the Lao-li Assembly in Hsin-ch’eng, through his brother-in-law who
Villages in which K’an Trigram sect members resided
was in one of Lin's sects. Wang Jui, quoting from the literature used by his sect, tried to explain that it was not a good time for rebellion: "If you want to rebel, you must wait a few more years. How can you do it during such a peaceful time? You all are acting too precipitously." The brother-in-law tried to argue that their leader Lin Ch'ing knew what he was doing and had a great many followers. Wang Jui was unimpressed and claimed that his sect was at least as numerous. "I am in the Lao-li Assembly. I don't want to belong to your Jung-hua Assembly. Don't bother me!" Further attempts to persuade Wang Jui also failed, though there is no indication that Lin Ch'ing ever went personally to talk with him, but in the end Lin remembered this group and sent them identifying signs so that they would be spared during the great calamities.

Lin Ch'ing even tried to enlist the support of the man he had ousted as head of the Jung-hua Assembly years earlier. He sent a pupil to see Kuo Ch'ao-chün, to explain the sophistication of Lin's sect and to ask Kuo to come and talk. Kuo claimed later that he had refused to do so, though he had given Lin what was essentially protection money: "He said that Lin Ch'ing was going to rebel and I should give four strings of cash every month; if I did, Lin Ch'ing wouldn't kill me. When I heard these words, I begged him to beg Lin Ch'ing for me, saying 'please spare me!'" Kuo did not participate in the uprising, but, as with Wang Jui, protective banners were sent to him as an albeit uncooperative fellow believer.

Kuo Ch'ao-chün's experience was not atypical. Much of the proselytizing done by Lin Ch'ing and his pupils in 1811 and 1812 was accompanied by increasingly precise promises of benefits to be received "after the affair was successful" and equally explicit threats of the dangers awaiting nonbelievers. Potential converts were told about the turn of the kalpa and its accompanying destruction and were urged to join the sect to avoid certain death. Membership alone was sufficient to place one among those who would be saved, yet Lin Ch'ing made very positive efforts to persuade believers that they should volunteer to take part in the K'an Trigram uprising that would accompany the kalpa calamities. Land and rank were offered as inducements to encourage conversion, contributions, and participation: "Later on there will be unlimited wealth and prestige (wu-ch'iung fu-kuei 無窮富貴)" promised one teacher. Those who assisted actively would be rewarded accordingly, and "those who help a lot will be made high officials, those who help less will be made lesser officials." The usual promise was that one would be given an
“official post” (kuan-tso 官僚), but some teachers were more specific, telling pupils that they would receive “buttons of the first rank,” “a first- or second-degree rank,” “a soldier’s stipend,” or “be installed as chief eunuch.” These promises were combined with threats: “Whoever doesn’t want to help will be treated like a deserter and killed”; “If you don’t agree to participate, you won’t live long”; “After the affair was completed we would all become officials, but anyone who didn’t participate would be struck dead by a thunderbolt.”

The use of these threats and promises implies incorrectly that the many people who joined the would-be rebels at this stage did so entirely out of fear or greed and not out of any faith in sect teachings. It is important to remember that neither these threats or promises were actually carried out prior to the rebellion. Except for the eunuchs mentioned above, no one was rewarded concretely in advance nor was anyone harmed. A potential recruit, in order to be moved by either carrot or stick, had first to believe in at least the possibility that what Lin Ch’ing predicted might actually come to pass. White Lotus sects were fundamentally different from criminal organizations, which normally operated outside the system and whose promises of benefits or violence were carried out immediately. These sects put their challenge to the state and society in the future, and only after a designated time did they openly carry out what had previously been talk. Those who believed and were moved by threats and promises were people who thought that the sect might some day take power as predicted. To those who did not believe this, talk of “official posts” and “not living long” was meaningless.

By the summer of 1813, Lin Ch’ing had built his K’an Trigram into an umbrella over his own Jung-hua Assembly and four other previously separate sects. This network of teachers and pupils numbered more than three hundred men from nearly sixty villages in seven districts. While this network was built by ties between individuals, these three hundred sect members in fact represented nearly that many families. When a male adult joined the sect, his wife, parents, and grown children often followed suit. Even when other members of his household did not formally join the sect, later when the new kalpa came, the protection accorded each member of the sect automatically included his family. Thus the total number of people who could be considered associated with Lin Ch’ing’s K’an Trigram sect at this stage was probably closer to one thousand.

Although there were a large number of resident “believer” house-
holds in some villages, it should not be assumed that any one village was dominated by sect members. In Sung-chia village where Lin Ch'ing lived, for example, there were at least forty-four adult male members of his sect, one-third of them from the Sung family that gave the village its name. In terms of the sect, this constituted a large number of believers from one place. Even so, there were definitely residents of the village, including relatives of sect members, who did not belong. Without knowing the total number of people or households in Sung-chia, it is impossible to guess at the ratio of believers to nonbelievers. There is no evidence that Lin Ch'ing could (or did) consider this or any other village a solid "base" or "nest." These sects were built up through individual ties, and prior to any rebellion they remained limited by those ties.

