PART FOUR

Survival: The Contest for Popular Support
THE magistrate of Ch’ang-yuan district in southern Chihli had been surprised and killed by a band of Eight Trigram rebels in a village of that district on the 6th day of the 9th month of 1813. The following day, rebels who had secretly entered Hua city in northern Honan attacked the official compound there and then occupied the city and the adjacent port town of Tao-k’ou. Three days later, on the 10th, other rebels carried out surprise attacks on the magistrates’ offices in Ting-t’ao and Ts’ao in southwestern Shantung but did not attempt to occupy either city. On the 15th, the date originally designated for these uprisings, another band of rebels entered the Forbidden City in Peking with the intention of seizing it but were instead killed or arrested.

During the rest of the 9th month the rebels in Shantung and southern Chihli formed small bands and were involved in a continuous search for food and supporters. Government soldiers were gradually mobilized and by the end of the month drove these rebels out of Shantung toward the west. From their base in Hua city and in villages nearby, the Eight Trigrams in Honan also went out in search of men and supplies. They attempted to seize the city of Chün but were unsuccessful. A large Ch’ing army was slowly assembled during the 10th month, and pressure was put on the Honan rebels from all sides, with the spearhead of the government’s attack aimed at Hua city. Assisted by local militia, Ch’ing soldiers gradually recaptured rebel-held villages and, as surviving rebels fled into Hua city, regained control of the countryside. At the end of the 10th month the river port of Tao-k’ou was recaptured by the government and the encirclement and siege of Hua city was begun.

In order to escape, the rebel leader Li Wen-ch’eng took several thousand men and left the city. After first attempting to go toward Shantung, they were forced to swing south and then west and finally sought the comparative security of the mountain foothills on the Honan–Shansi border. Trapped there in a small fortified village, Li Wen-ch’eng and his men were surrounded and wiped out by pursuing soldiers late in the 11th month. The siege around Hua city had meanwhile tightened, and on the 10th day of the 12th month, when fifteen thousand soldiers from as far away as Manchuria had been assembled, the Ch’ing armies attacked and recaptured the city. The Eight Trigrams rebellion had lasted for three months and had cost the Ch’ing government some four million taels. More than one
hundred thousand people had been involved in the uprising, some of them against their will, and at least seventy thousand had died.

Once the Eight Trigrams had risen in rebellion, the nature and scale of their undertaking changed radically. Committed sect members, now the core of a wider and more heterogeneous movement, had at once to hold their rebellion together and to defeat militarily the forces of the Ch'ing government. All else had been a prelude; this was the real test. We will look first at how the rebels tried to win popular support and at the life they offered to recruits. Then we will examine the problems that faced the Eight Trigram leaders as they tried to adapt their ambitious goals and strategies to the disappointing realities of their situation, and at the new life style enjoyed by these leaders. We will discuss in more conventional terms the Ch'ing suppression of the uprising, their use of both large armies and militia. Finally, we will look at the last days of the rebellion, Li Wen-ch'eng's flight from Hua and the bloody recapture of that city by Ch'ing forces. The following account, concentrating as it does not on the government but on the struggles and painful collapse of the rebel movement, should help us understand how the Eight Trigrams tried to survive as rebels and why they failed in this, their final metamorphosis.

**Rounding Up Supporters**

Once they had risen in rebellion, the size of the Eight Trigrams multiplied rapidly. Hsu An-kuo had about six hundred pupils who were involved in planning the uprising. Within one month, nearly six thousand rebels had been killed or captured in Shantung, and an equal number had allegedly fled the province. The one or two thousand Eight Trigram sect members in Hua and Chun districts in Honan later attracted between seventy and eighty thousand followers and were in effective control of urban populations of an additional twenty thousand. In short, the core of believers who initiated this rebellion amassed ten times as many new followers and eventually themselves constituted only a fraction of the total rebel population. How did they attract and secure the loyalty of these new recruits? How did they organize and direct them? To answer these questions we must look both at the occupied cities and at the villages in the countryside, for each presented the sect members and rebel leaders with somewhat different problems of recruitment.

Unfortunately, information about the occupation of Hua city is
distressingly sparse. Only a few rebel leaders lived to be interrogated; the others died when the city was retaken in the 12th month. There are only a few descriptions of what this occupation meant for the inhabitants of the city and of the relationship between rebels and those "good people" (liang-min 粒,穀) whose loyalty they hoped to win.

As we have seen, on the morning of 9/7 Li Wen-ch’eng’s aides and pupils from Hua and Chün districts broke into the Hua yamen buildings and freed their leader. They attacked the symbols of Ch’ing authority, opening the jail, breaking into the treasury, destroying tax and household registers, and burning down the compound buildings. Toward the resident Ch’ing officials they were equally fierce. Magistrate Chiang was able to escape, but his servants and relatives, thirty-seven people in all, were killed. The director of education was dragged from the well into which he had jumped and later killed together with seventeen members of his household. His corpse was thrown over the city wall, while the bodies of his relatives were simply left inside to rot. The rebels announced that anyone who tried to bury them would be killed. Director Lu’s subordinate, the eighth-rank subdirector of schools, fared somewhat better. He claimed later that he had refused when the rebels tried to force him to serve as magistrate; but nevertheless he was merely imprisoned in an apothecary shop for the duration of the rebellion. His unwillingness to cooperate may have been exaggerated, for he was the only official so spared. It is noteworthy that this rebel violence against Ch’ing officials extended automatically to their administrative assistants, relatives, visiting friends, and household servants, regardless of their age, sex, or social position. The prisoners, on the other hand, were freed by the Eight Trigrams and most of them appear to have joined the rebel cause.

Initially rebel attitudes toward city residents were hostile. Following the yamen attack, bands of armed rebels rushed through the streets of the city, and if the following account is typical, they brought terror to the inhabitants of Hua. The Wei family belonged to the urban bourgeoisie: old Mr. Wei owned a store in the city where he sold shoes and hats, his son managed a wineshop, a nephew had earned sheng-yuan status, and a grandson had been studying for the civil service examinations since he was twelve years old. Early on the morning of the 7th, just as it was getting light, the wineshop owner, Wei Ping-ch’ün, was awakened by the shouting of the ti-pao 出 on the street. The constable cried out that members of a White Lotus sect had rebelled and come into the city, and he told everyone to grab
clubs and other weapons and come to chase and capture the rebels. Wei Ping-ch’ün followed the *ti-pao* toward the yamen compound, but when they found themselves being fired upon with rifles, the attempted resistance was abandoned and everyone scattered. Wei immediately left the city, apparently not even returning to check on the welfare of his family. His father also left the city while escape was still possible, and Wei Ping-ch’ün’s wife and son were left at home unprotected.

Later that morning, when the young man was at his studies as usual, waiting for his tutor to arrive, seemingly unaware of the attack on the yamen, he suddenly heard sounds of great confusion in the streets. Having finished at the government offices, the rebels had now dispersed through the city. Young Wei related: “Then some people shoved open our gate and ten or twenty rebels came running in. I rushed inside the house but they ran after me. They grabbed a lot of our clothing and supplies of food. They had knives and were going to kill me when my mother cried out, ‘He is my only son. Spare him!’ But then the rebels stabbed my mother three times and she fell to the ground. They bound me and took me away with them.” After the city was retaken, surviving members of this family found that their house had been destroyed and the boy’s great-grandmother, grandmother, uncle, and two aunts were all dead. Obviously official and urban leaders were caught by surprise and were unable to mobilize effectively against the Eight Trigrams. If those with money and power, such as the magistrate or the Weis, chose to flee at the outset rather than to resist, it is not surprising that those with less leverage acquiesced to the new state of affairs.

As the Eight Trigrams occupied the city, property was confiscated, buildings were seized, and city residents were forced to serve the rebels. Although there does not appear to have been a general massacre as the sect members themselves had predicted, nevertheless assistance and active participation in the rebellion were demanded and those who refused were summarily killed. The rebel leader Huang P’an-kung, for example, was given charge of a team of two hundred men and sent out to search the city for valuables. As they were confiscating the property of a certain Chang family, Mrs. Chang screamed curses at them. Huang thereupon ordered his men to kill her and then the twelve other members of her household.

The young son of the Wei family, on the other hand, was one of many who chose instead to obey the Eight Trigrams. He was bound and taken to the courtyard of a store taken over by the rebels.
he and several dozen other men—all also bound—were imprisoned for several days and so given time to consider their options, which were not numerous. "A rebel came who was armed with a knife. He asked us if we would obey his orders or not. Those who did not want to obey, he explained, had merely to say so—but they would be killed on the spot. So all of us agreed to comply and chorused yes! Then they untied us." Those whose compliance was given only grudgingly and who could not be fully trusted were given commissary jobs involving the procuring and preparing of food for rebel leaders and for the city population and fodder for the livestock. Sang Te, for example, had been stopped on the road by a rebel band outside a village near the city. "They wouldn't let him pass and forced him to go with them into Hua city. There he heated water and cooked for them. They said they would kill him if he didn't cooperate."

In addition to the dedicated rebels and their families, who moved into the safety of Hua city in increasing numbers, and the able-bodied men who were useful to the rebels, a large portion of the city population consisted of women, children, and old people. Though obviously important as symbols of popular support for their cause, these dependent groups were of limited practical use to the rebels; nonetheless they required attention, food, and shelter. Children in particular appear to have been left unharmed as the following not untypical testimony from a child who lived in Tao-k'ou suggests: "In the ninth month of [1813], a White Lotus sect came in rebellion to Tao-k'ou. They came in the south gate killing people. My grandmother told me to flee, but a large group of rebels came and made me and my grandmother go with them. Since she was over seventy years old and could not walk, they killed her. They seized me but did not kill me because I am a child." Homeless children slept in broken-down buildings or near the city wall and lived by begging and by eating the offerings still being placed in the city temples. In general, however, the rebel leaders established a system of procuring, cooking, and distributing food to the city residents. Survivors testified that they were given something to eat once and sometimes twice a day; this food was at times precooked (steamed dumplings are mentioned in one instance) but in general consisted of rice or millet in daily allowances.

The city of Hua became increasingly crowded as the rebellion progressed. The original population appears to have been about ten thousand. Nearly sixty thousand, a third of them women and children,
were living there when the city was retaken in the 12th month.\textsuperscript{15} Raiding expeditions brought back provisions and supporters from the countryside, rebels from nearby areas fled into the city, and all contributed to the swelling population. The disruption and confusion of life in the city of Hua during the three months of rebel occupation could only have been compounded by this influx of residents.

Nevertheless, by occupying Hua and Tao-k’ou, the Eight Trigrams had put themselves in control of large stores of grain. Inside the cities grain was commandeered from homes, shops, and markets.\textsuperscript{16} When Tao-k’ou was being attacked during the 10th month, the rebels moved all the provisions accumulated in that grain storage depot into Hua city. As a result, even after Hua itself was besieged, the inhabitants—despite the increased numbers—were in no immediate danger of being starved out.\textsuperscript{17}

During the entire three months Hua was occupied the Eight Trigrams guarded the gates to the city and permitted no inhabitants to leave. Rebels themselves, identified by their white cloth sashes or by the password “Be Victorious,” and others who were involved in importing grain into the city for food (and who may have been under surveillance), were permitted to pass through the east gate, the only one open for traffic. The initial period of strict control, perhaps terror, was probably followed by a general relaxation of discipline as the situation in the city stabilized. Later, however, as government pressure on the city mounted, especially after Hua was besieged, controls over the city population tightened again. Despite unspecified stern measures to keep them from leaving, there were people who climbed onto the city wall and let themselves down on the other side on ropes in order to surrender themselves to the Ch’ing authorities.\textsuperscript{18}

Prior to the uprising, new sect members were in some measure converted to the White Lotus religion and bound together organizationally by pupil–teacher bonds. The prophecy of apocalypse and death for nonbelievers was strong encouragement for joining, and yet secrecy had necessitated private and low-keyed proselytizing. After sect members had publicly declared themselves rebels, they were still bound to one another by these ideas and ties. In contrast, new recruits joined the Eight Trigrams on an entirely different basis. They did not take as their teachers men with whom they had established a firm personal relationship. If they were taught meditation, yoga, boxing, or healing techniques, there is no mention of it in the historical record. Their knowledge of White Lotus ideology, even the ideas of apocalypse and millennium, was probably quite
superficial. There is no indication that any kind of religious instruction was arranged in the occupied cities or in the countryside. The force of the millenarian message of the Eight Trigrams was perhaps more terrifying as a prediction; once manifested in events, the prophecy became more or less convincing in direct ratio to the progress of the rebellion itself. Success would generate confidence and momentum, failure would even more speedily breed pessimism and doubt. But in either case the new recruit's understanding of the historical vision of the White Lotus sects would not be profound, and as a result the religious message of the movement as a whole was greatly diluted once the rebellion began.

Although the Eight Trigrams were able to secure control over the inhabitants of Hua and Tao-k'ou, their fate ultimately depended on their success in the countryside. There it was necessary not only to dominate and control territory, but also to continuously attract large numbers of new supporters. It was not enough merely to survive the mounting Ch'ing counterattack; the Eight Trigrams had also to grow vigorously and to generate and maintain the momentum and the appearance of a victorious movement.

This kind of success was in large measure dependent on the free and effective use of violence by the rebels. The Eight Trigrams had used force to destroy the symbols of Ch'ing authority, killing officials, burning buildings, and occupying walled administrative and commercial centers. To survive, the rebels would have to eliminate local opposition, defeat Ch'ing armies on the battlefield, and resupply themselves with food and weapons; all required the use of force. Equally important, the unrestrained violence and even brutality that was generated by rebellion and that marked the life style of the rebels would themselves contribute to the persuasiveness of the rebel cause. This violence not only exposed weaknesses in the Ch'ing "order" and commanded fear and respect from the population at large, it laid the groundwork for the subsequent recruitment of many who would not normally have joined a rebellious group.

Any disruption of the routine of normal life in and of itself encouraged people to reassess their habits and values; when combined with the presence of an openly advocated alternative to the status quo, such dislocations multiplied and further unraveled the fabric of normal life. The Chinese called such a condition luan (disorder, chaos, confusion), and it was a state of affairs greatly feared by those advocates of the established order who made up the ruling elite in
China. The appearance of the armed and determined Eight Trigram rebels accompanied and created disorder, and it was in the rebels' interest to shatter the status quo and so make possible a realignment of loyalties. The fact of this ongoing rebellion, an alternative to and in open defiance of the government, created a tension that forced each person affected to reappraise his interests. In such a referendum, the Ch'ing system might collapse, or it might be further strengthened by a strong show of approval. In either case, there was no hope of success for the rebels without loosening and then redirecting traditional loyalties.

In areas where the Eight Trigrams rose in rebellion, the local gentry often took the initiative of organizing militia to defend their homes against the rebels. By attacking and defeating these forces, the Trigrams were not only eliminating their enemies, they were discrediting the local pillars of the Ch'ing order, and they did so with vigor. In Shantung, for example, a family named K'ung had rallied the people of their village in support of the government. To punish them, Trigram rebels came there deliberately and killed the members of that family and everyone in their village, more than five hundred people. In Honan, the rebel Wang Liang-tao had come with his band to a village where he urged the residents to join him. He was met instead by active resistance led by a sheng-yuan who had organized his fellow villagers into a militia, and was driven away. Wang Liang-tao did not forget this challenge. Later he brought his teacher, Chen Trigram King Sung K'e-chün, and a force of several thousand men back to that village, and the rebels looted and burned it down.\(^{19}\)

The Eight Trigrams did not restrict the use of violence to those who opposed them in battle. The decision to take up the life of a man in rebellion against the state was a liberation for the individual from the constraints of normal life, and one dimension of this new freedom was the possibility of venting through violence one's grievances, grudges, and hatreds. Rebels captured later testified readily to having used their new power to attack and kill personal enemies, particularly those who had previously refused to cooperate with them, and not surprisingly many of these enemies were members of the local elite.

