PART THREE

Mobilization: Government Investigations and Rebel Uprisings
DURING the month after the Tao-k’ou meeting and prior to the scheduled uprisings, weapons and name lists were prepared, and banners, white cloth, and information were passed along the rebel network from teacher to pupils. At the same time, the Ch’ing government finally learned about the Eight Trigrams’ activities, and officials began to interrupt this mobilization. These parallel actions, mobilization and interference, climaxed early in the 9th month of 1813: the rebels were forced to strike prematurely and the scheduled uprisings went off like badly timed firecrackers.

The demanding task of transforming sect members into rebels without alerting the government required a degree of discipline not normal to teacher-pupil relationships, and it strained the entire Eight Trigrams organization particularly at its weakest links. Joining a White Lotus sect was in itself an act of nonconformity, but a mild one compared with the drastic and defiant actions now required of believers. The fears about the future that had motivated many to join the Eight Trigrams could in this crucial moment of transition emerge as timidity and uncooperativeness. Sect members had, therefore, to be moved speedily and unhesitatingly toward the violent acts that would commit them to their new lives. And yet care had to be taken not to rouse these men to total license or anarchy; their hostility and anger had to be directed and channeled so that the movement as a whole would not be fragmented by the unleashed emotions of its individual participants. Against these needs for positive direction and explicit instructions, sect leaders had to balance the increasingly real danger of government discovery. The final preparations for rebellion, involving rapid clandestine communication and the secret procurement of illegal and incriminating objects, were very hazardous. The slowness of the government’s response did allow the rebels to sacrifice some secrecy to speed without suffering truly drastic consequences, yet it by no means removed the danger.

The Ch’ing government’s problem was not isolation, for as we shall see the lower levels of the Ch’ing apparatus reached directly into the ranks of the rebels, but rather the difficulty with which the attention of the great bureaucracy could be captured by the hints and clues of imminent rebellion and the slowness of its reflexes once a potential problem was spotted. In the end a fair measure of good and bad luck on both sides further hampered both an efficient govern-
ment response and the smoothly scheduled timing of rebel uprisings. We will look first at the strike against the district cities planned by the various trigrams on the north China plain, and then, because of the incomparably richer source material, examine in greater detail the attack on the Forbidden City in Peking organized by Lin Ch'ing.

UNRAVELING IN CHIN-HSIANG

In Chin-hsiang district in Shantung, authorities had begun to learn about the planned rebellion even before the Tao-k'ou meeting, and as Eight Trigram leaders were making their final plans, threads of the sect network in this district were already unraveling. In the 6th month of 1813, a sheng-yuan (holder of the lowest examination degree) from Chin-hsiang named Li Chiu-piao heard about sect members' holding secret night meetings in a village south of the city (probably near where he lived). Li was concerned about this and informed the Chin-hsiang director of schools. Because the district magistrate was in the provincial capital on business, the director of schools wrote a report and sent it to his superior, the provincial direction of education; at the same time the district constable was told to send a report to the governor. T'ung-hsing, the Manchu governor of Shantung, was at that time at Lin-ch'ing on the Grand Canal supervising the passage of grain boats bound for Peking. He received these reports on the 23d and 24th days of the 6th month and immediately sent a deputy to the scene to investigate and report back.1

Two weeks later, on 7/6, Deputy Tso returned and submitted a three-page report to the governor. T'ung-hsing called in an expectant district magistrate named Wu Chieh 胡德, who was then assisting him and appointed him acting magistrate. Wu Chieh was instructed to go to Chin-hsiang, investigate further, and if necessary make arrests. Wu went first to the provincial capital and then on to Chin-hsiang, arriving there on 7/20. On the way, he encountered the magistrate of Chü-yeh, adjacent to Chin-hsiang, and Wu advised him to return to his post immediately in case arrests needed to be made. In order to learn about the local situation, as soon as he arrived in Chin-hsiang, Wu Chieh went to see an old friend of his, a prominent local dignitary and former official in the Yellow River Administration named Chang Ti-kung. Wu asked to be briefed on the district situation, and Chang told him that "the various localities here are not peaceful. There is
Districts and cities of the north China plain
an evil leader named Ts'ui Shih-chün who has founded a sect and converted many people. Their strength increases like a prairie fire. There is sure to be trouble. The gentry are all just trying to figure out how to avoid harm.” According to Chang, this Ts’ui Shih-chün had already held a big feast earlier that month, but when staff from the district yamen arrived belatedly to make arrests, they found that everyone had vanished.

Magistrate Wu decided that these men had to be lured out of hiding, so he ordered notices posted saying that “the charges previously filed against Ts’ui Shih-chün, etc., have been found to be based on groundless rumors started by a person who bore a personal grudge against them”; Ts’ui and the others were no longer wanted for arrest but they should “remain in their proper occupations and cause no trouble.” Making other inquiries, Magistrate Wu learned that although most of the gentry in the district were aware of the increasingly public sect activities, they had taken no special steps to put an end to them. He resolved to remedy this.2

Wu Chieh had learned previously from the report of the governor’s deputy that there was to be a gathering of sect leaders on 7/27. Wu made secret preparations to surprise the “troublemakers” that day and arrest them, but his plans were spoiled by the overeagerness of his associate, the magistrate of Chü-yeh. This man had taken Wu Chieh’s advice and returned to his post; on 7/24, eager to get results, he had taken men into adjacent Chin-hsiang and arrested one would-be rebel, luckily obtaining a list of sect members this man was carrying. Magistrate Wu had therefore to act immediately before this arrest could alert Ts’ui Shih-chün and his comrades to their real danger. On the 26th and 27th he sent men and arrested Ts’ui and ten others. They were brought to the distict yamen, but Magistrate Wu cautiously did not imprison or interrogate them there. He let Ts’ui be informed that they were wanted in the provincial capital for questioning on another matter. Thus Wu Chieh hoped to fool Ts’ui’s followers into feeling safe once more. Ts’ui and the others were transferred to the prison in Chi-ning, about fifty miles to the east. Wu Chieh meanwhile continued to make arrests, seizing six more sect members on 7/29.

On that day, two commoners from eastern Chin-hsiang district who were evidently aware of the sect activities and of the recent arrests, came to the city. They reported that their sons, together with at least three other men, had joined some religious sect. (In such cases, if relatives of sect members demonstrated their loyalty by re-
reporting the offenders to the authorities before any trouble occurred, all could be spared punishment.\(^3\) The two sons and the other men were arrested but would admit nothing. Magistrate Wu had their relatives and neighbors brought in to testify against them: these "good people" said to the believers, "At night you all burn incense and recite things. You wouldn't listen to our warnings, instead you just said to us, 'Before long you will have no heads.'" Magistrate Wu ordered torture applied and finally the young men began to confess. They admitted that they had joined a sect in which an eight-character mantra was recited three times a day, and they described how those who contributed money were promised land or office in return. Asked about a possible uprising, these men said that "the Pai-yang kalpa will come in the 8th or 9th month, and it will cut away [the old era] with a black wind which will blow for seven days and seven nights." They admitted that sect members would be given banners just ahead of time so that they would be spared death; everyone else, however, "would suffer under the kalpa and be killed."

Magistrate Wu, now aware of a possible uprising within one or two months, went to Chi-ning city where the eighteen captured sect members were being held. He interrogated them but learned very little—"they hung their heads, closed their eyes, and would only admit that they had encouraged others to do good and to avoid the kalpa calamities, no more." Wu Chieh ordered them transferred to the provincial capital for more professional interrogation.

During the 8th month the pace of arrests slowed. By this time the Tao-k'ou meeting of sect leaders had been held and specific instructions about the uprising were being sent out. A few men were arrested in Chin-hsiang on 8/8 and more ten days later; one of them was Ts'ui Shih-chün's son-in-law Li Ching-hsiu. Li made a detailed and informative statement. He said that Ts'ui had an associate in Ts'ao district named Chu Ch'eng-kuei and a teacher from Ch'ang-yuan named Hsu An-kuo, and he named the villages where they lived. He added, moreover, that he had heard that Hsu An-kuo's teacher lived very near Peking. Li Ching-hsiu admitted that his father-in-law had promised to take the home and estate of the Li family (probably the family that had originally informed on the sect to the director of schools two months earlier) and give it to him as his palace after they had passed through the kalpa.

This information about Chu Ch'eng-kuei and Hsu An-kuo was confirmed when Magistrate Wu arrested five men who had been overheard "talking wildly" in a restaurant a few miles north of the
city. These men further confessed that “the overall sect head was named Liu Lin, he lived twenty or thirty li from Peking, and he was in contact with eunuchs.” They added that while the date for the turn in the kalpa had been originally thought to be during the 8th month, this had recently (that is, since the Tao-k’ou meeting) been changed to the 9th month.

Wu Chieh “found this very upsetting” and immediately reported the information to the governor. T’ung-hsing, for his part, did not report in turn to the emperor about possible sect organizations near Peking or about rumored eunuch involvement. Instead, he ordered that Ts’ui Shih-chün and the others be interrogated as soon as they reached the provincial capital so that the allegations could first be substantiated; not until 9/11 (when he had already received reports of rebel uprisings) did T’ung-hsing memorialize the emperor about possible Peking or eunuch connections with these sects.⁴

In the meantime, Wu Chieh was trying to expedite the arrests of those named in these confessions. As early as 8/16 he had sent a message to Ts’ao telling the magistrate to arrest Chu Ch’eng-kuei, but nothing was done until ten days later when Ch’eng-kuei’s older brother Ch’eng-chen was arrested. Two white banners were found in his possession. Notified of this, Magistrate Wu realized that the time for the uprising must be very near indeed: “Since I had heard from confessions that these banners would be given out just in advance, I knew it wouldn’t be long before something would happen. This business had grown larger and larger during that [the 8th] month.” Wu immediately took steps to defend his own district against possible attack. He ordered that all families post the names of their members as part of a pao-chia (household registration for security purposes) survey. At the same time, he ordered that able-bodied men be called up and on 9/1 began training them as militiamen. Thus, by the beginning of the 9th month, Magistrate Wu had already arrested thirty-two sect members, including many of the top leaders in that district, he had alerted the gentry and citizenry, and began making military preparations for defending the city. Had all local officials possessed his appreciation of the realities and the same “righteous” assistance of members of the local community, the Eight Trigrams’ rising might have been thwarted at an early stage.

**Preparations in Central Chihli**

When the meeting in Tao-k’ou was over, Lin Ch’ing returned
GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS AND REBEL UPRISINGS

home, traveling in his same magisterial style. Feng K‘e-shan accompanied him as far as Ching district, where they stayed with Feng’s pupil Sung Yueh-lung, who was finally introduced to Lin Ch’ing. They all discussed their plans and then Lin proceeded north, arriving home on about 8/16.

Feng K‘e-shan remained with his pupils. He told them about the Tao-k‘ou meeting and the decisions reached by the leaders. Sung and his son were told to notify their followers that the date of the uprising would be 9/15, that the password was “Be Victorious,” and that the identifying insignia would be pieces of white cloth and banners on which should be written “Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way.” On the 15th, all were to assemble and come to Sung Yueh-lung’s village. It had originally been arranged that Sung would then bring his men south to Hua to join with Li Wen-ch‘eng, but Feng and Lin Ch‘ing had changed this. Sung and his men would instead build a wall around that village making it into a stockade; then they would gather and store food and fodder and wait for Li Wen-ch‘eng to come north. When Li and his followers arrived, they would greet them with the password, provide them with supplies, and all would then proceed onward to Peking together. Sung Yueh-lung and his son immediately began purchasing white cloth and making banners, which they then distributed to their pupils with these same instructions.

Sung’s son conveyed this information about the banners, password, and date to Huo Ying-fang, the sect leader in nearby Ku-ch‘eng district. The source material permits us to reconstruct in some detail, as an example of this process, the way in which these goods and information were then distributed by Huo to his many pupils (see fig. 2). Huo Ying-fang began immediately to make up white banners with the four-character slogan written on them; he distributed these to fifteen people including his teacher’s pupils, his own pupils, and members of his family. Huo Ying-fang’s pupil Liu K‘un had himself a large number of pupils, and so he told them in turn about the date and password and showed them what kind of banner to make. One of Liu’s pupils (Su Yuan-mo) then told his pupils. By the time this fourth generation was notified, it was already early in the 9th month and communications became increasingly urgent. Wang Yuan, a participant, described how he was informed:

Early in the 9th month Su Yuan-mo told his pupil Wang Yuan that sect members were going to rise up, and he had some cloth for banners which could be used to escape being attacked. Su
Yuan-mo gave Wang Yuan pieces of white cloth on which were written the four characters "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way." Wang Yuan was to wait until the sect rebels arrived, and then place the triangular banner in his gate post. The square banner was to be worn by his wife in the lapel of her clothing as identification. Moreover, Wang was to boil water for tea and to make rice for the sect rebels when they came. Thus he could safeguard himself and his family.\(^7\)

At this point the network began to expand drastically. Wang Yuan, who had been in the sect for less than four months, was much relieved to know this system for saving himself. He quickly made another set of banners, which he gave to a friend, then he passed the information on to yet another friend who was in a different sect. This man was tense and frightened; he knew the day was coming nearer, and he wanted to insure his safety further by becoming Wang Yuan's pupil and being part of the Eight Trigrams. Wang therefore taught him the eight-character mantra, told him the password, and gave him a model of the banner to copy. In his turn this man took as his pupil and passed on all this supposedly secret information to a friend of his, a Taoist priest named Lo Kung. Lo Kung immediately told some of

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Fig. 2
his friends (none of whom were sect members), so that they too could benefit from this advance warning. They all purchased some cloth and rapidly made up forty banners on which the four-character slogan was written. Lo Kung handed these out to five friends, none of whom bothered to join the sect or become his pupil. Two of them took a dozen banners each, enough to supply all their relatives. None of Lo Kung's friends had apparently any intention of participating in the rebellion, or at least not until someone else took the first step; they were interested only in protecting themselves.  

The above account shows how under the pressure of time the normal channels for expansion of the sect became increasingly bypassed. A month was a long time when the danger of government discovery loomed ever larger, but when many links in a chain had to be renewed individually, sometimes necessitating travel from one village or district to another, at a time when interrupting normal activities (such as harvesting one's crops) was a hardship, and when the imagined calamities of the predicted kalpa seemed suddenly possible, a month passed very quickly. Friends and relatives of sect members who had not been interested in the sect suddenly became very concerned about having the option of sect protection if they needed it. As the time for the uprisings approached, sect members first took new pupils so as to extend this protection to them and to gain participants in the rebellion, and then gradually and almost indiscriminately passed on information about the protective powers of white banners, the password, and so forth. What little discipline could be exerted through the teacher-pupil relationship disappeared as word simply spread to friend and neighbor. Of even greater danger to the would-be rebels was the way in which conspicuous objects (such as white cloth banners marked with the presumptuous "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way") were being prepared and distributed outside the formal sect network. As it happened, none of Huo Ying-fang's followers came to the attention of the local officials; but as we shall see, it was just this hasty last-minute scramble that in other areas alerted the government to the existence of a "rebellious plot."

In the actions of the sect leader Yang Yü-shan and his followers in the district of Chü-lu, we can see another example of the kinds of preparations necessary during the last month. Yang had attended the Tao-k'ou meeting. When it was over, he sent a colleague back to his home in Chü-lu to pass the word to his pupils there; in the meantime Yang hurried to Yung-nien district, the home of several other of
his pupils. He told them about the meeting and said he needed a list of the names of all the Yung-nien group. A list was promptly made up, written not in a register, but in the manner of the "ten family lists" used by the government for tax and security purposes. It is not clear whether this style was adopted out of ignorance or to reduce the danger should the list be discovered.9

Yang Yü-shan then returned to his home. He had previously established connections with the Kao family in Honan, the leaders of a Li Trigram sect to which he had once belonged but which had no direct connections with the Eight Trigrams. Now, in anticipation of the uprisings, Yang wanted the Kaos to know and be protected. He had someone write a letter to a member of that family who was one of his pupils. In it he described the coming Eight Trigrams rebellion and suggested that they make up banners to safeguard their families and, when the day came, bring followers and come to Hua to lend a hand.10 Other fragmentary information indicates that in many cases, Eight Trigram sect members took this generous and rather fraternal attitude toward other White Lotus sects and wanted them to have the option of joining even at the last moment.