Similarly, the links between these villages were created by the sect, and this network appears to have existed independently of other social organizations. It is true that in many cases the sect did expand along lines of kinship or physical proximity: as we have seen, one believer would convert his family, friends, and neighbors. Some of the crucial links in the K''an Trigram network were created, however, between individuals who shared only one thing: their interest in the ideas and practices of White Lotus sects. The crucial association between Lin Ch'ing and Li Wen-ch'eng, brought about through a chance meeting and a mutual friend, would not have been possible without their common involvement in a religious sect. When the teacher–pupil links reinforced preexisting ties, they were stronger by consequence. When they did not, as between chance acquaintances from distant villages, between a visiting healer and his patient, the links were correspondingly weaker, but they existed nonetheless. The sect network grew and spread in the interstices of the larger society, and although technically illegal and sometimes in conflict with normal social relationships, these sects—even those in a state of expansion—did not challenge or openly interfere with the status quo.

**New Groups Join the Trigrams**

Having established contact with sect leaders in Honan, Lin Ch'ing kept in regular touch with them during the next three years. For all the trigram sects the years 1811 through 1813 were a fruitful period of cultural interchange, a time when there was speeded-up expansion and increasing travel and communication. It was a time
when boxers competed and compared skills, healers traveled and learned new techniques, sect masters discussed predictions and doctrine, and organizers compared systems.

Lin Ch'ing went again to Honan early in 1812. He took three pupils with him, remained there a month, and when he returned brought with him a box of silver ingots and a talisman mounted as an impressive scroll, gifts from pupils there. Lin used some of this new income to improve his living arrangements. He enlarged his quarters and his privacy by building a separate room for himself in the Tung family courtyard, and he hired his niece's husband to come and cook for him so that he could eat separately from his sister and her family. This space was badly needed, for by 1813 Lin Ch'ing had acquired a sizable household. In addition to the Tung family (his sister and all her relatives), Lin had his own wife and two stepdaughters, three pupils who lived with and worked for Lin doing both household and sect chores, plus his friend Ch'en Shuang and three godsons who had more or less moved in by the summer of 1813. In addition, Lin Ch'ing had frequent meetings in his quarters and visitors from the Peking area and from the south.

In the late spring of 1812, three men brought Lin Ch'ing another delivery of money from Li Wen-ch'eng and the trigram sects in the south. In the fall of 1812 two other men from Honan came to deliver money to Lin; they too stayed only a few days and then returned south. Later that fall Li Wen-ch'eng himself came to Sung-chia village. Li brought with him his own right-hand man Yü K'e-ching and Lin Ch'ing's old friend and pupil Niu Liang-ch'en. Yü K'e-ching was originally from Shansi but had moved to a village north of Hua city in Honan. It was to Yü that Li Wen-ch'eng had formally handed over control of his Chen Trigram sect, and Yü was evidently a man of some authority in sect matters. He had in his possession a sacred book that he now presented to Lin Ch'ing. It was entitled "Comprehensive Manual for Responding to the Kalpas of the Three Buddhas" (San-fo ying-chieh t'ung-kuan t'ung-shu 三佛應詮觀通書), and as far as we know it was the first religious book owned by Lin Ch'ing. (After the uprising it was found by the government wrapped in red cloth and hidden in a bricked-over hole under the eaves of Lin Ch'ing's room.) Later Lin would use this book to make predictions about the arrival of the kalpa and to derive titles for the new Eight Trigrams hierarchy. It was probably at this meeting between Lin and Li Wen-ch'eng that they decided on the "public slogan" (ming-hao 明號) to be used by the Eight Trigrams:
Districts and cities of the north China plain
Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way (feng-t’ien k’ai-tao 天開道).\textsuperscript{108}

The visits by sect leaders to Peking to call upon and deliver money to Lin Ch’ing reflect the process of growth and expansion taking place in those sects during the two years since the first meetings between Li and Lin. This expansion took place in Honan, in southern Chihli, and in Shantung and consisted of the conversion of individuals, families, and entire sects to the cause of the Eight Trigrams. Hsu An-kuo, the healer from southern Chihli, adopted the new system of registering contributions and incorporated Lin and Li’s specific plans for an uprising into his own teachings. He worked hard during these years, traveling often and preaching the sect as he went. His activities provide a good illustration of the different ways in which the sect network was extended.

