

INTRODUCTION

THE TIGER IS ALL but extinct in China today, but in earlier centuries the animal was greatly feared by people who lived in or traveled through sparsely populated areas. By the seventeenth century, human population growth had made bona fide sightings of tigers rare; it was often reported, nonetheless, that tigers would venture into cities to feed on human carrion after some disaster—pestilence, famine, or a massacre. Although tigers may have been present more in people's imaginations than in actual tooth, claw, or stripe, associations of the tiger with acute peril, calamity, ferocity, and intimidating aggressiveness—or, more positively, with dashing, thrilling savagery and martial courage—were frequent in Chinese expressions in the seventeenth century and remain so today. Contending with a perilous situation, for instance, is called being in a “tiger's mouth” (*bukou*), and surviving such a situation is called “life beyond the tiger's mouth” (*bukou yusheng*).

Because the tiger is native to neither North America nor Europe, the aura of exotic beauty that it carries in the Western mind has not been manifest in China. But the Chinese have associated the tiger with things from the outside in another way: their word for tiger, *bu*, is homophonous (except for tone) with their general, pejorative term for northern “barbarians”—who were viewed inimically by denizens of the “Central Florescence” from at least as early as the third century B.C.¹ In the eyes of Chinese south of the Ming-period civilizational demarcation line, the Great Wall,² such aliens became the most salient among several factors that made the middle seventeenth century one of the most trying periods in Chinese history.

The term *general crisis*, derived from scholarship on seventeenth-

century European history, is often applied to comparable conditions in China during that century: climatic cooling, reduced agricultural yields, revenue shortfalls, political strife, social disruptions, economic dislocations, monetary instability, epidemic diseases, and so forth.³ The one calamity that stands out most in Chinese cultural memory, however, and which exacerbated all the others, was the conquest of China by a coalition of “barbarian” peoples from the far northeast, led by the Manchus. From their base east of the Liao River the consummately martial leaders of the Qing dynasty (1636–1911) seized control of the Chinese government, both violently and by default, from the indigenous Ming dynasty (1368–1644), with its markedly antimartial bias.⁴ But among the armed conflicts that ensued in China from the 1620s through the 1670s, those perpetrated or necessitated by Manchus, or even by those northeastern peoples allied with the Manchus,⁵ constituted only a part. There also abounded huge roving armies of marauders, smaller local bands of outlaws or hired thugs, pirates of the lakes, rivers, and seas, and aborigine insurrectionists, not to mention Ming government troops, who—whether renegade or not—often pillaged to survive. It probably is safe to say that no locale in China escaped some sort of “soldier calamity” (*binghuo*) during the middle decades of the seventeenth century.

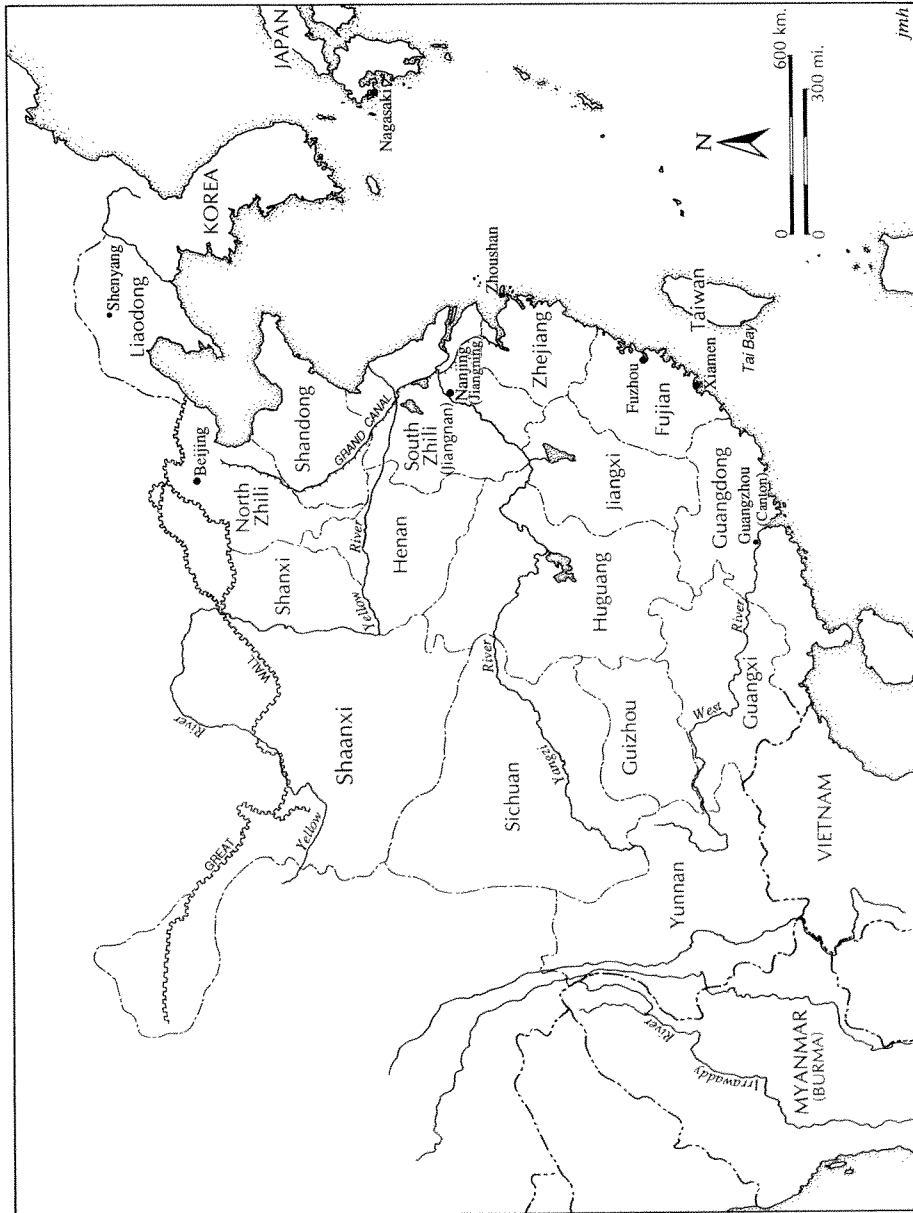
That terribly agonizing time—when people in all sorts of life situations had their social and political values, moral courage, and physical stamina put to severe tests—has been treated on the macro level for the most part. In trying to extract some general sense from the tumult of events, scholars of all ideologies have tended to use abstractions such as *scholar-bureaucrats*, *peasant rebels*, *local elites*, *urbanites*, *banner nobility*, and *landlord-capitalists* to speak about the responses of people to conditions of the day. Twentieth-century ideas about nationalism have tended to oversimplify both Ming and Qing loyalism, which in the seventeenth century involved complexes of factors not found in present-day Chinese patriotism.⁶ Most textbooks characterize the Ming-Qing transition as a relatively short and smooth one, institutionally and culturally—a minor blip in the very long electrocardiogram of Chinese history.

Certain overlapping countertrends in scholarship have also promoted a sort of sanitization of the conquest period: scholars in both East and West have tried to get away from the jingoistic anti-Manchism that characterized Chinese studies of the conquest period from the time of

the Republican revolution (which overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911) until the 1950s. This sanitization, along with the official Chinese policy to treat the minority peoples of China more fairly by reducing “Great Han-Chinese chauvinism,” has engendered reluctance to bring forth unflattering aspects of Manchu activities. In addition, the desire of scholars to move beyond the stereotypical moral condemnation of “bandits” in traditional Chinese writings on socially disruptive groups has coalesced with the glorification of such groups as “revolutionaries” in Communist Chinese historiography. Thus, the brutalities of both the Manchus and the rebels tend to be either glossed over or attributed with “historical functionality”—that is, with having been necessarily destructive aspects of certain teleologically conceived, positive or progressive developments in Chinese history.

Also distorting our view of that time has been the more voluminous production of historical source materials in the economically advanced and heavily populous lower Yangzi region than in other regions. The number and wide circulation of writings about what happened to places and personages in the area now encompassed by Jiangsu and Anhui provinces and the northern parts of Jiangxi and Zhejiang provinces have encouraged the mistaken notion that the violence and destructiveness of the Qing conquest occurred mainly there. As will be evident in several of the selections in this anthology, that was hardly the case. The rich lower Yangzi and Hangzhou Bay regions had much that was vulnerable to destruction, but they also had the greatest resources for recovery. Other parts of the country, once devastated, remained longer in that condition (map 1). The western provinces, in fact, suffered the worst and the longest. The slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people in Sichuan Province under the tyrannical regime of the rebel leader Zhang Xianzhong between 1644 and 1646 was but the beginning of armed strife in the Sichuan Basin⁷—which persisted until resistance to Qing control was eliminated in 1663. Perhaps worse, from the early 1640s through the late 1670s southern Huguang (present-day Hunan Province) was ravaged repeatedly—first by rebel armies, then by clashing Ming and Qing armies, then by forces loyal to the Qing and those supporting the breakaway southwestern feudatory, Wu Sangui—with the result that only 27 percent of the land registered in 1581 was being cultivated in 1679.⁸

In sum, although excellent studies of major literary and political figures of the conquest period are now available to Western readers, we have



Map 1. China in the Mid-Seventeenth Century

yet to lend an open ear to the voices of a wider variety of people (including Europeans) in different parts of the country whose lives were deeply affected—and often terminated—by the dynastic cataclysm.⁹ This is unnecessarily the case, for those voices have been waiting to be heard, as it were, for a long time. One feature of the general restlessness of late Ming thought that was not obliterated by early Qing conservatism was a marked willingness to abandon the reticence traditional in prose narratives and to describe personal experiences, including dilemmas.¹⁰ Doubtless the traumas of the Ming-Qing transition reinforced this cultural development, and the bibliophilic, textually preservative ethos of Qing learning aided the survival of such narratives, even those by very obscure writers. It has remained only for someone to make them more accessible to present-day readers through selection, translation, annotation, and introduction. Any fictional elements in this anthology are those generated by the authors themselves, who give form to their observations, feelings, and memories—as we all do—with motifs supplied or conditioned by their cultural milieus.