In the end, none of these groups from central Chihli—or nor two others about which there is no information, those of Chao Te-i in Tz’u and Chao Pu-yun in Chi—ever moved beyond this stage of preparation for rebellion. Huo Ying-fang had been instructed to send his men to Hua to assist Li Wen-ch’eng on 9/15. Early in the 9th month some of his pupils (but not Huo himself) started south, but when they learned of the presence of government soldiers ahead they became frightened and returned home.11 Yang Yü-shan and his followers never even left their homes, deciding it was far safer to remain where they were.12 Sung Yueh-lung claimed that he and his pupils had prepared everything as instructed and “when everything was ready, we waited, but we didn’t see either Li Wen-ch’eng or Feng K’e-shan come in rebellion.”13

Although all these men had pledged their support to the Eight Trigrams, when they heard of government soldiers on the march against their colleagues in the south and of the quick elimination of an abortive attack on the Forbidden City by their colleagues in the north, and when they saw that no great calamities were sent by the Eternal Mother to destroy nonbelievers, they changed their minds and remained at home, burning their banners and hoping to cover up their association with the rebels. Although the bonds between the top Eight Trigram leaders and these groups were strong enough to make
possible elaborate plans for coordinated action, these links were not so tight that lesser leaders could be compelled to perform as promised. In the cases discussed above, the Eight Trigrams superstructure simply dissolved in the face of the crisis created by the rebellion and government moves to suppress it.

**Rebellion in Honan and Southern Chihli**

With the reader's indulgence we will change focus once more and look now not at government efficiency or at the prudence of some believers, but at action, at the successful transformation of sect members into rebels through violence.

Liu Pin was the subdistrict deputy-magistrate\(^{14}\) stationed in the town of Lao-an in southeastern Hua district near the Chihli border, about twenty miles from Hua city. Late in the 8th month, in the pouring rain, after the Tao-k'ou meeting was over and plans for the uprising were in their final stages, Deputy-Magistrate Liu learned about weapons being manufactured in Lao-an market town and somehow he obtained the names of the "criminals" involved. He went to the city and told the Hua district magistrate Chiang K'echieh. Magistrate Chiang issued warrants for the arrest of these men and on the 2d day of the 9th month sent out police runners to seize them. Like Magistrate Wu in Chin-hsiang, these officials had been apprised of the names and residences not of rank-and-file sect members, but of the highest leaders. Consequently, it happened that the police runners went to Hsieh-chia village and arrested Li Wen-ch'eng himself and brought him together with Niu Liang-ch'en and several other sect members in custody back to Hua city.\(^{15}\)

This was a catastrophe for the Eight Trigrams. Magistrate Chiang, however, did not realize how very important his prisoners were. Unlike Magistrate Wu in Chin-hsiang, he made no effort to cover up Li's arrest or to transfer the criminals to a more secure place. Instead, he kept them in the yamen jail and over the next few days tried to interrogate them. Li Wen-ch'eng did not cooperate and so, as was customary, torture was applied. Members of the yamen staff used pincers to squeeze Li's feet and ankles, and then they beat his feet and shins several hundred times with a club. The injuries that Li sustained were very severe. (Three months later his feet were still scarred from the pincers, a thick cotton cloth smeared with a viscous red
medicated plaster was still wrapped around the flesh and broken bones of his shins and ankles, and he was still unable to walk or ride a horse. Li finally admitted that an uprising had been planned but apparently would say no more. He and the others remained in jail as Magistrate Chiang continued to make inquiries but took no military precautions. Several of Feng K’e-shan’s more respectable (degree-holding) relatives, hearing of these inquiries, came to the yamen and told the magistrate that Feng was involved in some of these sect activities. On 9/5 more than twenty other sect members were arrested by Hua authorities.

In the meantime, Li Wen-ch’eng’s pupils were becoming more and more agitated. They had learned about the injuries Li had received—probably from one of the sect members who worked as a runner in the district yamen—and they were afraid he might die. Yu K’e-ching, who was formally the head of Li’s Chen Trigram sect, got together with Li’s brothers-in-law and other prominent leaders from the Hua area and decided finally that something had to be done: they could not wait until the 15th but had to take action and rebel immediately. Word was sent out to all believers in the area that the date had been changed, on the 7th day of the 9th month they would attack the city and free their leader.

A man called Chao Te provides one example of how sect members in Honan (and elsewhere) were mobilized for action. Chao Te was an opera performer from a village of Hua district who in the spring of 1813 had been persuaded by his brother-in-law to join the sect. In the middle of the 8th month, Chao’s brother-in-law passed the word that Sect Manager Niu Liang-ch’en had decided that the group would take action. A few days later, a fellow believer came to Chao Te’s house, bringing a small white banner and ten shares of white cloth, each share consisting of two pieces, and the message that on 9/15 they would rise up. Chao Te was instructed to bring ten men. Chao agreed, took the banner and cloth, and then distributed the latter to two men, presumably pupils, telling them to each find four more men, which they did. All this occurred during the last ten days of the 8th month. On 9/3 Chao Te’s brother-in-law sent a messenger again, this time with the urgent news that Niu Liang-ch’en and Li Wen-ch’eng had been seized by Hua authorities and put in jail. The new plan was for Chao Te to go with another sect member (from his village, possibly a relative), bringing his ten men, and enter Hua city on the 7th to free Li and Niu. Chao obeyed instructions and was among those who attacked the Hua yamen.
In a similar manner, other sect members from Hua city and the surrounding countryside were notified and alerted. The arrest of Sect Master Li had exposed their plans and made them very vulnerable, but at the same time this action appears to have stimulated a higher degree of enthusiasm for rebellion. Threatened with the real possibility of imminent arrest, a sect member had less to lose and more to gain by active participation in the uprising. On the night of the 6th, these men left their homes and met with their colleagues in several temples inside the district city. There the plans for the following day were outlined, and at this point, when there was no turning back, some of the rank-and-file members were given their new titles and positions. This further committed them to the cause of the Eight Trigrams and gave them something to fight for. Early the following morning they took the final step and with a burst of violence “made known” their intentions and became rebels.

Members of the Eight Trigrams, perhaps as many as a thousand men, went to the district offices at daybreak. They broke into the jail, carried out Li Wen-ch'eng, and released their other colleagues and over a dozen ordinary prisoners. They were not able to kill Magistrate Chiang, for he had summoned several dozen yamen runners and fled from the compound, by his account fighting rebels all the way. (Chiang reached Feng-ch'iu city about thirty-five miles to the south in safety and three days later hanged himself in disgrace.) The rebels killed the rest of the magistrate's household—two children, six women, and twenty-nine men, over half of them servants. One of the women, the magistrate's daughter-in-law, did not submit passively, and when she fought and cursed the rebels, they furiously nailed her alive to a post, “carved her up,” and later ordered her bones thrown away. The rebels also went to the offices of the director of schools and stabbed to death all seventeen people in his household, including his wife, daughters, and grandsons. The education official himself escaped by jumping in the well. Deputy-Magistrate Liu Pin (who had helped arrest Li Wen-ch'eng), the constable, and the resident sergeant were also killed. Finally, the rebels set fire to the yamen buildings. Having destroyed these symbols of Ch'ing authority and left nearly sixty people dead, these men of the Eight Trigrams—who with bloody hands had now become true rebels—spread out to close the gates and occupy Hua city.

In southern Chihli province the mobilization of the Eight Trigrams, its tempo hastily increased when word arrived that Li Wen-
ch'eng had been arrested and the date changed, was also interrupted by the government but in a different fashion. As word was being sent out to Hsu An-kuo and others from his district, sufficient care was not taken, and the magistrate of Ch'ang-yuan learned that something was going on. He “heard” that about six miles northeast of the city, in Wei-yuan village, members of a heretical sect were “hatching a plot.” On the 6th day of the 9th month, in the middle of the day, he left the city to investigate personally, taking along with him several yamen underlings. When the magistrate reached that village, he found the sect members already alerted: they emerged from the houses wearing white sashes and white turbans and carrying weapons. These men may already have been preparing to go to Hua to free Li Wen-ch'eng, but when they learned of the magistrate’s arrival they were spurred to take the first step as rebels then and there. They surrounded Magistrate Chao, stabbed him to death, and cut off his head. They also killed the yamen runners—all but one who managed to escape and run back to the city to report what had happened.

This occurred the day before the attack on Hua city, and the district authorities in Ch'ang-yuan did not yet realize what kind of “plot” they were up against. Two days later a Captain Ch'en, a fourth-rank military official stationed in nearby Tung-ming, came to the village with two hundred men. They opened fire on the house where they had thought the rebels were hiding, but found no one there. They searched the village and were shocked to find the body and head of the magistrate inside one of the houses; these were immediately sent back to the city for a proper burial. Then unexpectedly several hundred rebels appeared and attacked the government force. Other rebels emerged with equal suddenness from the houses of the village. The two groups fought and “both sides suffered casualties.” The government was able to capture two rebels alive and to withdraw more or less intact to the district city. Captain Ch'en, now realizing that he was outnumbered, remained in the city “to defend it” and did not venture into the countryside again until reinforcements arrived.24 Ch'ang-yuan city was never attacked by the rebels, but the murder of the magistrate on the 6th put the city on the alert and the attack on Captain Ch'en and his men forced the city defenders to withdraw behind the walls.

Nearby in Tung-ming district, the local magistrate had also learned in advance about the preparations for rebellion. Sometime prior to 9/10 a blacksmith from a village in western Tung-ming (near Ch’ang-yuan and Hua) came to inform on the rebels. Getting
GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS AND REBEL UPRISINGS

135

Weapons was a problem for the Eight Trigrams, for all so-called deadly weapons were illegal, and they were forced to be somewhat dependent on blacksmiths who were not members of their group. This blacksmith told the magistrate that on the 5th day of that month a man named Chiang from nearby Ch'ang-yuan had come to him, shown him a knife with a steel blade, and asked to have ten made just like it. (Chiang had perhaps thought it would be safer to have the knives made further from home, a mistake in this instance.) Magistrate Chu of Tung-ming immediately had Chiang arrested and interrogated. He learned that Chiang belonged to a group called the T'ien-li Assembly and that they were planning something for the 9th day of the month. Alerted in advance, Tung-ming authorities were able to take elementary steps toward defending the city against attack. The city was put on a curfew, and gentry and merchants gave money and food to hire men to repair damaged places in the city wall and to defend the city if necessary. These preparations plus the fast pace of events in Hua discouraged a secret entry and surprise attack on Tung-ming city, if indeed one had been planned; like Ch'ang-yuan, the city was safe but isolated until assistance arrived.25

Surgical strikes in Shantung

In Ting-t'ao and Ts'a'o in Shantung the rebel uprisings went more nearly according to schedule and proceeded without government interference, even though the local officials had been alerted to possible trouble. This is in sharp contrast to nearby Chin-hsiang or Tung-ming, where positive official action prevented secret attacks on the cities. To see what happened, let us to back again to the Tao-k'ou meeting.

Hsu An-kuo, the teacher of all the sects in Shantung, did not attend that meeting. At the time he was staying with the Chu family, his pupils in Hu-chia village in Ts’a'o district, and had sent his chief pupil Chu Ch'eng-fang to Tao-k'ou in his stead. On 8/6 Chu Ch'eng-fang returned home with a message from Hsu’s teacher Liu Kuo-ming that the date had been set for 9/15. It was at this time that Ts’ui Shih-chün (Hsu’s pupil) was being arrested in Chin-hsiang. Notified, Hsu was not pleased by the news; nevertheless, he continued with the plan for uprisings carried out by his pupils in six districts of southwestern Shantung—Ts’a'o, Ting-t’ao, Shan, Ch’eng-wu, Chin-
Districts and cities of the north China plain
hsiang, and Yü-t'ai. Having risen up, they would join Li Wen-ch'eng and go to Peking with him to assist "Venerable Master Liu"—Lin Ch'ing. Chu Ch'eng-fang had brought back with him a model for the white cloth banners, which were to be prepared immediately. Information about these banners, the password, and the date of the uprising had to be transmitted as fast as possible to all of Hsu An-kuo's different pupils; Hsu gave Chu Ch'eng-fang the responsibility for this while he left and returned home, presumably to coordinate with his other pupils in Ch'ang-yuan.  

After Hsu had left, the arrests in Chin-hsiang continued, and as more of the sect network was uncovered and more of their plans revealed, Hsu An-kuo's other pupils became directly threatened. As we have seen, in the middle of the 8th month, Ts'ui Shih-chün's son-in-law was seized and he revealed to the authorities that Ts'ui's teacher was Hsu An-kuo and that Chu Ch'eng-kuei of Ts'ao district was also in that sect. Authorities in Ts'ao were notified of this and on 8/21 the magistrate was able to arrest Ch'eng-kuei's older brother Ch'eng-chen. In his possession were found two white banners, one large, one small, both with slogans written on them. Chu was not imprisoned in the district jail but was wisely transferred to the provincial capital.

The rest of the Chu family, alerted to their danger, left home to avoid being arrested as well. They did not, however, leave the area or abandon their plans. This increased official interest in their activities did put pressure on the Shantung sect leaders, and when Chu Ch'eng-kuei returned home on 9/6 with the news from Hua and instructions from Hsu An-kuo to change the date, they were probably glad to act ahead of schedule. It was impossible to notify everyone in time to attack the following day (to coincide with the Hua attack), but the Chu brothers decided that all could be ready by the 10th, and as the official search for sect members continued, Hsu An-kuo's pupils were notified of the new date.

On the 7th and 8th, the Ts'ao magistrate made seven more arrests; on the 9th, still trying to locate Chu Ch'eng-kuei, he took what looks in retrospect to be the risky step of going personally into the countryside accompanied by only yamen runners, but the expedition was both uneventful and unsuccessful. By the evening of the 9th, when the magistrate returned to his offices in the city, it was already too late for him to halt the planned rebel actions. Members of the Eight Trigrams had entered both Ting-t'ao and Ts'ao cities that night and were ready to strike in the morning. Foolishly, neither magistrate had put his city on the alert.
Hsu An-kuo's pupils from Ts'ao district were responsible for planning and executing the attacks on both Ts'ao and Ting-t'ao cities, which were only twenty miles apart. As elsewhere, those who were staying at home were told how to identify themselves, and those who were participating were told where and when to assemble.

Our clearest view of these events is through the eyes of one of the participants, in this case, Hu Ch'eng-te 胡成德, a pupil of Hsu An-kuo. Hu Ch'eng-te was originally from the same village as the Chu family, but in 1811, after joining the sect, he had left to rejoin his wife and family in southern Honan, where he had spent his youth. As the economic situation became difficult during the summer of 1813, Hu decided to return to his native village in hope of being paid for some work he had done on a relative's land on his last visit. On 8/20 he arrived in Hu-chia village and found himself in the middle of the planning for the uprising, just as the pressure from increased arrests was building up.

Hu Ch'eng-te saw Chi Ta-fu, the man who had originally introduced him to Hsu An-kuo, and he was told, "We will make known the Way. Teacher Hsu is going to assemble enough people and we will rise up." About a week later, Hu was told by Chi that the date had been fixed for 9/10. "We were to go to Ts'ao city and rise up, then later on we would all be given land. I hoped to profit and so I agreed to participate. Later Chi Ta-fu gave me a large triangular silk banner that had six characters written on one side. I can't read, so I asked him what they meant. He told me they said, 'The King who Follows Heaven, Hu Ch'eng-te.' He also gave me about sixty or seventy small pointed white cloth banners." A few days later, Hu ran into Chu Ch'eng-kuei (just back from Hua) and learned that Chu was readying a separate group to attack Ting-t'ao.

On the 9th, as they prepared to leave the village for the city, Chi Ta-fu told his men (Hu says there were about a hundred of them) to bring along whatever weapons they had around—"wooden clubs, knives, spears, or whatever." Hu himself carried a long-handled, doubled-bladed knife, and brought with him a large square yellow banner with a white border. Chi Ta-fu assigned about seventy or eighty men to Hu and told him to be responsible for them. He, Chi, would lead while Hu was to bring up the rear. "So on the evening of that day, I put two knives [which Chi Ta-fu had given me] inside my clothing, and I did the same with the large white banner. I told my relative Hu Kuang to bring a bamboo pole to use later for the banner. I also took the small pointed banners and distributed them..."
among the men assigned to me. There were not enough, so we tore
some strips of white cloth which the men could tie in their clothes as
a sign. I led the group and we left the village."²⁸

The group that attacked Ts'ao city numbered at least one hun­
dred men.²⁹ Most of them were sect members of at least several
months' standing. Among them, however, was a group of men who
were probably not sect members, and who were forerunners of the
type of mass following which the rebels would later attract. We have
learned about this group from the testimony of one member, a man
named Li Ch'eng 了成.

Li lived in Ke-tse district north of Ts'ao. He was physically very
strong and had studied boxing and fencing. Chin Lan, his boxing
teacher, had not, however, instructed him in any religious practices.
At the end of the 8th month, Chin Lan had come to Li Ch'eng and
told him that, because of the bad harvest and resultant famine, he
and another man had decided to get together a group of men to go
and get what they needed by using force, to "plunder" as the gov­
ernment called it. Chin Lan and his men thereupon went out and
took food supplies from several different villages in Ts'ao district.
Government authorities tried to arrest them, perhaps as part of the
general search for dissidents at this time, but without success.