In the winter of 1811 Hsu An-kuo left home to make a trip into western Shantung. He again visited Hu-chia village in Ts’ao district where he had been the previous year curing illnesses. Several branches of a family called Chu lived in this village, and one of these men, Chu Ch’eng-fang 成方, was now converted by Hsu and became his pupil. In subsequent months, Chu Ch’eng-fang in turn transmitted the sect to his five cousins. Hsu An-kuo treated him as his “top pupil”—“the one who looks after all the others.” Chu and his cousins propagated the sect in Ts’ao and Ting-t’ao districts in Shantung.\textsuperscript{109} In the spring of 1812, when Hsu An-kuo was again (or perhaps still) in Shantung, he converted another man from Ts’ao called Chang I, who would later also play an important role in organizing Hsu’s pupils in that area. Among Chang I’s first converts were his wife’s brother and his family, including his five sons.\textsuperscript{110}

While Hsu An-kuo’s network grew in part by whole family accretions like the Chu brothers or Chang I and his relatives, it also spread by the extension of vertical chains of teachers and pupils. In Ting-t’ao district, for example, one such line consisted of Hsu’s pupil Liu Yun-chung, the latter’s pupil (one of many) Liu Ching-t’ang, Liu Ching-t’ang’s pupil Chou Wen-sheng, and Chou’s pupil Li Fa-yen.\textsuperscript{111} Although in this case these men were all from the same district, this type of chain often spread the sect over a wide area. Since the process of conversion and introduction to basic sect practices could be accomplished quite speedily, it was easy for new generations to be created very rapidly.

Hsu An-kuo gained followers further east in Shantung not by building up a network from scratch but by converting men who had
large sect followings of their own, Ch’eng Pai-yueh in Shan district\textsuperscript{112} and Ts’ui Shih-chün in Chin-hsiang.\textsuperscript{113} This latter method of expansion brought large well-established blocs into the trigram apparatus.

On another trip to Shantung in the 2d month of 1813, Hsu An-kuo visited each of his senior pupils and began to discuss the planned rebellion quite specifically. He explained to them about the vigorous growth of the K’an, Li, and Chen Trigram sects, and he told them about the sect head in the north known as “Venerable Master Liu” (Lin Ch’ing), and the trigram head in Hua called Li Wen-ch’eng. He urged his pupils to go to Hua and pay a call on Li Wen-ch’eng; in compliance with this suggestion four important pupils went to visit Li in the spring of 1813. Hsu An-kuo took them there and on the way told them more about the coming uprising. He said that the Pai-yang kalpa was about to begin. “Seven days before the Pai-yang kalpa we would have to distribute small white cloth banners. We did not have to prepare or make any knives or swords: when the time came we were just to grab whatever was handy.” Sect members would be given these banners to place in the gateways of their houses. The Pai-yang kalpa would come and cut away the past with the black wind that would blow during seven days and seven nights. Sect members would wear white sashes, and when they took action they “were to massacre the residents of any house with no banner at the gate.” In this way only sect members would be left and all others would die.\textsuperscript{114}

By the time they reached Hua, Hsu’s pupils had had an opportunity to get to know one another and to discuss the great undertaking in which they were involved. Arriving at Li’s village, they were first introduced to several of Li Wen-ch’eng’s pupils and assistants. They were further briefed by Liu Kuo-ming, Li Wen-ch’eng’s original teacher and now his assistant and the man who had brought Hsu An-kuo into that sect. Liu told them more about the visits of “Venerable Master Liu” to Hua and about some of the prophecies and scriptural quotations which “proved” that indeed the Pai-yang era was about to begin. Finally, Hsu’s Shantung pupils were presented to Li Wen-ch’eng himself. They kotowed. Li remained standing, and then said to them, “You must all work very hard. This kalpa can create endless misery or it can be a preparation for endless blessing. You should all go home now, and if you have any further questions, ask your teacher.”\textsuperscript{115}

Hsu An-kuo’s contacts with the top rebel leadership were all made
through Li Wen-ch’eng; he made no trips to Peking and only saw Lin Ch’ing when the latter was in Hua district. On the other hand, Feng K’e-shan, as befitted the future King of Earth, made several trips to Sung-chia village in addition to meeting with Lin Ch’ing in Honan. He went once in late 1811 and again in early 1813; in the time between these visits, he made remarkable progress generating a following and gaining authority as a sect leader.

In 1811, at Lin Ch’ing’s invitation, Feng K’e-shan came to Sung-chia village to demonstrate and give instruction in martial arts. Feng brought with him his teacher, an elderly Shantung man named Wang Hsiang, and they taught their boxing system to some of Lin Ch’ing’s pupils. It is likely, however, that Lin Ch’ing did not treat Feng with the respect he accorded Li Wen-ch’eng. Although Lin and Li had felt the need to include someone who was proficient at military arts, Lin Ch’ing, who had few purely physical skills, took a patronizing attitude toward such men. Lin’s nephew tells of a visit to his uncle by another boxer that illustrates this condescension: Lin Ch’ing’s assistant Liu Ch’eng-hsiang introduced this man to Lin as a person of outstanding ability who simply could not be injured by a knife or sword. When Lin Ch’ing wanted to take a knife and try, Liu Ch’eng-hsiang stopped him, saying, “This is serious. You must not treat it lightly.” Urged to study with this man, Lin Ch’ing was contemptuous: “Here, ours is the Way of the Immortals; we don’t use knives or violence.” It is not known how Lin and Feng K’e-shan got along, but it is not surprising that Feng felt the need to demonstrate his usefulness and to build a network of his own comparable to that of the King of Heaven and the King of Men. Furthermore, Feng was intrigued by the millenarian prophecies of Lin and Li and drawn by the accompanying promises of wealth and power. In 1812 and 1813 he worked hard organizing men who would participate on his behalf in the uprising.