In delving into this sort of literature, one soon realizes that the overwhelming motivation for writing down personal experiences in those trying times—whether the pen was used right there in the tiger's mouth or later on—was self-justification or self-vindication. This includes the guilt-tinged need of human beings in any culture to explain how it was that they lived when so many others died. Decisions made and courses of action taken under extreme duress seem to be suspect and to require painful articulation or reexamination. Though this may be generally true in any culture, the particular dilemmas that arise, the models that are looked to for guidance, the values that motivate people in different, stressful situations, the manner in which spiritual release is sought—these are culture specific. Indeed, the stories presented here could be regarded as prime materials for a cultural history of self-justification. The resources that a given culture can or cannot provide to sustain people, or that it provides in conflicting ways, are cast into stark relief in times of crisis like the middle seventeenth century in China.

A SURVIVOR
OF BEIJING
“SETTLES HIS THOUGHTS”

LIU SHANGYOU ENTERED Beijing at a truly inauspicious time—mid-winter 1643–44. The roving rebel armies that had ranged over most of North China since the 1620s had become uncontrollable, and now, under the leadership of “the Dashing Prince,” Li Zicheng, they threatened to invade the capital province, North Zhili (present-day Hebei) for the first time. The Manchus, who had grown in strength since the last decade of the sixteenth century and who had openly challenged the Ming by declaring their own Qing dynasty in Mukden (Shenyang) in 1636, had taken over the entire Liaodong region almost down to Shanhai Pass, just one hundred seventy miles east of Beijing. The Ming government in the North was growing more paralytic by the day.

Apart from what is recorded in Liu Shangyou’s own account of his trials from this winter to the next, nothing is known about the author except that he hailed from Jiading County (northwest of present-day Shanghai). Apparently he had gone to Beijing to seek or await formal appointment to some official position. In any case, he was in close contact with Shen Zhifang, a supervising secretary in the Ministry of Rites and also Liu’s relative, probably by marriage, and was able to learn a good deal about court affairs secondhand. Typically for a man in the middle ranks of the scholar-official elite, Liu casts the Ming Chongzhen emperor (r. 1628–44) in a favorable light and, conversely, has nothing charitable to say about Li Zicheng or his followers, whom he refers to as bandits.¹ Though unaccustomed to fending for himself among the hoi polloi, Liu abhors only people who engage in armed violence—be they soldiers, highwaymen, or vengeful citizens. He pointedly defends the behavior of Shen Zhifang, who—like many of-

ficials who managed to survive the short reign of Li Zicheng in Beijing and later joined the rump Ming court in Nanjing—was indicted for collaborating with the rebel regime.² Liu may have written the *Dingsi xiaoji* (A Short Record to Settle My Thoughts) partly as a testimony to Shen’s probity.³

It is sadly ironic that Liu Shangyou struggled so long and hard to return to Jiading, a county that was mercilessly attacked the following year during the Qing conquest of Jiangnan. The county seat itself was subjected to massacres three times between late August and early October of 1645.⁴ Whether Liu survived those ordeals is not known.

... I recall that after our boat reached Xingji we had to go by land because the Grand Canal was iced over, and that in the morning when we set out, the beards and eyebrows of our outriders were so completely whitened with frost that we travelers looked at each other and laughed a bit. When staying in the public inn at Jinghai, we saw trees florid with frost, the leaves like layers of jade within jade, all lustrous in the bright sunlight.⁵ Some who knew about divination said [the frosty sight] portended combat; others said the death of a ruler. On a clear day in Tongzhou* we heard very heavy thunder and were quite surprised. Upon inquiry, we learned that it was gunfire from the capital. When we drew near Beijing, the walls were so lofty—with parapets like sharp mountain peaks—that without thinking I murmured to myself, “How beautiful—the fastness of mountains and rivers. This surely is conferred by heaven!”⁶

On the road we often heard warnings about bandits, and in all the small neighborhoods and villages we passed through, there were only broken-down walls and ruined chimneys leaning against one another; for several hundred *li*⁷ there was no sign of human habitation. That these northerners seemed unaware of the presence of bandits⁸ I took to be lack of concern borne of preparedness, so I thought the situation was very secure. Once inside the city I became busy with social affairs, for the New Year holiday was approaching. . . .

At the early morning audience on New Year’s Day [by the lunar

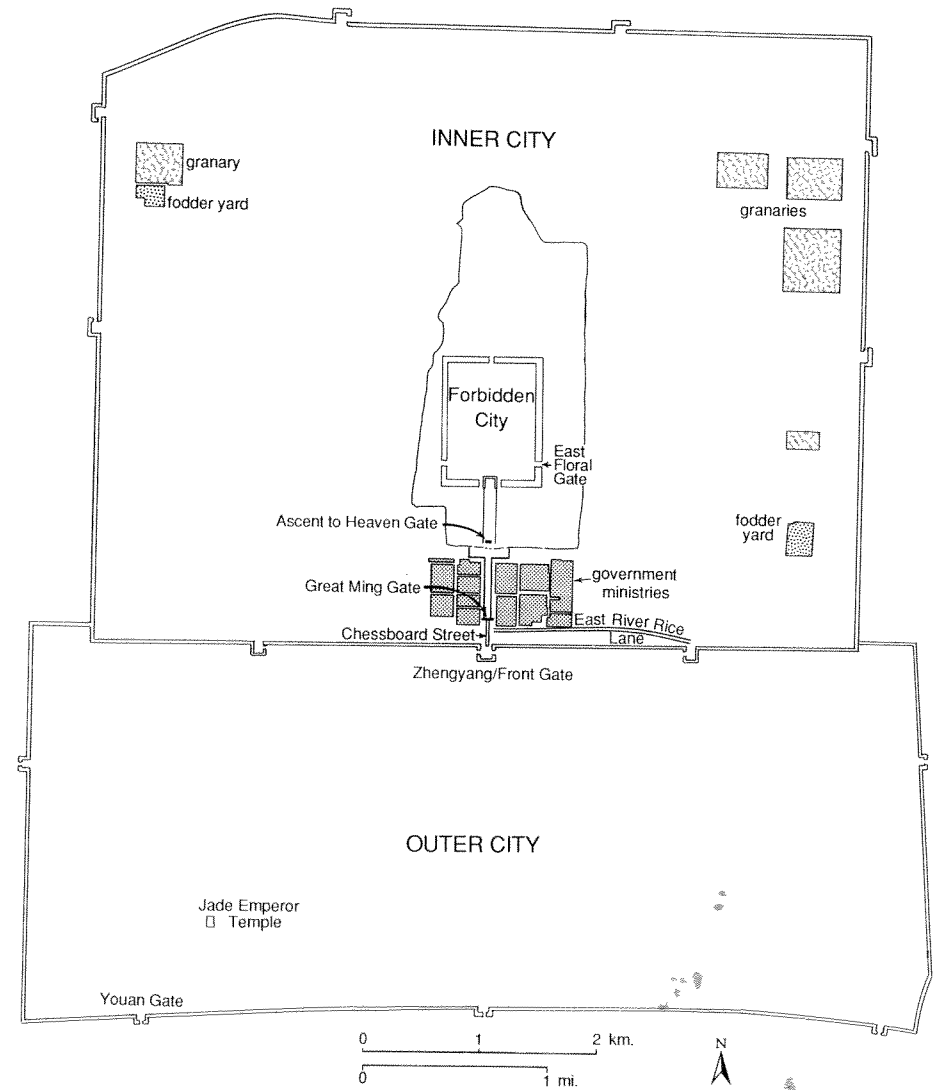
*The northern terminus of the Grand Canal.