We have seen that when the rebels originally attacked Ts'ao city, the leader Hsiao Han-san went directly from the district yamen to the residences of some people he knew who had refused to join their sect: he and a pupil beat them up and robbed them.\(^{20}\) The sect teacher Hsu An-kuo stated that when he took command of his pupils, the first thing he did was to lead his men to the residence of an old
enemy of his, a military *chin-shih* named Hsu (perhaps a relative?), where they killed that man and the members of his family.\textsuperscript{21} The rebel Tsung Yuan-te described another incident in which an unsuccessful attempt had been made to recruit a military *sheng-yuan* and a *chien-sheng* from Tsung's village. These degree-holders had refused to cooperate with the Eight Trigrams, and later a rebel force came to the village to show their anger and burned these men's houses and killed them and their families.\textsuperscript{22}

One of the villages in Chin-hsiang district that was attacked by rebels was the residence of a *sheng-yuan* named Li Chiu-piao. It had been Li who had reported the suspicious behavior of sect members in his village to the district authorities in the 6th month of 1813; this report had led directly to the investigations of Magistrate Wu and to the subsequent arrest of the sect leader Ts'ui Shih-chün and about fifty of his pupils. The Li family, aware that their actions might call for reprisals, had left their homes in the countryside early in the 9th month and moved into the district city. Later they learned that the rebels had come to Li Chiu-piao's village, and to revenge their colleagues, had killed the seven members of the Li household who had remained behind, even destroying a coffin that was there awaiting burial, and burned not only the house but the entire village.\textsuperscript{23}

Although rebel attacks on members of the local elite are recorded with particular thoroughness in the source material, there is no question that the Eight Trigrams used equal violence against ordinary people. Old enemies were punished, uncooperative residents of rebel-occupied villages were eliminated, and support for the rebel cause was often forced at gunpoint. Children whose parents were harmed by the rebels testified later with similar stories, of which the following are typical. Wang Kuei-ni was a young girl from a village outside Hua city. When the Eight Trigram rebels came to her village, her older brother was killed by them. Her father and another brother fled (or perhaps were frightened into joining). She and her mother and her sisters-in-law, separated from the men, were forced to go into Hua city. There her mother jumped into the water (perhaps a well) and drowned. One sister-in-law became ill and died; the other killed herself.\textsuperscript{24}

Liu Hsi-r, a ten-year-old girl from another village, described her experiences:

Last year hundreds of White Lotus sect people came and surrounded our village. A dozen or so rebels came to our house to
take our grain. They asked my grandfather, my father, and my mother if they would join them or not. They said no. The rebels tied the three of them up and said they were taking them into Hua city to kill them. My twelve-year-old sister Lien-r and I were terrified and ran and hid in the muddy waters of the marsh nearby. That evening the rebels found us and forced us to go into the city too. We went to the gate of our godmother’s house and next to the wall we saw our grandfather’s, our father’s, and our mother’s bodies. That is when we knew that they had been killed. Dogs had torn their clothes apart and eaten at their hands and feet, but you could still recognize the faces.25

On the other hand, violence was not always necessary. The threat of force or simply the arrival of the rebels themselves and the atmosphere of luan, confusion and disruption, which they symbolized could be frightening enough. T’ien Lien-yuan and his family were in the process of gathering their belongings and moving away from their now-endangered home when members of the Eight Trigrams arrived in their village. “Suddenly nine men appeared, mounted on horseback. They told us that the White Lotus sect really did not kill people, and so there was no need for us to run off; all they wanted was some food to eat. But along with everyone else in the village, I was terrified and rushed to find a place to hide. Later on those men on horseback left. We were talking about it afterward and [someone] said he thought he recognized one of the men—he looked like Chao Erh of Wang-chia village.”26

It is important to remember that the rebels had a decided advantage over villagers whom they encountered. The Eight Trigram bands were concentrated groups of able-bodied men, often mounted on horseback, armed, and prepared for violence. The villagers by contrast included many people unable to resist effectively (women, children, old people). Villagers were not by law permitted to have weapons in their homes, and if taken by surprise even the men were not organized for resistance. (The great importance of officially sponsored militia organizations was that they encouraged village leaders to take an active role and, by supplying food and weapons, enabled the men of the village to put aside their normal tasks and concentrate on fighting.) The rebel life itself was an advertisement for their cause and a way of winning adherents. Those who joined the Trigrams could participate in their roaming and freebooting and could share in the opportunity to eat, dress, travel, and behave pub-
licly as important people. This opportunity for power and prestige was a strong magnet to many, even in the face of mounting Ch‘ing opposition.

The rebels offered not only freedom from normal restraints and access to new power; equally important, they provided a source of food in a time of drought and famine. The north China plain has always been subject to a vicious cycle of flood and drought, both accompanied by famine, and, as we have seen, Hua and Ch‘in districts had had a series of bad years (with only a short respite in between) for at least a decade. The other districts affected by the rebellion had not suffered as long, but they too had been hurt by the drought that began in the early spring of 1813. The rain that finally fell in this drought-stricken area during the 8th and 9th months, coming as it did in too great a volume and too late to improve significantly the agricultural situation, probably only contributed to the disaster conditions. In and after the 9th month, as winter approached, the people’s desperation could only increase. The Eight Trigram rebels, on the other hand, were from the start relatively rich in food supplies. They used violence with impunity to take what they pleased, and their occupied cities and villages became storehouses for grain and provisions.

As the Trigrams moved about the countryside, plundering with strength and confidence, they surely tempted many famine victims into joining their movement. Indeed, the quickest (and least permanent) source of rebel support came from the bands of men who, while unwilling to join the Eight Trigrams movement, used the occasion and the cover of rebellion to undertake their own robbing and looting. One rather unlikely rebel was a man called Liu Chü from Ch‘eng-wu district in Shantung who had been a seventh-rank preceptor at the Imperial Academy. Nevertheless, when Liu saw the district city under curfew, other cities attacked by rebels, and bands of people plundering in the countryside, he arranged with his son and nephew to take advantage of the situation. Following Liu Chü’s instructions, the two younger men organized the people of the village, who were probably in economic difficulties, and led them out to take what they wanted from others. At least sixteen men were involved, most of them surnamed Liu and probably members of Liu Chü’s lineage. Liu composed a rhyme or slogan of encouragement, but he himself remained at home. The others brought their booty back for him to divide up. This group went out many times, “preying on adjacent villages,” but when word of this reached the magistrate, he
was able to make arrests without encountering resistance. There were surely many other groups like this one whose appearance, often indistinguishable from those who called themselves Eight Trigrams, served to bolster the size of the rebel population and to contribute to the breakdown of law and order in the countryside. The support provided by these looters was, however, only transitory. As government control was reestablished (and with it, often, famine relief), these bands, especially those on the fringes of the rebellion, simply melted away and disappeared.

Given their relative power, it is not surprising that many villagers chose willingly to join the Eight Trigrams. The Shantung sect leader Chu Ch’eng-kuei was leading his band of men from place to place in search for food and supporters and came to the fortified village of the Pi family in Ke-tse district. Members of that family related what followed:

On 9/13 the Chen Trigram sect head Chu Ch’eng-kuei and his younger brothers came to Pi-chia village, leading a group of men. They burned down the gate to the village and raised a white banner on which was written "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way." They forced everyone to accept this. Because it was difficult to resist so numerous an enemy, and because everyone was afraid of being killed, Pi Kuang-ju [the senior member of the lineage that dominated the village] led the others in bowing and welcoming Chu Ch’eng-kuei.

The eagerness with which the Pi family joined the Eight Trigrams became apparent when with little hesitation eighty men in the family left home to plunder under the banner of Trigram Lord Chu. In this case, the threat of violence and the promise of plunder were enough to win the defection of the entire village, and this example gives credence to an official report that the Eight Trigrams sometimes “practiced a policy of not killing or burning at all in order to gain popular support.”

Although the great mass of followers of the Eight Trigrams were apparently motivated by combinations of fear, hope, greed, and hunger, there were also those who had previously belonged to a White Lotus sect and who dared commit themselves to rebellion only after others had taken the first step. These believers may not have been very numerous, but they did supplement the pool of available leaders. A believer named Wang Sen described the arrival of an Eight Trigram band in his village soon after the occupation of Hua
city. At that time many of the sect leaders had returned to their own villages rather than remain in the city, and there they raised white banners to proclaim their presence. Wang Sen had, in the meantime, remained at home to see what would happen.

On 9/10 [the rebel] Chang San-yang led men from his village to [Wang Sen's home of] Wang-chia village nearby. Chang was calling himself the Ch’ien Mansion King. He announced that the Hua magistrate had been killed and he urged the villagers to join his sect and thus avoid a similar fate. Some villagers like [so-and-so] heard this and were afraid, and so they kotowed to Chang San-yang. Chang San-yang then distributed white cloth to the group so that each person could tie some around his waist, and he gave each household a small white banner to be placed at its gateway. He told everyone that if they met with other rebels they were to say the password “Be Victorious.” He made Wang Sen an important leader with the title Ch’ien Trigram Lord, and gave him a large white banner on which were written the words “Ch’ien Trigram Lord Wang Sen, Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way.” Wang Sen was put in charge of sixty men, including those [from his village] who had been coerced. Chang San-yang also named [three other men] as leaders. Each of them led a group and all went out to take supplies and provisions.33

The integration of new supporters into the hierarchy of titled positions created by Li Wen-ch’eng and Lin Ch’ing was as simple as the brief instructions about banners and slogans and identifying sashes. The recruits were simply assigned to groups under the trigram kings and lords. The eighty-odd members of the Pi family in Shantung who joined the band of Trigram Lord Chu Ch’eng-kuei were divided into groups of ten men, each one having a designated leader, with one man, Pi Ch’ou (chnitt, Stinking Pi), appointed as overall leader. Chu Ch’eng-kuei gave Pi Ch’ou white cloth and instructed him to distribute it; the men were to tear the cloth into strips to make identifying white sashes. Thus organized, these male members of the Pi family left their village and went on with Chu’s band. As they came to other villages and found more men willing to join them, they incorporated them in the same manner. The new recruits from each village were split into groups of ten to twenty men, each with one leader. These additional groups were also assigned to Pi Ch’ou’s command until he had a hundred men in his charge.34
Another rebel described a similar arrangement of men into simple ten-man groups. In this case, Liu Kao-yü was assigned to carry a small triangular white banner and lead ten men. His teacher in the sect carried a large square white banner and led one hundred men, ten groups of ten; his teacher's teacher had a large triangular white banner and was in command of a thousand men. The sect member Chao Te stated that his teacher had given him a small banner and instructions to bring ten men to participate in the rebellion. We have seen that those of Lin Ch'ing's followers who were part of the palace attack likewise came into Peking in groups of roughly ten, each with a leader identified by his banner.\footnote{It is not surprising that this simple decimal system should be employed, nor is it surprising that, as was the case in Peking, the actual size of each group varied and the neat theoretical arrangement was not reflected in reality.}

As we have seen, the Eight Trigrams used banners made of white cloth to signal their different levels of organization. Lesser leaders had unmarked banners or banners reading either "Commander" (\textit{ling} ⚘) or "Commander [so-and-so]." Higher leaders had large and small banners of different shapes on which were written the Eight Trigrams' public slogan, "Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way." Those rebels with titles had this slogan, their titles, and their names written on their banners. Some leaders made their banners of silk rather than cotton. The rank-and-file rebels looked to these white banners on the road and in battle to find their place and instructions.\footnote{New recruits were assigned to a leader and given weapons (usually spears or knives, but sometimes guns) and, in lieu of a uniform, white sashes. Four men testified that a portion of the hair on the underside of their queue was shaved off as another secret identifying sign, but this may not have been common practice.}

On 9/8 [one day after Hua city was occupied] Li Mei, a sect rebel from Chiao village came there riding in a cart and carrying a large white banner on which was written "Chen Mansion Lord, Entrusted by Heaven to Prepare the Way." He was leading seventy or eighty men. They surrounded the village where Chang Wei-han lived and ordered the villagers to come along with them if they wanted to avoid being killed. They seized Chang Wei-han, and because he didn't want to die, he cooperated. Li Mei took them all back to his own village. Behind Chang Wei-han's queue they burned away some of his
hair with moxa and gave him a white banner. They put him in
charge of the village gate. Three days later Chang Wei-han
accompanied Li Mei [and others] and went to join Li Wen-
ch'eng's followers in attacking Chün city.38

Most of the men who joined the Eight Trigrams were assigned
military tasks. Several peasants testified that they had been forced
to serve on the front lines and were given a special name meaning
"those who get there first."39 Those followers not involved in fighting
or guard duty, which is to say those who were older or less trusted,
were put to work doing menial tasks in the rebel camps, often under
supervision. They cut fodder, fed and cared for the livestock, ground
flour and prepared meals, drove carts, or carried baggage for rebel
leaders.40

Because of the difficulty of securing commitment from "good
people" forced into rebellion, the Eight Trigrams often used violence
to seal this relationship. New recruits were encouraged (or com-
pelled) to demonstrate loyalty to their new leaders, and the more
"crimes" in which they were involved, the greater their stake in the
rebel cause. Trigram leaders used recent recruits to carry out threats
against those who were less willing to join up. Ch'en Chin-kuei, a
herdsman, and Ch'en Ch'en, a butcher, told of their experiences. An
Eight Trigrams band had come to their village and had forced many
of the villagers, including the two Ch'ens, to go along. Ch'en Chin-
kuei was given a musket and Ch'en Ch'en an iron spear. The follow-
ing day, the rebel band and their new members went to another
village looking for food and supporters. Some of those ordered to join
the rebels refused, and so the rebel commander ordered Ch'en Chin-
kuei to use his gun and shoot one of them as an example to the
others. Ch'en fired and killed the man. When this did not produce
the desired effect, Ch'en Ch'en was told to use his spear and kill
another of the villagers, but he merely stabbed him in the leg without
killing him.41 On a different occasion, another man, similarly
"forced" to join, was instructed to use the knife with which he had
been supplied to execute two prisoners.42 A recruit named Wang
Wen-cho watched his new comrades as they tied up and stabbed
a recalcitrant individual to death with their spears, and then he
was given the task of cutting off the dying man's head with his
knife.43

There were many who, having lived and fought with the rebels,
eventually decided to abandon their cause. It was particularly after
military defeats that rebel followers fled for their lives, and this
occurred with increasing frequency as Ch'ing armies arrived on the scene. Some, probably those who had truly been forced to join against their will, took aggressive action against their captors. Ch'eng Chin-hsiu, for example, arranged with several relatives, all of whom had been compelled to join the same Eight Trigrams band, and made specific plans to go over to the government side. When a well-organized militia force advanced to attack their camp, Ch'eng left secretly, surrendered himself to the militia commander, and promised to rally the others and fight for the government the following day as a fifth column within the camp. Ch'eng then crept back into the rebel village, gathered and hid over two dozen muskets; the next day during the battle, he started a fire inside the camp and, arming himself and the others, turned on the rebels and killed at least one of them. (He later joined the militia and fought against the Eight Trigrams on several other occasions.)

Although it is true that the Eight Trigrams gathered over one hundred thousand supporters in the course of their rebellion, it is important to remember that the country villages of the north China plain were affected by the rebel presence with far less concentrated intensity than the residents of the occupied cities. The sudden rebel seizure of the major commercial centers of the region, the occupation of villages throughout the area, the disruption of communication, transportation, and marketing—not to mention the fear generated by the presence or merely the rumored presence of bands of armed men killing, looting, and burning as they pleased—must have been a frightening experience. Nevertheless, comparatively few people were directly involved in the rebellion itself. Hua district, which felt the rebellion most intensely, was densely populated and had between 700,000 and 800,000 inhabitants. Admittedly rough estimates suggest that only about 10 percent of these people came in direct contact with the Eight Trigrams. Even if the actual figure were two or three times as large, we can still see that the great majority were not ultimately forced to confront the rebels personally.

If some Eight Trigram supporters were hungry or displaced individuals, as certainly seems likely, there is some evidence that famine alone was not a sufficient condition for successful recruitment. When Li Wen-ch'eng took a band of several thousand followers and left Hua city early in the 11th month, he led these men in a broad semicircle through the districts of Wei-hui prefecture in northern Honan. The districts through which the rebels passed had suffered greatly during the famine of 1813. Feng-ch'iu, Yang-wu, Yen-chin
and Huo-chia (see map p. 252) had all experienced severe drought, and in Hsin-hsiang and Hui districts this had been compounded by flooding in the fall of that year. One would expect—and certainly Li Wen-ch'eng hoped—that Li's band might have gained new support in these districts, perhaps enough to infuse new vigor into the faltering uprising. Yet this did not happen. Rebel numbers increased hardly at all: Li rallied no more than fifteen hundred or two thousand men at the most in the course of his flight. Apparently neither the persuasiveness of the rebel cause nor the pressures of economic distress was compelling enough to induce large numbers of people to join the rebels as they had done earlier in districts to the east.

It is perhaps of interest that there is no evidence of the wholesale defection to the rebels of preexisting ethnic or occupational minority groups as fueled the fires of rebellion at other times and places in China. The reason for this may be very simply the absence of such groups in north China, which was relatively speaking an economically and racially homogeneous region. The rebels could rely on no ties between their members other than those created by the sect organization and the rebel hierarchy, and the fragility of these networks, particularly in the face of powerful opposition, contributed to the weakness of the Eight Trigrams. In contrast, to suppress this rebellion the Ch'ing government could and did rely on social organizations of great strength—the government bureaucracy, two separate military establishments, and time-honored local networks of gentry power and prestige. Before turning to those defenders of the established order, however, let us first return to the outbreak of this rebellion and look at Li Wen-ch'eng and his colleagues and at the attempts of these Eight Trigrams to deal with their new mass following and with government opposition.

Revised Strategies

Few large-scale undertakings proceed according to schedule, and that of the Eight Trigrams was no exception. From the moment their plans were formalized during the Tao-k'ou meeting in the summer of 1813, sect leaders were forced to make adjustments and alterations. Indeed, the lack of coordination between the various uprisings, the failure of many groups to act at all, the fiasco in Peking, Li Wen-ch'eng’s injuries, disputes among the leaders, and successive
defeats on the battlefield made it necessary for the rebel leaders to reappraise continually their options and their goals.

It is not clear exactly what was supposed to happen after the district officials had been killed in a dozen cities, the Forbidden City taken by Lin Ch'ing, and with assistance from Li Wen-ch'eng the emperor killed and Peking occupied. We will probably never know. Indeed, we cannot be sure that the decision to occupy the city of Hua—a tactic of major consequence for the course of the rebellion—was even part of these original plans. It may have been Li Wen-ch'eng's unforeseen arrest two weeks before the scheduled date that determined this particular strategy. It was Li's relatives and chief pupils who made this decision, arranging to change the date and move ahead of schedule to free their leader and occupy the city, but there was evidently some last-minute disagreement with this plan. On the day before the rescheduled attack, a sect member of long standing from the Hua area, a man called Wang Hsueh-tao, tried to persuade the others to abandon the idea of seizing the city. Wang told them that "he had a thorough knowledge of the areas of war, and he believed that after they had broken open the jail, they should not occupy the district city. If they were to occupy it, then they would certainly be surrounded and attacked by government soldiers and eventually all killed." Wang considered himself an expert on military strategy—he even carried a small book in which he had written down brief accounts of campaigns and battles in the past—but to his disgust, his advice was ignored.

On 9/7 those Eight Trigram sect members from Hua and Chün districts entered Hua city and released Li Wen-ch'eng and Niu Liang-ch'en from the jail. They sealed off and took control of the city and then moved immediately to do the same to the nearby port city of Tao-k'ou. Tao-k'ou was a grain and rice storage depot and an important commercial center for the region; it served Chün and Hua in particular and was located on the Wei River, halfway between the two cities and no more than ten miles from either. Sect members from the area were obviously familiar with the place and its resources, and it was there that the summer meeting of the assembled Eight Trigram leaders had taken place. Using at least two thousand men, the rebels occupied Tao-k'ou on 9/7 or 9/8, and if they met with resistance, none is recorded. Rebel bands moved across the Wei River into the villages of southern Chün district, raiding some and setting up camp in others. Similarly, Eight Tri-
gram bands appeared and took over villages elsewhere in Hua district, to the east and south of the city particularly.