In Ching district in central Chihli on the Shantung border there was a large group of sect members who concentrated on the martial arts dimension of the White Lotus tradition. Feng K’e-shan established contact with these men, won their respect for his physical ability, recruited them, and made that network his “base.” Their leader, Sung Yueh-lung, was forty-three years old and was known for his skill at various forms of fighting, including kicking, the use of fists, staffs, and clubs. Sung had taught these skills to many disciples and called his system the I-ho (Righteous Harmony) school of fighting. They considered themselves a sect but the emphasis was clearly on military arts.
It was this common interest in fighting techniques that eventually brought Feng K’e-shan and Sung Yueh-lung together. In the spring of 1812 a sect member called Huo Ying-fang who lived near Sung but who came originally from Hua suggested a match between Feng K’e-shan and Sung Yueh-lung. Sung was interested, and so Feng came to Ching district to Sung’s village to compete with him in boxing and fencing. Feng’s abilities were superior and he was acknowledged as the champion. Sung Yueh-lung and his son kotowed to him, took him as their teacher, and joined his Li Trigram sect.

The Sungs learned the eight-character chant and thereafter taught it to all their pupils, telling them that they should now consider themselves part of the Li Trigram sect. One of Sung’s more important pupils was a military sheng-yuan (holder of the lowest military examination degree) from Ku-ch’eng named Li Sheng-te. Li had at least twenty-three pupils under him, from towns and villages mostly in adjacent Ching district. Thus, through this one match, Feng K’e-shan acquired all these men as part of his network and thereafter considered them his primary body of followers, his Li Trigram sect. He maintained regular communication with them and began to prepare them for the coming uprising.

Late in the winter of 1812, Feng K’e-shan decided to visit Lin Ch’ing again, perhaps with the intention of impressing Lin with his new following. He stopped off on the way to see his pupils and may have traveled north from Hua together with Huo Ying-fang, who was just returning home after being presented to Li Wen-ch’eng. Feng stayed with the Sung family when he arrived at their village, and they decided that Sung Yueh-lung’s son Yü-lin would go with him to see Lin Ch’ing. En route they went through the provincial capital of Pao-ting and stayed there at the same inn where Lin and Niu Liang-ch’en had first become acquainted during the trial in 1808. The inn owner, Ma Lao-t’ai, had later become a pupil of Lin Ch’ing, and he now helped Feng hire a cart to complete the last leg of their journey. When they arrived in Sung-chia village, Sung Yü-lin, who was meeting Lin Ch’ing for the first time, kotowed respectfully to him. The three men discussed the uprising. Lin Ch’ing told Feng that the public slogan for the Eight Trigrams had been decided upon—Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way—and he could begin telling his pupils about it; the secret password and date of the turn in the kalpa, on the other hand, would not be determined until the coming summer. Lin asked Feng how many men he could muster. With some pride, Feng replied, exaggerating, “About three hundred.” After several days, Feng and young Sung left and returned.
south. They stopped in Ching district, and then Feng returned alone to Hua where he informed Niu Liang-ch'en (who had been instrumental in arranging the trip) and through Niu, Li Wen-ch'eng.

In the 4th month of that year Feng returned to Ching, and that spring he and Sung Yueh-lung and one of Sung’s pupils traveled to market fairs in the area, demonstrating their skills and attracting potential pupils. By the summer of 1813 Sung Yueh-lung’s following included at least fifty men who, together with their families, were prepared to participate in the Eight Trigrams uprising. Although Feng K’e-shan did take a few other pupils, he relied overwhelmingly on Sung to provide men for “his” trigram.

Lin Ch’ing continued to receive callers after Feng K’e-shan left in the 2d month of 1813. Two months later he had a visit from a man called Liu Yü-lung 劉玉隆. Liu is another example of the practicing sect member who through friends who were believers came in contact with Lin Ch’ing and decided to become part of the Eight Trigrams. Liu came from Jao-yang district in central Chihli, but a chance meeting with members of Ku Liang’s Jung-hua Assembly in 1808 had led to his conversion to that sect. In 1811 Liu came north to visit his teacher and acquaintances near Peking. He learned about the plans then being made in Hua, was told that there would be an uprising led by all the trigram masters, and agreed to participate. Thus, when Liu Yü-lung came to see Lin Ch’ing in the spring of 1813, he was given more specific instructions: return home and convert more pupils, and when the time arrives, come to Peking and participate in the palace attack with Lin Ch’ing’s other followers.