⁷One li is roughly one-third mile.

calendar; February 8], 1644, the drums sounded and the [Chongzhen] emperor went out through the Hall of the Central Ultimate. Although the high-ranking officials had not yet assembled, the emperor remained seated in the Hall of the Established Ultimate waiting for them. Some officials then arrived walking unsteadily and panting as though they were about to expire, and others who arrived later got closed outside the gates. The emperor was indulgent and did not question them. People said that the failure to effect ritual propriety at the first congratulatory court audience of the year was a sign of heaven's indictment. Then, during the night of the second or third day of the year, sounds of combat and crying were heard outside the Great Ming Gate,* as though several tens of thousands of horsemen had gathered on Chessboard Street, and this continued for several nights in succession [map 2]. Also, during the previous half-year no babies were born in the whole city. And in the summer and fall there was a great pestilence: people, seemingly without reason, got virulent cysts and died within hours. It was called the pustule plague, and 40 percent to 50 percent of the capital residents suffered from it. Then in mid-spring there was a blood-spitting sickness, which also killed people in half a day, sometimes taking several together from the same family. At court such anomalies as a freakishly tall man or a horse entering the imperial palace gate were seen, but they were kept secret, and news of such sightings was not passed on. Inside the palace grounds an ancient cypress strangely sprouted four twigs, which the caretaker didn't dare report. Often there were scourges and abnormalities like these.⁷ . . .

After Taiyuan [in central Shanxi] fell [on March 16, 1644, to the roving rebel forces of Li Zicheng], the bandits set their sights on what then seemed easy prey—Beijing. Discussions at court, however, were as confused as tangled silk threads, and battlefield defense plans were as feeble as trying to dredge the moon from the water. Our Sacred Ruler above was frayed by work and worry, and his assembled ministers below said yes, yes, just hoping to survive somehow and rarely taking any responsibility. The money addiction grew worse by the day, and selfish factionalism was hard to stop. The minister of revenues [Ni Yuanlu] served fruitlessly by staring at the ceiling, and nothing was done to raise money for military provisions.⁸ The minister of war

*The entrance to the compound where the main ministries and agencies of the central government were located.



Map 2. Liu Shangyou's Beijing

[Zhang Jinyan] aimlessly responded to official memoranda with empty prose; he proffered no real plan for the military situation. When the bandits were reconnoitering the capital region from Shanxi and their momentum was already toppling the chimneys and burning the rafters of the empire, at court word would go around that the passes had not held or, to the contrary, that the bandits had withdrawn. It was impossible to get either an accurate report or anyone to take even the minor position of provincial courier. . . .

Our Ardent Emperor was heroically perspicacious and firmly decisive, overseeing every matter personally. But his policies were least carried out right there in the hub of the nation. For instance, regarding such things as illicitly casting coins or printing paper money,⁹ there would be patient admonitions and promulgations of stiff penalties. But the little people dared to disobey their superiors and in the end were unwilling to accept the aims of the government. Roundups of suspects by the palace secret service were not indiscriminate, but false rumors rose in clusters and became more rampant the more that officials tried to curb them. Manifestos and declarations from the bandits—some going so far as to rebuke the emperor himself—were sometimes tossed into the grounds of government agencies or posted on major thoroughfares. Time limits were set for catching the culprits, but that never worked. The ignorant common people took calamity to be good fortune and rejoiced in disaster, all saying that when Master Li arrived, he would give each poor person five taels. They often seemed to look forward to the rebel leader's arrival as they would to a year of good harvests. The people of the capital were very mixed in type, and identities were impossible to check; all the vegetable peddlers and wine carters were sent by the bandits, so their true business was especially hard to discern. I heard that the emperor in his palace sat alone deep into every night reading and signing documents and that once he sighed, "I am not the sort of ruler who loses his country. How can I have so many country-losing affairs?" and his tears followed his words down, as though in a premonition.

In the middle of the 2nd month the momentum of the bandits became extremely strong. There was a troop mutiny at Changping, so the capital was put on alert, and ample provisions were rushed out to pacify the soldiers. But just as Changping was restored to order, Jurong Pass

became indefensible.* On the 29th was the Qingming holiday [when ancestors' graves are tended], so the various officials followed orders and went out to the imperial tombs.[†] On such occasions in the past they routinely took the opportunity to travel about in the western foothills. But now they all made great haste to return as soon as the ceremonies were over.

At the time some court officials were advocating raising donations to support defense efforts. The donations were to be given according to people's home regions and personal financial capacities. The degree holders from Jiangnan [the rich lower Yangzi region] had gathered in the Four Offices Meeting Hall, and the hall master came with brush in hand to record their donations, but no one was willing to respond with the amount he could afford. Some said that they were impoverished or represented others claiming impoverishment, even sounding like cold beggars and saying things that would never leave the mouths of the most ordinary people. I could have laughed out loud.

This led me to the idea of drafting a memorial to the throne, suggesting that two chests be set up on either side of the Great Ming Gate to urge loyal and righteous gentryfolk from the four quarters and men and women of the capital to aid the resistance as much as they could. One chest would be for donations in amounts from one to one hundred taels, and the other would be for amounts from a tenth to a hundredth of a tael.¹⁰ When the chests were full, then it would be announced to an official comptroller, who would open the chests and report the amounts in a memorial to the emperor. This money could then be kept in readiness so that should the city be surrounded, a unit of dare-to-die soldiers could be raised to burst through the siege. I had the memorial all prepared, but because there were no compatriots who would stand by the gate with me and make tearful appeals and because conditions were already pressing, it was extremely difficult to carry out my idea, so I abandoned it. . . .

On the 17th [of the 3rd month, April 23] artillery fire shook the heavens, and I knew the bandits had reached the foot of the city walls. The guns on the walls were fired empty as often as not—for lack of

*Jurong was the last major pass leading to the capital from the northwestern defense zone, and Changping was the only garrison between that pass and the capital.

[†]The date is wrong. The Qingming holiday was on the 27th of the lunar month—that is, April 4, 1644.

ammunition. Below the walls the bandits also relied on artillery for their attack; each firing of a cannon was sure to collapse a roof or topple some tiles—anything that got in the way was smashed.¹¹ Their ammunition was shaped like a man's thumb—keen and shiny, hard and slick, really effective. During past defenses of the city two soldiers were stationed at each rampart on the walls, and they were rewarded generously. The various officials shared defense duties at the gates and made inspection tours around the inner sides of the walls. In this action, however, only one soldier was used at each rampart, and each was given only twenty-four cash—not even enough for satisfying meals. Defense of the gates and itinerant inspections were left to ordinary personnel, and no higher-ranking officials showed up.

On the 18th the siege grew intense. The bandits drove the people who lived outside the city walls to fill in the moat, and they built “cloud ladders” that could be brought to the foot of the wall. Among those who pushed the carts holding the ladders, people who had just recently surrendered to the bandits were placed in front. When felled by arrows or rocks they were immediately replaced, so that not one of the real bandits was injured. Of the generals who were called in from surrounding regions, Wu Sangui didn't make it because he had just entered Shanhai Pass,¹² Tang Tong had surrendered [at Jurong Pass], and Huang Degong¹³—his army isolated and with no prospect of aid—observed the situation but did not advance. In the city there were many bandit sympathizers and collaborators lying in wait, people's hearts were agitated, and the soldiers' spirits sagged even more. . . .

That night my relative Shen Zhifang, [a supervising censor in the] Ministry of Rites, stayed in his office, but he returned to his residence the next morning. I asked him how the news was, and he said: “Not good. Before daybreak I saw some palace people and eunuchs in a flurry, trying to get out. I didn't know why until I learned that the head eunuch, Wang [Cheng'en],¹⁴ had led his housemen in an attempt to storm the gates and leave, but the guards on the wall fired large guns at them, so they came back. And just now, as I was nearing home, I saw two uniformed soldiers on horseback gallop into this lane, cast off their armor, seize the short jackets and small caps of two people on the street, and then flee. How could these incidents be without cause?”

After a short while, the servant on duty came and reported, “The bandits have entered the city!” Shocked and unbelieving, Shen ordered a confirmation. But I said, “It's true. Haven't you heard the gunfire from

the top of the wall? For two days and nights, there hasn't been a moment of peace. Now it's quiet.” Shen was very upset and anxiously looked for his official robes, intending to return to the court. He said that the emperor had summoned the grand secretaries to an audience that day and that he should be in attendance. His valet firmly held him back and tried to calm him down. Shortly it was reported that the bandits had already entered the Great Inner Precincts [that is, the imperial palace]. Shen then tore his cap and robe and beat his chest in grief, and I, too, sobbed uncontrollably. Because of this news, I got him to change into humble clothing with me and take refuge in a nearby dwelling to watch what would happen. Our luggage was thrown together hurriedly, and we stored just one or two valuable items with the master of the place next door, leaving the rest to be pilfered by the neighbors and servants—no questions asked.

That day the whole mass of bandits entered the Great Ming Gate, and the rebel, [“Prince”] Chuang [Li Zicheng], with a martial flourish, shot an arrow at the Ascent to Heaven Gate,* striking the side of its upper part—wherefrom one of his bogus aides-de-camp divined great auspiciousness. He proceeded to the inner court and sent out a call for all the actors, cooks, official courtesans, and child singers to come and serve him, having the whole Forbidden City scoured so that none got away. But he still didn't know the whereabouts of the emperor. Everyone said that around midnight some soldiers of Regional Commander Wu [Sangui]'s had arrived and taken the emperor, empress, and crown prince to safety.¹⁵ The bandits seized their close attendants and interrogated them under torture, but none knew where they had gone. Then a bill was posted at the entrance offering a reward of ten thousand taels and enfeoffment as a marquis for anyone who could produce the emperor, empress, or crown prince. Not until the next day was it learned that [the first two] had both died on the altars of state.¹⁶ . . .