At this stage, it was still their intention to try to rendezvous with Lin Ch’ing in Peking: one rebel commented that “from Hua we wanted to go toward Chün, and then cross the mountains and go to Peking.” In any event it was strategically important to the rebels that government authorities be driven out of Chün city. Chün was only fifteen miles from Hua; to have had hostile armies there would have been (and eventually was) too close for comfort. On the other hand, for the rebels to have held all three cities—Hua, Tao-k’ou and Chün—and to have controlled the Wei River running between them would have strengthened their position immeasurably, whether or not they chose to go on to Peking. In short, Chün city was very important. It therefore seems somewhat surprising that no attempt had been made to attack Chün secretly on 9/7 simultaneously with Hua. More than a dozen high-ranking sect leaders came from that district, including Li Wen-ch’eng’s adopted son and at least one trigram king. Perhaps the leaders had decided to concentrate all their strength on freeing Sect Master Li and occupying Hua, preferring to try later to take Tao-k’ou and Chün by military force. It
is true that once Li Wen-ch'eng had been arrested, their advantage of surprise was diminished, for Magistrate Chiang of Hua had notified his colleague in Chün by the 5th day of the month, and that magistrate had begun immediately to make his own investigations and arrests. Nevertheless, the rebels may have miscalculated, for even a very careful and stealthy entry into Chün and elimination of the magistrate would have been far easier than the open military attack on the city that now became the rebels' only recourse.

As soon as Hua city was seized on 9/7, Magistrate Chu Feng-sen of Chün closed his city and readied what defenses were available. Following Li Wen-ch'eng's directions, Niu Liang-ch'en, together with other rebel leaders and several thousand men, moved swiftly to capture the walled city. Fresh from their successes in Hua and Tao-k'ou, they camped on the slopes of the low hills to the south and east of Chün and blockaded the stone bridge across the moat that constituted the city's main entrance. Other small bands assembled in and occupied villages nearby. The city was defended only by a small garrison force; nevertheless, the initial rebel attacks (inadequately documented in the sources) were completely unsuccessful. Despite initiative, momentum, and superior numbers, the Eight Trigrams were unable to break into the city. Was this a result of their lack of military expertise, a failure of nerve, or a testimony to the security of a walled city no matter how lightly staffed?

Although the rebels threatened Chün city for ten days they were unable to seize it; finally, on 9/17, the first outside detachment of Ch'ing soldiers arrived. A thousand Green Standard soldiers from western Honan reached the outskirts of Chün, attacked, captured the main western entrance to the city, and cleared that area of rebels. Another thousand soldiers arrived later, and Niu Liang-ch'en had to call for reinforcements from Hua. By the 26th, there were eighty-five hundred rebels, including some who had come from Shantung, camped south of Chün with cannon now in place ready to attack again. They were opposed by only two thousand government soldiers, and yet the rebels were still unable even to regain their previous positions, much less to capture the city. They attacked on 9/26, storming the main government camp located on a hill just to the south of Chün, sending a smaller force to locate and destroy the official supply depot. The government position was a good one, however, and the rebels lost a thousand men that day without being able to dislodge the Ch'ing forces from their hilltop. Although government soldiers did not dare pursue the rebels as
they withdrew, they had in fact carried the day. This was the last rebel attempt to take Chün city. They had fought there for two weeks, lost between three and four thousand men, and been unable to achieve their objective. Furthermore, this prolonged and ultimately unsuccessful contest for Chün city gave the Ch'ing government a place on which to concentrate their counterattack and a chance to gain a militarily and psychologically important victory.

Thus, by late in the 9th month, rebel leaders must have realized that a victorious northern expedition was virtually impossible. Niu Liang-ch'en had planned an attack on the prefectural city of Wei-hui and had sent scouts there to survey the situation; this plan was now abandoned. The rebels may even have heard rumors about the abortive attack on the Forbidden City and of Lin Ch'ing's death, for the emperor had ordered that Lin's head be taken south and displayed publicly so that all would know he had been executed. More important, Ch'ing soldiers had begun moving into northern Honan with the specific aim of defending the urban centers and blocking the rebels' path. Official soldiers arriving at Chün city made good use of its proximity to Tao-k'ou and Hua, and during the 10th month they gradually reclaimed rebel-held villages and closed in on the rebel strongholds.

Increasingly pressed on their northwestern flank, the rebels considered expansion toward the south instead and sent out scouts in that direction. In the middle of the 10th month, as government pressure intensified, the rebel general Wang Chin-tao told some of his men to go to and cross the Yellow River. "If the soldiers on the south bank are not numerous, then the rest of us will come and we will all cross the river," he told them. Such a crossing would have been even easier once the river had frozen over, but regular government patrols along the Yellow River, the absence of boats for crossing, and the presence of heavy concentrations of soldiers in the area of the provincial capital of K'ai-feng (see map p. 228) were effective barriers against rebel movement in that direction. Another plan considered and then rejected during this same troubled 10th month was movement toward the southwest. A scout captured in western Honan confessed that his superiors were considering occupying the prefectural city of Huai-ch'ing, located about one hundred miles southwest of Hua, and "digging in there." "Huai-ch'ing prefecture," he said, "relies upon the T'ai-hang mountains at the north and is protected by the Yellow River to the south. Saltpeter and iron weapons are its chief products. Its territory can be readily
defended and fought for.”

This plan was thwarted by movement of government soldiers into this part of Honan and into adjacent Shansi and by the presence of Ch’ing armies and well-organized militia along the western border of Hua district. The rebels’ two-week abortive attempt to take Chün city had eaten up their momentum and spent the advantage of surprise and preparedness that they had had with regard to their official opponents. In consequence, they soon found themselves blocked to the north, west, and south.

Even without such problems, these could not have been easy weeks for Li Wen-ch’eng. The injuries to his feet and legs received at the hands of Magistrate Chiang were extremely painful; he could not walk and remained confined to his bed during this entire period, living in his own village, which had been occupied by the rebels. He appears to have given orders and made decisions, but he was necessarily dependent on those close to him for information and for the execution of his instructions. Sometime during this time, Li’s adopted son Liu Ch’eng-chang left Hua and was not seen again. In his thirties, Liu was active in the sect and had been a leader during the occupation of Hua city. It seems very probable that Li had sent Liu north to Peking to find out about Lin Ch’ing and to inform Lin about events in Honan. In any event Liu vanished and never returned. For Li Wen-ch’eng this meant the loss of one of his most trusted aides and close associates.

Equally unfortunate for Li was the death, during the battle for Chün city, of his assistant, Yü K’e-ching. It was Yü who had obtained a copy of the scripture “Manual for Responding to the Kalpas of the Three Buddhas” and presented it to Lin Ch’ing; he was an active recruiter and appears to have been knowledgeable about and committed to sectarian religious practices. It was to Yü K’e-ching that Li Wen-ch’eng had turned over management of his sect in 1811 when he and Lin Ch’ing began planning “the great undertaking,” and Yü was among those who organized the attack on Hua that freed Li and probably saved his life. Both Liu Ch’eng-chang and Yü K’e-ching had numerous contacts all over north China and considerable organizing experience; their loss so early in the rebellion must have been very distressing for Li Wen-ch’eng.

It was probably with less personal grief that Li viewed the departure of Feng K’e-shan, “Controller of Earth” and “Sage of Military Ability.” It is not clear what happened between Feng and Li, for we have only one side of the story and that is the unreliable testimony.
of Feng himself. He later told government interrogators that at the time of the attack on Hua city, he, Feng, had been in Shantung. He had then rushed back to Hua, arrived two days after the attack, and gone into the city. "I went to my home and saw that my wife and son and daughter had all been stabbed to death, and their bodies were lying on the ground. Then Niu Liang-ch’en came, on orders from Yu K’e-ch’ing and Liu Ch’eng-chang, to seize me because I had not been at home and had not helped rescue Li Wen-ch’eng. I cried bitterly and begged Niu Liang-ch’en to spare me. So he forgave me and told me I must work hard serving Li Wen-ch’eng." Feng was, by his own account, put to work transshipping grain to Li’s village, but Li continued to refuse to see Feng, using his injuries as an excuse. As time went by and pressure from government soldiers on Hua city increased, Feng became concerned about the future. "Besides," he explains, "I was still angry because Li Wen-ch’eng had had my wife and children killed. So I thought about fleeing to Te district [where his followers were] and finding [his pupil] Sung Yueh-lung. Then I would organize my people there and rise up and come and kill Li Wen-ch’eng and so get revenge."

Appealing as this account may be, it is at least in part a complete fabrication. There is ample evidence that Feng K’e-shan was not only present during the attack on Hua city but, as befitted his rank, a leader of it. The wife and children and their alleged murder by his friends to punish Feng for not helping were in fact invented by Feng. Nevertheless, something did go wrong between Feng and Li, Feng did not take part in high-level decision making, and in the middle of the 10th month he left Hua city. Another rebel described the dispute with frustrating economy, saying "Feng K’e-shan had been in disagreement with Li Wen-ch’eng (即 Li Wen-ch’eng 不和) and had therefore gone to Te where he had pupils of his own." Feng’s identity as a skillful itinerant boxer and local tough guy does not seem to have been changed by his association with believers of the Eight Trigram sects. He had apparently been willing to cooperate with religious leaders for their goals primarily in order to satisfy his own ambition and competitiveness. He had brought few followers into the sect and none into the rebellion. It is not surprising that he did not get along with the Trigram leaders after the rebellion had begun. His departure was probably not much regretted.

Without Lin Ch’ing or Feng K’e-shan, or even his close friends Yu K’e-ch’ing and Liu Ch’eng-chang, Li Wen-ch’eng, himself ill, was very much alone in dealing with the deteriorating military
situation. Similarly, on him alone devolved the responsibility for providing symbols of leadership that could rally his pupils and their followers. The new hierarchy outlined in advance for the Pai-yang era was drastically reshaped by the realities of the situation as it developed after 9/15, just as the rebels’ goals and ambitions had been tempered by less than auspicious military conditions. Without Lin Ch’ing and Feng K’e-shan, the triumvirate of the Controllers of Heaven, Earth, and Men (t’ien-p’an, ti-p’an, and jen-p’an) dissolved. It had previously been planned that as Emperor of Men (jen-huang 人皇) Li Wen-ch’eng would rule and in this role would be assisted by Yü K’e-ching and Feng Hsueh-li; by the end of the 9th month, Yü K’e-ching (who may have been one who helped formulate such titles) had been killed. It was nevertheless essential that some kind of new hierarchy be established, no matter how truncated, both to satisfy the expectations of believers and to provide the entire rebel group with its formal alternative to the Ch’ing system. Li Wen-ch’eng therefore emphasized his own role as ruler, apparently sweeping aside all other sets of titles, and he created a working apparatus that would meet the needs of the current situation. Available information about the new system is limited and confusing. We do not know if Li followed blueprints drawn up prior to the uprising or if he improvised on his own, nor is it clear whether he intended this system (or some part of it) to be temporary, limited only to the period of transition, or permanent, extending into the Pai-yang era.

Li Wen-ch’eng’s first official act after he was freed from prison was to formalize and confirm ritually his own position and that of his subordinates. A knowledgeable aide of Li’s said that “Li Wen-ch’eng was honored (尊) as Master (主), and then he enfeoffed (封) [his subordinates with the various ranks here named.]”68 This could not have been an elaborate ceremony, considering Li’s weakness, but it was an important one. Li claimed to be the “True Master” (chen-chu 真主) of the sect, a supreme teacher and authority on religious doctrine and practices. He also laid claim to the legitimacy of the preceding Ming dynasty and simultaneously to the most famous of the rebels against that dynasty, calling himself, “True Master Li of the T’ien-shun Era of the Great Ming” (大明天順參真主). Capitalizing on his surname, Li Wen-ch’eng also asserted that he was a reincarnation of Li Tzu-ch’eng, the rebel who had overthrown the Ming dynasty and founded (but was unable to perpetuate) his own state of Ta-shun 大順, Great Accordance (with Heaven’s
THE CONTEST FOR POPULAR SUPPORT

Will). Moreover, Li proclaimed the reestablishment of the Ming dynasty and took the traditional step of a dynastic founder and selected an era-name. He chose one—Heaven’s Accordance—that was reminiscent of that of both Li Tzu-ch’eng and the Ming Emperor Ying-tsung. Thus he cast himself in the dual role of rebel and restorer and used both to create an additional aura of legitimacy about his claim to power.

Li Wen-ch’eng followed previously formulated plans at least with regard to one set of titles set up for his subordinates. He established the trigram kings (kua-wang 卦王), one for each of the eight trigrams: Li 離, Ken 賁, Chen震, Ch’ien覲, K’un 坤, Sun巽, Tui兌, and K’an坎. Under each of the kings there were eight trigram lords (kua-po 卦佐), sixty-four in all. At least some, perhaps all, of these titles had been assigned prior to the uprisings, but the act of investiture did not take place until after the sect members had openly committed themselves to rebellion. These titles were intended for use only during the period of transition to the Pai-yang era. Ultimately, the Eight Trigrams, with Li Wen-ch’eng at their head, were to become the Nine Mansions (chiu-kung 房宫), and accordingly each of the trigram kings and lords would have his title changed to mansion king or lord (kung-wang 房王 or kung-po 房佐). It is nowhere stated that Li Wen-ch’eng ever declared the formal beginning of the new era, but it is likely that he had done so with his first formal ceremony, for these rebel leaders are referred to by both titles (trigram and mansion) during the months of rebellion.

It is not clear how well structured the relationship was between Li and the kings and lords. It appears to have been one of loose association rather than tight command and, relatively speaking, the position of trigram lord was one of considerable independence. Both kings and lords inscribed their names and titles on white banners, which they displayed prominently as symbols of their authority. During the uprising rank-and-file rebels were assigned to the command of one of these seventy-two kings and lords. The relationship between the king or lord and his fighting men was relatively close, and most rebels knew their commander and his trigram by name.

These kings and lords, in addition to Li Wen-ch’eng and several of his chief assistants, all had the power to assign titles and positions to people who had served them and proved themselves worthy. Other rebels simply selected titles for themselves. Thus a hodgepodge of titles was generated during the rebellion, creating a mixture of dissimilar terms whose relationship to one another and whose
part in a larger structure is not known. Part of this problem is historiographical, for most information about these titles comes from lists compiled by government military commanders containing the names of dead or captured rebels followed by their title, in a orderly but uninformative fashion. On the other hand, the rest of our information comes in confused and contradictory fragments. There is only a limited amount of sense to be made from this data, and as a summary I have therefore drawn up the following table, giving Chinese terms and tentative English translations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tsai-hsiang</td>
<td>Chief Minister*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsung yuan-shuai</td>
<td>Chief Commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuan-shuai</td>
<td>Commander*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fu yuan-shuai</td>
<td>Assistant Commander*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsung-ping</td>
<td>Brigade-General* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts'an-chiang</td>
<td>Lieutenant-Colonel* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu-ssu</td>
<td>First Captain* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch'ien-fu tsung t'ou-ling</td>
<td>Captain of the Forward Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niao-ch'iang tsung t'ou-ling</td>
<td>Captain of Musketry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hsien-feng</td>
<td>Adjutant*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k'ai-lu hsien-feng</td>
<td>Adjutant Who Leads the Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t'i-t'iao ping-ma tsung hsien-feng</td>
<td>Adjutant for Transferring Soldiers and Horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hsien hsing kuan</td>
<td>Advance Officer*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu-liang kuan</td>
<td>Grain Supervisor*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu-tsung kuan</td>
<td>Superintendent*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fu-tsung kuan</td>
<td>Assistant Superintendent*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chiu-men t'i-tu</td>
<td>Military Governor of the Nine Gates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t'ien-hsia tu-chao-t'ao ping-ma ta yuan-shuai</td>
<td>Great Commander Who Summons Men and Horses for the Pacification of All under Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsung-kuan t'ai-chien</td>
<td>Chief Eunuch* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chih-fu</td>
<td>Prefect**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chih-hsien</td>
<td>Magistrate**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Titles assigned to more than one person
**Titles also used by the Ch'ing government

In general, most of these titles had the virtue of being easily understood and important sounding, and none was likely to be beyond the understanding of the ordinary rebel. All were clearly working titles,
and they reflect the primarily military and logistical activities that dominated the rebels' lives during the uprising. At least ten of these titles (marked with an asterisk) were assigned to more than one person. The total number of men (and there is no indication of any woman holding a position) holding an office of some sort numbered at least one hundred.

Despite the only partial response by Eight Trigram groups to the call for rebellion on 9/15 and the disappointing performance by rebels in Peking and in Chun, Li Wen-ch'eng had proclaimed his challenge to the Ch'ing government and retained the support of his subordinates and tens of thousands of followers. He had scaled down his goals and his organization to fit the new situation, but as the 10th month passed, government pressure increased and it became increasingly apparent that the tide had somehow to be turned quickly if the rebels were to survive at all. In the final section of this part we will return to Li Wen-ch'eng and his attempts to save himself and his movement. First, let us look in more detail at the new life sect members had created for themselves and for their followers.

*A New Life*

No matter what their expectations, members of the Eight Trigram sects who had discarded the known and familiar to act the roles of rebels in the name of the Eternal Mother could not but have been astonished at the excitement, the fierceness, and the unpredictability of their new lives. And although in time many surely realized that the creation of a Cloud City where "everyone was in the sect" was beyond their power, what was to have been a period of transition was a new life nevertheless, a radical break with the past and an emancipation in its own right.