In the 5th month of 1813 Lin Ch’ing received another visit from the titular head of Li Wen-ch’eng’s Chen Trigram sect, Yü K’e-ching. Yü brought with him several newly converted pupils from Chü-lu in central Chihli. By including these Chü-lu men in the Eight Trigrams, Yü K’e-ching had tapped a large pool of believers in that area. These men, including the sect leader Yang Yü-shan 楊遇山, had belonged to the Ta-sheng sect in Chü-lu (itself an offshoot of the Kao family’s Li Trigram) that had been prosecuted by the government in 1811 and 1812 (see pp. 56-60). After these investigations, Yang Yü-shan and his fellow believers had given up holding meetings and allowed the congregational aspects of sect membership to remain temporarily in abeyance. In the spring of 1813 Yü K’e-ching had come to that district to cure illnesses and find pupils; he and Yang became acquainted and found that they were “in the same sect.” Yang began to treat Yü K’e-ching as his teacher and recommended
him and his sect to others. Yü was a success as a healer and as a promoter of the Eight Trigrams. He told Yang about the imminent arrival of the Pai-yang era, invited him and his followers to be part of their group, and persuaded them to come to Peking to be introduced to Lin Ch’ing. They did so and Lin explained that the turn in the kalpa was coming that very year, and he was already arranging with eunuchs to capture the Forbidden City in Peking. Lin invited Yang to participate and urged him to go home and “call his pupils together again.” The Chü-lu men were persuaded, and so their Ta-sheng sect was reassembled to become part of the Eight Trigrams.126

Preparations for the coming uprising had intensified in 1813. As we have seen, word had been sent out during the preceding winter and spring that the new kalpa would arrive that very year. Believers had been alerted, told of a public slogan, and urged to convert and recruit as many people as possible. During the summer Li Wen-ch’eng’s adopted son Liu Ch’eng-chang came to see Lin Ch’ing. He stayed for several weeks—from the end of the 6th month until the middle of the 7th. He was accompanied as before by Ch’in Li and brought the customary gifts for Lin Ch’ing, this time 500 taels. Lin immediately took this money and deposited it in a shop in Peking. Lin and Liu discussed the serious matter of determining the precise date of the turn in the kalpa, and Lin decided that he would go to Hua very soon for a major meeting of all the trigram leaders. Liu left immediately to notify everyone of this meeting.127

Substantial progress had been made in planning the Eight Trigrams uprising since Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng’s first meetings in the summer of 1811. By the fall of 1812 they had agreed on a public slogan and had begun to tell people that the kalpa would come sometime in 1813. The plan of action for responding to the kalpa had been worked out, but in broad outline only. When the signal was given, it was understood that each sect group would move into action and that there would be simultaneous uprisings led by each major leader. With the help of natural and supernatural disasters accompanying the arrival of the new era, nonbelievers would be eliminated and only members of the Eight Trigrams would be left. The details of this plan, including the date on which it would be put into effect, were left to be worked out at the meeting in Honan during the summer of 1813. In the meantime, sect members, though increasingly in contact with one another, were still living normally. Organizationally, a large-scale network linking one sect with another in pyramidal fashion had been created, and previously small and
isolated sects had now become part of a lively whole. Believers waited only for the announcement from their leaders before openly converting this organization into a vehicle for rebellion.

THE TAO-K’OU MEETING

When Lin Ch’ing left home for the meeting in Honan in the 7th month of 1813, he was near the peak of his power and prestige and he traveled in style. Accompanied by three pupils, Lin rode in a passenger cart just presented to him (perhaps specifically for this journey) by his eunuch pupils. He instructed his godson Ch’en Wen-k’u-ec to ride on the lead horse, his pupil Chih Chin-ts’ai to drive, and his friend and pupil Ch’en Shuang to serve as his personal attendant. It was a fine contrast with his days in Kiangsu when he had waited upon other men.128

On the way south they passed through Pao-ting prefectural city and stopped at the Ma family inn; Lin Ch’ing brought Ma Lao-t’ai up to date on the plans and asked him to prepare his group.129 Leaving Pao-ting, Lin Ch’ing continued south to the river port of Tao-k’ou near Hua city where he stayed at an inn. Li Wen-ch’eng’s home was about five miles away, so Chih Chin-ts’ai rode their donkey there to tell Li that Lin Ch’ing had arrived. Liu Ch’eng-chang had brought news of the visit and Niu Liang-ch’en, who had been particularly active in organizing Li Wen-ch’eng’s followers, helped notify and assemble all the sect leaders in the area. Among those present were Li’s former teacher and present assistant Liu Kuo-ming, the Chen Trigram sect head Yü K’e-ch’ing, the Li Trigram sect head Feng K’e-shan, other lesser teachers and leaders from the Hua and Chun area, Yang Yü-shan and Chao Te-i from central Chihli, and Chu Ch’eng-fang from Shantung. The meeting lasted from the middle of the 7th month until early in the 8th.130