On 9/9 Chin Lan told his followers that there was a man who was
assembling some people to go and "cause an incident" in Ts'ao
city and that their group was going to go along. It is possible that
Chin Lan, being a boxer, was acquainted with some of these Ts'ao
sect members, we do not know how the contact was made. Chin was,
however, unlike the sect members, already a lawbreaker and outlaw.
Now he formally joined the rebels by giving his men white cloth to be
tied about their waists for identification and led his group into the
city on the night of the 9th.³⁰

Not every sect member was willing to take the risks of rebellion.
On that same day, 9/9, a sect group was assembling in one village
when a believer (and former police runner) named Ts'ai Wu-k'uci
was passing through and saw them. He claimed later that he had not
known about the rebellion until this time when he was informed
about the plans and asked to come along. He refused, but the group
told him that if he did not his whole family would (later) be killed.
Ts'ai was not persuaded, but he lied, promised to help, and then
went home, gathered his family, and fled. He later joined the militia
and was helpful in arresting his former colleagues. Ts'ai's decision
was not necessarily related to his career as a police runner. Two of his
relatives were also runners in the Ts’ao district yamen and in the sect, yet they did participate in the uprising. The risk was great, and as we shall see below in greater detail, commitment to rebellion was not always easy.  

Those who were to participate in the Ts’ao uprising were ready by the night of the 9th. They went into the city in different groups either late that night or early the following morning and arrived at the district offices at daybreak. The sixth-rank military official stationed in that city heard them and rushed out; the rebels killed him and three of his men, obeying their instructions to “kill anyone” (luan sha 歪殺). The rebels then entered that lieutenant’s quarters and killed his wife and daughter-in-law. Meanwhile, others in the group had already burst into the main government offices. The magistrate came out; he had just risen and was barely dressed. They immediately attacked and stabbed him to death; one rebel cut off his head and took it with him. Using only their spears and knives, the rebels then killed nine other members of the magistrate’s household—three men, four women, and two children. According to a government account of the incident, they called out for and sought by name Wu Hsing-tzu, the seventy-year-old cousin of the Chin-hsiang district magistrate (who had been responsible for discovering the Chu family’s involvement) who happened to be staying in the Ts’ao yamen. Wu was seized and killed together with his sons and one aide. Engaging anyone who opposed them, the rebels killed another fifteen people, servants in the yamen offices. Since at least two members of their group had worked in the yamen, the rebels had no trouble locating the jail, which they broke open, releasing the forty-one prisoners (ten of whom chose not to flee with the rebels but remained at the yamen). They also broke into the treasury and removed the contents. 

As the men left the yamen, they allegedly met Hu Ch’eng-te and his group coming toward them. Hu claimed that he had come to the north gate at dawn and finding it still closed had gone around to the east gate and then into the city. He had tied the white banner with his name and title on to its bamboo pole and then rushed through the streets toward the yamen. There Hu saw Chi Ta-fu, who said to him, “You’re too late. The business is done. The men need to get some clothes to wear, so we can take them to the pawnshops at the east gate to get some.” It is in fact very likely that Hu Ch’eng-te and his men did take part in the attack on the yamen, for it was easy for Hu to lie later to minimize his involvement. In any case, the rebels
proceeded to loot the pawnshops and moneylenders. When they had finished—and presumably could carry no more—they started out the east gate. As they approached the bridge over the moat, they saw that the far end of the bridge had been barricaded. Then someone fired a shot. When the rebels realized that muskets were being used against them, they turned around, hurried along the city wall, and left the city through the north gate.33 There they broke into smaller groups, each going its own way but arranging to keep in close touch.

While one group of Hsu An-kuo’s pupils was carrying out this attack on Ts’ao district city, another large group was executing a similar strike on Ting-t’ao city, only twenty miles away. This group may have been somewhat smaller, perhaps as few as fifty men.34 The leaders had all been active in planning the attack on Ts’ao. They had notified their followers on 9/6 and distributed banners and white cloth.

Again, let us follow one participant. Chao Chen-wu 趙振五 was from Ting-t’ao district. One day earlier that summer he had met a friend of his called Hsiao Han-san, and Hsiao had said that although Chao was an honest sort, people took advantage of him. He, Hsiao, had a way of getting certain “good benefits,” and he promised to make Chao an official and “to put him in charge of things.” According to Chao, they were interrupted before he could learn more and because he was at home sick and then busy with the harvest, Hsiao didn’t contact him again until the 9th month. (In truth, he had probably joined the sect at that time.) On 9/9 Hsiao Han-san came and invited him to his house. Chao went there, found a dozen other people, and went together with them to their leader Chang Erh-kou-tzu’s house. Chang Erh-kou-tzu explained the planned attack to the fifty or sixty men assembled there. By this time it was early evening and so Chang distributed the equipment. He gave Chao Chen-wu a knife, a small triangular white cloth banner, and a white cloth sash. All the other men were likewise given weapons, banners, and sashes.

The group left Chang’s house and regrouped again (perhaps joined by others) outside the east gate of Ting-t’ao city. Since it was the middle of the night, the city gates were closed. The rebels had planned for this, however, and knew of a place in the city wall, near the northeast corner, where the wall had collapsed. Chang Erh-kou-tzu sent some men to climb over the wall at this spot, and then to come around from the inside and open the east gate. In this way, the
entire group was able to enter the city. They made their way through the streets, stopping briefly to rest in a temple along the way, and finally reassembled outside a pawnshop.

Tying on their white sashes, with weapons ready, the rebels entered the official compound at dawn. The first man roused was a low-ranking military officer who mustered a few soldiers to resist. The rebels wounded him and killed four of his men. The rebel Chao Chen-wu himself went into the main hall of the yamen and smashed the hall drum so that assistance could not be summoned. The rest of the group broke open the jail, freeing fifteen men and setting fire to that building. In the meantime the acting magistrate had heard the disturbance. He quickly took his official seal and gave it to a servant, instructing him to take it to the prefect and report what was happening. Then when he went out into the yamen courtyard to confront and try to arrest the rebels, he was repeatedly stabbed till he died. Half a dozen other men—servants, aides, and relatives—who tried to assist the magistrate were likewise killed.

Their bloody task at the district offices completed, the rebels went about the city taking what they wanted. The leader Hsiao Han-san led his men first to the west-gate area, where they broke into some pawnshops, and then to the south-gate area, where they did the same, setting some buildings afire in the process. Hsiao Han-san himself had some private scores to settle: he went to find some Muslims who he said had refused to join them and he and a pupil beat them up and robbed them. Finished in the city, the rebels left to rejoin their colleagues.

The Eight Trigrams from Ting-t’ao and Ts’ao had accomplished their missions in those two cities, and the success of these two strikes gave sect members who had not dared to participate the courage to commit themselves to the rebel cause. On the other hand, other pupils of Hsu An-kuo in nearby Chin-hsiang were not so successful; let us return to Magistrate Wu’s successes in that district.

FOILED IN CHIN-HSIANG

On the 9th day of the 9th month in Chin-hsiang in Shantung, by contrast, everything was quiet. It had rained steadily since the first of the month, and this had inhibited Magistrate Wu’s attempts to drill militia. He must have waited nervously during these days of bad weather, worried about the anticipated uprising. The rebels in that
district, on the other hand, may have been able to use this interval to collect themselves for the first time since the government began investigating two and a half months before. During that period many sect leaders had been seized, including the sect head Ts'ui Shih-chün, and as news arrived about the premature uprising in Hua city and then a message from Hsu An-kuo telling them to change their date to the 10th, there must have been much confusion and uncertainty about how to proceed.

On the 9th, when the weather finally cleared, the position of the would-be rebels worsened: Magistrate Wu learned about the revised date for the uprising. There was a man named Kao Kuang-kuei who lived in a market town west of the city where he ran a dye shop. On the afternoon of the 8th, an old friend of Kao's had come to see him. This man was a sect member, and he had just received word that the date for the uprisings had been changed to the 10th. He warned his friend Kao that “after noon on the 10th, there would be great turmoil in our district, and massacres everywhere.” He urged Kao to bring his wife and elderly mother and move into his house where they would be protected from the kalpa calamities by his identifying white banner. Kao Kuang-kuei thanked his friend but did not take his advice. Having no loyalty to the Eight Trigrams, he went instead to consult with the head of a gentry family in his village. He described the message about the rebellion, said he had seen announcements saying that all “troublemakers” were to be reported to the authorities, and now did not know what to do. The gentry man told him that he should go secretly into the district city and report all this to the magistrate. Kao took this advice and the first thing the following day (the 9th) he presented himself at the yamen of Magistrate Wu and related what he had been told. The magistrate promised Kao a reward for his loyalty and told him to go and get his family and bring them into the city where they would be safe.

Magistrate Wu then immediately notified the two adjacent districts of Chü-yeh and Ch'eng-wu, telling them to ready their city defenses (he probably also notified Ts'aö and Ting-t'ao). Then, that afternoon, he and members of his staff went up on the wall on the north side of the city and, walking along the top of the wall, decided where guards should be stationed. They pretended to be on routine business in order not to alarm the general population. Finishing around sunset, Wu Chich then went to consult with his old friend gentry-member Chang, briefing him on the latest developments. Chang advised the magistrate to tell “the hundred or so gentry households
in the city" to have ready one or two armed men each; if they heard the gong on the treasury building sound the alarm, they were to come immediately to the government offices. Magistrate Wu followed this advice. Furthermore, he instructed all official staff to remain on the job round the clock for the next three days and ordered a halt to routine business. That night, still worried, the magistrate went out after midnight to check on the patrols along the city walls. When he returned he found a report had arrived describing night meetings of sect members in Ting-t'ao and Ts'ao districts. More disturbing, it stated that three days earlier the magistrate of Ch'ang-yuan had been murdered and that a similar event was rumored to have occurred in Hua. Fully alarmed, Magistrate Wu went out again to patrol.

At dawn on the 10th, the magistrate decided with some misgivings to open the city gates as usual. He sent out members of his staff to walk the streets and to look for anyone behaving suspiciously. During the morning Kao Kuang-kuei's sect member friend was brought in and interrogated, but he would say nothing. As the day went on and nothing happened, Wu Chieh, exhausted from being up all night, decided to rest. Not long after he had retired to his quarters, he was awakened by his son, who announced that there were armed rebels in the yamen. Unlike his colleagues in Hua, Ting-t'ao, and Ts'ao, Magistrate Wu did not rush into his courtyard to find a large mob of armed men carrying banners and wearing white sashes. Instead, he found members of his staff holding captive two men who had been secretly carrying knives and banners. Shortly thereafter, a third man who had been caught at the north gate of the city was also brought in. These three sect members had earlier been sitting in a teashop (managed by a former yamen runner) just outside the district offices. As the owner's twelve-year-old daughter brought these men their tea, she had noticed that they were carrying weapons and appeared to be wearing an unusual amount of clothing. She told her father and he sent for assistance in having the men arrested.

The magistrate ordered his staff to break these rebels' shinbones; then he questioned them. He learned that they were indeed members of a religious sect, waiting for the moment to strike. They told the magistrate that it had already been arranged that the group would rise up that very afternoon, attack the city, kill him and his staff, break open the jail, set fire to the city, and murder its inhabitants. The magistrate ordered the men secured in the jail; then he alerted the gentry of the city and instructed his staff to arrest anyone who
was not a city resident. A curfew was put into effect, for by this time it was already evening, the gates were closed, and torches were burned along the city walls all night to prevent any secret attacks. According to the magistrate, a group of rebels actually gathered in a village south of the city, planning to enter it that night, but seeing the torches and patrols they decided to wait.

The following day, the 11th, Magistrate Wu sent word to the villages outside the city that they should expect trouble. By noon he had been notified that the preceding day both Ting-t’ao and Ts’ao cities had been attacked and the resident officials murdered. Moreover, there were reports that the rebels had “several ten-thousand supporters” and were “on the rampage” in those two districts. Chin-hsiang city remained on the alert for the next few days and, much to the magistrate’s relief, on the 13th government soldiers began to arrive, one hundred fifty that day and two hundred the following day.

Although the rebels continued to make trouble in the countryside of Chin-hsiang for the next few weeks, the city was never attacked. Magistrate Wu, with valuable assistance from gentry and commoners who felt more loyalty to the government than sympathy with the rebels, had uncovered their plans, and by his arrests, interrogations, and defensive measures had drastically weakened the rebel organization in his district and successfully thwarted their plans.

The successful prevention of a rebellion in Chin-hsiang made uprisings by other pupils of Ts’ui Shih-chün in Ch’eng-wu, Chü-yeh, and Yü-t’ai much more difficult. In Yü-t’ai there was an apparent failure of nerve. The magistrate was tipped off to possible trouble by a report of some would-be rebels making weapons in one village. He arrived to investigate and make arrests and encountered no difficulties. The relatively swift appearance of a government army on the scene and the great distance from what was becoming the rebel headquarters in Hua contributed to the retreat from rebellion by sect members in this area. In Ch’eng-wu and Chü-yeh districts a similar situation prevailed. There were some rebels—members of a previously unaffiliated White Lotus sect—who rose up in Ch’eng-wu when they heard of the city strikes in Ts’ao and Ting-t’ao and left their homes to join the Eight Trigrams in the west. Similarly, the Ch’en Trigram leader Ch’eng Pai-yueh from Shan who had maintained contact with both the Hua leadership and Lin Ch’ing, mobilized his pupils and, without attempting any military action in his own district, went to Ts’ao district to join his colleagues there.
By the 15th day of the 9th month, the Eight Trigrams rebellion was well on its way in the southern plain. There had been no black wind lasting seven days and seven nights and the Ch’ing regime had not fallen with a single stroke; in fact, the government had learned about the planned rebellion and had been able to prevent many and discourage more from joining it. But Hua city had been occupied and Chun city was being attacked, the magistrates of Ch’ang-yuan, Ting-t’ao, and Ts’ao had been killed, and sect members had risen up as rebels in at least nine districts. Although Li Wen-ch’eng was injured he was still alive, and his followers roamed the countryside in a wide corridor at least one hundred miles across. Should Lin Ch’ing and his men in Peking succeed in taking the Forbidden City according to plan, there was still hope.

The fact that a great many of Lin Ch’ing’s followers in the Peking area were arrested and interrogated makes it possible for us to look in far greater detail at the palace attack that he organized—his preparations, the village-by-village mobilization of his followers, the various channels through which information leaked upward to the government, and the entrance into the palace itself. The involvement of the imperial family (and the interest of historians) have forced this part of the Eight Trigrams rebellion into the limelight, and the resulting excellence of documentation compels us to do likewise. Nevertheless, although the target was more majestic, the attack on the Forbidden City should be seen as but one of many provincial assaults, and in terms of rebel mobilization what happened in Peking was not markedly different from events in the south.

**Preparing for the Palace Attack**

Lin Ch’ing had returned home from the meeting in Tao-k’ou in the middle of the 8th month and set about preparing his K’an Trigram for their role in the rebellion. The original plan had been for Lin Ch’ing simply to assemble his men outside the Chang-i Gate (the western entrance to the southern section of Peking), wait until the men from Honan had arrived, and then go together to “take care of” the emperor. Lin’s friend Ch’en Shuang, who had recruited eunuchs as pupils, had later persuaded him that it was a better idea to enter and occupy the Forbidden City first without assistance. When this plan was discussed by Lin’s followers, some agreed with
Ch’en, but there was at least one man, Liu Chin-te, who did not. Liu urged his teacher to persuade Lin to reconsider, saying, “This idea isn’t very smart. Why don’t you tell Lin Ch’ing that he should first wait for the men from Honan to arrive and then go into the city together.” “But,” he related, “they all told me that it is said, ‘A single man can take Yu-chou [Peking],’ and this surely wouldn’t be such a difficult thing to do. Because they wouldn’t listen to me, I left.” Thus it was decided that on the 15th Lin’s group would enter the Forbidden City with eunuch help and occupy the city of Peking by taking control of the gates. Within a few days Li Wen-ch’eng and his men would have arrived and with their combined forces they would go out the road to Jehol, meet the returning imperial entourage and “engage and fight them.” If the emperor was not killed, he would at least be driven to flight into Manchuria. This was the plan agreed upon at the Tao-k’ou meeting.

When he returned home, Lin Ch’ing considered changing the plan again and taking even more responsibility and possible glory upon himself. He thought that he might even assign some of his men to attack the emperor without waiting for assistance. He sent his friend and pupil Liu Ti-wu to go and talk with the sect leader Ch’ü Ssu about organizing such an expedition. Ch’ü was told to get together as many men as possible and to take and assemble them at Yen-chiao (east of Peking). Lin Ch’ing wanted one or two hundred men but was willing to settle for considerably fewer. Ch’ü Ssu responded to this idea by saying, “The men in my village who are believers are few, and some of them are old people and young children who cannot be of any use [in the rebellion]. If you just want strong and able-bodied young men, then I can only find a dozen. I cannot get even as many as thirty or fifty.”