The problem of survival was a paramount one, for the rebels had not only to secure food and shelter in a world now completely disrupted, but they had to defeat hostile military forces in armed combat. They needed men, ammunition and weapons, efficient organization and realistic plans if they were to vanquish Ch'ing armies. These were not tasks for which life as a believer in a White Lotus sect was appropriate preparation. Not only had the sect structure to be changed to fit the demands of this entirely new situation, but the attitudes of the sect members themselves were forced to shift. The
devotion and discretion of the believer had to be replaced by the
determination and defiance of the rebel. Free from restraints and
reprisals, these rebels had an extraordinary opportunity for courage
and independent action, if they could take advantage of it.

For the organizers and leaders of the rebellion, this new life con­sisted of an endless series of orders to be given and decisions to be
made. The occupation of Hua and Tao-k’ou and of villages in the
countryside was a demanding business. Both cities had to be closed
off and all exits guarded. Granaries and stores, pawnshops and loan
houses had to be emptied and the contents stored. Food had to be
made available to the rebel leaders and their fighting men, and to
the tens of thousands of dependents (old people, women, and chil­
dren) who were brought into the rebel strongholds in increasing
numbers. This work had to be organized by the rebel leaders and
executed by their followers in orderly fashion if the movement was
to be successful. New recruits had to be incorporated into the rebel
organization and persuaded to fight for its cause.

During the first two months of rebellion Li Wen-ch’eng remained
at home in his village just north of Hua city, lying in bed and al­
lowing his broken legs, ankles, and feet to heal. He entrusted the
administration of Hua city to two men: Niu Liang-ch’en, who was
his chief minister (tsai-hsiang), and Sung Yuan-ch’eng, who was his
chief commander (tsung_yuan-shuai). Sung Yuan-ch’eng, in his forties,
was a craftsman from Chun district who had done painting work for
a living. He had been to visit Lin Ch’ing early in 1813 and was among
those who made the decision to move ahead of schedule to free Li
Wen-ch’eng from prison. Niu Liang-ch’en was the Hua district
treasury clerk who had met Lin Ch’ing in 1808, become his pupil,
and arranged the first meeting between Lin and Li Wen-ch’eng in
1811. He had been arrested early in the 9th month and was freed
together with Li on 9/7. These two men supervised the provisioning
and defense of the city; when Li Wen-ch’eng fled from Hua early
in the 11th month, he left them in charge.

The sources yield few personal details about Sung Yuan-ch’eng’s
role, but Niu Liang-ch’en, who was ultimately captured and inter­rogated, talked freely about his life during this period. Niu had been
very active in planning the rebellion before his arrest, and unlike
Li he was not injured by torture during the five days in the Hua
jail. He took over the job of chief minister and went with the rebel
armies to supervise the capture of Chun city. The rebel failure there
does not speak well of Niu’s ability as a commander, but more
bureaucratic skills learned while serving as a treasury clerk may have made him more successful at the task of supervising the occupation of Hua city that absorbed his energies thereafter.\textsuperscript{79}

For Eight Trigram leaders like Niu, their new life as rebels meant prestige as well as power and an opportunity for public display of their high status within the sect. Niu alone of the Hua rebels could claim a special relationship with Lin Ch’ing, and Niu made the most of his status as Lin’s pupil. He had made and publicly displayed banners reading “Pupil of the Lin [Ch’ing] School” (林門弟子) or in a longer and more impressive form “Niu, the Chief Pupil of Lin Who Is the Patriarch of Latter Heaven and the Heavenly Controller in Charge of the Faith at the Time When the Eight Trigrams Begin to Practice the Law” (掌理天盤八卦法開後天祖師林大弟子). Seemingly not content with his practical job as Li Wen-ch’eng’s chief minister, or with the prestige of his position as pupil of the Heavenly Controller himself, Niu Liang-ch’en chose to act out yet another role. He explained that previously his teacher Lin Ch’ing had consulted his “Manual for Responding to the Kalpas of the Three Buddhas,” and from it determined that in addition to the three great Controllers of Heaven, Earth, and Men, there would be a Controller of the Immortals (hsien-p’an 仙盤), Niu Liang-ch’en. Accordingly, during the months of the rebellion Niu dressed himself in robes elaborately decorated with the symbols of the eight trigrams and the square cap of a Taoist priest. He was addressed by everyone as “Honored Sir” (hsien-sheng 先生).\textsuperscript{80}

It is possible that other rebel leaders did as Niu had, altering their life style and appearance so as to be in keeping with new religious roles. (Niu was particularly willing to talk about religious matters and did not share what seems to have been a prevailing attitude among his colleagues not to speak of such things to the authorities.)\textsuperscript{81}

Other rebels used titles that either had unexplained religious significance or were simply made up on the spot by men eager for prestige. Some used the title General (chiang-chün 將軍), for example, including one who was known as the Great General of the Middle Era (chung-yuan 中元 ta chiang-chün), which may have referred to the second and present great kalpa period, and another was called the Great White General (ta pai 太白 chiang-chün), which may have referred to the White Sun era to come.\textsuperscript{82}

There were also a number of men who called themselves “king” (wang 王) without reference to the Eight Trigram kings selected by Li Wen-ch’eng. Some of their titles included: The King Who Follows
Heaven (shun-t'ien wang 顺天王), or The King Who Pacifies the West (p'ing-hsi wang 平西王).\textsuperscript{83} Other men simply were called by their surname and a number, as Second Great King Hsiao (Hsiao Erh Ta-wang 萧二大王) or Fourth Great King Ts'ai (Ts'ai Ssu Ta-wang). The latter, a man called Ts'ai Ch'eng-kung, was a person of no prominence in the sect whose confession (and possibly his life as a rebel) reflects his strong desire to appear important and impressive. He claimed to have given orders to men like Niu Liang-ch'en and Feng K'e-shan, though apparently he simply made up his title himself.\textsuperscript{84} A monk who joined the sect and rebellion claimed to have been installed as The Ch'an Master Who Protects the State (hu-kuo ch'an shih 覆國禪師). Not surprisingly there were other rebel leaders who took and wore the clothing of members of the elite or arrogated imperial titles to themselves.\textsuperscript{85}

In order to describe the kinds of activities in which rebel leaders were engaged, we will look at one set of leaders for whom relatively more information is available: the Tui Trigram king and his lords. Liu Kuo-ming 刘桐明 was the Tui Trigram (or Mansion) king, one of eight kings selected prior to the rebellion. Liu had been Li Wen-ch'eng's teacher in the past, but he had acknowledged Li as sect master when Li had taken over in 1811. Liu Kuo-ming had converted Hsu An-kuo and was responsible for the participation in the Eight Trigrams of Hsu and his vast network of pupils in Shantung. He had taken part in the entry into Hua city to free Li Wen-ch'eng but, having been confirmed in his position as king, he then took his men and left Hua. Liu and two of the Tui Trigram lords (Wang Hsueh-i, who was Liu's pupil, and Wei Te-chung, who was Liu's teacher's pupil) set up camp in the villages of Ssu-chien-fang, P'an-chang, and Nan-hu in northeastern Hua district, erecting poles to display the white banners that proclaimed their titles. During the 9th and 10th months they remained there, raiding other villages in Hua and adjacent K'ai districts for food supplies, and engaging local militia and government soldiers whenever necessary. Trigram King Liu appears to have had a force of at least three thousand men under his command: Trigram Lord Wei named at least eight men, including himself and Wang Hsueh-i, who had been named "leaders" (t'ou-mu 頭目) under Liu's authority and each of whom commanded three hundred to four hundred men. There was communication but apparently no formal or regularized chain of command between Liu and the other rebel leaders in Hua city; between Tui Trigram King Liu and the six men designated as Tui Trigram lords, there were no visible organizational links.\textsuperscript{86}
These six other lords consisted of three sets of brothers (or cousins) who apparently worked together in pairs. Shen Kuo-hsien and Shen Kuo-chen were pupils of Niu Liang-ch’en from a market town in the far northeastern corner of Hua district. Unfortunately nothing else is known about what they did or where they were during the rebellion. They could have been with Liu Kuo-ming, for they did finally join Liu when he accompanied Li Wen-ch’eng on the latter’s flight from Hua in the 11th month. Huang Hsing-tsai and his brother Huang Hsing-hsiang were also Niu Liang-ch’en’s pupils and Tui Trigram lords. They came from a market town in southeastern Hua and had brought their followers to assist in freeing Li Wen-ch’eng from jail. Both were among those put in charge of the port town of Tao-k’ou, and Hsing-hsiang died in the battle for that city on 10/27. Hsing-tsai had an unspecified number of men under his command, had “fought many battles,” assisted with the unsuccessful defense of Tao-k’ou, and moved into Hua city and remained there until it was retaken and he was captured. There were no visible connections between either brother and the Tui Trigram king. The last two Tui Trigram lords were Chu Ch’eng-kuei and Chu Ch’eng-fang, cousins from Shan-tung, pupils of Hsu An-kuo, and the leaders of the rebellion in that province. Having organized and carried out the attacks on Ts’ao and Ting-t’ao, the two Chus and their followers had raided the villages of those districts for several weeks, using their own home village as a base. Late in the 9th month, following instructions from Hsu An-kuo, they brought their followers and came to Hua city. They joined in the attack on Chun city and then together with Hsu An-kuo went to Tao-k’ou to prepare its defenses. Chu Ch’eng-fang remained in Hua with Hsu An-kuo until the end, while Ch’eng-fang went with Li Wen-ch’eng. While the two Chus might have coordinated their activities with the Huang brothers—for all were involved in defending and losing Tao-k’ou—there is again no evidence of any upward connection with the Tui Trigram King Liu Kuo-ming.87

This admittedly rough picture should illustrate the looseness with which king and lords of a given trigram related to one another. Generally speaking, the position of trigram king had been assigned to eight sect teachers active in planning the rebellion (and all from Li Wen-ch’eng’s group), and the other sixty-four positions had been distributed among their highest-ranking pupils. In reorganizing the chains of teachers and pupils in the various sects to fit the structure of eight kings and sixty-four lords, it appears that family and sect ties were respected, but the power of a trigram king over his followers was diluted by the addition to “his” trigram of those whose sect loyal-
ties went to other leaders. The resultant organization was flexible and apparently not unmanageable since teacher–pupil relationships did continue to be operative as chains of command supplementing those of king to lord.

Some of the organizational and command problems experienced by the rebels can be further illustrated if we look at four brothers named Chang, all pupils of Li Trigram King Wang Tao-lung. The third brother, Chang Feng-hsiang, had originally been designated by Trigram King Wang as a Li Trigram lord and in that capacity he had “managed things” (possibly in Hua city). Chang Feng-hsiang did not manage things properly, however, and when Wang Tao-lung found out that he had been “privately accumulating part of the money” (taken from city residents?) and not turning it over to rebel authorities, Wang forced him to relinquish his position of trigram lord. The title was not assigned to a stranger, however, but was taken by Feng-hsiang’s older brother, the second of the four sons. It is not said what happened to Feng-hsiang, but his other two brothers were also given posts. The youngest had been made adjutant (hsien-feng), while the eldest had been promised by his teacher that he would be given a leadership position “after the period of rebellion (luan) was over,” presumably in the new Pai-yang era. All four brothers remained in Hua city and lost their lives there.88

The dispute described above suggests that “looting” by rebels may have been organized and systematic. This picture is confirmed, at least in the case of Hua city, by the testimony of the rebel named Huang P’an-kung. Huang’s story can also illustrate how rebel leaders lived and worked in Hua. Huang P’an-kung was one of several clerks and runners in the Hua district yamen who were in a sect and in the rebellion—Huang himself was a yamen runner. His teacher, relaying instructions from Niu Liang-ch’en, had arranged with him about participating in the uprising, and Huang later helped free Niu and Li Wen-ch’eng from prison. Huang received no title after the rebellion, but Chief Commander Sung Yuan-ch’eng assigned him the task of emptying and cataloguing the contents of a pawnshop appropriated by the rebels. Chief Minister Niu Liang-ch’en came later and made an inspection of the pawnshop, commended Huang on his handling of the task, and formally promoted him. Huang says that he became a “big leader” (ta t’ou-mu 大頭目). In this new capacity, Huang P’an-kung took charge of two hundred men and went through the streets and houses of the city, looking for and taking objects of value, and, as we have seen, this authorized plunder included the power to kill those who resisted.89
In addition to the systematic looting of Hua and presumably of Tao-k'ou, many rebels were engaged in the transshipping of grain from Tao-k'ou into Hua city during the 10th month. From the beginning, those rebels involved in transporting grain had been allowed to pass freely through the city gates, and when Ch'ing pressure on Tao-k'ou mounted, the rebels decided to move all of that town's sizable grain reserves into Hua. This operation was assigned to several trigram kings, trigram lords, and their followers.

Although a great many rebels were involved in securing and defending Tao-k'ou and Hua, the majority of Eight Trigram commanders spent their days as rebels living in the countryside. Making camp in villages and market towns, they took what they wanted and lived as they pleased. Many sect leaders from Hua and Chün district preferred this life and did not go into Hua city until forced there by irresistible pressure from advancing Ch'ing armies. Rebels in southwestern Shantung were likewise free from harassment for a time, though a considerably shorter time, and lived a similar life of foraging expeditions and sporadic battles, a life in which they too were put increasingly on the defensive before being driven out of their camps altogether. We will look in greater detail at these rebels in Shantung, for the documentation permits us to see into the life of these lower level, village based, and eventually beleaguered rebel bands, and their experience can stand as representative of that of their comrades in southern Chihli and northern Honan.

The Shantung rebels had a period of only three weeks before they were driven to take refuge in Hua by a closing circle of government soldiers, but during these weeks they were particularly free to do as they pleased. They were connected with the top level Eight Trigrams leadership only through their senior teacher Hsu An-kuo, and Hsu, who had left his home in southern Chihli only to join his colleagues in Hua, offered his pupils little instruction or direction during this period. Although all the Shantung leaders and many of the followers had been sect members, there appears to have been little interest in translating into reality the religious ideas of their sects. Instead, the rebels concentrated on staying alive and if possible enjoying life.

A government scout described their life as follows: "They are confining themselves to Ts'ao and Ting-t'ao district. In the daytime they loot shops and at night they drink wine with their women. They have forced others from the villages [of those districts] to join them. Now they roam about, hesitating and not daring to approach the cities." A local magistrate gave a similar picture: "The rebel group
from Chi-t'ieh village had eaten early, divided into groups, and then gone out to burn and plunder. In the evening, after they had eaten, they made plans to attack the [district] city; however, when they heard that our defenses had been increased, they dared not.”

Our best rebel source, the testimony of the leader Hu Ch'eng-te, presents a slightly more colorful picture. Hu Ch'eng-te was among those who attacked the government offices and the pawnshops of Ts’ao city. He and his group of seventy men left the city that same day (9/10), and went, apparently on foot, to Fan-chia village. They were joined by others, and by the time they reached the village, their group numbered about two hundred. Outside the house of Fan Ta-p’i-keng, who was one of Hu’s lieutenants and for whose family the village was named, they constructed a makeshift shed. There the men sat and rested until evening and, using Fan Ta-p’i-keng’s supplies (perhaps stockpiled in advance), cooked noodles in broth for everyone to eat.

After relaxing for a day or two, the group mobilized themselves and marched to Ma-chia village about six miles away. That market town contained several pawnshops and these were broken open and emptied by the rebels. They helped themselves to the clothing for which the pawnshops were serving as summer storage. Hu Ch’eng-te took a blue padded-cotton robe and a green padded-cotton riding jacket and immediately put them on. He also obtained for himself a more dignified means of transportation, commandeering a passenger cart with a mat awning. Along the way that day, Hu encountered an old acquaintance whom he had persuaded to join their group; this man had been a cart driver, and so now Hu told him to drive his cart. To another recent recruit, Hu assigned the task (or privilege) of carrying the banner inscribed with the title Hu’s teacher had given him, “The King Who Follows Heaven, Hu Ch’eng-te.” That night Hu came back to Fan-chia village in style, sitting under the awning of a horse-drawn cart with his banner carrier walking out front.

The rebels were by necessity concerned with subsistence as well as style, and finding that Fan Ta-p’i-keng’s supplies had been exhausted, they then went to the other houses in the village and took flour and dumplings. The following day they again stayed in the village, resting and enjoying themselves. This was their pattern during these early days of their rebellion. They would leave the village one day to obtain food, clothing, and supporters and then return to relax for a day or two. Each night when the men came back to the village, they
would greet one another by bowing deeply, saying "Be Victorious," and laughing.  

What did they take in these foraging expeditions? The primary object of rebel "looting and plundering" was food, necessary in large quantities to support each growing rebel band. They took grain and other provisions from people's houses and from grain shops. (There is surprisingly no reference by rebel or official to the opening of government granaries.) In addition to food, the rebels helped themselves to other valuables. As we have seen they removed the contents of the treasuries (presumably silver and copper money) when the government offices were attacked. Inside the cities and later in smaller market towns, they broke into loan houses (ch'ien-p'u 錢鋪) and into pawnshops (tang-tien 当店). From the pawnshops and from people's homes, the rebels took clothes, particularly those made of silk or of padded-cotton—luxuries beyond their previous means. To make the white banners carried by rebel leaders (and captured in great quantities by the government), we presume that cloth was taken whenever possible. In order to transport themselves and their supplies, the rebels took horses and mules and carts of all sizes. Similarly, they armed themselves and stockpiled weapons and ammunition, taking knives, spears and muskets, and from the cities, cannon.

At first the prospect of a good fight with Ch'ing soldiers was a welcome one for those rebels who had attacked Ts'ao and Ting-t'ao cities and who were riding high on a wave of excitement and self-confidence. Several days after the attacks on the cities, a third-rank military officer from the Green Standard garrison in Ts'ao-chou prefectural city ventured southward into Ting-t'ao district with two hundred men, some of whom were militia. The rebels learned of this, and word was sent out to all of the various bands in the Ting-t'ao area (we know of at least four) telling them of the approaching soldiers and asking everyone to assemble and fight them. The rebels attacked on the 12th or 13th (of the 9th month) in a place called K'ung-lienkeng. The soldiers, though better armed (with muskets), were outnumbered: "Because the rebels were many and the soldiers few, the few could not hold off the many," and the rebels won handily. Nearly one-fourth of the soldiers, including their commander, were killed or wounded. One Ch'ing agent sent in disguise to spy on the rebels reported that at this stage "the villages where the bandits were gathered extended over an area of about forty or fifty li across. The rebels go out in the daytime and rest at night. They have forced young and able-bodied men to join them and fight on the front lines."
Districts and cities of the north China plain
They have also sent out men to different places to reconnoiter and get in touch with other [rebels].”