The most important matter to be settled was the date of the uprising. Word had already spread among believers that the turn in the kalpa would come very soon. In the early spring, the healer Hsu An-kuo had told one of his pupils that the kalpa would begin on the chia-tzu day at the end of the 10th month; he later revised this and declared that “we would pass through the kalpa” in the 8th month.131 As the year went on, an atmosphere of excited anticipation was being generated, and pressure on the leaders to name a specific date for the rising increased.
This atmosphere was unquestionably affected by the dismal economic situation in the southern portion of the north China plain in 1813. There had been drought and flood in a few of these districts in 1811 and in many more in 1812, a fact that may have encouraged Lin and Li to expect that the turn in the kalpa accompanying such calamities might not be far away and to anticipate increased support for their enterprise. Since the very early spring in 1813 there had been a severe drought that had continued into the summer without abatement. Lack of sufficient snow the preceding winter had combined with lack of rain in the spring to leave the fields dry and hard; many were not even ploughed and only a few were planted. The price of grain had begun to rise and famine was setting in. "Those who have become impoverished," memorialized a local official, "eat grass roots and tree bark to stay alive. The leaves have all been picked off the willow trees which line the public highways and have been eaten for food." Another official traveling from Peking toward the southwest in the 8th month of 1813, just as the Tao-k'ou meeting was taking place, wrote a poem recording his feelings.

For ten days I have been traveling through Honan, and I can hardly bear to look at this desolation. It is easy to gather up the green sprouts, for they are like straw; but it is difficult to bury the dead in the hard yellow earth. How long has it been without rain? No one can do anything but sigh, whether he owns land or not. Only a few stalks of tough grass can be pulled up, and these even a passing stranger must use for food.

He went on to describe the empty houses and abandoned villages, the silence with which families left home in search of food and with which bodies fell to the ground beside the road; looters and wolves entered the villages at night, women begged by the highway, children were sold by their parents. Government relief had done little to improve the situation. The disaster area formed a wide belt extending across northern Honan, southern Chihli, and into southwestern Shantung.

A milder spring drought in the Peking area had led to a rise in the price of grain and Lin Ch'ing had taken advantage of this by circulating the rhyme, "If you want cheaper flour, Lin Ch'ing must take power" (若要白麪贱，除非林坐清了院). When he visited the south it became even clearer to Lin that there were very practical reasons for fixing a date in the near future.
It was Lin Ch'ing who made this decision and who announced it to his assembled colleagues at Tao-k'ou. He declared that, on the basis of certain passages in the religious books of the sect, he had determined that the new kalpa would begin on the 15th day of the 9th month; at that time members of the Eight Trigrams would "make known the Way" (*ming-tao 明道). This phrase circulated among sect members as another euphemism for their "great undertaking." One teacher told his pupils cryptically, "There will be Daylight. The Way will be made known" (要天明了，要明道了). As proof of Li Wen-ch'eng's role in the coming kalpa era, Lin Ch'ing cited a phrase from his "Comprehensive Manual for Responding to the Kalpas of the Three Buddhas": "someone named Li would make known the Way" (十八子明道).136

Lin Ch'ing explained the choice of date by quoting another passage from sect scriptures:

Eighth month, midautumn festival,
Midautumn festival, eighth month.
It is then that the yellow flowers will bloom everywhere.

The midautumn festival (*chung-ch'iu 中秋) fell every year on the 15th day of the 8th month. Lin Ch'ing explained that originally he had expected that in 1813 there would be an intercalary 8th month that would have fulfilled the prophecy mentioning two eighth months. When he learned this would not be the case, he had concluded that the 15th day of the 9th month could be properly said to constitute the 15th day of the second 8th month, the time when they would respond to the turn in the kalpa and make known the Way. These phrases involving blooming and brightness both convey graphically the process these sects underwent as they turned from private gatherings to open rebellion.137 The fact that at least two preceding White Lotus sects had determined that the new kalpa would begin on the 15th day of the 8th month indicates that some sect literature was persuasive on this point.138 The written prophecy was, however, interpreted in light of other practical considerations.

In the annual agricultural cycle in north China, a slack period in terms of demand for labor on the land did not begin until after the spring crops of sorghum, millet, buckwheat, and beans had been harvested and the winter crop of wheat planted.139 Until then, all those with land could be expected to be very busy, and those without land who were willing to work as hired laborers found their services much in demand. Normally this busy period fell in August, Septem-
ber, and October (in terms of the lunar calendar, during the 7th and 8th months plus the 6th or 9th depending on the year). In 1813 the peak period of agricultural activity in the autumn occurred during the 7th, 8th, and 9th months. Lin Ch’ing wanted as many followers as possible to participate in his strike on the Forbidden City, and the middle of the 9th month, no earlier, was therefore most practical. These considerations were less relevant in the drought areas of the southern plain where there was little to be harvested.  