In the mid-afternoon of the 19th we proceeded toward the residence of someone we knew near the Front Gate [of the Inner City]; bandit horsemen rode turbulently all around us, glancing down at but not confronting us. . . . [The next day] a member of the family told us

*The distance from the present location of Mao Zedong's mausoleum to Tianan Gate, the entrance to the Imperial Palace Museum—approximately half a mile.

[†]Front Gate was the informal name for the Zhengyang Gate, mentioned below. It was the central, southern gate of the Inner City, just south of the Great Ming Gate (see map 2).

of an announcement from the bandits: The higher officials were to appear for court audiences individually, and those who wished to go home to the provinces would be allowed to do so; those who did not show up, as well as those who gave them cover, would be punished heavily. Shen said, "I'll return voluntarily to my residence and not be a burden to my host." He went back only to find the place filled with bandits.

The next day Shen was compelled to go see one of the false [bandit-appointed] officials at court, who, when he heard my relative's name, said, "Master Shen has a reputation for virtue and has long been admired by me and my associates." Then Shen returned with the bunch who had occupied his house and was moved into a small apartment. On the 23rd someone came and told him: "You can be congratulated on escaping death. They want to handle your case with just a demotion and transfer. . . . Your host general requests a meeting." Shen replied, "I know what he has in mind," and then entered his study, found pen and paper, and wrote, "The great affairs of the world have come to this. To recompense my dear ruler, I can only die. A commoner castoff of the Shun rebel court, I am a minister of the Ming." He gave this to his valet and then tried to hang himself. Shen first ordered his valet to prepare the rope, then the valet held on to it, straining until his strength was spent. Not long after the noose had fully tightened and he heard a sound from his master's throat, the valet dropped Shen precipitously to the floor. In about half an hour, however, Shen revived and left the room in a daze. Meanwhile, all his servants, because of their master's decision to die, had hidden in fright; only a young boy in the next room overheard the attempted suicide and told about it later. . . .

On the 25th [May 1] several soldiers came again . . . and everyone was confined in the quarters of a bandit general named Li. Several dozen people were held in one room, suffering in filth and hunger beyond description. Each day they were taken under guard to the court gate, the bandits riding on horseback and the captives on foot. Those who fell behind were thrashed with horsewhips or the backs of swords to impel them forward. Their relatives, friends, and boy servants could only stand nearby and watch, unable to utter a word. After four or five days the bandits separated over a hundred people, Shen among them, and took them to the Ministry of Personnel.

The bandits wanted to employ Shen in his previous official position, but he refused vigorously and was released. . . . When brought back to the bandit general's quarters, [the ones] who had not been taken to the

ministry were subjected to cruel beatings to extract any silver they might have. Some were tortured with finger or limb presses more than three or four times. And some implicated others, so that thousands of commoner households were affected, and people were killed in rapid succession. The whole city was in agitation, and people began to lose interest in living. . . .

At first when the bandits entered the city, they restrained themselves and tried to look dignified. When one soldier snatched some merchandise from a silk-goods shop, he was dismembered as soon as it was known in order to deter others. But when the bandit soldiers were not far out of the sight or earshot of their superiors, they cut loose and did anything they wanted. Their generals and soldiers were all domiciled in the homes of officials and commoners, and the well-to-do provided them with fine food and presented them gifts, fearing their displeasure. Not even the humble alleys and grass dwellings of the poor escaped the bandits' footsteps. The men were used as cooks, and the women were violated. If the bandits happened upon anyone in the street who seemed to have a good upbringing, they would seize and flog him, seeking valuables. Those who wore short jackets [that is, people below gentry status] were made to sew and mend or to work as kitchen helpers. If they found southerners, they would always force them to sing songs, and the young ones would be carried back to the bandits' quarters and made into sexual playthings. The destruction outside the city walls was especially severe. So the people of the capital felt that they were having to walk through scalding water or fire, and all kept hoping for the bandits' defeat and thinking back fondly on their former emperor. . . .

[Because of setbacks incurred by Li Zicheng's army at the hands of the combined forces of Wu Sangui and the Manchus to the northeast of Beijing,] on the 24th and 25th [of the 4th month, May 29–30,] the bandits began hurriedly preparing to leave. They rounded up myriads of the donkeys, mules, camels, and horses in the city, and they emptied out everything in the palace, loaded it up, and went westward. Some said they had filled seventeen vaults with gold and silver, each vault holding several tens of thousands of ounces. Jewels, baubles, bolts of satin—all were piled on the court steps in such quantities that they couldn't be completely picked up in several days' time. Also, they ordered that the various ministers come along, greatly alarming everyone who heard this. Of those who had been confined and not re-

leased, over half had died of punishments, and now the rest were ordered strangled, causing cries of injustice to reach the outside thoroughfares. . . .

Suddenly it was passed about that on the 29th [June 3, Li Zicheng] would assume the imperial throne. So people then said that the bandits did not intend to return westward—that the intensive packing and transporting of the previous several days had been to solidify their base [in Shaanxi]. Earlier, when the bandits first appeared, some former Ming ministers had risked death trying to return home to the provinces, and sometimes people fanned the flames of alarm by saying, “So-and-so was killed on the road; so-and-so was drowned in the river.” Consequently, most officials in the capital hid themselves in the shadows and didn’t dare to test circumstances, however lightly. Now the bandit leader actually had the nerve to sit facing southward on the throne, so people were worried for the safety of those few Ming officials who had preferred death to disgrace and had managed to preserve their honor whole by staying out of sight. But the bandits were cowardly at bottom. They took this occasion [the enthronement] to smear everyone’s eyes and ears with false impressions and did not bother with anything else.

So at dawn on the 29th Li Zicheng usurped the emperorship, and the following midnight he fled the city, though people did not realize this until daylight came the next morning.¹⁷ The bandit followers made haste to depart with trains of camels laden with packs, and they left eunuchs and other palace personnel scattered outside the Forbidden City. As soon as people got word that “the city gates are wide open, and no common people who want to flee misfortune will be prevented from leaving,” pandemonium ensued, with people supporting old and young family members, carrying bundles of dried food, and running every which way. Before long, flames were seen in the fodder yards and granaries, shortly thereafter in the palace, and in no time the whole city was ablaze. Just then for safety’s sake I was staying with Zhao Bozhen in Widow Zhang’s hostel near the Front Gate. We climbed upstairs and looked around at the flames and smoke that filled the sky in all directions. The Haidai and Shuncheng gates, which flanked Zhengyang Gate on the left and right, had already burned [fig. 1]. Only the Zhengyang Gate tower, the Great Ming Gate, and the area around East River Rice Lane had not been touched by the flames. Because several dozen groups of bandit spies were still around, residents carrying lances led one another to mount the city wall and defend Zhengyang Gate.

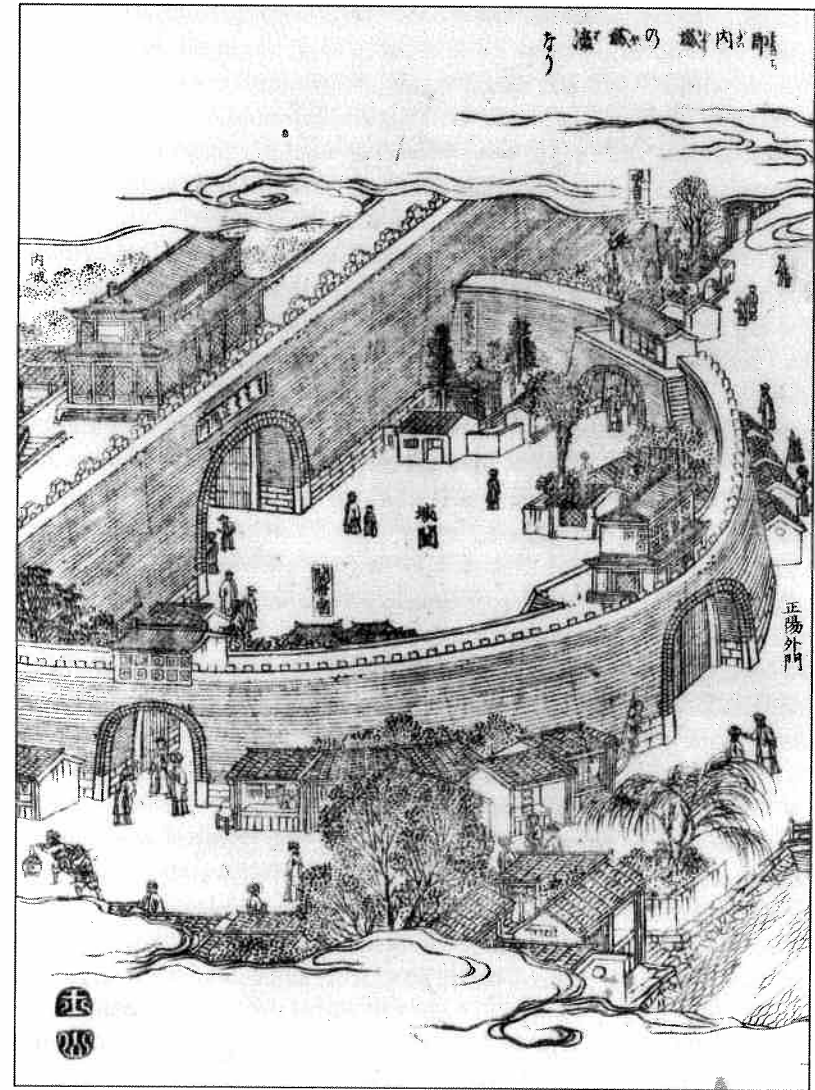


Figure 1. The (inner and outer) Zhengyang Gate, Beijing, with the Shuncheng and Haidai gates on either side of the outer fortification.