Lin Ch’ing thought about this and reluctantly concluded that he could spare no men from the groups assigned to attack the palace. He sent word to Ch’ü Ssu that if he had only a few men, then the plan would not work, for the soldiers accompanying the emperor were numerous. Ch’ü should therefore forget about making a separate attack and bring his men instead into Peking with the others. “On 9/15 we will just go into the capital and cause this incident (nao-shih) there. The government soldiers won’t be able to move [into the capital] fast enough, and we are sure to succeed. Then we will occupy (chü) Peking.” There is evidence that Ch’ü Ssu could in fact have brought more than a dozen men, but obviously and understandably he was unwilling to be the one responsible for
attacking the emperor, at least not without assistance. Thus, Lin Ch’ing abandoned the idea of single-handedly both taking Peking and killing the emperor, and he went ahead with his already ambitious plans to occupy the palace and then wait for assistance.

In order to enter and occupy the Forbidden City, Lin Ch’ing needed inside assistance, and for this he relied upon the eunuchs who had joined his sect. It was Ch’en Shuang’s pupil Liu Te-ts’ai who had recruited several of his fellow eunuchs and who had secured their loyalty with gifts of money from Lin Ch’ing. Lin had met with these eunuchs twice in 1813, first during the 3d month, and then again on 8/24 after he had returned from the south. Since Liu Te-ts’ai himself worked inside the palace, on those two occasions his father came into Peking, went to the western gate to the Forbidden City, and left a message for his son: Liu was to bring his eunuch pupils with him and come to meet with his teacher’s teacher, Lin Ch’ing. These meetings took place in the southern section of Peking, first in a restaurant and then in a large inn. Lin Ch’ing, Ch’en Shuang, Ch’en Wen-k’uei, and Chu Hsien were present, and they met with the four eunuchs brought by Liu Te-ts’ai. They discussed the plans for the palace attack, and Lin Ch’ing promised to make Liu Te-ts’ai chief eunuch if they were successful. It was arranged that at noon on the 15th Liu Te-ts’ai would come out from the palace and lead in the rebels assembled outside the eastern gate; two of his pupils would do the same on the western side, and two others would remain inside and assist from there. Apparently the gates to the Forbidden City and those gates inside it that led to the Great Interior (where the empress, who had not gone to Jehol, was residing) were only scantily guarded during the lunch hour, and the eunuchs, knowing this, may have suggested that particular time of day. Once inside, everyone would go directly to the Great Interior and, joining forces again, would seize and hold the palace.44

Early in the 9th month, as preparations were going ahead, Lin Ch’ing received a visit from the boxer and healer from Jao-yang, Liu Yü-lung. Liu was supposed to bring his pupils and participate in the palace attack. Now, however, Liu said that this was not a good idea; he claimed he would not be able to find the way. Lin Ch’ing therefore said that Liu should instead go south and join Niu Liang-ch’én’s band. Liu Yü-lung agreed. Bragging that he could “draw charms and recite spells so as to travel like the wind,” Liu said he would speed home, get his double-bladed sword and his pupils, and take them to Hua. Liu persuaded Lin Ch’ing to supply him with a
new brush, some gold paper, and vermilion ink to make a charm, plus 1,000 cash for traveling expenses, and he left. (Later, Liu Yü-lung had second thoughts, and when he heard about Manchu troops being sent south on campaign against rebels, he decided to go into hiding rather than to Hua).\textsuperscript{45}

By the middle of the 9th month of 1813, Lin Ch'ing had contacted at least 360 people in the Peking area about the planned attack on the palace. About one-third of these had been believers before 1811; another third had joined the Eight Trigrams in 1811 and 1812. The last third had joined during the first nine months of 1813 and included nearly 40 people who had been "converted" during the three months just prior to the rebellion. In other words, there had been a steady growth in membership during the years after Lin Ch'ing and Li Wen-ch'eng first met, and a particularly sharp increase during the months just prior to the uprising.\textsuperscript{46} The religious commitment of these last-minute converts is open to some question, for they were obviously recruited to fill out the ranks of those who would attack the palace.

Lin Ch'ing decided that at least 250 of his followers could participate in the palace attack. They were to leave home in small groups and come to Peking in time to be outside the Forbidden City at noon on the 15th. Because sect members in one village tended to be all pupils of a single teacher, Lin Ch'ing simply assigned villages or teachers (with their pupils) to either the eastern or the western group and thus divided his followers roughly in half. Of those we know about, approximately 130 were sent to assemble outside the Hsi-hua (West Majestic 西華) Gate, and about 110 to the Tung-hua (East Majestic 東華) Gate. These were the western and eastern gates to the Forbidden City.

In theory, these men were divided into smaller groups of ten, each group led by a leader carrying a white banner.\textsuperscript{47} In reality, the groups were by no means so regular. The people sent to the Tung-hua Gate came in three large groups, each under a major sect leader: thirty-one with Ch'en Shuang from Sang-fa village, thirty-eight with Ch'ü Ssu from Tung village, and thirty-eight of Li Lao's men of the Yang-hsiu area came with Liu Ti-wu. Those who were to enter on the western side came in six smaller groups. Li Wu brought twenty-three men from Ku-an district and sent nine more with Hsing Kuei-jung (from Hsin village), and Liu Chin-t'ing brought forty-four members of the former Ta-sheng sect from Hsiung district. Ho Wen-sheng brought sixteen from T'ai-p'ing village, Tung Po-
wang brought thirty-four from Lin Ch’ing’s home of Sung-chia, and the eunuch Yang Chin-chang brought nine men from Ma-chü-ch’iao. In general villages located southwest of Peking went to the western gate, those to the southeast to the eastern gate. Finally, Lin Ch’ing appointed his close friends Ch’en Shuang and Ch’en Wen-k’uei to be the overall leaders of the eastern and western groups respectively.

All the participants in the palace attack were men. Although many women knew about the planned uprising and had husbands or sons who would participate, no women went along. The men over sixty tended to stay at home, and the majority of participants were in their thirties and forties (62 percent). They were family men, usually with children still living at home. Many had a close relative who was also participating in the rebellion, a father or son, a brother or cousin. There is also some evidence to suggest that sect teachers looked for converts among the agricultural workers hired by their own and other families to help with the harvest: one-third of those who joined Lin Ch’ing’s group during the 8th and 9th months were hired laborers. Their inclusion may have been the result of the last-minute increased need for secrecy and manpower. Nevertheless, it is clear that the typical sect member who became a rebel was not a single rootless man with nothing to lose. Most had families and everyone within each village group of sect members knew one another and belonged to clusters of blood relatives, in-laws, and members of the same household.

Once Lin Ch’ing had determined who would go where, he had to send word out from teacher to pupil, notifying each man and telling him where to go and on what day. All participants had also to be given the two-character password “Be Victorious.” Each teacher had to make sure that all his pupils had a weapon of some sort and at least one (but preferably two) piece of plain white cotton cloth. This cloth was for the turbans and sashes that would distinguish the rebels from other people. By two descriptions, the piece of cloth to be worn like a kerchief on the head was only about a foot long, and the one to be tied about the waist about two times that length. At about 100 cash a foot, this white cloth represented no small expense, and it appears to have been procured almost entirely by Lin Ch’ing; he had a debt of 50,000 to 60,000 cash for cloth purchases made at a small store near his home during the summer of 1813. Group leaders, of which there were at least ten, were to carry small triangular white cloth banners. Ch’en Shuang, the leader of the eastern group, carried
a banner with the slogan "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way," and it is likely that his counterpart in the west did likewise. One rebel was later found to be carrying a piece of cloth on which were embroidered the lines:

Be of one spirit with me  
Never be separated  
Always secure.  

In addition to white cloth passed down from Lin Ch'ing, teachers provided their pupils with weapons or with money with which to purchase them. The weapons used were in most cases knives, although a few men carried iron bars. Although Ch'ing law prohibited ordinary citizens from owning deadly weapons, knives intended for daily household and agricultural use were permitted, and obtaining knives in small quantities was apparently not extremely difficult. Li Ch'ao-tso, for example, obtained a dozen knives for his men by buying them at small markets "one by one, here and there." The manufacture on demand of large quantities of weapons was more unusual and thus more dangerous. One blacksmith refused to make more than three (and as we have seen, reports from blacksmiths to the government about requests for weapons led to arrests in Hua, Tung-ming, and Yü-t'ai districts). Not all smiths were so careful, however, and Li Wu had forty-eight knives made by a blacksmith in his village. There were no known blacksmiths among the sect members, and no specific attempt was made that we know of to convert them and thus obtain an easy supply of arms.

In order to protect the sect members from detection, it was decided that they would not display the knives and cloth that symbolized rebellion until the moment when they entered the Forbidden City. On their way into Peking, the men stuffed these objects inside their clothing and, in some cases, hid their knives under baskets of fruit carried by sect members posing as peddlers.

We can see in detail how the knives and white cloth were distributed by looking at the pupils of the Pai-yang sect head Li Lao. Most of Li Lao's pupils came from four villages in T'ung district. Li Lao took responsibility for procuring knives and cloth for fifteen followers from his own village, including six members of his family. Late in the 8th month, Li Lao told his twenty-two-year-old grandnephew to go to a blacksmith's shop and have some knives made. The blacksmith was afraid to make more than three, so Li Lao told some of his pupils to buy knives themselves. On 9/13 and 9/14 these knives
and the cloth (which apparently came from Lin Ch’ing) were distributed: either Li Lao sent someone to deliver them or individuals came to his house to pick them up. The rest of Li Lao’s followers were the pupils of his pupils, three brothers named Chang. These Chang brothers went personally to the three villages involved on the 13th and 14th to deliver the equipment to their pupils. Li Lao himself, being rather aged, did not go into Peking on the 15th. Instead, Lin Ch’ing chose Li’s pupil Liu Ti-wu (the man who had first introduced Li Lao to Lin Ch’ing) to head the group. Liu Ti-wu brought along his two sons, whom he provided with knives and cloth.\(^5^5\)

Some of the participants were treated to meals in Peking on the day of the attack by their group leaders or were given money in advance to buy something to eat. Nearly everyone stopped to buy something to eat on the morning of the 15th, and these meals fueled their courage, gave them physical energy, and marked the specialness of that day.\(^5^6\)

Not everyone who knew about the rebellion was supposed to take part in the palace attack. Some men were too old or infirm to take part—Li Lao and Liu Hsing-li were in their eighties, Ch’en Liang was sixty-three and blind, Yü Ch’eng-r was crippled—and they all remained at home that day. As in Honan and Shantung, protection was extended in a fraternal spirit to former believers and to members of other White Lotus sects who took no part in the rebellion itself. Jen Tzu-k’uei, for example, had been in the old Jung-hua Assembly of Ku Liang for more than ten years. He had left the sect during the prosecutions of 1808 and had refused to give money to Lin Ch’ing in subsequent years. Nevertheless, in the 8th month of 1813 a sect member from his village came to Jen’s house. “He said that they were going to rebel and kill people. They had kept in mind the fact that I had once been in the sect and so they were going to give me two pieces of white cloth. I was to hide the cloth and then later when the incident began, take it out and tie it on my head. Thus I would be spared and not killed.”\(^5^7\) There were some sect members who told their teachers that they did not want to participate and who were allowed to remain at home. Many of these men lived in Ku-an and Hsiung districts, a considerable distance from Peking. They were told that they should look out for Li Wen-ch’eng and his men as they came toward Peking from Honan. When Li arrived, they were to put the white cloth on their heads and around their waists, come forward, say the password, kotow, and welcome Li by congrat-
ulating him. Thus identified as believers, they would be spared death.\textsuperscript{58}

Among those told specifically to stay home were several Manchu pupils of Liu Hsing-li. In the 7th month of 1813 Hai-k'ang, Liu's pupil and a member of the imperial clan, had gone to see his teacher. He was told that an uprising was being organized and that they were thinking of including him. The matter was discussed and finally Liu Hsing-li decided that since Hai-k'ang belonged to the imperial clan, it was too dangerous to have him participate. In the 8th month, Hai-k'ang met with Liu again. He was told that the date of 9/15 had been selected and that if he chose to be counted among believers, they would give him a high official position, which, despite his ancestry, he apparently did not have. Hai-k'ang agreed and complied with Liu's request for a 1,600 cash contribution. Later on, when Hai-k'ang saw his relative and pupil Ch'ing-yao, he mentioned that a rebellion was being organized by the sect. He told Ch'ing-yao that if he wanted to be in on it, he should come to Hai-k'ang's house on 9/14 and they would wait for further instructions. Ch'ing-yao in turn told his brother (who had had little contact with the sect in recent years) that on 9/15 "there might be men on the streets, and so he ought to be careful." Ch'ing-feng was not interested and preferring more orthodox means of advancement went ahead with his plans to take the Manchu \textit{chii-jen} degree exams on on the 12th, 13th, and 14th days of the 9th month. Ch'ing-yao and Hai-k'ang, on the other hand, waited all day at the latter's house on both the 14th and 15th.\textsuperscript{59} Hai-k'ang had a number of other pupils whom he might also have contacted about the rebellion with similar instructions.

Lin Ch'ing's pupil the Chinese bannerman Ts'ao Lun was also given special instructions for the day of the uprising. In 1813 he was serving as first captain at Tu-shih Pass north of Peking. When he was first informed about plans for an uprising, Ts'ao said that he would not be able to come into the capital. He was therefore told that on that day he should "turn his horse and face south"; later, after the rebels were in control, a messenger would be sent to greet and instruct him. As it happened, Ts'ao Lun was away all summer, accompanying a high-ranking Manchu into Jehol, and he arrived back at his post too late to learn the exact date for the rising.\textsuperscript{60}

Despite Ts'ao's absence, his son Fu-ch'ang and his friend Wang Wu were both drawn into the flurry of last-minute preparations for rebellion. Ts'ao Fu-ch'ang (who was then serving as an \textit{orbo}, a private second-class)\textsuperscript{61} was told to come see Lin Ch'ing on 9/12, which he
did. But Lin was not pleased and "he criticized Liu Ch'eng-hsiang saying, 'Why in the world did you bring him here?' Liu said, 'I was afraid we wouldn't have enough men.' But Lin Ch'ing replied, 'He is a bannerman, you can't have him come along.'" Ts'ao Fu-ch'ang was therefore told to return home. He was given the password and told just to prepare white cloth and wear it on 9/15.62

Ts'ao Fu-ch'ang did as he was told, but his father's friend Wang Wu did not. Wang Wu, like his father before him, was a servant in the household of a Chinese bannerman and former military-governor. During the summer of 1813 he had been told about the uprising but he had not kept this matter secret. Instead, he mentioned it to An-shun, the son of his master. Wang had previously admitted to An-shun that he belonged to Lin Ch'ing's Jung-hua Assembly, at which time An-shun told him that such a group had to be a heretical sect. Wang Wu denied this but his young master was unconvinced, though he made no move to report the group. Later, when Wang Wu mentioned that he "had heard" that Lin Ch'ing was going to rebel on 9/15, An-shun refused to believe him, fortunately for the rebels, saying, "You're crazy! This is nonsense! In such peaceful times this kind of thing could not happen. Even if you had a hundred people like this guy Lin Ch'ing, still not one of them would dare to start a rebellion." An-shun turned away angrily and refused to discuss the matter further, nor did he report this "rumor" to anyone.

Wang Wu continued to be uneasy at his own involvement with the Eight Trigrams. Just before the date of the uprising (when An-shun was away collecting rent from their tenants), Wang explained the situation to the wife of his master. He persuaded her that it would be safer to leave Peking temporarily and wait until the outcome of the rebellion was clear. Wang took and pawned some clothing belonging to the family and purchased silver bullion, and early in the 9th month, he and his elderly mistress went to the family graveyard (and country home?) outside the capital. Then, on the 13th, Wang Wu returned to the city, announced that his mistress was ill, and instructed the household staff to bring bedding and belongings and come to be with her. Thus the entire household had left the city before the 15th and all waited in safety.63

The most important person to remain at home on the 15th was Lin Ch'ing himself. No specific reason is given for this. Presumably Lin chose the safer course and planned to wait until word came that the Forbidden City had been secured or until Li Wen-ch'eng arrived before joining his followers. He kept his nephew and three godsons
home with him. He told Liu Ch’eng-hsiang, “My godsons and neph­ew are young. I’m afraid that they can’t keep their mouths shut. There is no point in taking them into the city. When the men from Honan come, I will tell them to tie on white cloths and go out and greet them, no more.” Lin Ch’ing also kept with him for protec­tion some of the men who had been more or less living at this home: Tung Po-ying (Lin’s brother-in-law), Sung Wei-yin (his pupil and since that spring his employee), and Liu Fu-shou. Liu Fu-shou was in his fifties and was the most trusted of those who remained with Lin Ch’ing that day. He too had been hired by Lin earlier in the year and had taken up residence with his employer/teacher. While Lin Ch’ing waited for news on the 15th, it was Liu who was charged with keeping watch.

