

## CHAPTER 3: THE BRUTAL HISTORY OF CHINESE WARFARE

### 1. Chinese warfare in ancient times

The Chinese civilization, whose source was the Yellow River civilization, placed no restrictions whatsoever on warfare. The farmers who cultivated the central plains, an area blessed with fertile soil, were the victims of frequent attacks by mounted nomads, who were seasoned warriors; no sooner had one war ended than the next began. As time passed and competition for resources mounted, warfare intensified, eventually extending from the central plains to all of China.

In this chapter I will demonstrate exactly how brutal and abhorrent Chinese warfare and similar upheavals were in ancient times, referring to historical records.

We are told through legends that when the Chinese civilization dawned, there were eight rulers (three sovereigns and five emperors). The years during which three of the five emperors (Yao, Shun, and Yu) ruled were a sort of golden age. Taming the waters of the Yellow River to prevent flooding was a monumental task, which was inherited from the Yao by the Shun, and then from the Shun by the Yu. After the Yu came the Xia dynasty. During the reign of Jie, the 17<sup>th</sup> Xia ruler, the Shang ruler Tang wrested the throne away from Jie, and founded the Shang dynasty. Then, during the reign of Zhou, the 30<sup>th</sup> Shang ruler, the Wu overthrew the Shang, initiating the Zhou dynasty, a little before 1000 BC. The years between 770 BC, when the Zhou moved their capital to Luoyi, and 403 BC are referred to as the Spring and Autumn period. The following era, which lasted until 221 BC, when China was united under the Qin, is known as the Warring States period.

The Spring and Autumn period saw frequent warfare, but the conflicts were neither as frequent or violent as those of later years. During the Warring States period there was academic and political freedom (the Hundred Schools of Thought flourished during that age). But after all, this was China, the land of warfare. During the 367-year Spring and Autumn period, the major powers clashed 448 times. Wars became even more frequent during the Warring States period, and also larger in scale. There were 222 major battles, and countless skirmishes.

I would like to present some accounts of events that occurred while there was still an aesthetic consciousness with respect to the means of waging war. The famous Battle of Hongshui was fought in 638 BC during the Spring and Autumn period. After Duke Huan of Qi died, Duke Xiang of Song declared himself the leader of China's city-states. Because the Song had defeated the state of Zheng, they ended up waging war with Cheng, the ruler of Chu, then a powerful state.

The Chu and Song forces faced off on either side of the Hongshui River. The Song army realized they were at a disadvantage when they saw how numerous their adversaries were. The Chu army began to ford the river. Mu Yi, one of the chief Song retainers, offered a suggestion: "Why not launch a surprise attack before they set up their camp?" But Duke Xiang demurred, replying, "A virtuous leader does not engage in such ungentlemanly behavior." After the Chu forces crossed the river, they soundly defeated the Song. Duke Xiang was hit by an arrow, and later died from his injury. Subsequently the Chinese came to use the phrase *Song Chu zhi ren* (Song-Chu benevolence) to mean misplaced compassion. There is no mention of a similar situation in Chinese history thereafter. But it demonstrates that entering into a battle imbued with the spirit of fair play was once considered aesthetically pleasing.

In 341 BC, during the Warring States period (476-221 BC), two of the seven states, Wei and Qi, collided; Qi won a decisive victory in the Battle of Maling. One year later Qin forces attacked the weakened Wei. Shang Yang, one of the highest-ranking Qin retainers, sent a letter to Wei General Gongzi Mao, with whom Shang was on friendly terms. In it he wrote that he was reluctant to fight against an old acquaintance; he wanted to conclude a peace treaty and withdraw his troops. Gongzi Mao rejoiced at this proposal, since his forces had just suffered a defeat and were not yet ready to fight again. He went off to the banquet where the negotiations were to be held in good spirits. But when he arrived, armed soldiers attacked Gongzi Mao, and took him prisoner. The Wei had suffered yet another defeat.

The state of Chu was in turn manipulated by the Qin. Its ruler, Huai, was tricked by Qin political maneuvers; the Chu fell victim to the Qin. In 299 BC Huai was again lured out by the Qin. They took Huai prisoner while he was on his way to meet them. One of the chief Chu retainers, Qu Yuan, told King Huai time and time again that the Qin were not to be trusted. But his warnings fell on deaf ears, and Qu was demoted. Despairing of the fate of Chu, Qu Yuan drowned himself. Mao Zedong was a native of Chu (present-day Hunan province). When Tanaka Kakuei was prime minister of Japan and went to China on a state visit, Mao presented him with a copy of Qu Yuan's *Songs of Chu*. When consulted to comment on the significance of that gift, Japan's China specialists had nothing to say. After the Republic of China was established, Hunan was, for a time, the headquarters of the federalist movement. It even produced a provincial constitution. Mao Zedong was opposed to the idea of China as one huge nation. At one point he advocated dividing China into 27 separate, independent states. Mao spent his youth, in fact most of his career, living in the Zhongnanhai district of Beijing, but never mastered the language spoken there. When looking at China, it is important to take the Chu territory (Hunan) into account. After the defeat of the Chu, the Qin dynasty began, and its first emperor, Shi Huang, united all of China for the first time in 221 BC. In that dynasty warfare was more brutal and even more depraved.