Doors, window shutters, and other things were pieced together and lined up to form barricades a few paces apart along the main streets. People with staves stood watch beside the barricades, and citizens with bells and clappers patrolled the avenues constantly. Anyone in the neighborhood whose face was unfamiliar wouldn't be allowed to pass. People were as agitated as if in a boiling cauldron, and both men and women climbed up on rooftops to be lookouts.

Through the whole night my friends Zhao, Zhang, Yan, and I stood together, shouldering packs [of emergency supplies]; we were anxious for our safety every minute. When morning came, those bandits who had set the fires and others who had not left because they had formed some attachments in the city were flushed out one after another. Thereupon a former commander of the military headquarters in the capital, named Yang, was brought forward to sit atop the wall, and over ten former officials took charge of defending the gate tower in rotation. Each time bandits were seized and brought in, after their true identity was determined they were executed forthwith, and bandit leaders were given death by slow slicing. Because several dozen were killed in all, the people were delighted. This day everyone in the streets was ordered to seize bandits, so people from the western provinces [such as Shanxi and Shaanxi] all cleared out with their whole families, even if they had lived in the capital for a long time. And there also were some incidents, which generally couldn't be investigated, of people taking advantage of the situation to settle old scores. . . .

Around dusk clamorous word came that Wu [Sangu] was about to accompany the crown prince into the city, and all the capital residents were ordered to turn out in welcome, wearing mourning garb. Then someone said surreptitiously, "Outside Qihua Gate there's an announcement on a placard with 'The Great Qing Nation' at the top. I don't know what it means." Those who heard this were greatly shaken. The next morning, that is, the 1st day of the 5th month [June 5], the respected elders led one another out several dozen li from the city to welcome the crown prince. A large military unit arrived escorting a man whom the elders led into the city. By the time they reached the East Floral Gate [to the Forbidden City], the authorities had readied the paraphernalia for an imperial procession. Then the one man under escort dismounted from his horse, stepped into the imperial carriage, and said to the common people looking on, "I am the prince regent

[Dorgon].*¹⁸ The crown prince will arrive in a while. Will you allow me to be the ruler?" The crowd, astonished and uncomprehending, was only able to lamely answer yes. Some in the crowd said that he must be a descendant of Yingzong [a previous Ming emperor who had been held captive by the Mongols],¹⁹ and the common people were so apprehensive that they couldn't do a thing.

Thereupon the regent entered the court. At the time the palace buildings had been consumed by fire; only the minor Hall of Virtuous Government had survived. So the regent stayed there with a very small number of accompanying soldiers. They prepared their food in large pans heated in pits dug along the wayside, and they didn't immediately enter any homes. Neither did they prohibit people from going to look at them. But if they saw idlers picking broken things from the rubble, they would vie to run over and get the things themselves. When some women got into palanquins and had themselves carried back and forth in front of the court gate, the soldiers on guard asked them, "If your own emperor were here, would he allow you to go around like this?" As the women's palanquins went by, the soldiers would peer at them and laugh among themselves.

Before long an order came down: All high-ranking officials must report for the court audience tomorrow; all men in the city must shave their heads [in the Manchu style].²⁰ Thereupon many people wrote open letters requesting that their old [Ming] customs be continued, and the newly appointed vice minister of war, a man from Jiangnan, also vigorously memorialized, urging that in the interest of gaining the people's confidence, head shaving not be considered. The regent said, "I preserved all your heads, and now you cling to your hair?" But to assuage the feelings of the populace, he ordered that people in the city be allowed to wear mourning for their former emperor for three days before being required to respect the new directive to shave the head.[†] Before this, everyone had passed it around that the Ming crown prince was in Wu Sangu's camp. But only Qing army units entered the city in greater and greater numbers while Wu himself led his forces west-

*The uncle of the seven-year-old Shunzhi emperor of the Qing dynasty. In effect, Dorgon directed the Qing conquest and ruled the dynasty until his death in 1650.

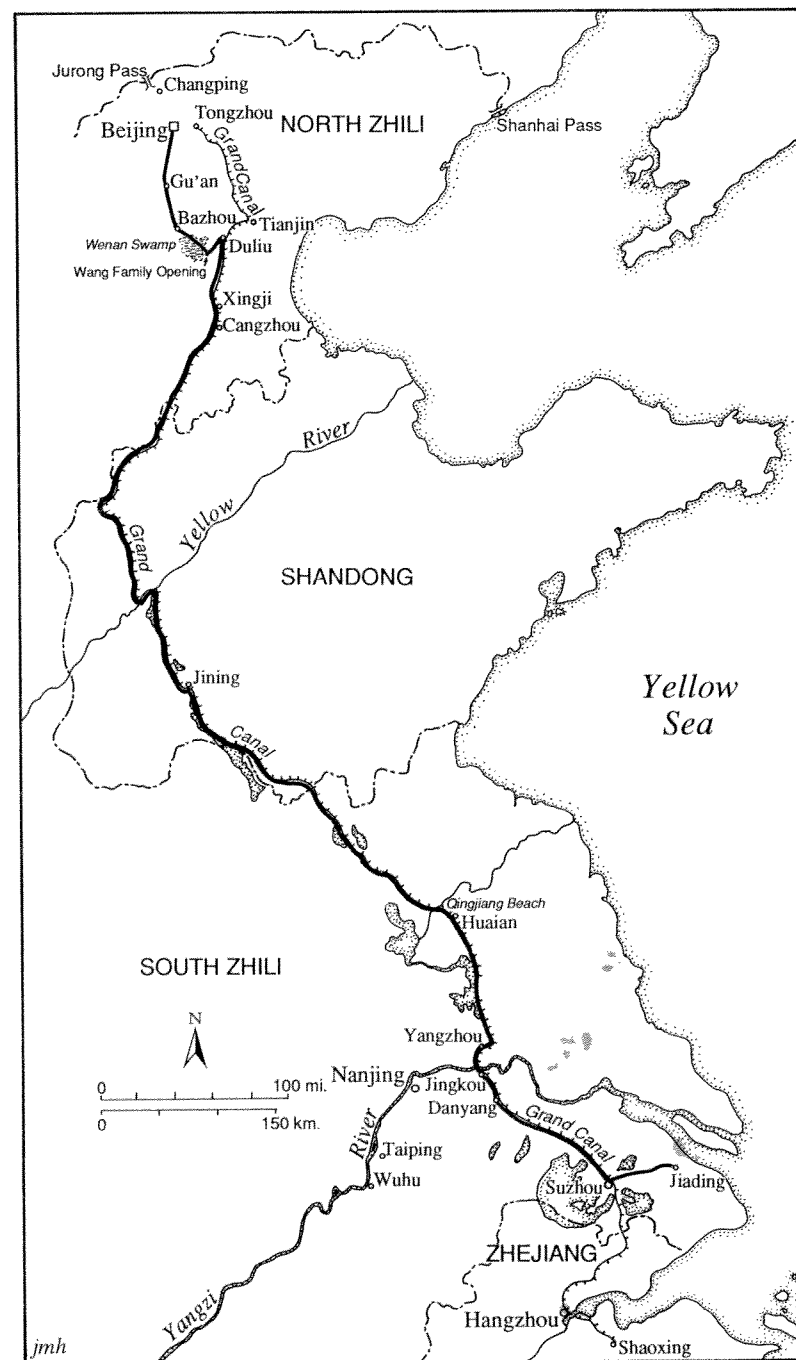
[†]The order to shave the head was rescinded twenty days later and was not renewed until the summer of the next year, after the Manchus invaded the Jiangnan region. See Chap. 4.

ward in pursuit of the bandits. Several hundred supply wagons were sent back to the capital, but no one heard anything of the crown prince.

Shen, who had been hiding from the bandits, came out when he learned they had gone. When he heard the order that heads had to be shaved by the 9th of the month [June 13], he secretly arranged to meet me at his former residence to plan a return to the South, nevertheless saying, "This will be a life-threatening matter. I don't want to force you to go along." Together we changed into suits of humble clothing, left behind all the luggage we had been using, and on the 6th braved death to depart. I went out the Shuncheng Gate, and Shen went out the Haidai Gate, neither he nor his attendants bringing anything except four or five small bundles in each of two small rented carts. I brought only some essentials packed in a couple of bedrolls. That night we stayed in the Jade Emperor Temple [still within the Outer City walls]—where fear and worry gave me a case of diarrhea—and the next morning we set out through Youan Gate with about a dozen friends from Zhejiang Province [map 3]. People on the streets had said that beyond the gates were only robbers, and they feared that it wouldn't be possible for us to travel, but circumstances didn't permit us to stop.