By 9/14 everything had been arranged, the symbols of rebellion had been distributed, and the rebels-to-be had begun leaving their homes and entering Peking. At the same time, however, the net­work of secrecy, such as it was, had begun to unravel. As we shall see, these preparations had not gone unnoticed by the rebels’ friends and neighbors, and Wang Wu was by no means the only sect mem­ber who mentioned the plans for a rebellion to an outsider. In several cases, knowledge of the uprising became public enough to come to the notice of government officials. As in the case of Li Wen­ch’eng and his followers, government attempts to learn about and then prevent trouble paralleled the sect members’ efforts to com­plete their rising before this could happen.

**DISCOVERY**

We have already noted some of the ways in which hints of the Eight Trigrams’ stepped-up preparations for rebellion reached members of the government bureaucracy—gentry who lived in the countryside heard about evening meetings, blacksmiths reported requests for the manufacture of large numbers of weapons, ordinary peasants were told by friends of the plans and in turn informed the authorities. As we look in greater detail at other such channels, it should become clear that although the government bureaucracy and official gentry represented a numerically small portion of the population, they were by no means isolated from the rest of the society. In the countryside, members of the Eight Trigrams and members of the elite lived in the same villages, worked in the same
places (for example, the district yamen), and were sometimes related. In the vicinity of Peking, the membership of Chinese bannermen, Chinese bondservants, and Manchus themselves in the sect created even more links between the would-be rebels and the government. Information about their plans filtered upward in many different ways. Sometimes, as in the case of the Chinese bannerman An-shun whose servant was in the sect, revelation of the rebel plans to one member of the elite did not lead automatically to official investigations; in other instances it did, but as it happened, in no case did such investigations disrupt Lin Ch’ing’s mobilization of his followers.

Let us look first at what happened in Ku-an district. The sect leader there, Li Wu, despite his relative wealth, was apparently unable to write (or to write well), and having no one among his pupils able to provide the list of sect members requested by Lin Ch’ing, Li Wu turned to a member of the degree-holding elite and a fellow villager. On the 8th day of the 9th month, he sent a relative (and pupil) to try to recruit the village schoolteacher. This man, a fifty-one-year-old holder of the lowest examination degree named Ch’iu Tzu-liang, was promised many benefits if he would join; he claimed he refused. Four days later, on the eve of the rebels’ departure for Peking, Ch’iu was asked to come to Li Wu’s house. There he was invited to assist Li by writing a list of the names of the people in the sect. Ch’iu claimed, “I realized that there were a lot of people involved, so I thought that if I wrote up the list, I could learn who they were and could then report them.” He made up the list as requested and was told about the rebellion scheduled for three days hence. He was also told to keep quiet about these plans.

Li Wu had been brave, perhaps foolish, in flaunting his strength in front of a sheng-yuan, for despite whatever promises he may have given, Ch’iu Tzu-liang did not keep their secret. The following day (the 13th), he contacted the ti-pao, the quasi-official government agent in that village, and together with other villagers went to the yamen of the district magistrate. Luckily for Li Wu, the magistrate was away on business. Ch’iu and the others could only inform the clerks about members of this heretical sect “plotting trouble” and did not file a formal report. The magistrate did not return until 9/16, by which time the rebellion had already taken place. No investigation occurred until a month later, when the participation of rebels from Ku-an was uncovered. Ch’iu’s “loyalty” had come to nothing and the rebels were very fortunate. This
incident indicates that, although it was possible for sect members to survive without literacy, the organizational demands of rebellion forced them to a greater dependency on those with these skills. The physical proximity of sect teachers, members of the lower gentry, and quasi-official personnel within the same village was in itself a danger to a sect intending to rebel.

It has already been pointed out that the Eight Trigram sects in the Peking area had spread to members of that class of more or less hereditary servants to the Peking elite. Family servants for official and Manchu families, the eunuchs who waited upon the imperial family, and the Chinese bondservants who also served the imperial clan all formed links between would-be rebels and the Ch'ing elite. To illustrate this connection, let us look at one bondservant family who formed a channel through which news of Lin Ch'ing's activities spread directly to the highest levels of the Manchu elite. Through Chu Hsien, sect leader and friend of Lin Ch'ing, and his relatives we can see something of the conflicting loyalties that pulled apart this bondservant family.

Chu Hsien was a pupil of Lin Ch'ing and had been in the Jung-hua Assembly since at least 1809. He and his family were plain-blue banner bondservants attached to the household of the Yü Prince, whose palace was located in Peking. (Ch'en Shuang, the leader of the eastern group in the palace attack, was also from a plain-blue banner bondservant family attached to this same princely household.) Chu Hsien himself had no formal employment and lived in Sang-fa village as a "bannerman agriculturist" (t'un-t'ien). His older cousin was living in the village and serving as ling-ts'üi, the man responsible to his banner company for the banner families in that village.

Chu Hsien's own family was relatively well-off, with a number of hired laborers. Chu's younger brother had been adopted out as a child and was known as Liu Ti-wu. Liu, as we have seen, was a long-standing member of the Jung-hua Assembly, later a pupil of Li Lao, and an active organizer of the palace attack. Chu Hsien himself was forty-six years old; he had remarried after his first wife died and had a son in his twenties and three daughters. Chu Hsien's son became one of Lin Ch'ing's godsons and lived at Lin's house during the summer of 1813. Chu and his son slept with "the women in Lin Ch'ing's household" (probably his two stepdaughters and perhaps his wife), and Chu's wife and daughter-in-law were made available to Lin Ch'ing. In short, the connections between Chu and Lin
Ch'ing were very close, and in consequence Chu had been made a leader for the palace attack and was instructed to organize the men in his village.67

Although Chu was not employed by the princely household to which his family was attached, other relatives of his were. His cousin Chu Hai-ch'ing served the Yü Prince in Peking. In the 9th month of 1813 he happened to come to Sang-fa village to visit his family's graveyard; while there he spent the night with Chu Hsien. The two men talked, and Chu Hsien, whose mind was on the coming uprising, asked his cousin many questions about the management and financing of the prince's household—how many people worked there, how many horses, how much did it cost to feed them per day, and so forth. While he was visiting in the village, Chu Hai-ch'ing also talked with another relative who lived there, his uncle Chu Sung-shan. His uncle told him that Chu Hsien had joined a "heretical sect" and had been meeting secretly at night with some person named Lin Ch'ing in Sung-chia village; moreover, they were planning to go into Peking on 9/13, and on 9/15 they were going to rebel. Hai-ch'ing's uncle added that because Chu Hsien had enemies in his village, the rebels were going to attack these villagers, and so he was afraid. He told his nephew to return to Peking immediately and relate this information to other members of the family.

After spending one night in Sang-fa, Chu Hai-ch'ing returned to the prince's palace in Peking. There he told another uncle what he had heard. This uncle said that such hearsay did not constitute evidence and that before they could file a proper report, they had to get sworn confirmation from Chu Jui, the relative of theirs who as ling-ts'ui was formally responsible for all the bannermen in that village. Hai-ch'ing urged his uncle to report this information anyway to Pai-p'eng-a (a bodyguard in the prince's household), which he did. Pai-p'eng-a claimed that this matter did not come within his jurisdiction; however, he did mention it privately to the Yü Prince that night (the 10th). The prince said, "I doubt this is true. Wait until they get sworn statements." Chu Hai-ch'ing and his uncle spent the entire next day, the 11th, trying to find someone to go back to Sang-fa to get these statements. Finally Chu Kuei-shan, the uncle, went himself. He told Chu Sung-shan (the original informant) and Chu Jui (the ling-ts'ui) to come into Peking and sign a statement for the prince.

As it happened, this man Chu Jui was not only the person responsible for bannermen in that village and Chu Hsien's elder cousin,
he was himself a member of the sect, as were his wife and adopted grandson. Thus, on 9/12 he found himself in a difficult position. He first stalled for a day, and then on 9/13 went to the home of his wife’s brother in a nearby village in order to borrow back a mule to ride into Peking. Chu Jui spent the night there, and he and his brother-in-law discussed the situation. The latter said to Chu Jui, “Those believers in that Sang-fa village of yours are making quite a rebellion—maybe you’re one of them!” To this, Chu Jui had no reply. That night his wife said to him, “All you can do is to go and report to the prince. If your report is successful [in preventing the rebellion] then so much the better. If not, then we had better flee, for I’m afraid the Sang-fa sect people won’t forgive us when they learn about this.”

Chu Jui realized he had to report the sect but he continued to delay as long as possible. On the 14th, as the rebels themselves were leaving for Peking, he rode his donkey and went unhurriedly into the city, not arriving at the prince’s household until early morning the day of the rebellion. In the meantime, the prince had been reminded about the rumored rebellion but again had instructed his staff to wait for written statements. Chu Sung-shan, the original informant, arrived at the prince’s establishment on the 14th, and everyone spent that day waiting for Chu Jui. When he finally arrived the next morning, Chu Jui was told to write up an account of what he knew. He said that he was unable to write; he asked his cousin to write for him and, claiming he was not absolutely certain about there being a planned rebellion (an obvious untruth), instructed him to put down only that a heretical sect had been uncovered. He and Sung-shan then signed the statement.

Despite their efforts the bondservants were unable to give this statement to the prince right away, for that very day, while the statement was being written, the rebels had attacked the Forbidden City. The prince, Yü-feng, being a ranking member of the imperial family, had gone into the Great Interior of the palace to assist during the crisis, and for security reasons none of his staff was allowed to go in and see him. As a result, it was not until sunset on the 16th, when Yü-feng finally emerged and returned home to get food supplies for some of the soldiers on duty in the palace, that his subordinates were able to present him with the now out-of-date report on a dangerous heretical sect. Yü-feng came in the gate of his residence riding in a sedan chair. He took the report, read it, and then asked, “Is this the matter Hai-ch’ing mentioned before? Some rebels have
already taken action. Find out if the people named here are among them. Then let whoever should handle this matter take care of it. Is there anything else?” Yü-feng returned to the Forbidden City that night; the following day, he had second thoughts and sent word requesting that the sworn statement be delivered to him. His intention was not to report the matter to the emperor; on the contrary, once he had the evidence in hand, Yü-feng instructed his staff to “keep it quiet.”

(The Yü Prince’s foreknowledge of the uprising was successfully covered up for nearly six months. Early in 1814, however, a rumor came to the attention of the emperor that Chu Hsien—who was at the time one of the six most wanted rebels—was hiding in the household of that prince. This rumor was investigated and the story began to leak out. By the middle of the 3d month, Yü-feng had been stripped of his title as prince (ch'in-wang 親王) and sentenced to house arrest. “Let him stay home and contemplate what he has done,” said the Chia-ch'ing Emperor.)

In this and the previous example from Ku-an, personal connections between the rebels and members of the establishment led to unsuccessful efforts by ordinary citizens to report the sect and the planned rebellion to the proper authorities. Let us now look at two other cases in which responsible officials were able to learn about the rebellion in advance and yet were unable to mobilize the bureaucracy to take preventive action.

Chang Pu-kao had been serving since the 1st month of 1813 as a subprefect stationed in Huang village, to the west of Peking. (This was the yamen where Lin Ch'ing and his father had served as clerks.) During the night of 9/14, this subprefect received a personal report from a lieutenant stationed there declaring that, according to a man who had come to the yamen for safety, there were people from Sung-chia village who were going to rebel. Subprefect Chang questioned this man and confirmed the lieutenant's report. Immediately he sent two yamen runners to Sung-chia to investigate. This occurred in the middle of the night, just as Lin Ch'ing's men were leaving home and starting into Peking. Nevertheless the runners reported back in the predawn hours that in Sung-chia village all was quiet. Subprefect Chang was not satisfied, and on the 15th he called up some soldiers and sent instructions to the inhabitants of the area to be on the alert. “I could not guess,” he later stated, “that the 15th was the very day that those rebels would go into the capital and rebel. I never dreamed that this would hap-
pen.” The emperor concluded that Chang, who was virtually on the spot, had been unable to discover the obvious, was derelict in his duties, and deserved severe punishment. It does seem difficult to believe that his deputies (if in truth he sent any) had been in Sung-chia village that night and had seen nothing unusual.

Another local official in the capital area also got wind of the Eight Trigrams’ plans; he had somewhat better luck in getting results, although he too was unable to interfere with the mobilization of men for the palace attack. In the middle of the 8th month of 1813, the subdistrict deputy-magistrate stationed at Lu-kou was making his rounds through Wan-p’ing district. This official, Ch’en Shao-jung, had just been assigned to this post in the 4th month of that year. He had first toured and inspected the western portion of Wan-p’ing, and then on 9/10 went to inspect the area south of Lu-kou, where Lin Ch’ing’s village of Sung-chia and nearly a dozen other villages inhabited by sect members were located. He described what happened:

I noticed that the people there were not planting their wheat. I summoned and questioned some of the people from that area. They all said that they were afraid and did not dare plant their wheat. When I tried to question them further they all ran off and hid. I became very concerned because they had seemed so agitated.

Deputy-Magistrate Ch’en returned to his office in Lu-kou on 9/12 and sent runners to go and tell the ti-pao from the villages in that area to come and report; at the same time he sent out deputies to make secret investigations. Those ti-pao arrived on the 13th and all signed sworn statements that they had heard of no trouble. The deputies came back with a different story. They said that in Sung-chia village, they had heard people say, “If you want cheaper flour, Lin Ch’ing must take power.” Deputy-Magistrate Ch’en immediately ordered the ti-pao from Sung-chia village to come to his yamen and in the meantime wrote a preliminary report. He gave his superior no names or places and said only that a “strange saying” had been reported, one that was “difficult to describe in writing.” He stated that he was investigating the matter and would soon interrogate the village headman from that place. Because Sung-chia village was more than twelve miles away from the yamen, this ti-pao did not arrive until early afternoon the following day, the 14th. Deputy-Magistrate Ch’en could not see him right away (he had to
meet with the governor-general that afternoon, and so the interrogation did not take place until the evening of the 14th.

The ti-pao from Sung-chia village, the commoner who was given official responsibility for monitoring the local situation, was, like the bannerman Chu Jui, from exactly that group and class of individuals who belonged to Lin Ch'ing's sect. This local headman was named Sung Chin-jung 邱進榮; he was the younger brother of Sung Chin-yao—one of Ku Liang's relatives and first pupils and Lin Ch'ing's teacher. While it is possible that Sung Chin-jung was, as he claimed, not in the sect, the fact that no fewer than fifteen male members of his lineage were, does make this seem very unlikely. His family was prominent on the local scene (they were the Sungs of Sung-family village), though they were not part of the degree- or office-holding gentry, and they had been the leading sect family in the village for years. Even after Lin Ch'ing had taken over, the Sungs continued to constitute a large portion of his followers. Sung Chin-jung had to know about the case in 1808 when several of his brothers and cousins were punished for being in the Jung-hua Assembly, and it would have been very difficult for him not to have been aware of Lin Ch'ing's increasing wealth and prestige over the last few years. Sung Chin-jung had been local headman for only a year and a half. He tried to explain his failure to do anything about Lin by saying, "[I had seen that] the people who came and went from Lin Ch'ing's house were a rather motley bunch, and this made me uneasy. After I became ti-pao I questioned them, but I never uncovered any hard evidence. Ever since the 7th month a lot of men from nearby villages had come to stay at Lin Ch'ing's. I didn't know what they were doing, but I didn't dare report them."

Summoned before the deputy-magistrate only one day before the planned uprising, Sung Chin-jung was in an even more unenviable position. He did his best to feign ignorance when Deputy-Magistrate Ch'en asked if he knew about anything illegal happening in his village or about any person planning trouble. Incredulous, Ch'en hit him across the mouth a dozen times, and Sung finally told him, "In our village the only person like that is Lin Ch'ing. If there is talk about anyone causing an incident, it must be him." Since Ch'en had already heard the saying "If you want cheaper flour, Lin Ch'ing must take power," Sung's information hardly came as a surprise. He continued to apply physical pressure and eventually Sung was forced to name some of the men he had often seen at Lin's house; not surprisingly, none were members of his family.
Ch’en then wrote up a statement for Sung Chin-jung to sign plus his own report for the district magistrate. He placed Sung in the custody of deputies and sent him together with the reports into Peking to the offices of his superior, the Wan-p’ing magistrate. All this took place on the evening of 9/14. Sung Chin-jung did not mention that there was a rebellion planned for the following day, and Deputy-Magistrate Ch’en apparently did not have the authority to issue a warrant for Lin Ch’ing’s arrest. By early morning on the 15th, just as the sect members were themselves coming quietly and nervously into Peking, Sung Chin-jung was escorted through the city gates. Shortly afterward, Ch’en Shao-jung, who had become increasingly anxious, came himself by horse into Peking. By 7 A.M. he and Sung had both arrived at the yamen of Ch’en Chü-chou, the newly appointed district magistrate.