## 2. Early Chinese “monuments”

Now I would like to comment on two types of “monuments.” Both involved cruelty, and both were intended to glorify the military prowess of the victor. One, called *jingguan*, was erected by piling up the corpses of defeated soldiers on both sides of a road, and covering them with soil. These monuments were referred to as pyramids or *wujun*.

This custom had come into being in ancient times. The founding of China began with wars waged by the legendary Huang Di, or the Yellow Emperor, to subdue the barbarians. China's first incarnation was that of a warring nation. War became a normal state of affairs during the reigns of legendary rulers Yao and Shun. Therefore, to instill fighting spirit as well as with the courage to kill others, and even to enjoy killing, the custom of putting the corpses of the vanquished on display seems to have become part of war. In 597 BC the southern barbarian Chu army scored a major victory over the Jin of the central plains. On that occasion Chu statesman Fan Dang made a suggestion: “I believe that we must build a monument with the enemy's corpses to convey this brilliant military achievement to our descendants.” The Chu ruler responded, “Long ago, when the corpses of men who had committed profoundly evil deeds were used to erect them, such monuments served as a warning. However, the men who died in this battle gave their lives defending their country. How could we possibly dishonor them by using their bodies for a monument?” The ruler then ordered proper burials for the fallen Jin soldiers. The Chu ruler's compassion calls to mind China in the ancient days. But on the other hand, this account also tells us that corpse monuments were being built with some frequency.

The word *keng* (坑), meaning *hole*, appears frequently in *Records of the Grand Historian*. One account tells us that when the Qin ruler Shi Huang attacked Handan, where he had spent his childhood, he killed men who had once bullied him by throwing them into a hole and covering them with earth. In other words, he buried them alive. Another account says that Shi Huang buried more than 460 Confucian scholars. Still another mentions that Qin warlord Xiang Yu buried troops defending Xiangcheng alive, and did the same with more than 200,000 Qin prisoners of war at Xin'an.

The *Book of Han* states that when Wang Mang, the first ruler of Eastern Han, seized power from the Han dynasty, he buried Liu Xin, Zhai Yi, Zhao Ming, Huo Hong and all their relatives alive because they had opposed him. The same work contains an imperial rescript issued by Wang Mang stating that the corpses of his victims were used to build a *jingguan* measuring 18 x 18 meters.

Burying someone alive is a dastardly deed. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, there was an all-out war between the Qin and the Zhao in 260 BC, during the Warring States period. The Battle of Changping resulted in the surrender of more than 400,000 Zhao soldiers. At a loss as to what to do with so many prisoners of war, Qin General Bai Qi ordered all of them to be buried alive in one night. The Qin had obviously brought warfare to a new level of brutality.

Long, drawn-out siege warfare pushed the cruelty level up another notch. One account describes a fortress under siege during the Warring States period. Its inhabitants were reduced to crushing human bones and using them for fuel, and exchanging their children for those of another family, and cooking and eating them.

Another account describes what happened during the Battle of Suiyang, when the Chu army surrounded Suiyang, the Song capital, and during the Battle of Jinyang, when the Zhi, Han, and Wei armies surrounded Jinyang, the Jin capital.

In September 594 BC the Chu ruler's soldiers surrounded Suiyang. Even in May of the following year, the siege showed no signs of letting up. The inhabitants of the capital were desperate because their food supplies had been exhausted. Hua Yuan, the highest Song official, held a clandestine meeting with the Chu General Zi Fan. Subsequently, Zi Fan reported on the meeting to King Zhuang. The king asked, "What is the situation inside the city?" Zi Fan replied, "They are crushing bones to use for fuel, and cooking and eating each other's children." The king told him that his own forces had only two days' worth of food left, and announced that since Hua Yuan had told the truth, he would discontinue the siege, and order his soldiers to withdraw. This act on the part of the Chu soldiers is one of the heroic deeds of ancient China, and is certainly more benevolent than warfare that followed.