Having passed several li beyond the Outer City wall, we unexpectedly found a donkey for hire beside the road, so we used it for thirty li at a fee several times higher than usual. After we rested for a short while, Shen came up with another donkey and rode on ahead, the rest of us following on foot. Alongside that stretch of road were thick stands of tall trees, which meant danger in all our minds. We hadn't gone ten li before Shen encountered some robbers ahead.²¹ The rest of us, seeing this, gathered and stood close together. One robber raised his bow and arrow as though he were about to shoot me, so I pulled a packet of silver from my sleeve and threw it to him, and he went away. At the outset our Zhejiang friends had been proud of their valor and strength, but at this point not one escaped being robbed, and all the bundles that Shen had placed in the small carts, as well as my packs, were gone.

Ahead we came to a river, where there was a tired old donkey. I had to whip it to cross the river, and the water came up over my ankles, but I didn't care. Having forded the river, we saw on the bank a dozen or so fellows bare to the waist gambling together under a grass tent, and we suspected that they were robbers. After we had gone five or six more li, we saw an old woman at the edge of a grove of trees, who



Map 3. Liu Shangyou's Journey Home

spied us coming and then went into the grove. Shortly three or four robbers appeared carrying bows and arrows, knives and pikes, and we were cleaned out again. After a few more li the donkey driver wouldn't go any farther, so I took off a brief linen shirt and a white kerchief with a small silver clasp and gave them all to him. But he still was displeased and eventually left us. Late that night we reached Gu'an, and I was so exhausted that I couldn't eat. The next day it rained, and we traveled thirty li without incident, but my illness took a turn for the worse.*

The day after that we couldn't find a single donkey. Upon reaching Bazhou we saw several dozen soldiers welcoming a new [Qing] circuit intendant and behaving brusquely, so we anxiously made haste to get by them and lodged instead at Su Family Bridge [to the southeast]. That night it rained heavily, and our accommodations were extremely crude. The next day, wanting to go to Dulu, we hailed two small boats. But after traveling a few li the boatman said we couldn't go on because men were lying in ambush along the way ahead. The carters on land had all abandoned their carts and left. My group alighted and made inquiries of the local people, who said that we could take refuge from the bandits at the Zuo Family Manor fifteen li to the northeast. So we floundered along, helping each other through the reeds for a long while before coming to some paths between farmers' fields, and again after a long while we came in sight of what was called the Zuo Family Manor. It was the provincial property of one or the other of the two most powerful eunuchs at court, both surnamed Wang,²² one of their younger brothers who resided there being called Sixth Master Wang. At first we were barred from entering by an expanse of water, but after pleading earnestly several times, we were allowed to stay in the eastern guest quarters.

Our host was generous, and he saw that all our needs were promptly met morning and night, but I saw nothing commendable about his adopted son. Setting out at daybreak, we saw some men carrying bows, arrows, knives, and clubs hustle on ahead of us. We asked their master about it, and he said, "Yes, today I'm having the best of my housemen serve as escorts to assure your safety." Subsequently we traveled twenty li, and the escorts were about to go back when someone from the manor caught up with us and said, "You absolutely must not take the road

*Probably the diarrhea mentioned above.

ahead; please let me escort you to Cangzhou." After some discussion we agreed to pay him thirty-five taels, for which we wrote up an IOU. Just then, sure enough, we saw the men with bows and arrows, knives and clubs go hustling back. I lay in one of the small carts ready to do whatever our guide directed.

Coming to another river and a place—I don't know where—that seemed like the vast glades of Liangshan Moorage,²³ we managed to get two fishing boats to take us along for half a day, after which we arrived at a town called Wang Family Opening on the border between Bazhou and Dacheng. Everywhere they had been setting up closely spaced palisades and drilling local militiamen for a tight defense. When my group arrived, we couldn't find anyplace to stay. Fortunately, among my friends from Zhejiang was one who was the fellow countryman of a Mr. Hu Yuwang from Shaoxing. He had become a stipendiary student in Shuntian Prefecture [which included the capital],²⁴ and for a long time his father had run a shop in this place. So Hu had also fled here and had been using a farmer-merchant cover [to conceal his upper-class status]. We happened to mention this relationship, and he happily volunteered to put us up. So we forthwith garnered some security—this being the 11th day of the 5th month [June 15]. . . .

[By the 15th of the 8th month (September 15)] the new Qing dynasty was establishing its officials in the various prefectures and counties [of the North] and was dispatching troops to quell local bandits. All gentry who were present in their locales of registry were ordered to enter the capital, where those who had previously been officials would be employed again in higher posts. Those who didn't go would be penalized. . . . So in the latter part of the 8th month Hu's relative by marriage, Chen Yuanzhu, who had been serving as Ming grain intendant at Tianjin, sent a letter arranging to accompany Hu southward [to join the rump Ming court in Nanjing]. We contracted with a boatman named Yang, and on the 19th we said good-bye to all our friends in the town and were rowed in a long, narrow fishing boat toward Dulu. Water caltrops and lilies covered innumerable acres, and our boat was like a leaf on the rippling expanse of green—it was both frightening and delightful. In the late afternoon we reached shore and at length found accommodations. [Shen Zhifang had already proceeded to Nanjing.]

We had to wait eight or nine days for the party from Tianjin to arrive, during which time I was utterly disconsolate. But when we struck oar and got under way, my mood was lifted by hopes of returning

home, even though I knew that frustrating impediments and worrisome difficulties would afflict us every step of the way. My heart chilled at the sight of a military uniform; my face paled the moment I heard any report of soldiers. Toll and dock fees on the canal were erratic, and payments for boat services were ten times higher than usual. It really was trying. Although I was traveling by water, in fact no day passed without taking to land; although a boat was my hostel, in fact on no day did I feel secure. One morning as I was in the middle of a dream a [mere] shout from upstream caused me to leap straight out of my slumber. In the evenings we moored on the canal,* and the men kept defensive watch by shifts all night. But [because I was ill,] Hu always took my turn. Everywhere we eyed any thick underbrush intently. At any given lock three or five ghoulish characters would emerge from behind a tumbledown wall. If what they got after demanding things from us didn't please them, they wouldn't move the planks, and we would have to go the whole night without sleep.²⁵ At places where the water was shallow, canal traffic was able to get by only by gathering people from a number of boats to emplace movable dikes [fig. 2]. On the boats there were no distinctions of old or young, high-class or low-class; everyone did heave-ho duty. There's a common maxim that says, "Everybody in the same boat has to pull together with a bare back."[†] Because I already was bereft of both servants and luggage, each time I put a hand to this chore, I recited this saying to poke fun at myself. . . .

After the 15th of the 10th month [November 13] we reached Jining [see map 3]. . . and found that the director general of the Grand Canal [Qing collaborator Fang Daxing] had closed the lock to commercial boats. Salt barges under official commission were in the majority, and second in number were those carrying jujubes and pears. All vessels transporting families were held up at the canal banks—over two hundred of them. Hu and Chen hastened twenty li to the Shifo lock hoping as an alternative to buy a small scull in which we could continue, but this was not permitted, either. After several more days Hu said to me, "What they're blocking are just domestic goods and womenfolk. If one is alone with no household, then there's no problem, right? I should see you home and then return for my family members." I was reluctant to reply. So Hu further persuaded me, saying, "Even if they

*That is, not at a city or established moorage.

†Literally, "Board the boat, haul the towline; shirt and pack, throw yourself down."