Magistrate Ch’en had already received his subordinate’s report mentioning a “strange saying,” but he had decided to wait for more specific information before taking any action. When the deputy-magistrate and the local headman reported to him in person, the former requested permission to go and arrest Lin Ch’ing and the others. Magistrate Ch’en disagreed and wanted him to go first and report the matter to the prefect. The deputy-magistrate persuaded his superior not to insist on this, saying he had never been presented to Prefect Fei (who was also newly appointed) and had neither proper clothing nor personal credentials. The magistrate was finally persuaded to take responsibility in this matter, and so he wrote out a warrant for the arrest of those men named by the headman and ordered that sixteen police runners be summoned and sent to make the arrests. The deputy-magistrate asked and was granted permission to take along ti-pao Sung to identify the offenders, and so they left the city and went back to Ch’en’s office in Lu-kou to wait for the arrival of the police runners. These events took place at about 9 A.M. on the 15th.

Sung Chin-jung and the deputy-magistrate waited all day in Lu-kou for the runners, but none came. The magistrate, uneasy about authorizing these arrests, had gone himself to report this matter to Prefect Fei-hsi-chang after Sung and Ch’en had left. By his own account, Prefect Fei had told him that they “must first find out all the facts and for the time being no haphazard arrests should be made. He was afraid that we might be overreacting and that this in itself might provoke trouble. The local headman was to be told to return home and investigate further [before any arrests were made]; then,
if the report should turn out to be false, the inhabitants of the area could be so informed [and thus calmed down].” This conference took place between 9 and 11 A.M. on the 15th; as a result Magistrate Ch'en returned to his offices and sent a message to the deputy-magistrate saying, “I have already reported and explained this matter to the prefect. We absolutely cannot make any arrests at this time! It is better instead to issue instructions telling the people to behave, no more. When you get this message, tell the ti-pao to come back to my offices, and I will give him further instructions personally.”

This message did not arrive until the night of the 15th, and the deputy-magistrate and headman did not leave for Peking until the morning of the following day. It was by then much too late. They found the city gates closed (because of the palace attack) and no one allowed to go in or out. Sung Chin-jung tried to explain that he was being called in for questioning about the group that Lin Ch'ing was assembling in Sung-chia village, and finally later that day they were allowed to proceed to the district yamen. Sung Chin-jung was taken immediately to the office of the military-governor of Chihli, where he was questioned further about Lin Ch'ing. By this time, the palace attack had taken place and government investigators were suddenly very interested in learning the names of sect leaders. Sung Chin-jung was ordered to serve as a spotter for the government and to assist in making arrests. Leaving Peking on the night of the 16th, it was Sung who brought police runners to Lin Ch'ing's house in the early hours of the 17th and made possible his arrest. Later, Deputy-Magistrate Ch'en finally received authorization and personally led about fifty men to Sung-chia village to make other arrests there.74

Considering the number of channels that existed for the activities of Lin Ch'ing and his followers to come to the notice of the government bureaucracy, it is remarkable that not a single sect member was arrested prior to noon on 9/15. The fact that men deputized semi-officially by the government to watch out for exactly this type of “troublemaker” were themselves sect members undoubtedly contributed to Lin Ch'ing's security. By having these men and many members of their families in a sect, believers had—intentionally or not—subverted the normal process of government surveillance and created a screen for their activities.75

An equally serious problem for the Ch'ing state was the slowness with which its bureaucracy responded. This sluggishness may have been somewhat more pronounced in the capital area where many
levels of officialdom resided in close proximity. This concentration of officials may have made the government less rather than more efficient. The sense of urgency was diluted as information passed up the line, and this, combined with each official's unwillingness to take full responsibility unless he had no choice, discouraged independence and inhibited decisive action. The Chia-ch'ing Emperor had some cause to be outraged when he understood the extent to which Lin Ch'ing had openly organized this rebellion—an affair that "suddenly turned up on our doorstep and took place within our very walls!" 76

**Entering Peking**

As the hour set for the uprising approached, Lin Ch'ing and his men sacrificed caution and secrecy and concentrated on the tasks of mobilization. The atmosphere of expectation among believers was compounded as more and more other people became aware that something was going on. Unusual conferences, hurried visits from village to village, the strange appearance of quantities of plain white cotton cloth, the unnatural reluctance of some people to plant their winter wheat, a daring rhyme about Lin Ch'ing taking power, and news that a large army was suddenly being readied to march to Honan to "suppress rebels"—all these things contributed to this uneasy mood. Yet official investigations, when they came, were slow and ineffectual, and Lin Ch'ing and his followers were able to proceed unhampered with their plans. Indeed, Lin's problems came more from within his own group than from the government. Many K'an Trigram members became increasingly frightened at their own audacity and at the last minute balked at taking the final step of becoming rebels. This fear ran like a counterpoint to the efficiency and determination of the rebels in the final days before the uprising.

On the 12th day of that month, the sect members began leaving home and traveling in small groups into the great walled city of Peking. Let us look at these clusters of would-be rebels and at their journeys and see how they attempted to maintain a veil of secrecy over what were now the first steps of rebellion, how they found food and shelter in a city where many had never been before, and how their fear grew as they approached the huge walls and gleaming golden roofs of the Forbidden City.

The larger group of rebels had been assigned to the Hsi-hua
(West Majestic) Gate. Of them, the men from Hsiung district were the farthest from Peking, about eighty miles away, and they left their homes early on 9/12, traveled steadily and did not arrive at the capital till the morning of the 15th. This group consisted of the pupils of the former Ta-sheng sect head Yang Pao. They came from eight villages in northwestern Hsiung district. These two dozen men had all met at Yang Pao’s house on the night of the 8th and at that time pieces of white cloth and weapons had been distributed. In addition each man was given 200 cash to spend for food en route to the capital. Yang Pao, who was in his sixties or seventies, did not go to Peking himself and delegated responsibility for the group to his pupil Liu Chin-t’ing. They all left from Yang’s house on the 12th, at least twenty-two men in all, traveling in three groups. They spent two nights on the way, and by the evening of the 14th, some of them had reached Lin Ch’ing’s, where they slept briefly. They were probably very tired. At dawn on the 15th, one group of at least fourteen men had breakfast in a small temple outside Peking and then went on into the city. Of this group, we know that Liu Chin-t’ing and at least four others went all the way into the city and reached the Hsi-hua Gate by noontime; but some of the others had turned back at the last minute.

Li Wu had mobilized a larger group of men from Ku-an district where he lived; at least seventy were involved in the planning of the palace attack, although we only know of forty-five (including Li Wu himself) who definitely left for Peking. Some of those who remained at home had been instructed, as has been mentioned, to come out and greet the rebels from Honan when they came north. Others, like Li T’ien-shou and his brother, backed out at the last minute: “We discussed this [whether or not to go] and thought that if we didn’t agree to go, they would kill us, so for the time being we would consent but then we would think about it came more. [In the end] we did not go to Lin Ch’ing’s.” Li Wu’s followers came from at least a dozen villages in the Ku-an and adjacent Hsin-ch’eng area, but most were from Hsin-chia village (where Li Wu lived) and another village close by. They were the pupils of either Li Wu himself or Li Wu’s teacher, but it was Li Wu who had done most of the organizing for the palace attack.

Prior to 9/10, Li Wu had had nearly fifty knives made by a blacksmith in his village and he had collected money from his many pupils. On the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th, he distributed the knives and pieces of white cloth. It was on the 12th that he persuaded the
village schoolmaster to write up for him a dictated list of all the members of their sect. Just before they were to leave, Li Wu invited his followers to a big feast at his house. The food prepared them for the physically demanding trip into Peking, and the event gave a certain honor to their undertaking. On the 13th, these men left for Peking, again traveling inconspicuously (they hoped) in small groups.\footnote{As an example, we will describe the route followed by a few of Li Wu’s men, people for whom there is good documentation. These men left Hsin-chia village early on 9/13, before it was light. Ts’ai Ming-shan narrates.}

The other four of them went ahead and [my brother-in-law] Shih Chin-chung and I followed. On the way Shih Chin-chung told me that if en route or in the capital I should run into anyone who was in the group, I should say “Be Victorious” and they would know that I was one of them. By the time we crossed the river it was already dark, so we spent the night in O-fang village. We caught up with the others there. We slept on a pile of wood at the west end of that village. During the night [our leader] Wei Pan-r saw some men and women from a nearby village who were frightened and moving away. He was afraid that they would see our knives. Shih Chin-chung, Chang Lien, and I all had knives which were big and long, so we threw them over the dike into the river. Wei Pan-r’s knife was short, so he kept it. He told us we could get others in the city.

On the 14th, we left that village and [eventually] arrived on the north road outside the Chang-i Gate [on the west side of the southern section of Peking]. We went into a small inn there where we spent the night. That inn was run by two men, a father and son named Ts’ao; I could identify them. Early on the 15th we went in that gate to a teashop on the south side of the road at the Vegetable Market where we drank some tea. Wei Pan-r went and bought three knives for us. When we had finished our tea, we went to the other side of the street and had a meal. Then we went in the Shun-ch’eng Gate [into the northern section]. It was nearly noon when we got to the front of the Hsi-hua Gate.\footnote{Li Wu and his other pupils went first to Lin Ch’ing’s and spent the night of the 14th there. On the 15th Li went into Peking, met the rest of his group at the Vegetable Market, and then led them to the}
City of Peking
Hsi-hua Gate. Of those forty-five who left home for the city, we know of at least twenty who definitely made it into Peking, and most of them went on to the Hsi-hua Gate itself.  

A small branch of Li Wu’s group lived in Hsin village in Tung-an district, southeast of Peking. Although it would have been closer for them to be part of the eastern contingent of the palace attack, they were assigned to the western side together with their teacher Li Wu. The leader of this group was Hsing K’uei-jung 胤貴榮, who was Li Wu’s pupil (and also Li Lao’s son-in-law). Hsing held a meeting at his home for the men from his village on the night of the 13th. They all left the following morning, carrying their knives and white cloth hidden in their clothing. That night they stayed at an inn run by a man called Yang Ssu-pa, located in the southeastern corner of the southern section of Peking to the east of the Temple of Heaven. Although there is no indication that Yang was in the sect, at least a dozen rebels from different villages stayed at his inn on the 13th and 14th. The following morning, early on the 15th, Hsing K’uei-jung and the five others left the inn and went through the Hai-tai Gate into the northern section of the city and then around to the Outer Hsi-hua Gate. It is not clear how many of them went any further.

Ho Wen-sheng 賀文升 was the leader of the sect members from T’ai-p’ing village, many of whom were his relatives. Ho had been in the sect since at least 1808, knew Lin Ch’ing, and was active in planning the palace attack. He and eleven (possibly fifteen) others left their village (east and south of Peking) on the 14th. They went around and into the city from the southwest, may have stayed at Yang Ssu-pa’s inn, and the following day assembled with men from other villages for a last meal at the Vegetable Market in the southern section of Peking. There is unfortunately no firsthand account by any member of this group.

One other group assigned to go in through the Hsi-hua Gate was led by the eunuch Yang Chin-chung, whose office was on the west side of the palace, and who came from the area of Ma-chü-ch’iao (east of Peking). These nine men were organized by their teacher Liu Hsing-li, following instructions from his teacher Li Lao. Liu Hsing-li was rather elderly and relied for assistance on his son and on his pupil’s pupil Yang Chin-chung. Yang’s family, the Chaos, lived in a small village near Ma-chü-ch’iao, and this house became the center for the prerebellion activities. These men had met with their teacher Liu Hsing-li in the 6th month of 1813 to discuss the uprising, and
most of them met again at Yang Chin-chung's house on 9/9, which
happened to be Yang's birthday. On the evening of the 14th they all
came again and, like many of their colleagues, had a big dinner and
discussed plans for the following day. Yang Chin-chung's coworker,
the eunuch Chao Mi, who was to help the rebels inside the palace
the next day, left early that evening to return to his post inside the
Forbidden City.

On the morning of the 15th, after they all had eaten breakfast,
Yang Chin-chung left with his adopted son; they went into Peking
through the Yung-ting Gate (in the center of the southern wall),
walked straight north, in the Ch'ien Gate into the northern section
of Peking, and then around to the eastern gate to the Forbidden
City. Being a eunuch Yang went directly in that gate and to the
Fruit Office, where he reconnoitered with Chao Mi. Yang then
proceeded to the western side, to the Hsi-hua Gate; there he waited
until noon when he was to go out and lead his colleagues back
inside.

In the meantime, the others of this group had left the village and
followed a similar route. They traveled in small groups and met one
another again at the Ch'ien Gate. Li Ch'ao-tso and his son, carrying
two baskets of persimmons in which thirteen knives were hidden,
pretended to be peddlers. All went to the area outside the Hsi-hua
Gate, where they too waited nervously.

The group from Lin Ch'ing's own village included thirty-two
men who went into Peking and seventeen who did not. Most were
actually from Sung-chia but some were from adjacent villages. Lin
Ch'ing made his brother-in-law Tung Po-wang (the man who
had originally introduced Lin to the sect, seven years before) the
leader of this group, while Lin's friend and the head of the K'lan
Trigram, Liu Ch'eng-hsiang, was responsible for organizing them.
Ch'en Wen-k'uei, the overall head of the Hsi-hua Gate contingent,
also went to Peking with this group. These men, together with
batches of men from other villages, came to Lin Ch'ing's house on the
evening of the 13th. Tables had been set up, and from late afternoon
on, they sat drinking tea and wine and discussing the attack. That
evening, Lin Ch'ing outlined the plan of action, assigned ranks and
titles to some of the men, and distributed pieces of white cloth and
knives. The Sung-chia group did not leave until the following
evening, the night of the 14th, some early that evening, others just
before dawn on the 15th. (It was this night that the runners sent by
Subprefect Chang Pu-kao came to Sung-chia village and found that
"all was quiet.") It had been arranged in advance that they also would all meet at the Vegetable Market in Peking.

One of these men described his journey:

During the fourth watch [on the night of the 14th] Hsiung Wu and Li Liu came to my house, each carrying baskets of persimmons. We lied to my father and mother and said that they had asked me to go into the city with them to buy some things. We left the village together, and then went to get Chin Lao-hu and [his younger brother] Chin Lu-r to join us. We went to the Nan-hsi Gate [in the southern wall of Peking] and waited there for the gate to open. Then we entered Peking and went to the Vegetable Market. When it was light, we saw that Tung Po-wang was already there, so we all went to a restaurant and had something to eat.88

Men from the neighboring villages joined them at the Vegetable Market; they had left home during the fifth watch (that is, near dawn) and had also waited outside the city for the gates to open. After Tung Po-wang and his men had eaten, sometime during the 9–11 A.M. hour-period, they went in the Shun-ch’eng Gate into the northern section of the city, to and through the Outer Hsi-hua Gate, and gathered near the Hsi-hua Gate proper.

While these men were assembling on the western side of the Forbidden City, other sect members were on their way to the other side to the Tung-hua (East Majestic) Gate. The overall leader for this group was Lin Ch’ing’s close friend Ch’en Shuang, who was from Sang-fa village and brought with him into the city at least thirty-one men.89

Although Sang-fa village was located near Sung-chia to the southwest of Peking, these men went with their leader to the Tung-hua Gate on the eastern side. This group included two eunuchs and a few people from small villages near Sang-fa. One member was Chu Hsien, the blue banner bondservant whose relatives were at this time trying to report him to the Yü Prince. Perhaps knowing of these efforts and unnerved by the tension and fears about the future of these final days before the uprising, Chu Hsien had begun to have second thoughts. He talked with his family, saying that this whole business was very dangerous. In tears, he confessed that he was afraid that “now that they had mounted the tiger, there would be no way to dismount.” They all cried and agonized together, and finally Chu declared that he would simply tell Lin Ch’ing that he was
quitting. He went to Lin's house to do so, but Lin Ch'ing talked with him, encouraging him to go with them, perhaps reminding him of the benefits to be won, reassuring him, and telling him that to be so concerned about one's wife and family was not acting like a real man. Eventually Chu Hsien was brought around. But as he left home on the 13th he said to his family, "If it is fated that we meet again, then I will see you all once more. If it is not so fated, then this is our last time together." Everyone cried bitterly as he left.90

Many of the men in the Sang-fa village group had attended the meeting at Lin Ch'ing house on the evening of the 13th, and most of them left for Peking the following night. At least six of them stayed at the San-ho (Three Harmonies) inn at the Jewelry Market. In order to find lodgings for the others, the group leader Ch'en Shuang made use of a relatively recent convert to the sect, a theater owner named Liu Ch'ao-tung. Liu was an old acquaintance of Ch'en Shuang's nephew, and it was the latter who had first approached him, probably with the explicit intention of having a Peking resident in his group. In the 8th month, the two Ch'ens had come to visit Liu and had told him, "[Lin Ch'ing] sent us to get you to join our assembly, and in addition he wants you to become his godson. Later on there will be infinite wealth and high position for you." Liu Ch'ao-tung had agreed, and so on the eve of the rebellion, he was ready to assist. The night of the 14th, Ch'en Shuang and his nephew came into Peking early and watched a play at Liu's theater. Then they all went out to dinner at a Muslim restaurant (in other words, to eat mutton or beef), and afterward Liu found a place to stay for at least five of Ch'en's group.91

Early on the 15th part of this Sang-fa group assembled at the Jewelry Market, where knives and cloth were distributed to those who needed them. One of the subleaders of this group took most of them on into the northern city, but he first instructed about ten of them to remain where they were, saying that he would be back to get them later. (These men waited there until noon, but no one ever returned for them, and they made no attempt to find the Tung-hua Gate themselves.) The others went ahead in the Ch'ien Gate and around to the eastern side of the Forbidden City. Four of them went into a wine shop there for something to eat and drink. Another five men in this group had camped out south of the capital, bought something to eat there, and then came into Peking that morning. They also passed through the Ch'ien Gate and sat for a while on the main street just inside that gate; it was not until nearly noon that they went
to the Tung-hua Gate itself. We know that at least a dozen men of this group arrived outside the gate; inside, the two eunuchs, pupils of Ch’ên Shuang, were waiting to lead them.