The Shantung rebels remained unchallenged in Ting-t’ao and Ts’ao districts for several weeks, but toward the end of the 9th month this situation began to change. On 9/21 the governor of Shantung and a veteran general arrived in Ts’ao-chou prefectural city, bringing with them footsoldiers and cavalry transferred from elsewhere in the province. These soldiers began to attack and engage small rebel groups, as did soldiers from Kiangsu who had also moved into Shantung. At about this time, the sect leader Hsu An-kuo sent word to his major pupils in Shantung that they should come to Hua to confer with him and assist in the faltering attack on Chün city.

These two developments—the arrival of Ch’ing soldiers and the request for assistance from Hsu An-kuo—would eventually put an end to the period of free and unhindered plundering, but those rebels who went to Hua to aid their colleagues still exhibited the exhilaration characteristic of this initial phase of rebellion.

The rebel Hu Ch’eng-te, whose own teacher had relayed to him the message from Hsu An-kuo, again narrated what happened to him. When Hu and his men got the message, they spent the rest of that day getting ready and by evening were prepared to leave for Hua. “Along the way we took dumplings for food and mules to ride. We also took ten or twenty passenger carts. I continued to ride in my cart. At that time our men numbered about five hundred or so.” Hua city was seventy miles away, and by dawn two days later Hu and his men had arrived about five miles from the city walls. Hu’s aide Fan Ta-p’i-keng volunteered to take a horse and ride ahead to announce their arrival to Hsu An-kuo. Later as Hu Ch’eng-te approached the east gate of the city, he saw a group of men walking toward him. Fan Ta-p’i-keng was leading his horse in one hand and walking respectfully behind “Teacher Hsu.” Hu Ch’eng-te and the others greeted Hsu An-kuo, described the villages they had looted and the battles won, and then they kotowed to Hsu. “When we stood up again, we put our hands together and shook them, congratulating one another, said ‘Be Victorious,’ and then everyone laughed.”

Later Hsu An-kuo spoke to them and said,

You’ve been very successful in doing this job for me. In the future, those who can read will be given official posts, those who cannot will be given land. However, right now I am afraid that the government soldiers will be making many arrests. For this
reason, you should now, without delay, go back to your homes and get your families and move them here [into Hua city] as quickly as possible.  

Some of the rebels chose to remain in Hua and assist in the fighting; Hu Ch'eng-te and others returned to Shantung to get their relatives and colleagues. But when they reached Shantung, early in the 10th month, the balance of power had already changed and they found Ch'ing soldiers waiting for them. In this less happy phase in the life of the Shantung Eight Trigrams, they became engaged in increasingly desperate battles against superior armies.

The pacification of the rebels in Shantung was undertaken by the veteran general and Shantung Salt Commissioner Liu Ch'ing. On 9/27 he first ventured into the area of rebel-held villages with five hundred soldiers, one-fifth of them cavalry. Thereafter he continued to attack and scatter rebel camps and whenever a large group of rebels came to their comrades' assistance, the Ch'ing armies held their own and forced the rebels to leave and regroup elsewhere. A battle in Ts’ao district on 10/1 was typical. Ch'ing soldiers advanced and “the rebel group rushed out to resist. The government soldiers attacked them. More than one hundred fifty rebels were killed and the rest—more than one hundred people—fled into the multistoried building in that village. They closed the gate to that building and threw down a rain of stones from above. The government soldiers were hit and injured by the stones but regardless they rushed forward and set fire to the building.” Those who jumped down and survived were captured, but the rest were burned to death inside.

After they were repeatedly defeated by Ch'ing soldiers, some rebels chose not to fight; frightened by the news that more armies were approaching, some “threw down their weapons and fled for their lives”; others came forward, removed their white sashes and kowtowed to the soldiers.

By the first week in the 10th month, the rebels in Shantung had been reduced to two large camps, one in Hu-chia village, and a smaller one in nearby An-ling village. Realizing the danger of their position, they attempted to fortify these villages and to turn them into stockades. At An-ling there was an earthen wall of a mile or more in circumference around the village. Although none of the four gates in the wall had wooden doors, the rebels had filled them up with brambles and thorny branches. Hu-chia village, which was the home of Chu Ch'eng-kuei and his brothers and cousin (Hsu An-kuo's
chief pupils in Shantung), had been made even more inaccessible. There, the earthen walls had been built up all around the village, the gates were closed, and tree trunks, branches, and bramble bushes were piled outside the walls. Earlier Trigram Lord Chu Ch'eng-kuei had taken many of his followers and gone to Hua, but his brother Ch'eng-liang had been left behind with nearly two thousand men to protect their home.

On 10/4 the larger camp at Hu-chia village was attacked. As the Ch'ing soldiers cut through the brush, the rebels were forced back inside the village wall. They soon found that fireballs were being thrown over the wall. The thatch houses began to catch fire and flames, spread by the wind, soon enveloped the village. The rebels could not muster an organized counterattack; most who tried to flee were easily cut down. A few did manage to escape and, though pursued by government cavalry, made it safely to An-ling village. Those who remained inside were either burned to death or captured as the soldiers entered the village. After this battle, the backbone of rebel strength in Shantung was broken.

Once word spread of the destruction of Hu-chia village, many of the rebel bands still in Shantung decided to seek safety in Hua. The rest congregated in An-ling village. Although they were joined by one of the Chu brothers who had come from Hua to assist his relatives and pupils, the initiative had already been lost. The remaining rebels were sitting ducks, isolated and vulnerable, and the Ch'ing soldiers moved quickly to attack. A cavalry officer from Ts'ao-chou prefecture led soldiers and approached the beleaguered village. He climbed up onto a small mound outside the earthen wall around the village and threw copies of an announcement of clemency over the wall, hoping to undermine rebel morale. The village was soon surrounded by Ch'ing soldiers, including crack Manchu troops led by an imperial bodyguard of the first-rank sent specially from Peking. Early in the morning on 10/7 the government attacked, stormed the village, and killed and captured its defenders. In the face of these defeats, surviving Shantung rebels, disillusioned and afraid for their lives, rid themselves of weapons, banners, and booty, and either left the area as soon as possible or made their way home and hoped that their involvement would remain undetected by the authorities.

The experience of the Shantung rebels paralleled the pattern of the rebellion as a whole, for once they had lost their forward momentum, they were attacked, pursued, and eventually besieged. Inexperienced in warfare and without an efficient command system, the rebel lead-
ers were neither imaginative nor flexible in their military strategy. As Ch'ing armies approached, the rebels merely withdrew into their poorly defended villages. Beleaguered and on the defensive, they soon could only flee or fight to the death. Over the next two months, those Trigram rebels who occupied villages of Honan and southern Chihli found themselves in exactly the same position, and their pride and delight with their new status soon turned into anxiety, fear, and even panic.

**The Ch'ing Government Strikes Back**

Most histories of rebellions in China consist largely of accounts of how the rebels were suppressed by the government. Here, however, matters peripheral to the uprising itself such as government decision making, finance, communications, military preparedness, or the personalities of the emperor and his chief officials, will not be discussed in any detail. Instead, I wish to concentrate on the Ch'ing defeat of the Eight Trigram rebels insofar as it relates to the nature of the contest between rebel and government and their competing strategies for getting or holding power. We will look first at the Ch'ing government's measures to win renewed commitments of allegiance from the local gentry and “good people” in the countryside, and then at their overall plan for defeating the rebels on the battlefield.

In order to quell the Eight Trigrams rebellion, the Ch'ing government undertook both organizational and propaganda measures to counteract rebel claims to legitimacy. In the first place, it was necessary for the government to secure the loyalty and assistance of the nonrebel population, particularly the local elites. In the second place, it was important to induce the majority of rebel followers to “return their allegiance” to the Ch'ing.

The emperor and his officials appear to have divided the population into categories along a spectrum of varying degrees of allegiance to the government: (1) “righteous citizens” (i-min 義民), those who supported the state with money and energy and actively rallied others to oppose the rebels; (2) “good people” (liang-min 良民), those who refused to join either a heretical sect or the sect-led rebellion; (3) “good people” who had been “tricked” into joining a sect but who repented of this and did not participate in the rebellion; (4) “refugees” (nan-min 難民) and “coerced people” (hsieh-min 市民), those
who had unwillingly joined the rebel side, who as rebels may have robbed or set fires or killed people, but who eventually surrendered to the government and refused to do battle with Ch'ing soldiers; (5) rebel followers who, no matter how persuaded to join the rebel cause, took up arms against government soldiers in battle; and (6) rebel leaders and sect members who actively directed others in the rebellion against the Ch'ing state. The first two groups were to be rewarded, the third and fourth forgiven for their mistakes, and the fifth and sixth punished or killed.

The policy of sparing all rebels who abandoned that cause and surrendered to the government was designed to create a wedge between dedicated Eight Trigram leaders and their less committed followers and to discourage any new defections to the rebel side—"those among the rebels who are fierce will become fearful, and those who are timid will flee." This policy of leniency and amnesty was posted on bulletins, distributed through leaflets, and announced aloud before battles. During a battle the government set up special red banners, visible at a distance, where all "coerced people" and "refugees" could come and surrender themselves.106

While they attempted on the one hand to persuade rebel supporters to surrender, the Ch'ing simultaneously sought to enlist the assistance of local elites in the process of restoring the order in which they too had a vested interest. The essence of these measures consisted of allowing power—in the form of initiative, money, and weapons—to flow down and out from the center to the local level. It was normal Ch'ing policy to retain this power in the hands of district, provincial, and metropolitan bureaucrats and soldiers; local leaders and men of wealth or prestige below the level of the district and outside the government were discouraged from taking any action that might lead to the creation of an independent power base. During the crisis of rebellion, however, the central government made an exception to this rule and bought the loyalty of families and individuals who were normally outside the power structure (or only marginally within it) by allowing them new scope for legitimate independent action at the local level.

As soon as the Eight Trigrams rebellion broke out, the Chia-ch'ing Emperor called upon local gentry and wealthy merchants for support by encouraging all threatened localities, villages, and cities alike, to "organize and train militia (i-yung 翁) and to dig out trenches and moats." "This," declared the emperor, "is the excellent policy of 'strengthening the walls and clearing the countryside.'"
According to this policy, militiamen trained “solely for the defense of their own localities (hsiang 畿)” could give the people a source of protection and a means for repulsing rebel attacks on their homes if larger armies were not on the scene.\textsuperscript{107} This officially sponsored organization of militia also gave the people a way of demonstrating their loyalty and using their power in the interest of the central government; in fact, it clearly put pressure on them to do so. By “donating” time, manpower, money, and supplies, all “righteous citizens” could expect to earn concrete rewards from the government in the form of money, titles, or positions.\textsuperscript{108} In the districts of Shantung, Chihli, and Honan that were either attacked or threatened by the Eight Trigrams, the creation of local militia and the readying of village and town defenses, and with them the rallying of local support, was both policy and practice. Under local leaders, these militia guarded the cities, arrested sect members and rebel scouts, and fought with rebel bands that entered their districts. When the danger was past, the militia were dissolved.\textsuperscript{109} Let us turn to the events of 1813 for a closer look at how this policy worked.

We have seen that in Shantung, the district magistrates in Yü-t’ai, Ch’eng-wu, Shan, and Chin-hsiang were alerted to potential danger and had effectively discouraged the rebels from causing trouble in their districts. In general, the representatives of Ch’ing authority in those areas had shown leadership and confidence convincing to the general populace. In Ch’eng-wu city for example, where markets were closed and a militia organized, the city defenders were at first very uneasy, conscious of being isolated in what might become hostile countryside. Those men who were patrolling the city walls at night to prevent a surprise attack claimed to have seen a strange firelike light in the sky, an evil omen which frightened them. To counteract this growing unease, one of the local education officials lectured the militiamen, describing the government’s great strength and comparing it with the weak and disorganized rebels. This heartening shift of perspective, combined with a stable and then improving situation, gradually restored public confidence in Ch’eng-wu.\textsuperscript{110}

We have seen how the aggressive actions of Magistrate Wu of Chin-hsiang disrupted and demoralized the network of would-be rebels in his district. Not until 9/15 did sect members from Chin-hsiang, encouraged by the successes of their colleagues in Ts’ao and Ting-t’ao, dare to become rebels. But when the magistrate sent out the small detachment of soldiers from the city to make more arrests, the rebels fled rather than fight. After this, the people of the coun-
trieside realized that the government, not the rebels, was the domin­nant force there, and they began taking the initiative themselves. Villagers located and seized rebels and sect members and brought them to the city to be put under arrest. In this manner, forty pris­oners from six villages were turned in between the 18th and the 20th of the 9th month. The large bands of rebels left the area, and by the 24th, Magistrate Wu could claim that “things have settled down, even though there are still a few rebels in hiding or in flight.”

Ke-tse district, located directly north of Ting-t’ao, was the seat of Ts’ao-chou prefecture, and it is not surprising to find that the gentry there had organized themselves quickly and in large numbers. One group of rebels from Ts’ao district ventured into Ke-tse following the attacks on the cities on 9/10, and they met with immediate resistance. Members of the local gentry (holding the rank of military chü-jen and below) had organized and coordinated militia from over a dozen villages, a force of more than a thousand men according to official sources. This militia engaged the rebels in several battles over a period of days in the middle of the 9th month, killing several hundred and driving the other rebels southward back into Ting-t’ao. On the 13th, a force of only two hundred soldiers from the local garrison and some militia, emboldened by these successes, ventured deep into Ts’ao district, but they were attacked by several combined rebel bands and defeated. Thereafter, Ke-tse district forces continued to defend their own district successfully but waited for large detachments of soldiers to move into rebel territory.

The events in these districts of southwestern Shantung should illustrate that leadership from local officials, swift organization of city defenses, and a firm commitment against the rebels did have the effect of generating public confidence in the government. Sect members were discouraged from becoming rebels, and rebels were discouraged from entering these areas. The atmosphere of initial nervousness and anxiety which, if prolonged, could have been disastrous for the government, was swiftly dispelled and replaced with a realization of Ch’ing strength and of the unlikeliness of rebel success.

In the 9th and 10th months, Eight Trigram rebels had moved freely from their bases in Hua and Shantung into the adjacent dis­tricts of southern Chihli. There their superior numbers had left local garrisons powerless. The cities and villages were isolated and helpless until outside soldiers could be transferred to the scene. “Since for the moment my military force is not yet consolidated,” memorialized
the governor-general of the province, "everything depends on the
gentry in those localities themselves doing the defending. We must
assist them with provisions and so I have sent a rapid order to [the
financial commissioner] saying that each of those districts should be
given between one thousand and two thousand ounces of silver."113

In K’ai district, which shared a thirty-mile border with Hua on the
west, a curfew was put into effect in the city, and men were called up
and paid to defend the city. The gentry of K’ai (the local gazetteer, an
important medium for commemorating acts of local heroism and
patriotism, gives biographies of seven men) immediately called for
volunteers and led these men to attack the rebels. The militia were
repelled with apparent ease, and many of the gentry leaders were
killed or wounded.114 Although authorities in K’ai admitted their
helplessness after this initial setback, they continued to do whatever
they could. They filed reports naming which villages had been
entered by rebels, encouraged residents of the countryside to dig
trenches around their villages and to resist all rebel attempts to
recruit them by persuasion or force, and arrested individual rebels
whenever possible.115 These acts were important as symbols of con­

tinuing Ch’ing authority, but an army capable of dealing effectively
with the rebels on the battlefield was a necessary complement to local
efforts.

Like villages in southern Chihli, the villages of Hua district were
powerless against superior rebel numbers. Moreover, they were
deprived even of the leadership provided by the magistrate (who had
killed himself in disgrace after fleeing the city) and city gentry—a
situation symbolized by the district city itself, now in rebel hands.
The large armies necessary for elimination of the rebels from the
countryside were needed first to form the government spearhead
against Tao-k’ou and then Hua, and therefore the villages of Hua
could not even count on receiving outside military assistance. In
order to provide these localities with a military force capable of deal­
ing with the rebels and to give the gentry of that area a focus for their
activities, the emperor allowed a special kind of militia to be formed.

Militia, when permitted at all, were normally to be organized and
financed locally and used only for the defense of their own localities.
It was the firm policy of the Chia-ch’ing Emperor not to permit the
organization of higher-level militia that would operate outside and
be financially independent of the locality where they were formed or
that would “follow along with the army.” After the massive White
Lotus rebellion (1796–1803) was suppressed fewer than ten years
earlier, there had been many problems demobilizing militiamen of this sort who had been organized and used successfully during the campaigns in the mountains of Shensi, Szechwan, and western Hupei. Nevertheless, in light of the special and urgent situation in the district of Hua, one officially sponsored exception to this policy was permitted in 1813.\textsuperscript{116}

As soon as Hua city had fallen, the prefect of Wei-hui ordered Meng Ch'i-chan 盧杞卿, an expectant official then in the provincial capital of K'ai-feng, to go to Hua and organize militia there. On 9/20 Meng, a Shantung man in his early fifties, arrived at the market town of Niu-shih-t'un in southwestern Hua district. Following instructions, he called up men from about 180 villages and from them selected 5,200 able-bodied “braves” (yung 翁). A training camp was established in that town and there the men were given weapons and instruction and supported by local contributions. This large militia force was to oppose any rebels who came in the direction of either Wei-hui prefectural city (to the west) or the Yellow River (to the south).\textsuperscript{117} Meng Ch'i-chan and his men took to the field and fought several small engagements in western and southern Hua district during the 10th month, killing more than 1,300 rebels during the first three weeks of that month.\textsuperscript{118} This obvious effectiveness against the rebels on the battlefield was in part possible because, unlike militia in Shantung and Chihli, this one was allowed to be both larger and more professional. Meng Ch'i-chan and his force also became an actual and symbolic rallying point for “loyal citizens,” a source of food and work, an opportunity to earn rewards and reputation.