Between 454 and 453 BC, the armies of Zhi, Han, and Wei besieged Jinyang (present-day Taiyuan in Shanxi province) for more than a year in an attempt to eradicate the Zhao. The attacking armies diverted water from the Fen River into the Zhao's Jinyang fortress, flooding it until only 2 meters of the fortress stood above water. Inside the fortress people were exchanging children and eating them. All of the Zhao retainers had become alienated, and little respect remained for Xiangzi, the Zhao commander. The fearful Xiangzi dispatched Zhang Mangtan, his leading statesman, in the middle of the night, instructing him to communicate with the Han and Wei. The three states conspired to destroy the Zhi, and divide up Zhi territory. Since the Zhao retainers were considering turning against their leader, and Xiangzi was fearful, this must be one of the earliest incidences of cannibalism in wartime.

### 3. Ho Jing initiates a massacre in Nanjing

There was very little civil strife during the Han dynasty, and consequently few sieges. Historical works like *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* contain many accounts of cannibalism resulting from famine that can be traced to natural disasters. However, there are not many records of cannibalism prompted by sieges. Noteworthy among them are (1) the siege of Wancheng, which took place in 23 BC during the transition from the decline and fall of Wang Mang to the establishment of the Eastern Han dynasty by Guangwu Liu Xu, (2) hostilities in Chang'an from 23 to 25, (3) the siege of Jicheng in 27, (4) more hostilities in Chang'an in 194 during the transition from the Eastern Han to the Three Kingdoms period, (5) the Battle of Yongqiu in 196, and (6) the Battle of Haixi in the same year. Almost every instance of cannibalism took place during a battle that signaled the end of one dynasty and the beginning of another. In his masterpiece *Critical Essays*, Wang Chong (27-ca. 100), the Han dynasty's foremost political analyst, wrote: "Those who are defeated in war become cannibals." From his comment we can deduce that cannibalism was a phenomenon that accompanied every conflict.

But even during the Han dynasty there were exceptions, depending on which side emerged victorious from a siege. In 35 BC Guangwu Liu Xiu launched an offensive against the kingdom of Shu. Then, in 36 Eastern Han General Zang Gong attacked Chengdu (in Shu) with a huge army. Shu ruler Gongsun Shu, personally commanding forces numbering several tens of thousands, quickly won three battles. However, his men were exhausted, not having been able to spare the time to eat, and the gates of their fortress were breached by the Eastern Han army. Desperate fighting continued within the fortress. After Gongsun Shu was killed in action, General Yan Cen surrendered.

In wars like this cannibalism was rampant. Another heroic deed concerns a man who, in a crisis, served the flesh of his wife and children to a guest. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* includes the story of how Liu Bei Xuande, ruler of Shu, paid a visit to the home of Liu An, a hunter with the same surname. Despite the fact that Liu An was poor, he treated Liu Bei to a magnificent meal, including meat dishes. The next morning when Liu Bei departed, he happened to notice the corpse of the hunter's wife in the kitchen.

Another account from the Eastern Han dynasty (146) tells how Zang Hong sacrificed his wife and concubines. As governor of the Eastern Commandery, he was entrusted with defending Dongwuyong (present-day Yongqiu). One day he was surrounded by the men loyal to warlord Yuan Shao. Soon his food supplies were exhausted and, since he knew he could not expect reinforcements, he prepared himself for the inevitable: death. First he told his subordinates to escape. But his officers and officials wouldn't budge; they just stood there and wept. Soon they had no food left. Zang Hong killed his favorite concubine, and fed her flesh to his soldiers, all of whom collapsed in tears and could not look Zang Hong in the eye. Until the enemy took the fortress, 7,000-8,000 men and women died, their bodies in a heap. Not one person betrayed Zang Hong. Since in his case the degree of cannibalism was relatively minor, his story was told and his cannibalism forgiven, since it was motivated by loyalty. Still, wars in China were unceasing, and Zang Hong was soon forgotten.

Now let us have a look at cannibalism connected with famine and war from the Eastern Han dynasty through the Three Kingdoms period. The Eastern Han capital was Luoyang (today in northwestern Henan province), which along with Xi'an (Chang'an) was one of China's most famous ancient capitals, known as a source of brilliant tacticians. During the Zhou dynasties Luoyang's name became Luoyi. During the Eastern Han dynasty the capital, Luoyang, was visited by severe famines in 109 and 155, resulting in cannibalism. Toward the end of Eastern Han the fortresses at Luoyang and Chang'an were destroyed by warfare and cannibalism. During the

Three Kingdoms period, both the Wei and the Western Jin rebuilt the Luoyang fortress. But in June 311 Liu Yao and Wang Mi attacked and conquered Luoyang. Emperor Huai, the Jin ruler, was in a daze for several days, not knowing what to do. The famine within the fortress was severe, and the people inside the fortress began killing and eating each other, while the farmers desperately sought an escape route. Eight or nine out of every 10 people died.

Thus the massacre of the people inside a fortress is part of China's war culture. China's cities are surrounded by fortress walls. If a city is captured by an enemy, the people inside the walls are trapped, and become victims of looting and murder. Now I would like to describe a massacre that took place in Nanjing, shortly before the Sui and Tang dynasties commenced, during the Liang dynasty (502-587).