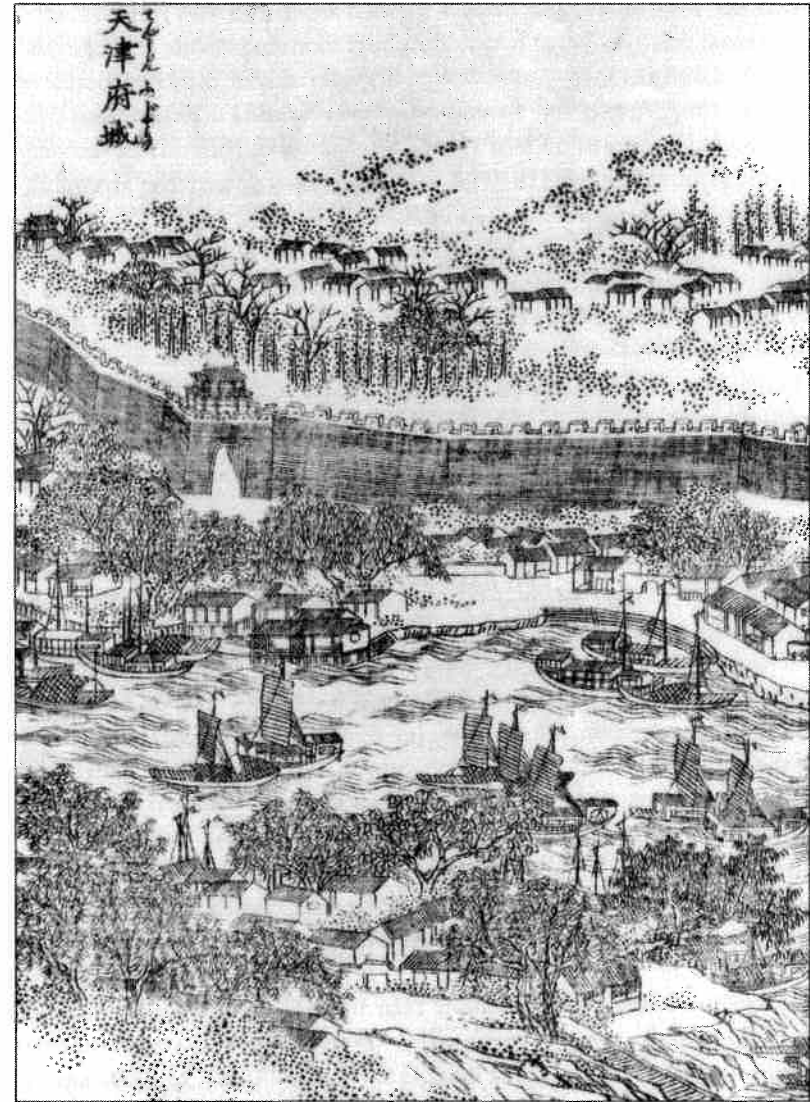


Figure 2. The Grand Canal as it passes a corner of the Tianjin city wall, afloat with the various kinds of private boats that plied its waters.

open the lock today, the canal will soon be frozen and impassable. I have close relatives here. It wouldn't hurt them to provide enough food for my family. Once you're home, I'll go back to my own home to manage things a bit, and around New Year's time I'll return here." So we decided to set out on foot around sunrise on the 9th day of the 11th month [December 7], Hu with a small knapsack and me struggling along behind him. . . .

On the 20th [December 18] we bought a leaflike boat to float down the canal. It was small, we were heavy, and ice and snow gathered around us during the three days that it took to reach Qingjiang Beach. Along the way a friend of Hu's from Hangzhou abandoned our vessel for a mount, but Hu and I were running low on resources, so we stayed with the boat all the way. The difficulties and obstructions proved twice as bad as on the northern route of the canal, but at the time I comforted myself with the thought that I had now actually entered the South. From Qingjiang through Huaian and Yangzhou, there was no day without rain or snow. Because we lacked anything to repel the precipitation, our clothes got soaked time and again, and we had to slog several dozen li through the mire. Resorting to such a small boat had its dangers in that we were completely exposed [to the human and natural elements]. Our travel provisions were about gone, and if too many things came up, we wouldn't have enough to last. On the morning of the 28th [December 26] when we crossed the Yangzi River, snowflakes as big as the palm of my hand blurred the line between water and sky—quite a scene. When we landed at Jingkou, the anxiety I'd felt up to then seemed to fall away. But it was raining hard and there were no boats, so we stayed in a small lodging that was damp and narrow, noisy and messy, and where we couldn't get enough to eat. Because a bad stretch of water at Danyang was blocking the channel, the next evening the twelve people on our boat had to stay on board, moored near the eastern gate of that city. The next day, the 1st of the last month of the year, Hu and I walked the twenty li to Lingkou along a narrow path—three or four feet wide—knee deep in mud, with an escarpment over ten feet high on our left and a steep drop-off to the water on our right. It's not just the passages into Shu [the Sichuan Basin] that are hazardous! People traversing this path fell down one after another. But I tottered along, using my umbrella as a staff, and eventually got through without injury. I said to Hu, "In my nine-times-

nine difficulties on this trip, this is the eighty-first!"* and Hu laughed in agreement. . . .

First thing in the morning on the 5th of the month we departed from the city [of Suzhou] on a boat for Taicang. Although it arrived at dusk, we crawled on in the dark over the rough terrain of an unfamiliar byway for five, six, or seven more li. When we finally sought a hostel, we had to go to several before one let us in, the doorman having sized us up favorably. The distress and frustration of travel is like this. The old saying "Just one-third of a mile outside one's gate is not as good as at home" was really borne out. In the wee hours of the next morning we walked over ten li to Salt-Iron Opening, where we came upon a small utility boat from my town, so we hired it to go home. When we arrived it was only late afternoon, on the 5th day of the 12th month [January 2, 1645].[†] When my flesh and blood and I saw each other, grief and joy intermingled, and when I recounted my recent tribulations to them, the past straightaway seemed like another world. . . .

*The number nine was prominent in Chinese numerological calculations based on the *Yijing* (Book of Changes). See Chap. 11, n. 12.

[†]That is, 205 days after leaving Beijing.

“HORRID BEYOND
DESCRIPTION”:
THE MASSACRE OF YANGZHOU

BY THE TIME Liu Shangyou reached his home in Jiading, the Manchu leadership had launched the first stage of their carefully calculated plan to conquer the prosperous, populous lower Yangzi region and eliminate the rump Ming court at Nanjing, presided over by the ineffectual Hongguang emperor. During the winter months they wrested Shanxi, Shaanxi, and northern Henan from Li Zicheng's remaining forces, and in mid-March they were ready to concentrate on the drive into Jiangnan.

The central figure in this drama on the Ming side was Shi Kefa (1601–45), a man of strong character, high principles, and considerable experience in resisting the encroachment of roving rebel armies on Jiangnan. The Hongguang court had appointed him grand secretary and viceroy concurrently to direct the four major Jiangnan defense zones from the headquarters at Yangzhou, a city of great commercial wealth located on the Grand Canal not far north of the Yangzi River (see map 3). The hopes of many in the South had been placed on Shi because of his reputation for uprightness and because he seemed to be the only person of stature who could deal with both the refractory generals in the field and the contentious factional leaders at court.

In the end, however, even Shi was defeated by Ming weaknesses and Qing strengths. He was unable to exempt Yangzhou from the rapaciousness of semi-renegade armies supposedly under his own authority. Just as the Qing armies were advancing through the Huai River drainage and down the Grand Canal toward Yangzhou, Shi was called away from his headquarters to defend Nanjing against a mutiny to the southwest. By the time he got back, morale in Yangzhou had collapsed,

and he was unable to rebuild an effective defense before the Manchus arrived at the doorstep.¹

Conditions were ripe for Shi Kefa to become the greatest martyr of the Southern Ming* and one of the most famous patriots in Chinese history.² Because very few near Shi survived the events of his last hours, accounts of his death differ widely, and many rumors circulated long thereafter that he had been seen alive elsewhere. The final blow was most likely delivered at the command of the Manchu generalissimo Dodo, the Prince of Yu,³ when the captured Shi Kefa refused to submit to him. Shi's body was never found in the immense carnage that ensued.

Shi Kefa's best-known writings are his conscientious memorials to the Hongguang court and his dignified, uncompromising missives to the Qing regent, Dorgon.⁴ Below are translated the last words that he sent to his family members, then in Nanjing,[†] as he faced certain death (fig. 3). These letters, though personal, reflect the extremely heavy burden that officials and their families often bore for the state, the acuteness of the sense of obligation they could feel toward even an indifferent “father-ruler,” and the awareness on the part of moral and political leaders that even their farewell notes to loved ones would instruct posterity.⁵

The pain of decision for loyalists like Shi Kefa was sharpened by their knowledge that adherence to the principle of nonsurrender on their part would assure terrible consequences for the people under their charge if resistance failed. By repeatedly refusing to open Yangzhou to Qing occupation, Shi made that beautiful, elegant city the first one in Jiangnan to stubbornly hold out against the Qing advance. The Manchu leadership did not hesitate to set an example for the other cities farther on by letting their men, normally under strict discipline, rip loose and reward themselves with the riches of Yangzhou. Having penetrated into the city and destroyed the remaining Ming military forces, Dodo authorized five days of unrestrained killing and rapine.

One lucky survivor of the massacre of Yangzhou was Wang Xiuchu, about whom nothing is known except what is recorded in his *Yangzhou*

*Since the latter part of the nineteenth century this term has been used for the collective activities of the four rump Ming governments established by loyalists in the South—those of the Hongguang, Longwu, and Yongli emperors and that of the Prince of Lu (Regent Lu). See Chaps. 4, 7, 8, 14, 15.

†The Shi family ancestral home was in Kaifeng, but because of Kefa's official duties, his close relatives often resided in other cities more proximate to his post.

shiri ji (An Account of Ten Days in Yangzhou), a new translation of which follows the translation of Shi Kefa's last letters home.⁶ Wang sees himself as a scholar, and like most urban civilian men in the highly cultured Jiangnan region, he is helpless to resist martial might with any counterforce. His chief resort is mutual aid among family members, the ties among the brothers being especially strong. As for Wang's relation with his wife, readers will note the absence of anything resembling the Western value of chivalry toward women. Wang does his wife great honor, however, in his culture and time by portraying her foremost concern for him, his brothers, and their son and by contrasting her willingness to die for chastity with the looseness of many other women he observed.