After the large government army had arrived within a few miles of Hua city, Meng's militia also joined with these soldiers in combined operations in the countryside. For example, on 10/18 Yang Yü-ch’un, the military-governor of Shensi and Kansu, in command of two thousand Shensi soldiers (one-fourth cavalry) joined with some of Meng's militia and engaged a rebel band of about the same size south of Hua. They pursued these rebels, driving them back to their camps, and then attacked those camps, forcing the rebels to abandon them and retreat into Hua city. The following day Military-Governor Yang again took his men into the field to attack a large rebel camp at Ting-luan village. Because he had learned through rebel testimony that it was the government soldiers, not the militia, who were truly feared by the rebels, Yang dressed his soldiers as militia. The rebels from that village, seeing that it was “merely”
the militia attacking them, rushed forward confidently. Confronted with soldiers who were apparently the better trained and more effective fighters, the rebels quickly fell back. Yang's combined force was not strong enough to surround or destroy the rebel camp, but it was able to compel most of the rebels to take refuge in Hua city.\textsuperscript{119} Meng Ch'i-chan's militia continued to engage in this kind of harassing activity, clearing the countryside by encouraging rebel bands to regroup elsewhere rather than trying to defeat them thoroughly on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{120} During the 11th and 12th months these militiamen joined with the massive government army and assisted in the recapture of Tao-k'ou and the city of Hua. For their labors, many received rewards and Meng Ch'i-chan became magistrate of Hua.\textsuperscript{121}

Although the organization of local militia and even of special militia such as that of Meng Ch'i-chan's was useful for rallying the local population and defending village and town against small-scale rebel attacks, these measures were by no means enough to suppress the rebellion as a whole. The primary responsibility for the suppression of the Eight Trigrams rested with the Ch'ing armies. In order to understand this other dimension of Ch'ing policy and to see how large armies were deployed, it is first necessary to look at the Ch'ing military apparatus as a whole and at the general pattern for its handling of large-scale disturbances on the north China plain.

The Green Standard army (lū-ying 綠營), manned by Chinese and staffed by Manchus at the highest levels, was deployed in small units (averaging fewer than a thousand men) at regular intervals across the plain. The arrangement was such that few localities were more than fifty miles from any garrison force. The largest garrisons were along the Grand Canal and in the provincial capitals of K'ai-feng (Honan), Chi-nan (Shantung), and Pao-ting (Chihli); here were garrisons of one or two thousand men. On a second, higher level, there were Manchu soldiers of the Eight Banners (pa-ch'i 八旗) stationed in three strategic cities: K'ai-feng near the Yellow River, Te on the Grand Canal in Shantung and Peking itself. Finally, there were large concentrations of special Manchu soldiers in Peking, along the Great Wall north of the capital, and in Manchuria.\textsuperscript{122}

These three levels of deployment can be seen as reflections of three different levels at which the Ch'ing government was able to check rebellion. The small Chinese garrisons were for minor disturbances, those larger Chinese and Manchu brigades at strategic places were for large-scale trouble, and those in the north constituted the emergency reserves. The regularly spaced garrisons of at least several
hundred Green Standard soldiers were capable of handling only rebel groups of equal or smaller size. Because the command structure of the Green Standard army prevented any single commander from marshaling large numbers of soldiers, and because many localities were several hundred miles from the handful of large garrisons (one thousand or more men), it was important for these forces to defeat and disperse dissident groups before they started to grow. Constant vigilance and readiness at the local level could keep dissident groups from getting too big to be handled by local garrisons (often with the assistance of local militia). Once a rebel band passed the level of several hundred men, however, a second line of defense had to be called into action.

The mobilization of the larger garrisons stationed at strategic points could be slow (if they were far from the scene of action) and inefficient, especially if more than one province were involved, because of the fragmented command structure. This line of defense was in fact of limited usefulness. Rebels whose numbers increased slowly or not at all could eventually be suppressed locally, but a rebel group of several thousand that continued to attract followers could easily reach ten thousand or more before a large and coordinated government force could be assembled against them. In that situation it was necessary to call in the third line of defense, Manchu soldiers from the north, sometimes almost immediately. Ideally, these soldiers from Peking and Manchuria, together with local and regional garrisons and local militia, could combine to make up a force of sufficient number and skill to suppress even a very large rebellion. The command problem was solved by the appointment of a Special Imperial Commissioner (ch’in-ch’ai ta-ch’en 钦差大臣) who was given temporary command of all these soldiers for the purpose of suppressing one particular rebellion.

In the case of the Eight Trigrams, all three levels were called into action almost immediately. On the periphery of the rebel area, local garrisons were of some use, but where rebel bands were large, even government forces of several thousand men were at best only able to drive the rebels out of the area rather than to defeat them in battle. In the area of Hua city, the rebels grew quickly to numbers far exceeding available regional forces, and the Eight Trigrams won for themselves the time and freedom to grow until a sufficiently large force under a single commander and including troops from beyond the Wall was mobilized against them, and then the rebels were defeated.
Lines of government attack
The government's overall plan for the suppression of the Eight Trigrams was quite simple. The Yellow River, extending in a west-east line across the north China plain, south of which there had been no disturbances, would be a southernmost barrier against rebel expansion. North of the river, Manchu Banner and Chinese Green Standard soldiers would be transferred into the area from northern Kiangsu, eastern Shantung, Peking and Manchuria, Shansi, Shensi and Kansu, and northwestern Honan. Forming a great arc and moving inward by stages, these soldiers would form a net, limiting rebel expansion in all directions. Like hunted prey—"fish in a kettle or animals in a trap"—the rebels would be driven into a smaller and smaller area until they were held at bay in Hua city. In order to counter the massive concentration of rebel forces in the area of that city, and in order to protect particularly vulnerable cities nearby (such as Chün and Wei-hui), additional soldiers would be sent directly to Hua, to blunt the force of any rebel drive outward and eventually to go in for the kill. As Hua was attacked, soldiers ringing the periphery would be ready to capture any who fled and tried to escape. The scenario was developed early in the campaign and agreed upon by the emperor and Special Imperial Commissioner Na-yench'eng; little occurred to upset their plans. The Chia-ch'ing Emperor's main complaint was that the suppression took much longer than he had hoped; yet these delays were due primarily to the slowness with which Manchu troops from outside the Great Wall were moved south to participate in the final assault on Hua city. Let us now look at the implementation of this policy.

In 1813 the Yellow River ran from west to east in an almost straight line across the north China plain. Cutting through northern Honan and running along the southern border of Shantung, the river was a natural deterrent against rebel expansion toward the south (and against the government transfer of troops to the north). Upon hearing of the initial uprisings, the emperor immediately ordered that all boats be anchored on the south bank for the entire length of the great river in those two provinces so that rebels would have no means of crossing or escaping downstream. The boats bearing the precious copper from the mines of Yunnan were ordered to anchor immediately and to proceed no farther until it was safe to do so. The magistrate of Lan-yang district in Honan did decide, despite these orders, to ferry across to the southern bank some two thousand "refugees" who had gathered on the north bank at the end of the 9th month: "They had waded out onto the sandy flats of the river and were
standing in the mud and shallow waters, crying out for help.” For this he was dismissed and orders were given for all the alleged refugees to be interrogated and the rebels among them arrested. In general this policy of containment was quite successful, possibly because the rebels themselves do not appear to have thought in terms of travel by water.

Unfortunately for the government, there had been a break in the dike of the Yellow River in Sui district in Honan late in the 8th month. The river had burst through the southern embankment and was flowing south of its regular course. The main channel that ran due east was nearly empty. Efforts to repair this breach had begun prior to the rebel uprisings, but now this construction site became a point of government vulnerability. A number of rebels from Shantung and a few from Honan had learned about the construction work and had gone to the site with the express aim of destroying government equipment and material. For example, Chu Te-san, who was arrested at the site on 10/7, stated that the leader of his group had given him explosives and told him and at least five others to go to where the construction was being done and pretend to be beggars or carters. They were then to “find a chance to set fire to the walls of the dike which were made of thatch.” These and other small groups of scouts were vulnerable to arrest because they traveled individually or in small groups, and many were seized by authorities on the spot. In the end no disturbances took place at the construction site.

The suppression of the Eight Trigram rebels in Shantung was accomplished with apparent ease and dispatch, but the task had been made considerably easier by the departure of most of the large bands of rebels from the area. We have seen that in the districts of eastern Ts’ao-chou prefecture, a display of confidence on the part of the government officials and people had discouraged some sect members from taking any action and encouraged others to leave to join their colleagues in Ts’ao and Ting-t’ao. This movement of the rebels toward the west was speeded by the swift appearance of Ch’ing soldiers on the scene. To contain the rebels and protect the area exposed by the break in the dike, a second-rank military commander from Hsuchou in Kiangsu was ordered into the area. By 9/18 he had arrived near the borders of Shan district with four hundred men (soon increased to a thousand), and he remained there for the next few months deterring large bands from coming his way and mopping up smaller groups that came within reach. (Also see map p. 228.)
As we have seen, the Ch’ing counterattack in Shantung was undertaken by the salt commissioner of that province. Commissioner Liu Ch’ing, then in his seventy-first year, was a former military official and veteran of the campaigns against the White Lotus rebels in Szechwan and was respected as an able commander. Both the governor and salt commissioner had come to Ts’ao-chou prefectural city, just north of the area where rebels were living and raiding, arriving there on 9/26. Commissioner Liu decided to attack immediately. He moved southward into Ting-t’ao district, leading five hundred Chinese and Manchu soldiers, including some cavalry. In a series of skirmishes that day and with the assistance of another government force of two hundred men who came from the east, Commissioner Liu supervised the killing of three hundred rebels out of a group of at least one thousand, and he captured another hundred. More important, he forced these rebels to leave that part of Ting-t’ao and move to the south and west. Over the next two weeks Liu Ch’ing pursued and attacked the rebels wherever he could find them. When the rebels withdrew into a village and tried to defend it, he surrounded them and relied on muskets and fire to break through their defenses. When they fled, he used cavalry to pursue them. In battles at Hanchia-ta-miao (9/30), Hu-chia village (10/4), An-ling village (10/8) and Hao-chia village (10/9) the rebels in Shantung were gradually pushed out of the province, nearly five thousand of them losing their lives in the process. In these battles it was the government soldiers (mostly Green Standard with some Banner troops) who did the fighting; mopping up was left to the local militia, which were not capable of handling the large rebel bands. After the 10th month, when rebels from Honan and Chihli tried to come to Shantung, they found their way blocked by these Ch’ing soldiers. Those scattered rebels still left in Shantung were “exhausted,” and their groups broke apart as each man tried to save himself.

The beleaguered cities of southern Chihli did not receive the same swift assistance as those in nearby Shantung. The governor-general of Chihli, Wen Ch’eng-hui, had begun transferring soldiers to the south as soon as the initial uprisings occurred. On 9/12 he was named Special Imperial Commissioner and he and the military-governor of Chihli, Ma Yü, were ordered to go in person to supervise the suppression campaigns. On 9/16, after the palace attack, the emperor punished Wen Ch’eng-hui by removing him from his post and appointed a new special commissioner. Wen was told to continue to the battlefield and to assist with the campaign in order to make up for
his negligence. He and Ma Yü and their 4,200 Green Standard soldiers did not, therefore, arrive at Kai district city until 10/2, more than three weeks after the murder of the magistrate of Ch’ang-yuan by rebels. At this time, the situation around Chüin city was still considered critical, and since the threat to that administrative center took precedence over that posed by the roaming bands of rebels in southern Chihli, the emperor ordered Wen Ch’eng-hui and Ma Yü to take their men westward instead. They were to help the governor of Honan relieve the pressure on Chüin. Ten days later, the situation had improved and the emperor realized that “if the rebels were to move northward, we would be unable to halt them.” He ordered Ma Yü to return to the K’ai area and begin clearing the rebels out of southern Chihli.

Ma Yü was instructed to be ready to cut off any rebel movements away from Hua and to move with his two thousand men down the boot of southern Chihli, retaking rebel-held villages and driving the larger rebel bands westward to Hua. He finally reached K’ai on 10/21. The rebels in southern Chihli had had no serious opposition for six weeks. Meeting only minor challenges from militia, rebel bands of five hundred to a thousand men had come freely into Chihli from their camps in Hua district, dominating the countryside—“their strength was frightening.”

Strengthened by another one thousand soldiers from Shantung (no longer needed in that province), Ma Yü finally led his men into battle on 10/23. They attacked a rebel camp at P’an-chang village about ten miles away inside the Hua border. The government appeared to have the upper hand; the rebels defended the village from a small ridge but were eventually forced to take refuge inside, and nearly a thousand died when the soldiers set fire to the thatched houses inside. But just as the Ch’ing soldiers were counting the bodies, gathering up firearms, banners, and captives, they were suddenly attacked by two thousand rebels who had come belatedly to their comrades’ assistance. Ma’s men “had been fighting all day and were like a bow which has already been shot, and so they could not be victorious.” It was nearly dark and the government army beat a hasty retreat back to K’ai.

Realizing that his three thousand men were inadequate against large rebel armies, Ma Yü concentrated on smaller villages, engaging the rebels, killing some, but trying to drive most of them westward to Hua city. Pressure on the rebels from this direction was important, for it came at a time when the Eight Trigrams were feeling increasingly beleaguered. On 11/1 Grand Councillor T’o-chin arrived
in K’ai to take charge of the campaign in Chihli. When Li Wen-ch’eng took his followers and tried to escape from Hua early in the 11th month, these soldiers were waiting for them. After that, only mopping up was necessary as the rebels were caught in the trap in Hua city.

Rebel bands were driven into Hua city during the 9th and 10th months by these government actions in Shantung and Chihli. This centripetal movement was also encouraged by the growing need to defend Tao-k’ou and Hua against the increasingly pointed attack by armies concentrating on those cities. A thousand Green Standard soldiers under the command of the brigade-general stationed in Hua-ch’ing prefecture (to the west of Hua) arrived outside Chün city on 9/17. The governor of Honan, Kao-ch’i 高杞, arrived on the 20th, bringing another thousand men. As we have seen, this force was sufficient to blunt the rebel attack on Chün city and force a standoff. During the 10th month, more soldiers hurried to the scene: two thousand Green Standard soldiers from Chihli, and five hundred crack cavalry from Kansu. The government attack was effectively directed during these weeks by the commander of that cavalry, the military-governor of Shensi and Kansu, Yang Yü-ch’un 阮遇春. Like Salt Commissioner Liu, Yang was a veteran of the campaigns against the White Lotus rebels, as well as of other Ch’ien-lung period campaigns in Kansu, Taiwan, and Nepal and against the Miao rebels in the southwest. The emperor had ordered him to the scene as soon as word reached him of the loss of Hua city. During the 10th month Yang Yü-ch’un, Kao-ch’i, and Wen Ch’eng-hui positioned themselves between the rebels and the mountains, fearing that the rebels might try to abandon Hua and head for the T’ai-hang mountains less than fifty miles to the west. There was only one large engagement during this time: on 10/9 Yang Yü-ch’un led the assembled soldiers and succeeded in driving the rebel bands out of the area on the west bank of the river across from Tao-k’ou. Yang then took some of these soldiers and joined with Meng Ch’i-chan’s militia in minor engagements in southern Hua district, but the main thrust of the attack was stalled temporarily, pending the arrival of the new special commissioner.

When he fired Wen Ch’eng-hui on 9/16, the Chia-ch’ing Emperor had replaced him with Na-yen-ch’eng 那彦成 as Special Imperial Commissioner, and a month later Na was also made governor-general of Chihli province. Na-yen-ch’eng, then forty-nine years old, was a plain-white banner Manchu, the grandson of the official and
general of the Ch’ien-lung period A-kuei. He too had commanded troops in Shensi during the suppression of the White Lotus rebellion and had served as grand councillor, as governor-general of Kwangtung and Kwangsi (where he dealt with the problem of coastal pirates), and since 1810 as governor-general of Shensi and Kansu. He had high office, experience, and the personal confidence of the emperor. All the soldiers transferred to Honan and Chihli for the campaign against the Eight Trigrams were placed under Na-yen-ch’eng’s supreme command.

It took quite some time for both commander and troops to reach the scene of the fighting. Na-yen-ch’eng did not leave his post at Lan-chou (Kansu) until 9/26. Delayed by rain and mud, he passed through Tung-kuan (at the juncture of Shensi, Honan, and Shansi provinces) only on 10/4. From there he moved more rapidly eastward, along the Yellow River, and reached Wei-hui prefectural city on 10/8. Another ten days passed as Na regrouped, and finally on 10/19 he arrived in Chên district. Together with Yang Yü-ch’ün and the others, he immediately set up camp at Hsin-chen, across the river from Tao-k’ou. Na had brought with him thirty-five hundred soldiers (five hundred Green Standard, the rest Manchu); Kao-ch’i had three thousand Honan soldiers; and Wen Ch’eng-hui commanded two thousand (all Green Standard). Thus by the middle of the 10th month, there were eighty-five hundred men in position to the west of the rebel-held villages and cities, on both sides of the river, ready to attack. (See map p. 211.)

On 10/21 the commanders learned that three or four thousand rebels had “poured out of their nest at Tao-k’ou” and dividing into two groups had gone south and east. In fact, a third band had been prepared secretly and the rebels were hoping to lure the Ch’ing soldiers into a trap. Na-yen-ch’eng and Yang Yü-ch’ün both went into battle. Attacking alternately with cavalry and infantry, one detachment of soldiers forced the rebels to scatter and return toward Tao-k’ou. The would-be trappers were themselves caught, for they found Yang Yü-ch’ün and his men waiting for them. The battle lasted all day and was the biggest government success to date: more than fourteen hundred rebels killed, five cannon recaptured, and a thousand “coerced people” surrendered to the government (and were allowed to go free). Those rebels who survived the battle retreated into Tao-k’ou and Hua.