Nanjing, the Liang capital (called Jiankang at the time), was the scene of the Hou Jing Rebellion in 548. Hou Jing began his military career at a Northern Wei garrison. Later he was in service to Northern Wei General Erzhu Rong. When Gao Huan of Eastern Wei came into power, Hou was quick to ingratiate himself. When Gao Huan died, Hou turned against the Eastern Wei, took command of a local army and surrendered to Liang Emperor Wu (502-549). But when it looked as though a north-south peace treaty would be concluded between the Liang and Eastern Wei, the uneasy Hou Jing turned against Emperor Wu, raised an army, advanced toward the capital, Jiankang (Nanjing), in 548, and conquered Jiankang in 549. Emperor Wu was imprisoned and starved to death. Then a three-year-long massacre commenced.

Nanjing's walls were built of stone and bricks. In the Jin dynasty during the Three Kingdoms period, the city had double walls, but by the Southern Liang dynasty it had triple walls. When Emperor Wu ruled, the population was greater than one million. The Liang empire was a Buddhist state, and Jiankang was home to many Buddhist temples, as well as 100,000 priests and nuns. According to the *Book of Liang*, during Emperor Wu's reign an important memorial service was held at Changyu temple. It attracted several hundred thousand men and women, an unprecedented number, and inspired the following lines in a famous poem written by late Tang dynasty poet Du Mu:

Southern Dynasty temples,  
Four hundred eighty or more,  
Towers and terraces  
Wreathed in misty rain.<sup>1</sup>

But the Hou Jing Rebellion in 548 shattered the dream of prosperity for Jiankang, when Hou Jing turned against Emperor Wu. What ensued was the Nanjing Massacre.

An account in the "Liang" section of *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* dated 548 tells us that after having exhausted the food supplies in the Changping storehouses in Shitou (another name for Nanjing), the soldiers did not have enough to eat. Hou Jing unleashed his soldiers on the city; they stole the people's food, valuables, and kidnapped women and children. Soon the price of rice soared to 80,000 qian per 1.5 kilograms, and the people resorted to cannibalism. As a result, five or six out of every 10 persons were killed or starved to death.

The same account states that on the day of the attack there were more than 100,000 civilians and over 20,000 soldiers in the city. But as the assault continued, eight or nine out of 10 people died, and in the end fewer than 4,000 persons remained in the city. The survivors were all

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mountainsongs.net/poem\\_.php?id=404](http://www.mountainsongs.net/poem_.php?id=404) (retrieved 10/16/2017).

emaciated. Corpses littered the streets, and fluids from the decomposing bodies flowed into moats that had been carefully planted with pagoda trees and willows.

When the Liang established their capital at Jiankang, there were 280,000 households in the city. After the rebellion, the roads were impassable. Even though cannibalism ran rampant for several months, many starved to death. Only about one or two out of every hundred survived. For years on end Jiangnan suffered droughts and locust plagues. The situation in Jiangzhou and Yangzhou was even worse. The people drifted from place to place, wandering through mountain valleys and wading through rivers. They picked and ate grass, nuts, and water chestnuts. Strewn everywhere were the corpses of those who had starved to death, which covered the fields. For miles on end one might not encounter another live human. There were mountains of bleached bones.

#### 4. Tang dynasty: the golden age of cannibalism

Reports from Japanese missions to China during the Sui and Tang dynasties give the impression that China was a magnificent place. But those dynasties also represent the golden age of cannibalism in China. The time frame begins in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, after the An Lushan Rebellion (755) toward the end of the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, who is so well known in Japan.

We know that cannibalism was widespread then from historical records concerning cannibalism practiced by the occupants of fortresses under siege, one-third of which date from this same period. This was also the time when human flesh and internal organs came to be viewed as having curative powers. Human flesh was sold openly at markets, and humans were captured, killed, and eaten. Toward the end of the Tang dynasty the rebel Huang Chao (835-884) established a great many human-flesh processing factories called *chongzhaizhai*, as well as a branch of his army (*zaishawu*) whose soldiers were responsible for the husbandry and slaughter of humans being raised for their meat. They would make enormous quantities of *yanshi* (salted corpse) by extracting the internal organs, packing them in salt, and drying them in the sun. The resulting preparation was fed to the soldiers. In the fluctuating situation that pitted the barbarians against the Chinese, it was rations for the soldiers that caused problems for the farmers. (Nor was the problem resolved in the modern era.)

In 759 General Shi Siming, An Lushan's bosom friend, led an army of elite soldiers from Fanyang to Weizhou, which they attacked and conquered; Shi proclaimed himself the Great Yan Wang. Then the government forces launched a counterattack, surrounding the fortress. They then proceeded to flood the city.