Another matter of concern to Lin Ch’ing was the whereabouts of the Chia-ch’ing Emperor. If Lin was to be responsible for attacking and occupying Peking, it was essential that he know exactly where the emperor would be at the time. Every year during the summer the emperor went to Jehol, north of the Great Wall, to hunt, relax, escape the summer heat of Peking, and reaffirm his Manchu heritage. These trips were routine matters, and it is unlikely that the emperor’s itinerary was a secret within the palace; Lin Ch’ing could have learned of the plans through his eunuch pupils. In 1813 the Chia-ch’ing Emperor left the capital for the north on 7/18, the same day as the preceding year. If he were to follow the same schedule (as he apparently intended to), he would arrive in Jehol on 7/24, remain there until 8/15, when he would leave for two weeks at the hunting park at Mu-lan, return to Jehol, and be back in Peking on the 17th day of the 9th month. It is clear that when Lin Ch’ing planned the attack on the Forbidden City, he knew that on the 15th the emperor would be outside Peking but only a few miles away. The palace would not be as heavily guarded, and the emperor, despite his retinue of bodyguards, would be more vulnerable while traveling.

Thus, as far as attacking the emperor was concerned, 9/15 was a convenient date for Lin Ch’ing. In terms of agriculture, it was late enough so that most of the autumn harvest would have been collected and if the millennium was to arrive, surely there would be no need to plant for the spring. In discussing these matters with the other Eight Trigram leaders in Honan, where drought and famine loomed large in a way they did not in Peking, Lin Ch’ing could not but have felt that the sooner they acted the better.

The sect leaders also selected visual and verbal signs by means of which their followers could identify one another and be protected from harm. Drawing on a long tradition of using colored turbans as symbols of rebellion, it was decided that all Eight Trigram members would tie white sashes about their heads. White, the color of the Paiyang (White Sun) era that was about to arrive, would also be the
color of their banners.\textsuperscript{142} Houses of sect members would be marked by the presence of a small white cloth banner in the gateway. Women believers would wear small white banners in the lapel of their clothing. Active rebels would use pieces of white cloth as turbans and if possible as sashes about their waists. On those banners belonging to leaders, the public slogan of the Eight Trigrams was to be written—Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way.\textsuperscript{143}

These visual signs were not enough; as there was a “public slogan” (*ming-hao*) so there would be a “secret slogan” (*an-hao* 暗號). The latter was in reality a password, not to be written down or broadcast to the world at large, but only to be spoken by one sect member to another. At this meeting, Lin Ch’ing and the others decided that this password would be the phrase “Be Victorious” (*te sheng* 得勝). When one rebel met another he would greet him loudly with these two words, thus identifying himself and by a kind of verbal magic inducing success. When a rebel killed a nonbeliever he was also to speak these words.\textsuperscript{144}

Larger strategical matters were also discussed and decided upon at the Tao-k’ou meeting. The leaders determined not only when but precisely how they would respond to the kalpa. Feng K’e-shan alleged in his confession that a territorial division of the spoils was agreed upon, and he reported that the following conversation took place at the summer meeting:

Lin Ch’ing said, “I want to occupy (chan 佔) the area of Pao­ting in Chihli. You each can go and occupy some other place. Any place that you don’t occupy, I will take over myself.” Li Wen-ch’eng then said that he would occupy the area of Chang-te prefecture in Honan. I said that I would occupy the area of Te district in Shantung.\textsuperscript{145}

This scheme is more consistent with Feng’s far-from-religious attitude toward the entire uprising than it is with the vision of a single system imagined by Li Wen-ch’eng and Lin Ch’ing, and it seems unlikely that any such feudal arrangement was planned. On the contrary, available evidence indicates that it was responsibility for “pacifying” certain regions—not for governing them—that was assigned to each of the participating sect leaders. Judging from their actions, this “pacification” (p’ing 平) appears to have entailed primarily the destruction of the symbols of Ch’ing authority, namely the offices and officers of government, and perhaps the massacre of all nonbelievers.
These acts would be carried out on 9/15 when each of the participating sects would "rise up."

Each group was assigned its own targets. Li Wen-ch'eng and his pupils would be responsible for the area of Hua and Chün in Honan and adjacent southern Chihli. Hsu An-kuo's men were responsible for the various districts of southwestern Shantung: Chu Ch'eng-fang in Ts'ao, his cousin Chu Ch'eng-kuei in Ting-t'ao, Ts'ui Shih-chün in Chin-hsiang, Chang Chien-mu in Ch'eng-wu, and Ch'eng Pai-yu in Shan. The region around Tz'u district in Chihli was assigned to Chao Te-i. There was a leader named Chao Pu-yun who would take care of Chi district in central Chihli. Not far away in Ku-ch'eng there was Huo Ying-fang's sect, and just to the north Sung Yueh-lung in Ching. Yang Yü-shan would handle Chü-lu and Yung-nien, and Ma Lao-t’ai and his pupils would be ready in Pao-ting. Liu Yü-lung and his followers were in Jao-yang. Lin Ch'ing was to be responsible for seizing the Forbidden City and Peking itself.