Another group of rebels consisted of the members of the old Pai-yang sect; they were from four villages southeast of Peking, and were all pupils under Li Lao. These are the people for whom we described distribution of cloth and knives. They were Li Lao’s family, the pupils of his pupils the Chang brothers, and their leader Liu Ti-wu and his family. Li Lao, though the leader, did not go. This group was rather well organized and nearly all made it to the gate itself.

Two brothers who were from Ma-chü-ch’iao left home on the 13th and spent the next two nights in Peking (one at Yang Ssu-pa’s inn, and one at the San-ho inn). At least seven of the Yang-hsiu village group (that is, Li Lao’s village) came into Peking on the 14th; they stayed at Yang Ssu-pa’s inn as well. Chang I-fu, the senior Chang brother, led in most of the others; they left home in the middle of the night of the 14th, came into the southern section of the city, then straight north and in the Hai-tai Gate or the Ch’ien Gate. One man described his trip as follows:

At just past the third watch I followed Chang I-fu and we all set out. We went to the Chiang-ts’a Gate, but they hadn’t opened it yet. I saw [others in the group] also waiting there. When the gate opened, everyone went into the city. We split up, and I went with Chang I-fu [and some others]. We bought some dumplings to eat on the way, and then went in the Ch’ien Gate. We followed along the eastern Ch’ang-an street, walking at the foot of the wall of the Imperial City, going around to the Outer Tung-hua Gate. Then we went in this three-arched gate and arrived outside the Tung-hua Gate. There we went into a teahouse which was on the south side of the road.

In the teashop, Chang I-fu bought tea for his men, and together with the other pupils of Li Lao who had assembled near the gate, they waited for noon.

The third and last group to make up the eastern contingent was from Tung village in T’ung district and came with their leader Ch’ü Ssu. Although Ch’ü had told Lin Ch’ing he had only a dozen able-bodied men among his pupils, there were thirty-one (possibly thirty-eight) who came with him into Peking. One member of Ch’ü Ssu’s group was his fellow villager An Kuo-t’ai, who made his living as a puppeteer in Peking. He had been asked to join the rebellion specif-
ically because he was familiar with the streets of the capital and could help the others find their way in what was to many a bewildering maze.94 Most of this group went to Ch'ü's house for a meeting on the night of the 14th. There, in a pattern identical to that of many of their comrades, they had some dinner—noodles in this case—and were given knives, pieces of white cloth, and instructions for the following day. At this meeting Ch'ü outlined what would happen and urged everyone to participate; to those thinking about backing out at the last minute he counseled, "In this business it might be death if you went, but it would certainly be death if you stayed. If we are successful after all, then everyone will obtain both wealth and position." He asked who wanted the task of carrying banners for the group (a dangerous privilege), and two men volunteered. The banners were marked with the slogan "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way."

The men in this group went into the city through the gates along the southern wall of the capital and assembled at the Flower Market. At this point, Ch'ü Ssu instructed at least five of his men to remain behind, waiting there for men who would come from the south to assist them. "There would be men and horses coming from Hua," he explained. "Bring them into the city, taking the Chiang-mi lane as far as the Tung-hua Gate, and they will be reinforcements for our men."95 (Like another group told to station themselves in the southern city on the western side, these men waited and finally fled when they learned the palace attack had been unsuccessful.) The others went ahead with Ch'ü Ssu. One man carried a basket of dates under which he had hidden knives for the group. They went to outside the Tung-hua Gate, where some went into a teashop, some into a wineshop, each drinking for courage and to pass the time until the signal was given for action.

There were many who never came as far as these two gates to the Forbidden City. In testimony after testimony, those who were to have been rebels stated that they had had second thoughts as they made their way into Peking, and "the more I thought, the more afraid I became." Some of these men turned back before they reached the palace gates; others hung back and, hoping "that when they got their 'benefits' they would not leave me out," looked for an excuse to flee. The tension and suspense, only partially relieved by the alternation of much walking with frequent pauses to eat and drink, undermined morale and ate away at the conviction that this deed must be done. When the noon hour finally arrived, many had
lost their nerve, and we shall see that in the forward movement, the rush to enter the gates, there was an undertow, a simultaneous pulling back which weakened the force of that attack.

**Into the Forbidden City**

Of the intended Tung-hua Gate rebels, between thirty and forty had stayed at home. Of the ninety to one hundred who had left, at least thirty-four never made it to the gates, but at least sixty-one did arrive in the immediate area just to the east of the Forbidden City. Most of them had come in plenty of time and were, as we have seen, sitting in different teashops and wineshops, eating, drinking, and waiting nervously for the moment when they would act. Early that morning the eunuchs Liu Te-ts'ai and Liu Chin had come out from the Interior (where they worked) and exited through the Tung-hua Gate. As arranged, they went to the wineshop just outside and met Ch'en Shuang, their teacher and the overall leader for this eastern group. The eunuchs joined Ch'en and his men, reviewed their plans, and then they too sat and waited, drinking for courage.

Finally, at noon, the two eunuchs rose and walked toward the gate; word was passed that the time had come. The rebels took out their banners, tied on identifying white cloth, drew out their knives, and, following the eunuch leaders, walked rapidly toward and then through the open gate. At that time seventeen men were supposed to be on guard duty at that gate, and though many were eating their lunch, sleeping, or talking with friends, some were at their posts. As the rebels hurried inside, those guards—with little effort—simply closed the doors of the gate. This turn of events almost epitomizes the naiveté and ultimate hopelessness of the rebels’ plans. Besides the two eunuchs, only five rebels were able to enter; all the rest were shut out.96

The rebels who were at the gate saw it close, and those who were farther away heard the noise of the great doors swinging shut. One participant described how he carefully preserved the options of advance and retreat and watched what happened:

At the Outer Tung-hua Gate, I saw [some of the others] drinking in a wineshop, but I went ahead in that gate. Just to the south of the stone bridge [leading to the Tung-hua Gate proper] there were some men selecting horses, so I watched them for a while. Then I went forward onto the bridge and then stood
there and waited. At noon official soldiers began grabbing people, and I heard the noise of the gate closing, so I turned and ran.97

The guards outside the gate shouted, "Seize them! Seize the rebels!" There was noise and commotion as many turned to flee. Word quickly spread: "There's trouble at the Tung-hua Gate." "They're rebelling, someone's rebelling!" Some rebels did not arrive at the gate until the last minute (at least so they claimed), and when they got there it was already too late. Several men who had stopped for tea and were just coming toward the gate encountered some of their colleagues "running frantically" in the other direction. They too turned around, frightened, and made their way home as fast as they could. All those who fled from the scene disposed of their incriminating paraphernalia as best they could, throwing knives and white cloth by the roadside, into moats, streams, graveyards, sewers, or the deep ruts made in the road by carts. Word was carried to those who had been waiting in the southern section of the city: "I hear the Tung-hua Gate has been shut. Things are not going right. Let's get out of here!" At least three rebels were arrested near the palace gate, but the others all returned home unhindered. Those from the Sung-chia village area came back in a group and shamefacedly presented themselves at Lin Ch'ing's quarters to bring him the bad news.98

In the meantime, the two eunuchs and five other rebels who had made it through the gate found themselves alone inside the Forbidden City. Among them was Ch'en Shuang, the leader of the entire attack. Their plan a near failure, they still followed the eunuch Liu Te-ts'ai and turned toward the north intending to kill anyone who got in their way. Their goal was the Great Interior, where they hoped to find their colleagues from the western side. Along the way they encountered resistance: two palace personnel grabbed clubs and tried to stop them. Ch'en Shuang and another drew their knives, stabbed them, and ran on. They turned up a narrow passage along the eastern wall of the Interior, heading for the only gate in this wall, the Ts'ang-chen Gate. They were pursued, and Ch'en and two others were stopped and seized. The remaining four, including the two eunuchs who were still leading the way, reached this gate to the Interior.

Sixteen men were assigned to guard duty on the Ts'ang-chen Gate. On this day, five of them were on their lunch hour and had left the palace. Ten others had, contrary to regulations, left the gate—some were resting, others were sitting around, talking, or writing up
Forbidden City, with paths taken by Eight Trigram rebels
reports. Only one man, the Manchu soldier Kuan-lung, was on duty. When the rebels entered the Ts’ang-chen Gate, he claimed he saw nothing unusual. They appeared to be just three or four eunuchs; no one had white cloth or weapons, though it did look like the first eunuch was carrying some cabbage, and they did not look like rebels. So Kuan-lung did nothing to stop them. Shortly afterward, however, he realized something was wrong. Someone from the Interior called out for help. “There are bandits inside the Interior!” Those gate guards who should have been on duty were alerted and, together with Kuan-lung, rushed in the gate to see what had happened. In the meantime, palace eunuchs had fought with and successfully tied up two rebels with no help from the guards, although several of them were injured in the process. The two rebel eunuchs had escaped detection entirely. One simply walked on through the Interior and made himself scarce elsewhere in the palace. The other turned upon his rebel comrades and, grabbing a staff, began to swing it at them.

The Chia-ch’ing Emperor’s second and third sons, Mien-ning (the future Tao-kuang Emperor) and Mien-k’ai, were at this time in the Palace School next to the southern wall of the Interior. They heard the commotion and quickly came out to see what was happening. They encountered the chief eunuch accompanied by other eunuchs and the bound captives. The rebels had been searched and their knives and white cloths discovered, and the princes were assured that everything was under control. Of the three other rebels who had come in the gate, two of them had already been caught before reaching the Interior, and the third was caught and apparently killed. No one involved in making these arrests realized that there were—or would be—rebels also coming in the western gate. The Tung-hua rebels had been taken care of with dispatch, and calm had apparently been restored.99

At least seventy or eighty men, possibly as many as one hundred thirty, had gathered outside the Hsi-hua Gate. The eunuchs who were to lead this group inside—Yang Chin-chung, Kao Kuang-fu, and Chang T’ai—came out through the gate to meet their associates. Although both attacks were to take place at noon, there is some indication that this Hsi-hua group’s attempt to enter occurred after the entry on the eastern side. Either one was early or the other late. At least four men were carrying peddlers’ baskets of persimmons and sweet potatoes under which they had hidden knives. Some of the men from Sung-chia village gathered around the man who was
carrying their knives and pretended to be buying persimmons from him. Instead, each reached under the fruit and took a knife. The group from Ma-chü-ch'iao, when they realized it was time to go through the gate, surged up behind the young man who was carrying their weapons, knocked him and his baskets over and, as the bright orange persimmons spilled out into the street, grabbed their knives from the baskets and rushed in the gate.

At least seventy men took this step and committed themselves to rebellion. The Hsi-hua Gate was supposed to be guarded by twenty men, but none of them did anything to oppose the rebels. Once inside, the leaders hastily decided that most of their men had made it, and closed the gate. In fact there were a number of sect members who had perhaps intentionally lagged behind and who were shut out. The gate guards, finally roused, called out, “These are rebels!” and so everyone left outside hurried away.100

Inside, the rebels tied on their white sashes and turbans; the leaders of each village group carried small white banners, and everyone had his knife ready.101 One of the leaders immediately went up onto the wall and planted a banner there as a signal of welcome to the Honan men who, according to plan, would soon arrive as reinforcements. Then the group headed toward the north, now totally dependent on their eunuch guides to show the way within the immense and unfamiliar palace complex. They were going toward the Great Interior just as the rebels on the eastern side had done. They passed the offices of the Imperial Household near the Fruit Office where Yang Chin-chung worked and where several other eunuchs who were sect members were now waiting. They encountered staff and palace personnel and, now fully committed and their lives at stake, attacked and tried to kill them.

It took this large group at least a half hour to reach the next set of gates leading into the Interior, but by this time the palace staff had been alerted and these gates were closed. (The eastern group had apparently all been seized by the time the western group reached this point.) When the rebels arrived at the Lung-tsung Gate on the edge of the Great Interior (just inside of which were the offices of the Grand Council) they found it closed. They tried to open it by banging on the gate door and even tried to burn down the door but were unable to get a proper fire started. Finally they seized the bows and arrows there for use by the gate guards and fought with those guards who advanced against them. As this fighting was going on, the Manchus had begun to mobilize their defenses.
That morning the emperor, returning from Jehol, was about fifty miles from Peking. The head of the Peking Gendarmerie, which was responsible for maintaining order in the capital city, had left early that morning to go out and greet the imperial retinue. His number two man, who had been with the emperor, came back to Peking to take charge temporarily. This man, Yu-lin, arrived in Peking during the 1–3 p.m. hour-period on the 15th. He was immediately notified that there had been trouble at the Tung-hua Gate of the Forbidden City; word of the more serious trouble on the western side had apparently not yet reached his office. As the highest ranking Gendarmerie official in Peking, Yu-lin had the authority to put the city on the alert, which he did immediately. Soldiers were sent to each of the four gates to the Forbidden City, and guards were instructed to close the thirteen city gates earlier than usual and to halt any suspicious-looking persons.

At the same time Yu-lin assembled soldiers and proceeded directly into the Forbidden City, entering from the north. He met with other high Manchu princes (including the Chia-ch'ing Emperor's brothers Yung-hsing and Yung-hsuan), who had already been alerted. They began to search for rebels and arrived to find that some of the Hsi-hua Gate group had come as far as the gate to the Chung-cheng Hall, part of the Great Interior, while others were "causing a disturbance" outside the Lung-tsung Gate. The Gendarmerie soldiers were well armed and came immediately to the assistance of the palace guards. Some of the rebels had abandoned the attempt to storm the Lung-tsung Gate and had gone instead toward the north. When they ran directly into the approaching soldiers, they were forced to turn southward again, away from the Interior.

At about this time, the two sons of the emperor again became involved in the action. Earlier they had seen that the rebels who had come in the Ts'ang-chen Gate had been caught and bound, and they felt the situation was under control. They had talked about it and decided that they would go and inquire after the empress (who was the mother of the younger of the two, eighteen-year-old Mien-k'ai) to make sure that she was unharmed. As they walked toward the northwest, still inside the Great Interior, they found themselves directly inside the Lung-tsung Gate, outside of which the fighting with the second group of rebels still continued.

At least three rebels, unable to enter the gate, had climbed the wall instead and were jumping down onto the roof of the imperial kitchen, which was just inside the wall. At this time there no soldiers
inside the Interior; only eunuchs, already on the alert but armed merely with clubs and staffs, were patrolling up and down the lanes and standing on lookout duty on some of the walls and roofs. Seeing the rebels coming over the wall, the elder son and future emperor, Mien-ning (then age thirty-one), immediately sent an aide to fetch his knife, musket, and powder. He realized that the rebels might be trying to head north deeper into the Interior and that the men on the inside could do nothing against those on the walls and roofs without using muskets. Therefore, he explained later, he broke the rule forbidding anyone to shoot a gun within the Interior, and when his musket was brought, he fired upon the rebels. He hit one who fell to the ground outside the wall. This shooting from the inside convinced most of the rebels outside not to continue scaling the wall, but there were already several rebels on their way. Mien-ning ran into a nearby courtyard, where he shot and killed another rebel on the wall—a leader who was carrying a white banner and calling out orders to the others. Those rebels who had dropped down onto the roof of the imperial kitchen, jumped to the ground and found hiding places temporarily.

The emperor’s nephew, Mien-chih (son of the I Prince Yung-hsuan), had previously arrived on the scene, and now he borrowed his cousin’s musket and began shooting at other rebels upon the wall, killing at least one more. Mien-chih then went to join in the fighting outside the Lung-tsung Gate and in the course of the day stabbed one rebel and shot two more. The two imperial sons in the meantime went as they had previously planned to see the empress. Mien-ning insisted that his younger half brother remain with his mother, just to be safe, and then he went back to where there had been fighting, accompanied all the while by the chief eunuch and several other eunuchs.