The inhabitants of the city began exchanging children and eating them. Si Chaoyi turned against his father, Shi Siming, and surrounded Siming's base, Fanyang fortress. As a result, several thousand people inside the fortress died over several days. For hundreds of miles around the defeated Luoyang, cannibalism was rife. Every village and town in the area was in ruins.

A century later, in April 881, Huang Chao's troops slaughtered the citizens of Chang'an. For several consecutive years thereafter, cannibalism was prevalent in Chang'an. Furthermore, the city became a trading post offering the flesh of both government and rebel soldiers. Additionally, the entire area around the capital came to serve as hunting grounds where both government and rebel troops preyed on civilians. Huang Chao's troops reportedly established special redoubts they referred to as "grinding and polishing forts" in which they ate the flesh of several thousand civilians each day.

A look at records from the late Tang dynasty tells us that during the five years between 887 and 891, even looking only at Tang records in the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*, soldiers preyed on civilians.

1. When food supplies ran out in June 887 inside the Yangzhou fortress, and the woodcutters' paths ended, the soldiers from Xuanzhou began to eat the flesh of civilians.
2. In February 888 Li Hanzhi's unit neglected their duties. Instead they looted, appropriating money and goods. They also captured civilians and served their flesh as food.
3. In July 891 warlord Sun Ru burned all the houses in Yangzhou. They ambushed men in the prime of life, as well as women and girls, crossed the Yangzi River, then killed the old and weak and ate them.

Dynastic historical accounts that describe soldiers preying on civilians show a sudden increase in the Sui and Tang dynasties and thereafter, but the ethos was at least as strong in the Yuan dynasty and thereafter.

The cannibalism culture, which blossomed during the five dynasties that followed Sui and Tang (Later Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han, and Later Zhou) soon became the model for China's dynasties. Subsequent cannibalism during siege warfare followed the same pattern as those eras.

Japan adopted many aspects of Sui and Tang culture, such as Buddhism and *ritsuryo*, a legal system based on Confucianism. However, the latter days of the Tang dynasty, when Japanese missions to China ceased, represented the golden age of the Chinese cannibalism culture.

After the Tang dynasty ended, and during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, the military established a new department called *zaishawu*. It was reportedly charged with the husbandry, slaughter and serving of higher mammals, or primates. An official record that deals with the *zaishawu* can be found in the section of the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* dealing with the Later Liang Emperor Taizu in about 909. At that time Yan warlord Liu Shouguang had surrounded Cangzhou. Inside the fortress provisions had been consumed. Civilians were eating clay, and troops were eating the civilians. "Lugun separated the men from the women, and the weak from the strong, raised them in the same way as other livestock, and killed them and served their flesh to the soldiers; this was a *zaishawu*."

Incidentally, Later Liang Emperor Taizu was a subordinate of Huang Chao, the one who started the rebellion against the weakened Tang dynasty during its last days. Still, when Huang Chao's prospects looked dim, Taizu went over to the government army. He received the name Zhu Quanzhong from the 18<sup>th</sup> Tang emperor, then toppled the Tang and began the Later Liang dynasty.

Another noteworthy aspect of Chinese military history is the fact that the Chinese often chose cannibalism, which required little effort and instilled fear into the hearts of the enemy, rather than attacking a fortress, which was a huge effort. They often chose cannibalism as a means of achieving their strategic objectives.

In 963 during the Northern Song dynasty, when Song troops, seeking to conquer China, were advancing southward to Hunan, the cannibalism strategy of Li Chuyun, dispatched to lead them, was obvious. When the Song army reached Aoshan fortress, the enemy abandoned the city and fled; many enemy soldiers were captured. Chuyun ordered his men to kill several dozen corpulent soldiers, whose flesh they ate. They tattooed young, strong prisoners of war and ordered them to act as the vanguard and enter the fortress at Langzhou. As soon as they entered,



the rumor spread immediately that all prisoners of war had been eaten. The residents of Langzhou were terrified, and proceeded to burn the fortress to the ground and flee.

Emperor Taizu, crowned by his subordinates, founded the Song dynasty. However, he protected the young emperor of the Later Zhou dynasty, the last of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms that had served him, and his family. Taizu named his younger brother as his successor.

For a Chinese emperor, Taizu was a gentle soul, but it is noteworthy that the cannibalism strategy was enabled him to unite China in the Song dynasty.

## 5. Warfare in the Ming dynasty

After the Song dynasty the Chinese began using gunpowder and artillery. Siege warfare underwent a significant change as far as strategy and tactics were concerned. The Mongols' main weapons in their assaults on fortresses were ladders and traction trebuchets introduced from Western Asia. Methods of attack had changed, but warfare remained relentlessly brutal.