Because of the importance of Peking to the rebels, it was arranged that Li Wen-ch'eng and all the other trigram leaders to the south would temporarily bring their men and come north to assist Lin Ch'ing. Presumably they intended to make Peking their headquarters, possibly their "Cloud City." Li and his men would rush northward, stopping en route at the other rebel strongholds to pick up men. Peking would be occupied and the returning Chia-ch'ing Emperor would be attacked outside the capital and killed, and as the present Hung-yang era was completed, Ch'ing rule would come to an end.146

It is not hard to imagine how this meeting generated an atmosphere of confidence, optimism, and enthusiasm in which it was easy to believe that cities would fall and armies melt away. Having convinced themselves of how easily it could be done, Lin and Li worked out in a more final form the new hierarchy with which they planned to replace the Ch'ing system. As we mentioned above, the highest positions would be occupied by Lin Ch'ing, Feng K'e-shan, and Li Wen-ch'eng. They were to be known as the Controllers of Heaven, Earth, and Men, respectively; Li Wen-ch'eng would be responsible for governing, while Lin and Feng would serve him as advisers possessed of great skill and wisdom. The two advisers would be a symmetrical pair, Lin the Yin Trigram Master (陰卦主), Feng the Yang Trigram Master (陽卦主). In addition to representing the yin-yang polarity, these two also encompassed the dichotomy between civil
and military: Lin was known as the Sage of Knowledge (wen sheng-jen 文聖人) and Feng as the Sage of Military Ability (wu sheng-jen 武聖人). Li Wen-ch’eng took the role of the Emperor of Men (jen-huang 人皇) who consulted with them.

As ruler, Li Wen-ch’eng was to be the center of another triad, and he and two pupils (Feng Hsueh-li and Yu K’e-ching) were to be known as the King of Heaven (t’ien-wang 天王), King of Earth (ti-wang), and King of Men (jen-wang), respectively. Presumably these would be responsible for ruling. Underneath these controllers and kings there were to be eight other kings, each named after one of the eight trigrams: the Ch’ien Trigram king (kua-wang 卦王), the Kun Trigram king, and so forth. Below these eight kings were sixty-four trigram lords (kua-po 卦伯), eight for each of the eight trigrams. Each leader was instructed to prepare registers listing the names of all members so that each could be rewarded eventually.

One point is quite clear. The Eight Trigrams were not introducing a fraternal, egalitarian society. Like the structure of the sects themselves, built by teacher–pupil bonds, the religious structure created for the future was fundamentally and openly hierarchical. The Eight Trigrams offered their members exclusivity and respect, but they did not offer brotherhood and an absence of authority. Li Wen-ch’eng’s former teacher and present assistant Liu Kuo-ming explained this to another leader: “At that time [in the new kalpa] only the people who practiced the sect teachings will be left, and they will be divided into upper and lower (shang hia 上下).” To prove this was as it should be, Liu cited the following lines from a sect scripture:

There are three ranks: upper, middle, lower.
There are three powers: heaven, earth, man.
As the five elements gave birth to father and son,
So the eight trigrams will designate princes and ministers.

Because the new hierarchy created by the Eight Trigram leaders is nowhere described in detail, the lines of authority among the leaders and between leaders and followers are not entirely clear. Nonetheless, there is no indication that teacher–pupil and master–follower relationships would be anything but reinforced under the new system. As with many true believers, the Eight Trigrams built their organization on authoritarianism and orthodoxy.

Finally, the Eight Trigram leaders needed a name for the new assembly of believers that would take place in the Pai-yang era, and
they now decided to call this convocation the T'ien-li 天理 (Doctrine [authorized by] Heaven) Assembly. Then, having concluded their business, the sect leaders hurried back to their homes. It was now the middle of the 8th month; they had four weeks in which to notify all their followers about the identifying turbans, sashes and banners, slogans and passwords, and to tell them of the date and their responsibilities for "making known the Way."

As the assembled leaders prepared to leave Tao-k'ou, the heavens finally opened up and rain came. Great downpours fell in northern Honan, southern Chihli, and western Shantung, ending the drought but creating mud and flooding in its stead. These rains continued for weeks and did not taper off until the 9th month, just in time for the Eight Trigram uprisings, as it happened—perhaps another auspicious omen for their enterprise.

It was in this way that the Eight Trigrams were created. Vigorous leaders had used ordinary sect ties to build a sect organization of extraordinary size and scope, and they had emphasized one dimension of the religion—its vision of apocalypse and millennium—to mobilize believers into rebellion. White Lotus sects had always contained the potential for such developments, but only with certain kinds of men and circumstances could this potential be activated and realized. Still operating within the bounds of normal life, sect leaders had created a higher regional network out of small isolated groups, and they had raised their sights accordingly. Their interests were no longer local and private but public and national. Having come this far, however, their task became increasingly difficult. Once in open rebellion, they would have to find ways of using their sect structure to carry out their goals on the battlefield, but even before that time they had to walk a very fine line in order to keep their secret preparations within the limits of what was observedly normal and legal. It was during this period of preparation that the sects were most vulnerable to government discovery. As they changed from being 安, dark and private, to being 明, bright and public, the sects were in great danger of letting their new personality shine through before that designated day when they would all step forward to make known the Way.