This battle, seven weeks after the initial uprisings, showed the Eight Trigrams that not only had they lost the initiative but that
Tao-k'ou was now seriously threatened. They began to improve the town's defenses: deep trenches were dug around it, the gates were closed, large bands of rebels were no longer sent out on raiding expeditions, and the remaining grain stores in Tao-k'ou were moved to safety in Hua. The government countered by shutting the locks on the Wei River downstream outside Ch'ün city; this forced the upstream water to back up, widening the river at Tao-k'ou and making it more difficult for the rebels to cross the river and escape toward the west. When the Tao-k'ou rebels tried to build a pontoon bridge of wooden planks at a fording place near the city, in what was their final attempt to maintain an open avenue toward the mountains in the west, they met with immediate resistance. Kao-ch'i had moved his men to the west bank opposite Tao-k'ou and together with Yang Yü-ch'ün destroyed the bridge, drove the rebels back into the port town, and killed another thousand rebels in the battle.\footnote{147}

The government armies, numbering some eighty-five hundred men, moved against Tao-k'ou itself on 10/27. This was their first direct attack on a major rebel stronghold, and they did so against far superior numbers, hoping to ride the tide of their series of victories. There were from seventeen to twenty thousand people in Tao-k'ou, and at least half of them took up arms to defend the city, assisted by several thousand reinforcements from Hua. The Ch'ing armies set up cannon across the river and sent soldiers to attack from both the north and the south; the rebels were left with one escape route, southeast to Hua city. Meng Ch'i-chan and his militia had been called to the scene to assist. The government attacked early on the 27th, and as the rebels began to retreat toward Hua, the soldiers entered Tao-k'ou and set it afire. By the evening of that day, five or six thousand rebels had been killed in battle, and an additional four or five thousand people were burned to death. Following the policy of leniency toward those who were "coerced," the government had set up prominent banners and announced that all "good people" should come there if they wished to be spared. Eight to nine thousand "refugees" from the city refused to fight and came forward begging for mercy.\footnote{148}

After resting that night, Ch'ing forces entered Tao-k'ou the following morning to seize those still hiding in the ruined city. A small band of about five hundred rebels made a break for it and fled toward Hua city, luring government soldiers after them. Na-yen-ch'eng and Kao-ch'i pressed onward after them, but the sudden appearance of first three thousand rebels coming from a rebel-held village nearby
and then five thousand more coming from Hua city forced them to pull back to Tao-k’ou. There the two commanders personally inspected the carnage; they found bodies everywhere, filling the streets and the houses. Contrary to their orders, the soldiers had killed anyone who opposed them, making little effort to spare any remaining innocent city residents or coerced rebel followers.

With the capture of Tao-k’ou the government net around the Eight Trigrams tightened significantly. Although rebel bands did continue to camp in villages near Hua, their movements were increasingly circumscribed. By the 1st day of the 11th month, Na-yen-ch’eng’s men were pitching camp outside the walls of the city. The rebels were forced to close all but two city gates. A thousand more government soldiers had arrived, boosting the size of the Ch’ing army to nearly ten thousand men. It would take Na more than a month to fully close the siege and assemble the additional five thousand soldiers transferred to his command. In the meantime, rebel leaders inside the city had taken stock of their situation and decided to take drastic and dramatic action.

**TRAPPED**

At the end of the 10th month, Li Wen-ch’eng decided to take a few of his followers and flee from Hua city before it was attacked by government soldiers. Li had previously been living in his home village north of Hua city, trying to recuperate from his injuries. Sometime during the 10th month he had moved to the nearby camp of Chen Trigram King Sung K’e-chün at T’ao-yuan village. At this time Tui Trigram King Liu Kuo-ming was camped not far away, and he and Sung K’e-chün had both been involved in increasingly frequent battles with soldiers in northeastern Hua district. After Ch’ing forces attacked and retook the port of Tao-k’ou on 10/27, no rebel camp outside Hua was secure.

At about this time, Feng K’e-shan, who was to have been King of Earth, quarreled with Li Wen-ch’eng, thus further fragmenting the rebel leadership. He left Hua city on horseback in order to organize his own people in Shantung and then “rise up and come and kill Li Wen-ch’eng and so get revenge.” Early in the 11th month, Feng arrived in Ching district near the Shantung border at the home of his pupil Sung Yueh-lung. Sung later described Feng’s journey for government interrogators (the constant insertion of personal names
and place names was surely at the insistence of the investigators who feared Feng might start another rising and were doggedly tracking him down):

[After leaving Hua city] Feng K’e-shan had fled to Nan-kuan-t’ao at Ho-wang-tzu where he spent the night. At daylight the next day, he crossed the [Wei] river, using a boat prepared by a pupil named Chao. After crossing the river, they went together to Tung-tien-tzu to Chao’s home where Feng had stayed for three days. Because it was dangerous to be traveling with a knife and a horse, he gave them both to Chao. His clothes and books had blood on them, so he rolled them up in a ball and threw them in the river. He traded his saddle and a riding jacket for some clothing, shoes, and socks belonging to Chao. He left there on 10/27.

Two weeks later Feng arrived at Sung Yueh-lung’s home. He explained to Sung why he had left Hua city, and asked for help in revenging himself against Li Wen-ch’eng. He discovered, however, that the power base he thought he had created for himself was nonexistent without the support of religious leaders such as Li or Lin Ch’ing, for Sung replied flatly that he did not have enough men for this undertaking. Feng K’e-shan kept up a brave front in the face of this refusal and declared that he would instead go and find his first boxing teacher who lived in Shansi (in fact this man lived in Honan and had no interest in rebelling) and with his help and the assistance of others from Shensi province, “where there were still big leaders with several tens of thousands of men under them,” would return to Hua and “compete with Li Wen-ch’eng for mastery.” Feng promised Sung a high title should he be successful, and Sung was thus persuaded to give him 16 taels for traveling expenses. Feng’s talk about Shansi and Shensi was only bluster; he had no other supporters. A few weeks later he was arrested in a small village about fifty miles to the north, where he was selling medicines and curing illnesses.151

Meanwhile on the 29th day of the 10th month Na-yen-ch’eng had ordered his men to begin laying siege to Hua city. This city was surrounded by a wall about three miles in circumference in which there were five gates, two on the western side (which faced Tao-k’ou and the Wei River) and one in each of the other sides. The rebels, in anticipation of a siege, had begun clearing out the moat, which was about twenty feet across, and had piled up earth on at least three sides of the city to strengthen their defenses; moreover, they had set
Government soldiers had been able to blockade the east, south, and southwest gates, leaving the rebels with access only through the north and west gates. Through these gates, however, the rebels in the city maintained contact with Li Wen-ch'eng and with other leaders still camped in villages north and west of Hua.

On 10/29, two days after the loss of Tao-k'ou, two thousand men from the camp of Trigram King Sung at T'ao-yuan, assisted by a thousand men from inside Hua city, converged on the area outside the northern wall in an effort to drive away the government soldiers positioned there. With the assistance of cannon and musketfire from the city walls they were able to stave off the Ch'ing advance that day, but the land outside the north gate was muddy and marshy, poor for fighting and difficult to hold. The next day, the 30th, the T'ao-yuan and Hua city rebels had to fight again to keep that area clear. From early morning until late afternoon a thousand men from T'ao-yuan and two thousand from inside the city did battle with soldiers under the command of Yang Yü-ch'un and several imperial bodyguards. The rebels lost more than a thousand men, and government soldiers were able to push close to the northern city wall before they were again driven back by the hail of rocks and gunfire from above. At the end of the day, the rebels still had access to the city through the north gate, but the west gate had been closed.

That night, Trigram Kings Liu Kuo-ming and Sung K'e-chün and Trigram Lord Wang Hsueh-i, each riding in carts, approached Hua from the north, bringing between seven and eight hundred men with them. They made camp less than a mile from the city. In the middle of the night Sung K'e-chün went to the north wall, called to his comrades inside to open the gate, and then he and Liu Kuo-ming went inside. Li Wen-ch'eng either came with them now or had been brought into the city the day before. During that night, the last day of the 10th month, the surviving Eight Trigram leaders—Li Wen-ch'eng, Liu Kuo-ming, Sung K'e-chün, Sun Trigram King Wang Hsiu-chih, Chief Commander Sung Yuan-ch'eng, Niu Liang-ch'en, and Hsu An-kuo—discussed their alarming situation. What could they do? Liu Kuo-ming felt that Li Wen-ch'eng and a core group of followers could be saved, and he wanted to take them to Shantung to hide at the home of Hsu An-kuo's chief pupil Tui Trigram Lord Chu Ch'eng-kuei. Chu had been in Hua since late in the 9th month, but had left his brother in charge of their village of Hu-chia in Ts'ao district. No one knew the current situation in Shantung, so scouts
were immediately sent out. In the meantime, the leaders agreed that Liu Kuo-ming would take Li Wen-ch‘eng from the city. They intended eventually to return with all available help to relieve those left behind.154

Before dawn, Liu, Li, Chu Ch‘eng-kuei, and Sung K‘e-ch‘ün left through the north gate, taking some additional men with them. With about a thousand followers, they went to Liu Kuo-ming’s camp at Nan-hu village, which as yet had not been attacked. Li Wen-ch‘eng, still unable to walk or even ride a horse, rode in a large cart drawn by four horses. They stayed at Nan-hu for several days, awaiting word from Shantung.155

In the meantime, Grand Councillor T‘o-chin had arrived in Ta-ming prefectural city to direct the pacification of the rebels in southern Chihli belatedly undertaken by Ma Yü.156 Ma Yü was at that time attacking rebel villages on the border between K’ai and Hua districts. On 11/1, just as Liu Kuo-ming and the contingent from Hua city were arriving at his camp, a group of his followers under Trigram Lord Wei Te-chung encountered Ma Yü’s force nearby. About five hundred rebels died in the battle; five cannon, hundreds of light arms, and two large carts packed with clothing, dried provisions, guns, and ammunition were lost. Some rebels tried to take refuge but were burned out.

Li Wen-ch‘eng and Liu Kuo-ming could not have been encouraged about their chances of escaping to the east when they realized how near this army was. Within a few days they learned from their scouts that the situation in Shantung was hopeless anyway: all large bands of rebels had been driven out of that province, Chu Ch‘eng-kuei’s home village had been burned a month earlier, and Ch‘ing soldiers were positioned on the borders in case anyone should try to cross into Shantung. There was not much time to consider where to go, but it became imperative that Li Wen-ch‘eng and his men set forth as quickly as possible. Li Wen-ch‘eng’s condition was not improved by an eye injury received about this time.157

On 11/3 Ma Yü learned that there were about three thousand rebels camped at Nan-hu, though he did not realize that the “chief rebel” himself was among them. In preparation against attack, a deep trench had been dug around that camp and the two other villages nearby, and when Ma Yü attacked on the 3d, the rebels were able to hold out. It is likely that Liu Kuo-ming, Li Wen-ch‘eng, and the others fled that evening. The next day Ma Yü attacked again. The government soldiers cut down trees, dragged the tree trunks to the
Li Wen-ch’eng’s flight
trench, and laid them across. Then they rushed across, simultaneously hurling fireballs to inflame the thatch buildings. The villages were burned and five or six hundred rebels died and more than a thousand people left behind, including women and children, were taken prisoner.\textsuperscript{158}

All the important rebel leaders and their most devoted followers (probably fewer than a thousand men) had fled. Liu Kuo-ming and Li Wen-ch'eng had decided that their only chance for survival lay in reaching the safety of the T'ai-hang mountains on the western border of Honan; there they would camp, reassemble, gain strength, and when they were ready (and presumably when Li Wen-ch'eng was well) would rise up again and return to Hua to save those holding out in that city.\textsuperscript{159} The only way to reach these mountains and avoid the closing government net and the fierce concentration of soldiers in the Hua city area would be to make a sweeping semicircle to the south, west, and then north. Li and his band traveled along the border between Honan and Chihli; they were "sighted" by local officials on 11/4 on the border between K'ai and Hua districts, then on the Hua border farther to the south, and on 11/6 they entered Feng-ch'iu district in Honan. At this time their band was said to consist of about fifteen or sixteen hundred men on foot, two hundred more on horseback, and some seventy or eighty carts—perhaps two thousand men at the most. There they were joined inadvertently it appears by another rebel band of about five hundred men who had just been driven out of their camp (with large losses through death and defection) by Meng Ch'i-chan and his militia, still mopping up in central Hua district.\textsuperscript{160}

It had been six days since the band left Hua city, and in the last three days they had traveled some seventy miles. At first the rebels had surrounded and looted some of the villages through which they passed; later they tried to avoid battle and did not risk attacking any place that had the forces to resist them. Provisions and ammunition and weapons were carried in carts, as were women, some of the high leaders and Li Wen-ch'eng. As many as possible rode on horseback, and the rebels tried to steal horses and mules whenever they could.\textsuperscript{161}

Gradually the government commanders at Hua learned of the existence of this rebel group, but they did not realize immediately that it was a single band traveling speedily and purposefully westward. At first small detachments were sent after them, but these were unable to halt the rebels.\textsuperscript{162} Na-yen-ch'eng, having finally received a variety of reports and confessions convincing him that Li Wen-
ch’eng was traveling with this band, decided to take more forceful action, even though it meant reducing his strength outside the besieged city. On 11/11 he ordered the recently appointed Brigade-General Yang Fang to take two thousand soldiers and, leaving at night so that Hua city rebels would not see them depart, to go speedily to intercept the fleeing rebel band. In the meantime a brigade-general in command of a thousand soldiers had come from Shansi to be stationed temporarily in Ho-nei district in Honan; he heard of the approaching rebels and moved to cut them off from the west.

The rebels had moved along the borders between Yen-chin and Yang-wu, and they continued traveling due west along the southern boundaries of Hsin-hsiang and Huo-chia. Finding that government soldiers were ahead of them in the west, the rebels changed directions once more. Part of the band remained behind and returned eastward, “causing disturbances” in the Yen-chin area. The main band, including Li Wen-ch’eng and all the top leaders, turned north and, proceeding along the border between Hsin-hsiang and Huo-chia, aimed for the mountains just north of Hui city. By 11/11 they had traveled fifty miles from Feng-ch’iu (more than one hundred and twenty miles since they left Hua) and arrived in southwestern Hui district. According to official reports, the villages along this portion of the rebels’ flight had been “ravaged, attacked, burned, and plundered, and their inhabitants forced to join the rebels or die.” If true, these reports may indicate the rebels’ lack of supplies and increasing sense of desperation.

The rebels were certainly not greeted by a wave of public support during this rush toward the mountains. They gained no more than one or two thousand new followers despite the fact that these were districts where drought and flooding had left many starving. It is not known how Li Wen-ch’eng and his men tried to rally support. They did carry Li’s banner reading “True Master Li of the T’ien-shun Era of the Great Ming” with them for all to see, but they may have been a clearly losing cause and could not have been welcome after they began to prey on the villagers and villages for supplies.

On 11/12 as they entered the foothills of northern Hui district, the rebel band numbered about four thousand men. In order to cross the low mountain passes, their carts had to be abandoned, and men and provisions traveled by horseback and on foot. Li Wen-ch’eng was still unable to ride a horse and was instead carried in a large winnowing basket slung on poles between two men. The rebels continued
north, close to the Shansi border and finally decided to pause and set up camp at a village called Ssu-ch’ai, “Fourth Stockade.” There they rested for several days, perhaps imagining that they were safe. Half the group, several thousand men, went on an expedition eastward into Lin district on 11/17 looking for supplies. They burned and looted two markets, but when they learned that government soldiers were approaching, returned rapidly to their camp with the bad news. Ssu-ch’ai was a fortified village; it had mountains behind it, a deep moat, sturdy walls, and access to fresh water. Exhausted and now surely pessimistic about their chances for survival, Li Wen-ch’eng and the others decided to stand and fight.168

Yang Yü-ch’un’s protégé Yang Fang had been sent from Hua to pursue the rebels, and quickly traversing the fifty-mile distance, he and his men entered the mountains on the 18th. The following day, Yang Fang arranged an ambush. He lured the rebels out of the stockade by sending only four hundred men to attack it. Nearly the entire rebel force, three thousand men including about three hundred on horseback, hoping perhaps for a quick victory, rushed out of the fort to attack. They pursued the soldiers as Yang Fang had planned and rushed straight into the trap. As the four-hundred-man bait halted and turned against them, several hundred other soldiers appeared to the right and to the left. The rebels were hemmed in, despite their superior numbers, and when six hundred crack Man-churian cavalry suddenly attacked, the rebels tried desperately to retreat. They fled to a nearby ridge and held it for a while, throwing down bricks and stones upon the soldiers, but they were again surprised by an attack from the rear by cavalry led by imperial bodyguards that had circled around behind them. Attacked from above and below, the one thousand rebels still alive tried to descend from the ridge and return to their camp. Only a few hundred made it. Between 2,200 and 2,500 rebels were killed that day; uncounted others fell to their deaths on the rocks and into the stream, and several hundred were captured alive.169

This was a disastrous defeat for the rebels; in a single day their fighting force had been cut to one-quarter its size. The government troops were fresh, as they had traveled only fifty miles since leaving Hua; the rebels, in contrast, had been on the move for nearly three weeks and had covered three times that distance. It was the able Manchurian cavalry only just arrived from Kirin and Heilungkiang to assist in the campaign and the infantry and cavalry from Shensi and Kansu that had made the victory possible. Nevertheless, the battle
had not been an easy one. There were reports later that some of the other soldiers (both Chinese and Manchu, both provincial and capital soldiers) had refused to attack the rebel-held ridge when ordered to do so and were galvanized into action only by the execution of two soldiers on the spot by their commanders. It is said that Yang Fang’s whiskers “turned white overnight” on this expedition at Ssu-ch’ai.\footnote{170}

Inside the fort were Li Wen-ch’eng, Liu Kuo-ming, a few other leaders, and about eight hundred of their followers. They had occupied the several hundred houses, most of them made of stone and brick, as well as the seven or eight high stone towers from which they were able to watch as Ch’ing armies surrounded them.