In 1275 the intrepid Yuan General Ba Yan surrounded Changzhou. He then ordered Wang Liangchen, who had submitted to him, to round up some people outside the city to bring soil and build a stronghold. However, whenever a crew came with soil, they were buried in the soil. Additionally, Ba Yan killed people and extracted oil from their fat, which he used to lubricate the cannons used to attack the fortress.

In terms of ethnic policy, of all China's dynasties, Ming was the one that most favored the Han Chinese. For instance, barbarian languages, costume, surnames, and customs were strictly forbidden; agriculture was encouraged, but commerce was suppressed. Politically, the Ming established a rigid autocracy. The emperor had supreme authority. Officials were under strict supervision, and to facilitate a politics of fear, a secret military agency was established called the Embroidered-Uniform Guard, as well as the Eastern Depot, an agency operated by eunuchs designed to spy on all officials.

Most of the siege warfare involving cannibalism during the Yuan and Ming dynasties was waged at transitional junctions. Cannibalism fueled by natural disasters and famine also came into the picture and, along with siege warfare, hastened the collapse of those dynasties.

Cannibalism was practiced by starving people for 11 years due to a terrible famine that extended for 21 years between 1342 and 1362 toward the end of the Yuan dynasty. However, cannibalism resulting from siege warfare also took place during the late Yuan rebellions. There was the Red Turban Rebellion, instigated by the White Lotus sect of Buddhism in which farmers and refugees placed their hopes, and whose mission was toppling the Yuan dynasty. That in turn engendered the Yellow Turban Rebellion, fomented by Zhang Shicheng, Chen Youliang, and Zhu Yuanzhang, who established the Ming dynasty. There were instances of cannibalism associated with siege warfare in Huai'an (1355-57), Xinzhou (1359), Anfeng (1363), and Qingyang (1369).

## 6. Qing dynasty and the Chinese civilization

The Manchu population numbered no more than several hundred thousand. Nevertheless, the Manchus managed to control the Chinese, who outnumbered them exponentially for nearly 300 years, a feat unprecedented in Chinese history. Not only did the Qing empire established by the Manchus embrace the political legacy of the Ming empire, it also embraced the several-



thousand-year-old Chinese cultural legacy, and built upon it. With the exception of its last years, the Qing dynasty was an exceedingly stable, comfortable age, and one in which the Chinese lived more contently than any other. It was not an accident that the 300-year Manchu rule went so smoothly. Throughout its 2,000-year history, China had far more foolish rulers than wise ones. But of the 12 Qing emperors, with the exception of child Emperor Xuantong (Puyi), who was forced to abdicate, not one was witless or imprudent. That can be explained by the fact that the Qing did away with primogeniture in the succession of imperial power, and instituted a system whereby the most competent and virtuous individual was chosen. Thus the Qing were able to avoid the intrigue instigated by maternal relatives and eunuchs.

Ever since the Han Chinese civilization arose on the lower reaches of the Yellow River, it had continually been expanding southward. But by the end of the Ming dynasty, that expansion had reached its limits. Socioeconomic development had stalled and was heading straight for ruin. Through his entry into the capital, Li Zicheng had effectively put an end to the Ming dynasty. Then the Ming General Wu Sangui, who had fought against the Qing forces mustered by the Jurchens, surrendered to the Qing, buried Li Zicheng's Shun dynasty by welcoming the Qing, marking the advent of the Qing empire.

The Manchus of the Qing dynasty expanded the territory of China like never before. Chinese territory now extended far beyond the northern defensive line provided by the Great Wall, solving the problem of possible incursions from the north. It was in the Qing dynasty that the Chinese moved beyond the Great Wall and entered Manchuria. They also migrated to Xinjiang in East Turkestan, as well as the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau in southwestern China, and to Southeast Asia. The population of China surged from several tens of millions to several hundred million.

The vast territory of present-day China is the legacy of the Qing dynasty. It not only put the finishing touches on the Chinese empire, but also on the Chinese culture. Every aspect of today's culture, thought, and art was perfected during the Qing dynasty.

But when the 19<sup>th</sup> century dawned, Western Europe, with its huge warships and cannons, shook the very foundation of the Qing empire. In the face of such a threat, China's massive city walls were useless.

In the waning days of the Qing dynasty the Taiping Rebellion, led by Hong Xiuquan, erupted. This uprising, which resulted in the loss of some 50 million lives, began in 1851 with a revolt in the village of Jintian in Guangxi province. In 1853 the rebel army occupied Nanjing and declared it the capital of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, renaming it Tianjing (heavenly capital). For 15 years the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom launched expedition after expedition, wreaking havoc throughout much of China.