The rebels had given up their attempt to enter the Interior, and finding soldiers to the north and rifle fire coming from within, they turned back toward the south, the way they had come. The eunuch Yang Chin-chung was still acting as a leader, and with him there were at least twenty rebels still alive and increasingly desperate. Yang went south with them, but realizing that the situation was hopeless, he abandoned the group and ran to the Fruit Office, where he worked. The staff there (some of whom were in the sect) had closed their gate and were waiting fearfully inside. Yang Chin-chung climbed the wall and jumped down into the courtyard. He went to his room to get a knife and then put a ladder up against the wall
and climbed up to see what was happening. When he saw the Manchu princes leading soldiers and searching for rebels, he descended and tried to go about normal business, hoping to avoid detection. (His name came out a few days later and like the other eunuch rebels he was eventually arrested and executed.) Without their leaders and guides, the remaining rebels scattered and found themselves trapped. Some tried to hide, others committed suicide.

Under the leadership of the I Prince, Ch'eng Prince, Mien-chih, Mien-ning, other lesser princes, officers of the Imperial Household, and the staff of eunuchs, the surviving rebels were hunted down and one by one found and arrested. During the night of the 15th, the palace and the city were patrolled regularly and though there was some fighting during the night, by morning all was calm. The entire Forbidden City was carefully searched in the course of the next two days and few rebels escaped. Two were found hiding in the imperial kitchen, one young man was discovered inside a shed near the Hsi-hua Gate, two bodies were found in the canal near that gate, and twenty or thirty bodies were lying about on the ground outside the gates to the Interior. Three other rebels were found alive three days later, hiding in the ceiling space of the Wu Gate.

While most of the rebels were caught or killed, a few did manage to find their way over the walls and escape from the palace. One, Fan Ts'ai, ran to the southern side of the Forbidden City and spent the afternoon of the 15th hiding under a bridge. After dark, he crawled onto the palace walls and made his way along the top. In the morning he tried to jump down, but fell, hurt himself, and was soon caught. T'ien Ch'i-lu was luckier:

[After fighting at the Lung-tsung Gate] I went back to the Hsi-hua Gate and went up the horse ramp. Then I jumped down onto another building [still inside the palace] and hid there for several days. Early on the 18th, I climbed a large tree that was next to the wall and jumped from the tree down onto the wall itself. I headed toward the north, walking along the wall for about one li, crossing over one gate. I saw that there were some piles of loose dirt along the base of the wall, so I jumped down onto them. I climbed over some bricks and up over a storage place for grain, then I jumped down from there onto a broken-down house which was filled up with dirt. I swam across a river and then climbed up some rocks and up the
riverbank. I followed along the side of the wall there and squeezed through an opening. [Once in the city itself] I went out [various] gates and then back home.104

T'ien was not arrested for two months, but then he was caught and executed like the others.

AFTERMATH

Nearly all the rebels who entered the Forbidden City were either killed or captured. The government stated that thirty-one rebels were killed and forty-four captured alive, some of whom were seriously injured and soon died. Nevertheless, the Ch'ing side did suffer more than their share of casualties, for these seventy-five rebels, armed only with knives, had been able to kill or injure more than one hundred of the palace defenders.105

Around six P.M. on the 15th, the Chia-ch'ing Emperor himself learned about what had occurred in Peking. That afternoon two low-ranking Manchu officials had by chance gone to the Tung-hua Gate. Finding the gate closed, they went around to the northern entrance to the Forbidden City. There they learned of the disturbances within and arming themselves with knives, went inside to assist. They witnessed some of the fighting, and respectfully inquired of the Manchu princes who were in charge if there was anything they could do. The emperor’s brother Yung-hsuan (whose son Mien-chih had already distinguished himself in fighting the rebels) gave them a brief draft memorial drawn up and signed by the seventeen princes and ministers who were there in the palace. He dispatched the two men to deliver it to the emperor as fast as possible. They left the palace immediately, commandeered horses at the Board of War, and rode rapidly out of the city. When they reached the imperial entourage, then less than fifty miles away, they presented the memorial and described to the emperor and grand councillors present what they had seen personally of the situation.106 In this manner the emperor learned within a few hours, that there had been trouble caused by men wearing white sashes and turbans, that his son and nephew had behaved outstandingly, and that the situation was under control.107

The Chia-ch'ing Emperor had known about the disturbances in Honan and Shantung for several days (since the 12th), and the com-
mon use of white sashes may have already suggested a link between these events and the palace attack. The possibility of a close connection between these uprisings had since become clearer. On the 15th the emperor had received a memorial from the governor of Shantung finally reporting the confessions of Chin-hsiang sect members who claimed that the leader of their sect lived near Peking. One Shantung sect member had stated that this man was a reincarnation of Maitreya Buddha, called by many names, sometimes Lin, sometimes Liu. He lived twenty-eight li south of the capital near the main thoroughfare. He had previously visited Honan, conferred with sect leaders there, and was planning his own uprising in the Peking area. Very soon the emperor received other evidence indicating the existence of a "mastermind" named Lin. The Sung-chia village ti-pao had named Lin Ch'ing several days before, and by the 16th his testimony began to be taken seriously. He was taken along as a spotter to identify and arrest Lin Ch'ing the following day. (Some of the rebels captured inside the palace were already being informally interrogated, but apparently none of them mentioned Lin Ch'ing's name before the afternoon of the 17th.)

The days prior to his arrest were difficult ones for Lin Ch'ing. The men from Sung-chia village had left from his house for Peking in the middle of the night on the 14th. The following morning, with the village relatively deserted, Lin Ch'ing left home briefly but returned just after breakfast time. When he returned to his quarters in the Tung family courtyard, he instructed his nephew and some of the others who remained at home with him to take out and play some cymbals and a trumpet while he beat out a drum beat on a board. At noontime, when the attack on the palace was scheduled to begin, Lin Ch'ing, a picture of calm, retired to his room to rest saying, "If people come, wake me up." Tung Kuo-t'ai and Sung Wei-yin stood at the gate to the house, watching the street. While they were standing there, they saw Ho Shih-k'uei, a sect member who was supposed to have gone into Peking. He had been too afraid to go and was on his way to market instead. Sung Wei-yin pulled Ho Shih-k'uei over under a tree next to the temple nearby and asked him why he had not gone with the others. Not sympathetic with Ho's weak explanation, Sung told him that "because you didn't go into the city today, that means that later our people are going to kill you." Ho Shih-k'uei hurried away.

At dusk, as the lamps were being lighted, Lin Ch'ing arose. He told some of the others that now they could sleep. Sung Wei-yin and
six of those staying at Lin's house were given knives and clubs and told to stand guard. Rebels began to return from Peking during the night and early morning. As these men, at least eleven of them, arrived at Lin Ch'ing's house, alone or in small groups, they gave their leader the bad news. Lin fatalistically explained to one of them that it was because their basic foundation was weak that they were unable to be successful. Realizing that he was truly in danger now, Lin insisted that everyone spend the night guarding his house.

The following day, the 16th, other rebels who had fled from Peking also returned to their villages. Lin Ch'ing stayed at his house and spent the day with a few friends in almost total silence, sitting, smoking, and thinking. Lin had already received some word about the progress of the uprising in Honan, and for a while he considered going there himself. Finally he decided to send instead his friend and fellow villager Chih Chin-ts'ai, who had accompanied Lin on each of his visits to Hua and who therefore knew the way. He told Chih to take the horse, go first to notify Sung Yueh-lung in central Chihli, and then go to Hua and tell Li Wen-ch'eng that the attack on the Forbidden City had not been successful.

Lin Ch'ing had just this one day in which to consider his options, and he chose to remain at home. Early the next morning the governmental machinery that had been set in motion seven days before finally caught up with him. Before dawn on the 17th, the ti-pao Sung Chin-jung (Lin's fellow villager and the brother of his teacher) arrived in Sung-chia village accompanied by one sublieutenant, several soldiers from the district garrison, and three men from the police bureau of the Imperial Household. The arrest was quickly made and there was no opposition. The only other person in the household awake at this early hour was Lin's nephew Tung Kuo-t'ai, who happened to be on his way to the outhouse. He saw his uncle being led away and as soon as the arresting officers spotted Tung, he was seized as well. The two were bound, put in a cart, and taken off.

The rest of the household awoke almost immediately. Lin Ch'ing's sister, Tung Kuo-t'ai's mother, took charge of the situation. She aroused everyone and ordered them all—at least twenty men—to grab knives and clubs and staffs and to chase the cart and rescue her son and her brother. A neighbor, out early in his buckwheat field, saw these men in the distance, running after the cart waving their weapons, but the attempted rescue was less than wholehearted. Most ran only as far as the edge of the village, and everyone had an excuse not to go farther: "The cart was going too fast, and we couldn't
catch up. "I hurried to the entrance to the village, but because I'm not very brave, I then ran back home."¹¹² For security reasons, Lin Ch'ing and his nephew were taken to Peking via the extensive Southern Park (Nan-yuan), off-limits to commoners, which lay south of Peking and just east of Sung-chia village. Then Lin was taken to the offices of the Gendarmerie for interrogation. The southern route subprefect Chang Pu-kao had arrived with some men to accompany the prisoners into Peking.¹¹³ The following day, the 18th, Subdistrict Deputy-Magistrate Ch'en Shao-jung finally arrived in Sung-chia village empowered to make arrests. He found Lin Ch'ing gone but searched his quarters and arrested members of the Tung family and eight sect members who were still at the house.¹¹⁴

In the meantime, after a preliminary interrogation in which Lin Ch'ing did admit to organizing the palace attack—"he stood up and straightforwardly admitted he was the head of the rebels, but when we questioned him about how many people there were in his group and where they were now, he equivocated and would not give us any information"—Lin Ch'ing was transferred to the Board of Punishments. There he underwent intensive questioning by senior board officials and special deputies of the emperor.¹¹⁵ In these subsequent confessions, Lin Ch'ing did give the names of other sect members, but he used nicknames and was very vague; his information was relatively useless, especially compared with that supplied by his nephew, whose statements were long, detailed, and reliable. (Tung Kuo-t'ai remained in the Board of Punishments prison nine years before being executed. He was periodically interrogated and asked to describe or identify wanted rebels or to confirm the testimony of those arrested later.)¹¹⁶

On the 21st, Lin Ch'ing was again interrogated by the highest Board of Punishment officials. They lectured him, saying, "Our emperor loves the people as if they were his own children. Anyone with a human heart would certainly have been grateful. You even live in Wan-p'ing district, which is an area on which the emperor has repeatedly bestowed special favors, and this is nothing like being from a distant province. You had to be aware of this. How could you organize people and charge into the Forbidden City armed with knives? Even brutes and beasts would not go this far! Exactly what did you intend to do?" To this Lin Ch'ing replied, "When I thought up the idea of organizing an assembly, I intended it as a way of making money. Later on, the people who believed grew numerous, and then, because I wanted to acquire wealth and honor, I started in on this business [of rebellion]. It is my fate to die. It is not my fate to
be a peaceful commoner. I sought this end myself. What else is there to say?"

On the 23d day of the 9th month, Lin Ch’ing was brought before the Chia-ch’ing Emperor himself and questioned by him and the assembled Manchu princes and ministers. With Lin were two eunuchs and another rebel; Lin’s friend Ch’en Shuang was also to have been present at this court interrogation, but he had just died of wounds received during the attack on the palace. The four were questioned, particularly about the extent of eunuch involvement in the rebellion, and then taken away to be executed. Thus Lin Ch’ing did have the privilege of seeing the man he had hoped to oust before being executed by slicing. His head was subsequently taken to the battlefields in Honan, where it was displayed for the rebels there as proof of his death.

The bodies of all those rebels who died during the palace attack had already been taken to the execution grounds and “chopped into ten thousand pieces.” Those K’an Trigram sect members and their relatives who were subsequently arrested were interrogated and then sentenced with meticulous attention to the extent of their knowledge of or participation in the abortive uprising. Over the next four years, more than eight hundred people were arrested and punished by the Board of Punishments, the majority with some form of banishment. The networks of White Lotus sects around Peking, even those having no connections with Lin Ch’ing, were decimated. Because of what was felt to be a pressing need to restore the security of the capital city and its environs, the policy of leniency toward sect members who did not join the rebellion, the rule in the areas to the south where Li Wen-ch’eng and his followers had risen up, was not applied.

In retrospect, the assault on the Forbidden City by this handful of poorly armed and inexperienced rebels appears almost pathetic. It is true that in Shantung a few hundred men had entered two cities and massacred the residents and staff of the magistrates’ yamen, but they had not even tried to occupy those cities. In Honan it took thousands, not hundreds, of men to seize and hold the city of Hua. The evidence suggests that the planning of the palace attack had been entirely unrealistic, and the responsibility for that planning lay with Lin Ch’ing. It seems to have been Lin’s ambition that blinded him. He may have been the victim of his own propaganda, forced to attempt a deed commensurate with a “Patriarch of Latter Heaven and Heavenly Controller in Charge of the Faith,” a deed that would outdo those of his colleagues and continue to earn him respect and deference from members of the Eight Trigrams. Lin Ch’ing ignored the weak-
nesses within his own group and the strengths of his opponents. The fact that he remained at home rather than leading his men into the palace is certainly not to his credit; his participation might actually have helped overcome the fragmented organization and lack of discipline that debilitated the attacking groups.

Under the best of circumstances, however, the rebels faced very difficult problems. The sheer physical presence of the Forbidden City put them at a disadvantage. After the dusty and crowded streets of village and city, the emptiness, the stillness, the dramatic colors, and the solidity of the buildings must have been overwhelming, almost paralyzing. The massive walls and gates and the immensity of the palace complex might be to an outsider an awe-inspiring maze and ultimately a trap. Even had the full complement of those sent by Lin Ch'ing been able to enter the palace, they would have still been outnumbered, and in terms of discipline, arms, and military experience, the rebels could not compare with the bannermen who served as palace guards. Other soldiers were stationed in great numbers all around Peking. Did the rebels not expect that they would be called in? Even had they been able to kill most of the palace personnel and members of the imperial family, could the survivors have held the four gates to the Forbidden City against large armies determined to enter?

Knowing nothing of the palace itself, Lin Ch'ing relied entirely on his eunuch pupils for assurances that this assault was possible. It is true, however, that there was some cause for their belief that the palace could be entered. Investigating the state of palace defenses after the event, the Chia-ch'ing Emperor, although proud of the quick suppression of the rebels, found much to criticize. For at least a year afterward, memorials and edicts were exchanged on ways to improve surveillance of the gates, to assure the availability of arms in good condition and in sufficient numbers, to regulate the movements of eunuchs in and out of the palace, and so forth. Yet no matter how careless the palace staff had become, when pressed they rose to the occasion and responded swiftly and very vigorously. Unused to such violence, the imperial family and princes of the imperial clan could justly feel a surge of confidence in their ability to meet and deal with crises as men and as Manchus.

Looking at the Eight Trigram uprisings as a whole, the difficulties involved in turning these White Lotus sects into instruments of rebellion are striking. In order to prepare many groups of ordinary people for violent uprisings in different places on and not before a
designated time, sect members had to begin to engage in dangerous and illegal activities that in themselves made discovery by government agents increasingly likely. The acquisition of the physical implements of rebellion involved risk. The stepped-up efforts by sect leaders to convince their followers of the rightness and inevitability of rebellion—to make them psychologically ready to give up what security they had and adopt a way of life built initially on violence—these were even more dangerous to the security of the movement as a whole. Friends and relatives and neighbors could not help but be aware of the tense, expectant, fearful, and excited behavior characteristic of believers about to become rebels. This mood spread outward in waves around the centers of sect activity, inevitably coming to official attention. In short, both the attitudes and physical objects which needed to be prepared in advance of the rebellion had to be and yet could not be secret.

Information about the "rebellious plot" traveled upward through individuals who served officially and unofficially as links between the government and the people. The eunuch who worked for the imperial family, the Chinese bondservant who served the Manchu elite, the servant in a wealthy household, the poor member of a rich lineage, the country neighbor of a gentry family, the degree-holding village schoolmaster, the semiofficial government agent in a village, the deputies of provincial officials stationed in market towns—these and other individuals had access to the official elite as other ordinary people did not, and this access made them possible conduits for information.

The near impossibility of secrecy and the existence of these upward channels meant that an extensive "plot" such as that of the Eight Trigrams could not be kept entirely secret. It was speed on the part of the rebels and slowness on the part of the government that allowed rebels to act without advance interference. As we have seen, if the officials were alerted to a possible threat, the seats of the Ch'ing government could be well protected by their high walls, men, and money. The Forbidden City, admittedly a special case, was defensible even in a surprise attack. By contrast, district cities operating normally were more vulnerable to sudden, violent attacks.

For those Eight Trigrams who survived the transition from the an (dark, secret) to the ming (bright, open) phase, an entirely new set of problems awaited them. The competition between these sects and the government, though indirect and muted in normal times, became now an open contest fought on the battlefield. Let us turn to that struggle.