Yang Fang did not lose his momentum, and the following day, the 20th day of the 11th month, he attacked. Government soldiers jumped the moat and tried for the entire morning without success to break through the wall of the stockade, being continually fired upon by rebels on the wall and beaten back by a hail of bricks and stones. Finally the soldiers were able to ram through one section of the wall, and as the rebels rushed to fill the breach with planks and bricks, the soldiers charged inside, firing bullets from their guns and arrows from their bows as they went. The rebels had to come down from the walls and the fighting continued in the narrow streets and alleys of the mountain village. Realizing that the end was near, the rebels fled back into the towers and houses. From the towers they fired their guns and cannon and threw down bricks and tiles. By this time it was already evening and both sides were exhausted, but Yang Fang, not wanting to give the rebels a chance to escape that night, ordered that the buildings be set afire immediately. His soldiers gathered wood and thatch and built fires around the stone buildings. Some rebels braved the smoke and made a rush for the gates of the stockade, but they were intercepted and caught or killed.\footnote{171}

Captured rebels were asked about Li Wen-ch’eng, and Yang Fang, learning that he was in one of the towers still standing, hurried to the spot. According to his report, he led a small group of soldiers into the building and 

from above there emerged a rebel leader who identified himself as Liu Kuo-ming. He leaped out, holding a knife, and stabbed two soldiers one after another. Other soldiers fired their guns and killed him. Then [the Ch’ing commanders] called to the other rebels, saying that if Li Wen-ch’eng would come out and give himself up, then those with him would be spared death.
That head rebel [Li] himself came out, and pointing to himself he said "Li Wen-ch'eng is right here. All you have to do is come up and get me. I'm not coming down." When the soldiers heard this, they all rushed in, holding ready their knives. But that rebel then started a fire, and in the fire the rebel group of forty or fifty men in that place surged to surround him and he was crushed to death.

One of those followers who escaped from the building explained that "when Li Wen-ch'eng saw that there was no way to save himself, he shouted to the group that they should all immediately set fire to the place, and so those leaders were all burned to death."172

The fires burned all night; the next day, the Ch'ing forces inspected the ruined fortress and its dead. Another forty rebels were captured that morning—they had been hiding all night in manure pits and in stacks of grain—and a few others who had escaped from the fort were quickly rounded up. Li Wen-ch'eng's body was found in a pile of charred wood and bricks. He was easily identified by the eye injury he had received and the leg and foot wounds from his torture in Hua three months before. He had a turban on his head and wounds from both guns and arrows on his face. "His body was intact. He was wearing a lot of fur clothing. His face looked alive. His left eye had a white film over the pupil. His ankles were wrapped in cloth bandages and inside there was broken bone, rolls of flesh, and scars from the pincers [of torture]."173 The large white banner bearing his title was found nearby. Besides Li, the bodies of all of the high-ranking sect leaders were located and identified. There were between seven and eight hundred bodies lying about inside the fort; few had survived.

It had been a little less than three months since Li Wen-ch'eng was first arrested. His flight from Hua was a gamble against high odds. He had been able to outwit the Ch'ing generals only temporarily. If his group had originally gone directly westward into the mountains, without making the long detour toward Shantung, perhaps they could have preserved the vigor needed to hold off pursuing armies and win new supporters. Now without Li or any of the kings and lords who had accompanied him, the position of those Eight Trigram rebels still trapped in Hua city became even more hopeless.

While Li Wen-ch'eng was in flight, Special Imperial Commissioner Na-yen-ch'eng had been proceeding with the siege of Hua
city. His first job was to close off the city completely by preventing the rebels from leaving or entering through the north gate. Because there was marshy land along the north wall, Ch'ing soldiers had difficulty controlling this territory, and when they approached the gate they were continually driven back by the hail of gun and cannon fire from the city walls. Moreover, they were occasionally harassed by attacks from the few rebel bands still camped in villages nearby. Na-yen-ch'eng therefore decided first to clear the countryside of these remnants; he sent out large concentrations of soldiers to attack and destroy their camps. Under pressure from these armies, from Ma Yü's force in southern Chihli, and from Meng Ch'i-chan's militia in southern Hua district, most of the scattered rebel bands abandoned their camps in the course of the 11th month and either retreated into Hua or joined Li Wen-ch'eng's band as it fled west. Once their allies nearby had been swept away, the Eight Trigrams in Hua closed the north gate, themselves sealing the siege.

By early in the 11th month Na-yen-ch'eng had assembled about thirteen thousand soldiers, nine thousand of whom were available for combat. Although no attacks on the city took place for nearly three weeks, Na-yen-ch'eng explained to the impatient emperor that this was a trick calculated to fool the rebels into feeling overconfident. The rebel population inside Hua numbered at least fifty thousand people, and Na prudently wanted to wait until the cavalry had arrived from Manchuria before attacking. In the meantime, he prepared for the assault on the walled city. The moat was cleared, fierce wooden barricades called "deer antlers" (consisting of rows of sharpened poles planted in the ground at an angle, pointed toward the city) were set up around the city, and cannon were arranged on platforms aimed at strategic places in the walls. In order to demoralize the city inhabitants, Na-yen-ch'eng ordered that some of the "good people" from villages in the district who had chosen to surrender to the government after being "coerced" by the rebels go and appeal to city residents to do likewise. These people were sent to walk outside underneath the walls of Hua, carrying banners of imperial yellow. They were to call out in loud voices to the people within and encourage them to surrender themselves, promising that they would be spared punishment. And indeed some (apparently not many) did climb over the walls to do exactly this.

Finally, on 11/19 Na-yen-ch'eng ordered a general attack on all five gates of the city. (He did not know it, but this was the day Yang
Fang was inflicting the disastrous defeat on Li Wen-ch'eng's band in the hills outside Ssu-ch'ai.) Cannon were fired and soldiers charged the city gates. The rebels rang their gongs to signal the alarm, threw down huge stones and flaming reeds from the walls, and shot bullets, arrows, and cannonfire "like rain." Despite the protection of wooden shields and boxes, the soldiers could not withstand the hail of objects from above and were unable to make any progress toward the goal of undermining the city wall.\(^{177}\)

The attack had been a failure. Na-yen-ch'eng began to realize that the walls and gates could not simply be stormed, nor could they be broken down by occasional cannonfire, a technique he tried next. Therefore, he ordered that tunnels be dug near each of the gates, extending right up to the city walls, inside of which land mines and explosives would be placed. This work was begun early in the 12th month. Yang Fang had meanwhile arrived back from his victorious expedition against Li Wen-ch'eng, and Na-yen-ch'eng soothed the increasingly angry emperor with a list of the eighty-one important rebel leaders killed or captured to date. Digging the tunnels was a difficult undertaking; some were dug secretly and others openly in hope that only the latter would attract rebel attention and bombardment. Those inside the city did throw down rocks and bricks upon the soldiers, and they fired on those within range. One night (12/2) they threw down burning bunches of reeds, and these flaming torches chanced to set off some of the land mines that had just been installed. The explosion did not achieve its full force because the tunnel had not yet been sealed off at the other end, so only several feet of the thick city wall were destroyed, but all the workmen and soldiers at work inside the tunnel died.\(^{178}\)

The Eight Trigrams may have been cornered but they had not given up. Late on the night of 12/3, when there was no moonlight, Hsu An-kuo led some six hundred of his comrades and came quietly out the north gate; their goal was the destruction of the cannon and gun emplacements that they feared could break through the city walls. Hsu and his men attacked the cannon platform located near the northwest corner of the city, hurling explosives at it in order to burn it down. Ch'ing soldiers stationed there were taken by surprise but sounded the alarm and prepared to counterattack. The commander in charge of the gun emplacement ordered that the cannon be fired upon the rebels. Unable to withstand the bombardment, Hsu and his men turned around and headed back toward the north gate, pursued at least part of the way. Na-yen-ch'eng reported the
next day that there was blood all over the ground along the north wall, but one rebel stated that fewer than one hundred and fifty of his comrades had died.

Memorializing, Na-yen-ch’eng summarized the situation at Hua at this point:

The rebels inside the city know that their highest leaders have been killed and that their outside assistance has been cut off. They realize that a large force surrounds them and that there is no route of escape. For this reason they are fighting like cornered animals. I should point out that during the period when they occupied Tao-k’ou, they took all the grain and provisions which were stored there and moved them into Hua city, and so they should still have enough food to eat. Their supply of fodder, on the other hand, appears to be deficient. When they came out of the city [to attack], their horses were in poor condition, and the great majority of the rebels were on foot. Thus they will not be able to escape from our cavalry.\(^{179}\)

Na-yen-ch’eng was feeling increasingly confident, and when the last of the Manchurian cavalry arrived, he prepared for the final assault on the city. Deer antler barricades had been set up in two rows outside the gates (especially on the western and eastern sides where the ground was firm) to halt any rebels who might try to escape. Militia were positioned in many of the nearby villages and told to be ready to round up remnants who would inevitably flee when the city was taken.\(^{180}\) The Chia-ch’ing Emperor, still displeased at the delay and hoping to have the business over with before the new year, sent repeated edicts ordering an immediate attack.\(^{181}\)

The rebels inside continued to fight back. Great Commander Sung Yuan-ch’eng, who together with Niu Liang-ch’en and Hsu An-kuo was in charge of the rebels left in the city, told Trigram Lord Huang Hsing-tsai that now it was his turn to try to destroy the gun emplacements. On the night of 12/7, while another group created a diversion on the eastern side of the city, Huang led four hundred men to the cannon platforms at the southwest corner of Hua. The government soldiers again responded quickly and, assisted by militia, forced the rebels to retreat again into the city without achieving their goal. Huang Hsing-tsai, who was shot twice in the arm by arrows and once in the leg by a bullet, fell to the ground and the following day hid among the militia in hope of escaping undetected. But when a head count was made, Huang was discovered and later interrogated and executed.\(^{182}\)
Yang Yü-ch’un and Yang Fang had been directing the tunnel digging near the west and southwest gates, and Na-yen-ch’eng now ordered that all energies be concentrated on those tunnels. This work was completed on 12/9 and finally the land mines and explosives were placed inside the tunnels, the fuses extended, and the tunnels sealed off. That night, all government soldiers were ordered into place. Na-yen-ch’eng positioned his men at the southwest corner. Kao-ch’i was stationed on the east side, Yang Yü-ch’un along the western side, and Ma Yü together with Meng Ch’i-ch’an and his militia along the north. Each force had other soldiers positioned behind them as reinforcements and each was equipped with scaling ladders and sandbags. The Manchurian and Shensi cavalry were positioned in various locations around the city in order to round up any who managed to escape. By early morning on the 10th, all was ready. The cannon were to be fired, land mines exploded, and everyone would attack simultaneously.

The order was given to begin. At first the Ch’ing soldiers made little headway against the continuing hail of rocks and bullets from the rebels on the walls. Finally the land mines at the southwest corner went off with a great explosion, hurling bricks and stones in all directions and destroying twenty feet of the city wall. As Na-yen-ch’eng and Yang Fang led men to occupy the breach, the land mines at the northwest corner also went off. The tide of battle began to turn; government soldiers scaled the wall and fought hand-to-hand with the rebels at the top. Yang Yü-ch’un and his force broke through the south gate, and gradually the other gates were forced open as well. The rebels retreated into the walled houses of the city. By this time it was evening and the fighting had raged for over twelve hours. As it was clearly going to be necessary to retake the city house by house, Na-yen-ch’eng decided to call a temporary halt for the night. He ordered the city gates closed, placed guards outside each gate and outside the breach in the wall, and instructed his men to rest.

Inside the city, the rebels were still not ready to surrender. Li Wen-ch’eng’s wife, Miss Chang, whom he had left behind together with his daughter, was among those still alive. Hsu An-kuo, Niu Liang-ch’en, and Sung Yuan-ch’eng had survived and were still in command. They had urged Miss Chang to mix in among the refugee women who were leaving the city to surrender so that she could escape safely. According to Na-yen-ch’eng, “Miss Chang listened to what they had to say but declared that she wanted to die with them and refused to flee. That night [12/10] Hsu An-kuo told her to get on horseback and, with several thousand men as support, she left the city.” It was during...
the second or third watch that night that this band of two or three thousand rebels came rushing through the breach in the wall at the southwest corner of the city, shouting, yelling, and charging through government barricades. Ch’ing soldiers, jolted awake by this sudden attack, held them off nevertheless, and when a nearby building caught fire and visibility improved, the soldiers again gained the upper hand. They killed more than a thousand rebels and drove the rest, including Miss Chang, back into the city.184

The following day, government soldiers reentered Hua and closed in on about fifty houses where rebels were still hiding; they surrounded them, set fires, and eventually smoked out the rebels. This house-by-house recapture of Hua continued for three days. When it was over, the city was in ruins. Buildings that had survived the rebel occupation did not survive the battle and, like the city wall, barely stood intact. Bodies filled the moat outside the city, clogged the streets, the gutters and the wells, rotted in cellars, and hung from the trees.185

More than twenty thousand people had fled the city during the battle, claiming to be refugees and begging to be spared; of these, five hundred were discovered to be “genuine rebels,” two to three thousand were young male children, and the rest were women. About two thousand other rebels were captured alive on the day of the big battle, but after that those left in the city were assumed to be rebels and were killed. According to government figures, nine thousand rebels died on the 10th, an equal number were killed in the next few days, seven to eight thousand more were burned to death inside the city, and several thousand others were buried under the rubble. In sum, about thirty-five thousand people had died.186 Miss Chang hanged herself rather than be taken prisoner, and government soldiers cut off her head. Great Commander Sung Yuan-ch’eng, K’un Trigram King Feng Hsiang-lin, and Ken Trigram King Liu Tsung-shun all were killed. Hsu An-kuo and Niu Liang-ch’en were captured.187

All government commanders had been given explicit instructions to seize alive the top rebel leaders so that they could be interrogated and then publicly and painfully executed. A certain Colonel Chang had learned the location of Hsu An-kuo’s home and, taking soldiers, had surrounded the grocery store above which Hsu and his family had lived. Hsu was not there, however, and his relatives refused to surrender and threw down bricks and tiles in defiance. The soldiers then burned the building and all those inside.188
Hsu An-kuo had, together with Chief Minister Niu Liang-ch’en and K’an Trigram King Yin Ch’eng-te, been holding the northwest corner of the city. Hsu described what happened when the city was attacked: “Our men had tied white cloth at their waists and when the government soldiers entered the city, they killed anyone with such a sash. I was wounded and fell to the ground. My older brother and his son dragged me into someone’s house, and we hid in the cellar. [Sun Trigram King] Wang Hsiu-chih’s younger brother moved a millstone over the entrance as a lid and then piled earth on it to disguise the place.” Two days later, the Manchu commander Ke-pu-she captured a rebel named Wang Te-feng (who was also hiding in a cellar) and questioned him about the whereabouts of the top leaders. Wang said that Hsu An-kuo was hiding in an underground room and “if you won’t kill me, I will find him for you.”

Wang Te-feng led the way and brought the Ch’ing soldiers to the disguised entrance. As the dirt was shoveled away above them, Hsu and his brother and nephew realized that they would be discovered. According to Hsu, “I saw that the situation was a very bad one, and so I killed my older brother and my nephew by cutting their throats and was going to cut my own throat.” Simultaneously, the stone was being removed and the soldiers were pulling out the bodies, first Hsu’s brother and his sixteen-year-old nephew, and before Hsu could kill himself, he too was seized and dragged out by the shoulders. The informer Wang Te-feng confirmed that this was Hsu An-kuo. Hsu said to him, “Did you actually tell them where to find me?” Wang replied, “There were a dozen people in my family, and you killed half of them. Why shouldn’t I revenge myself by telling them where to find you.”

Hsu was already seriously wounded: he had a severe head injury from a brick, a spear wound in the ribs, a smashed right leg, and burns on his back and left leg. The officials were worried he might die before being transferred to Peking for punishment: “He is in pain and moans all the time. We are afraid that the rocking and bumping of the carts might make him die of his wounds, which would mean that he would escape being punished for his crimes.” For this reason, after a brief preliminary interrogation, Hsu was placed in a wooden cage and carried by bearers to Peking; there he was treated medically, interrogated in detail, and eventually executed.

Niu Liang-ch’en, who like Hsu had been hiding underground, was also found and arrested. He too had been wounded in battle and had
a bullet in his upper arm; to avoid execution Niu also had tried to commit suicide, and though he managed to inflict a very severe injury on himself, he did not die.¹⁹¹ Like Hsu, he was cared for, taken to Peking, interrogated by the Board of Punishments and then by the emperor, and finally executed by slicing on 1/12 of the new year.¹⁹²

While Niu and Hsu were singled out for interrogation and execution in Peking, all other leaders were summarily killed during the recapture of the city. On 12/17 Na-yen-ch’eng memorialized a list of 191 rebel leaders whose bodies had been identified at Hua; he explained that this did not include the lesser leaders, because in the morass of rotting bodies “identification was difficult.”¹⁹³

By the middle of the 12th month, just three months since its beginning, the rebellion of the Eight Trigrams was over. Nearly forty thousand people had surrendered to the government and been spared, but more than seventy thousand others had died. The campaign to suppress the uprising had cost the Ch’ing government at least four million taels¹⁹⁴ and the fighting compounded the natural disasters that had already affected the north China plain. The sects whose members had had faith in and followed the Eight Trigram leaders were destroyed. An appropriate epitaph was pronounced by Ch’in Li, Li Wen-ch’eng’s captured aide: “The people in our sect believed what Lin Ch’ing and Li Wen-ch’eng said. Now those two men who were our leaders are dead and our sect is disbanded and scattered.”¹⁹⁵