In June 1861 the Xiang Army, formed to quell the Taiping Rebellion and led by Zeng Guofan, surrounded a Taiping Army that had holed up in the walled city of Anqing on the coast of the Yangzi River. At that point Zeng, through the British Consulate in Shanghai, asked the Qing court to keep foreign merchant ships from using the Yangzi. According to an account in *History of the Qing Dynasty* pertaining to Hong Xiuquan, the guards at the fortress, who were near starvation, began leaving it and surrendering. Those who remained inside survived by eating human flesh.

In *The Ever-Victorious Army*, Andrew Wilson wrote the following:

In November 1861 Nganking [Anqing] fell, after having been defended heroically for three years by Yeh Yun-lai, On entering, the people were found dead in the streets by hundreds. They had been reduced to the

last extremity; for human flesh had been sold as their food at 40 cash per catty, or one penny per pound; and it is worthy of note that, almost at the same time, the Imperialists besieged in Hangchow were reduced to the same dreadful extremity.<sup>2</sup>

This is an important record, emanating as it did from a Western writer.

Before the Xiang Army surrounded Nanjing, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had already been weakened by sudden internecine strife. In January 1864 Zeng Guoquan, Zeng Guofan's youngest brother, led the 50,000-strong Xiang Army to Nanjing, which it attacked and surrounded.

As the days passed, the food supply within the city walls began to dwindle. Grass was the last substance Zeng Guoquan ingested before he died. On July 19, more than half a year after the Xiang Army surrounded Nanjing, explosives were used to breach the walls in nine locations. The Xiang Army rushed into the city. For a month its men rampaged, killing, raping, setting fires, and looting. They used tanks to remove their plunder from the city. For a time Nanjing was the scene of a massacre perpetrated by the Xiang Army, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Nanjing massacre. In his diary Zhao Liewen, one of Zeng Guofan's right hand men, who had been assigned to observe Guoquan, Zeng's younger brother, described in detail the Nanjing massacre perpetrated by the Xiang Army.

With the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a shift in the main weapons of warfare to cannons and machine guns. Since firepower and mobility often determined the outcome of a battle, the usefulness of mammoth fortified cities declined, and siege warfare became a thing of the past. The traditional Chinese cannibalism strategy ended, for all intents and purposes, with the Taiping Rebellion, the 14-year period over which the uprising raged (it ended in 1864) marking the greatest civil war in human history.

During the rebellion, which comprised more than one massacre, the population of China, estimated at approximately 400 million, shrank by one-fifth. In Japan at that time, China was described as the land of 400 million people and more than 400 provinces.

## 7. China after the Xinhai Revolution

Having been sobered by the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Empress Dowager Cixi set China on the path toward a constitutional monarchy, having in 1908 promised her subjects a constitution and a parliament by 1918.

But it was already too late. When Cixi died that same year, a rebellious mood had permeated all of China. Inspired by the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911, 14 out of China's 22 provinces declared independence. This was what came to be known as the Xinhai Revolution.

The newly formed Revolutionary Army selected Sun Yatsen as its interim president in Nanjing on January 1, 1912, and proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of China. Yuan Shikai, prime minister of the Qing dynasty, was supposed to react to these events by leading a campaign to suppress the rebels. However, he negotiated with the revolutionary government in Nanjing, convinced the last Qing Emperor Xuantong (Puyi) to abdicate, and assumed the office of interim president instead of Sun Yatsen, and then president in the following year. However, Yuan died in

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Wilson, *The Ever-Victorious Army: A History of the Chinese Campaign Under Lt. Col. C.G. Gordon and of the Suppression of the Tai-Ping Rebellion* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868), p. 74.

1916, and Sun in 1925, leaving these words behind: “The revolution is not yet successful.”

Ever since the Republic of China’s government in Beijing was defeated by the National Revolutionary Army, the Nationalist government in Nanjing came to be recognized by the rest of the world as the government representing China. However, the truth is that the struggle for control of China continued, and after Sun Yatsen’s death, the militarist factions of the Nationalist Party began establishing governments willy-nilly, and the conflict continued. After World War II ended, the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) led by Mao Zedong gained supremacy, and in 1949 the People’s Republic of China was established. The Nationalist government inherited by Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan.

The Xinhai Revolution can be credited with extricating China from its traditional system whereby power was concentrated in the emperor, and enabling China to adopt a national civilization like that of Western nations. However, the armed conflicts that subsequently erupted were exactly the same as traditional power struggles in the Chinese civilization; to prevail, any means could be used. Given that any means could be used, although the revolutions were supposedly intended to benefit the Chinese people, absolutely no consideration was given to their welfare.

Looking back at ancient history, we see that warlord Xiang Yu of Chu was taken in by Liu Bang’s scheme involving “Chu songs on all sides” (Han soldiers sang Chu songs to demoralize Xiang’s men; convinced Xiang that his homeland had been captured). Xiang Yu fled straight south to the Wu River. Lamenting that he could not face the village headman east of the river, he committed suicide. But the extraordinary Sun Yatsen was entirely the opposite. Even though his revolutions kept ending in failure, he established a military government in Guangzhou in his home province, three times, and even perpetrated a massacre there. Why did he do that? The answer is that unlike powerful warlords, Sun did not have an army. To launch a government in his native Guangzhou, he needed an army. So he borrowed armed men from northern armies, and drafted outlaws and welcomed them to Guangzhou. They were called guest soldiers. Once they set foot in Guangzhou, they occupied every facility that made money, like the railroads. Then they locked horns with the Guangdong region’s commercial, engineering, and agricultural defense units, Sun Yatsen’s forces squabbled with the commercial unit over state-of-the-art weapons needed to launch a government. The result was a massacre. No one cared about protecting the lives of the people.

One of the evils of the Nationalist Army that no one can explain away was the Yellow River flood of 1938. To halt the advance of Japanese troops, the Nationalists destroyed dikes on the Yellow River, thus creating an artificial flood. As a result, between 10 and 12 million Chinese were affected, and 890,000 lost their lives.

The PLA ultimately prevailed; there may be some who believe that they valued the lives of Chinese citizens, but they were no different from the warlords.

On the morning of January 10, 1927, the PLA occupied the city of Guangdong. They committed every imaginable offense, acting as if civilian residents were an opposing army, setting fires, looting, raping, and killing. On the morning of January 13, however, another army counterattacked, and eradicated the PLA troops. The residents’ hatred for the PLA and the atrocities they committed ran deep. They slaughtered more than 2,500 PLA soldiers, including women soldiers. They committed terrible acts, too, such as exposing the genitals of female soldiers, sometimes penetrating them with sticks. Such brutal scenes were photographed by Japanese residents of Guangdong. The photographs are included in Higashinakano Shudo’s *The*

*Front Line of research on the Nanking "Massacre."*<sup>3</sup>

Warfare between the Nationalists and the PLA worsened after World War II ended. Noteworthy is the encircling operation initiated by the PLA at Changchun, where the Nationalists had taken over. It lasted for 150 days, between May 23 and October 19, 1948.

Civilians tried to escape, but PLA soldiers forced them to turn back. They were determined to starve the Nationalists to death.

According to PLA reports, 150,000 people did starve to death. Since China had entered the modern era, there were probably no blatant acts of cannibalism. Still, when one realizes that 150,000 died, there must have been some instances.

Estimates have it that after the PRC was established, in a three-year period at the beginning of the 1960s during the Great Leap Forward, tens of millions of Chinese starved to death. An examination of memoirs and other records reveals that there were many instances of cannibalism involving several villages.

During the chaos that was the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966, there were so many rumors circulating about cannibalism that we must assume that some of them were true, especially given the many instances of cannibalism in wartime. This writer provides a detailed description of a case of mass cannibalism in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, quotes from CPC officials' cannibalism diaries, and an account of a middle-school principal who was killed and eaten by his students during the Chinese civil war in Zheng Yi's *Scarlet Memorial: Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*.<sup>4</sup>

The Chinese Communist government has been aggressively broadcasting its claim that in 1937, when the Japanese attacked Nanjing, they unlawfully murdered civilians in what they call the Nanjing massacre. Needless to say, this claim is baseless. But in 1949 when the PLA entered Nanjing, its troops went on a rampage that targeted the wealthy, killing, raping, and looting. There have been many Nanjing massacres over the years, but the most recent one was perpetrated by the PLA.

Nationalist oppression of the Taiwanese is another instance of unlawful murder of civilians that must be mentioned. When Japan surrendered to the Allies after World War II, the Nationalist Army was to enter Taiwan and take over its administration, according to the first order issued by Gen. Douglas MacArthur. But on February 28, 1947, there were clashes with the Taiwanese, who had previously been Japanese citizens, and a massacre ensued with the approval of Chiang Kai-shek, who was still on the mainland at that time.

Within the short space of two weeks, the Nationalists murdered or executed some 30,000 Taiwanese. These were all unlawful killings or executions of civilians by their new government; this could not have happened under Japanese rule. Two hundred fishermen from Okinawa also lost their lives, caught up in the indiscriminate, gratuitous slaughter spree.

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<sup>3</sup> Higashinakano Shudo, ed., *Nankin "gyakusatsu" kenkyu no saizensen: Nihon Nankin gakkai nenpo 2002* (Tokyo: Tendensha, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Zheng Yi, *Scarlet Memorial: Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*, trans. T.P. Sym (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); see also *Shokujin enseki: massatsu sareta Chugoku gendai shi* (A cannibal's banquet: obliterated modern Chinese history), trans. Ko Bun'yu (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1993).