Confucian moral injunctions had always included an emphasis on women's chastity, and societal pressures for strict observance of this, among upper-class women in particular, increased markedly in the last three centuries of the dynastic era. Although the social stations and circumstances of Shi Kefa and Wang Xiuchu differed, both men expected their wives to place the honor and well-being of their husbands and families above the preservation of their own lives. Times of acute disruption, such as the Ming-Qing conflict, brought such expectations home to millions of women.⁷

SHI KEFA An unworthy son, Kefa, leaves this missive for his esteemed mother: In eighteen years of official service, I have tasted every bitterness and yet been unable to increase the welfare of the court. I have only been vastly remiss in attending to my parents.⁸ Neither effectively loyal nor filial, how can I show my face in the world? Now, even if I die fighting for this city, it will not be sufficient to atone for the wrongs I have done. I hope that Mother will attribute it to fate and not be too sorrowful again. Your son for his part will harbor no hatreds when he lies underground. I have obtained the agreement of my chief military aide, [Shi] Dewei,⁹ to finish those matters that should be handled by a son after a father's death, and I hope that Mother will treat him affectionately, like a real grandson.

Written tearfully by unworthy Kefa, 4th month, 19th day [May 14, 1645]

Kefa is about to die. I made a pact with you, my wife,¹⁰ that we would wait for one another in the grave.

Written personally by Kefa, 4th month, 19th day

Kefa leaves this letter for his esteemed uncle, elder brother, worthy third younger brother, and other brothers and nephews:¹¹ The Yangzhou city wall will fall within a day and a night. Months of toil and strain have come to this end. How could I resent using my one death to recompense the court? I regret only that the death of our former emperor [Chongzhen] has not been avenged. I have obtained the consent of my chief military aide, Dewei, to take care of affairs after my death. He should be accepted into our lineage in the same generation as my various nephews. Do not go back on this, my word.

Written by Kefa in the West Gate Tower of the Yangzhou city wall, 4th month, 19th day

[To Shi Dewei:] Kefa, who received great favor from our former emperor, has been unable to carry out the ultimate revenge for his death. Even though I received great favor from the present emperor [Hongguang], I have been unable to protect his domain. Even though I received great favor from my kind mother, I have been unable to make filial provision for her. I have run upon unfortunate times, in which my will could not be fulfilled. To repay the nation with this one death is surely my destiny. I only regret not having earlier followed our former emperor to the grave.

Kefa's last pen stroke, 4th month, 19th day

Respectfully wishing [my mother] Madam [Shi], [my mother-in-law] Madam Yang, and my wife boundless peace: The Northern [Qing] troops surrounded the Yangzhou city wall on the 18th but have not yet attacked. In any case, the people have already lost heart, and the situation cannot be saved. Sooner or later I must die, and I wonder whether my wife is willing to follow me?¹² In a world like this, life is of no use anyway; one might as well come to this conclusion early on. Mother, in your distress you must rely on Fourth Uncle, my cousins, and others in the family for care. Young Zhao* should do whatever

*Shi Zhaoqing, the son of Kefa's second cousin, Kecheng. Because Kefa and his wife were childless, they may have formally or informally adopted this "nephew" as their

恭候
 楊太
 夫人弟安此兵于十日前圍
 揚城至今尚未攻打
 然人心已去校槍不來
 法早晚必死不知
 夫人肯隨我否
 界上無差不知早
 決斷也
 太苦惱須記
 四大事
 古事三奇古事怪後怪
 鬼好及隨他窮了書
 至此肝腸寸斷矣
 四月廿一日泣寄

Figure 3. A calligraphic rendering (not Shi's own hand) of Shi Kefa's last letter to his mother, mother-in-law, and wife.

he thinks best for himself. I write no further; my heart* is rent to pieces.

Sent by Kefa, 4th month, 21st day [May 16]

WANG XIUCHU [On the 25th day of the 4th month (May 20, 1645)] one or two persons having told me that Qing troops had entered the city, I rushed out to ask others, and someone said that it was just the arrival of reinforcements from the Marquis of Jingnan, [General] Huang Degong.[†] Soon I saw that the guards atop the city wall were still in disciplined order, but farther on, in the market, people were talking clamorously as a group of disheveled, barefoot people arrived in a trail of dust. Gasping in alarm, they didn't know what to say when queried.

son. It is not clear whether Zhaoqing was too young to assume the sorts of responsibilities that Kefa placed on Shi Dewei, whether Kefa did not want to compromise the young man's future by designating him as heir to someone who so prominently resisted the Qing, or whether Kefa was displeased with him for some reason. In any case, Zhaoqing was eventually entered in the Shi lineage record, along with Dewei, as Shi Kefa's successor. It was very common for Chinese men who had no sons to adopt heirs, even from outside their lineages (see Chap. 6, n. 1).

*Literally, "liver and intestines."

[†]In fact, Huang had led his forces southwestward to resist an attack on Nanjing by a renegade Ming army from the middle Yangzi region.

Suddenly a wave of several dozen horsemen was seen galloping desperately from north to south, protecting one man in their midst—the viceroy [Shi Kefa]. They had probably fled to the eastern wall but found the outside troops pressing close, so now, wanting to escape by the southern gate, they had come through here. When I saw them, I had no doubt that enemy troops had entered the city. Presently a single horseman came back, riding slowly with slack reins, his face turned upward, wailing in anguish.* In front of the horse walked two soldiers, who couldn't bear to leave the rider. To this day the sight remains before my eyes, and I regret that the rider's name has not been passed down. When he had gone some distance away, the men guarding the wall came down, making a commotion, and scurried for cover, throwing off their helmets and spears, some even cracking their heads or spraining their ankles. When I looked back at the turrets on the wall, I saw that they were completely empty.

Prior to this time the viceroy had found that the city wall was too narrow to mount cannon on top. So he ordered platforms placed at certain ramparts—the fronts perpendicular to the wall and the backs connecting with the roofs of people's residences just inside the wall—to provide more room for mounting the cannon. But the work had not been finished. When the first enemy soldiers climbed over the wall, brandishing bows and slashing out wildly with swords, the soldiers who'd been keeping watch on the wall jostled against one another, trying frantically to escape. The way ahead being jammed, they all made for those platforms, crawling and pulling, hoping to reach the roofs of the houses. But the new platforms, not yet stable, collapsed underfoot, and people fell like leaves, eight or nine out of ten being killed. Those who made it to the rooftops broke tiles with each step, so that altogether it sounded like swords striking shields in a melee or like a hail of bullets, and the clatter went out infinitely in all four directions. The people in the houses underneath ran forth, startled out of their wits. Soon every room in those homes, from the outer reception halls to the inner apartments, was totally filled with soldiers and people who'd been on the wall and were now desperately seeking any nook or cranny in which to hide, oblivious to the owners' protestations.¹³

In one house after another, people closed the doors to their outer

*This lends credence to reports that Shi Kefa was killed near the south gate of the Yangzhou city wall.

rooms and held their breath. Directly in back of the central hall of my home was the city wall, so by peering out through a crack in the window I could see soldiers atop the south wall going westward. They marched in an orderly manner and didn't mind the soaking rain, so I thought they were the well-regimented troops [of the viceroy's command]. But just as I'd regained my composure somewhat, there came an urgent knocking at my door. Some neighbors were organizing a joint welcome for the Qing troops, and they were setting up a bench on which to burn incense to show that they dared not resist. Seeing that things were so far beyond help and being loath to go against the majority view, I lamely uttered a string of OKs. Then I changed into another style of clothing and waited, neck craned, watching apprehensively.

When quite a while passed and no troops came, I again peered through the back window to the top of the wall, where the military unit was spreading out, some soldiers walking on and some stopping. Suddenly I saw some women dressed in the Yangzhou fashion being bundled along among them, and for the first time I was taken aback. I turned to my wife and said, "Enemy soldiers have entered the city. If things go awry, you should cut short your own life." "Yes," she said, "Let me give you my few pieces of silver to keep." And then she sobbed, "Women like me in situations like this no longer think to live in the human world." . . . Just then someone from the countryside rushed in exclaiming, "They've come! They've come!"

I ran out and saw several cavalymen approaching from the north, all leading their horses by the reins and walking slowly. . . . At this point people were looking out for themselves, and there was no communication among neighbors. Although we were only feet apart, not a sound could be heard. When the soldiers got somewhat closer, I began to see that they were going from door to door soliciting silver.¹⁴ But they weren't being greedy, and they let people alone after getting small amounts. If someone refused to give anything, the soldiers would raise their swords threateningly, but they still hadn't struck anyone. (Later I learned that someone had donated ten thousand taels, but goaded by some Yangzhou natives, the Qing soldiers had killed him anyway.) When they got to my door, one horseman pointed to me and said to another, "Get something for me from this one dressed in blue." But before the second horseman could let go of his reins, I was in flight, so he gave me up and rode away on his steed. I wondered why they

had wanted to get me even though I was wearing coarse clothes like a villager.

When my younger and eldest brothers arrived, we put our heads together, saying, "All those who live near here are wealthy merchants, so they look on us as wealthy merchants, too. What can we do?" The upshot was that I relied on my two brothers to brave the rain and hurriedly take the womenfolk through back-alley shortcuts to my second elder brother's house. It was located behind the He family graveyard, and close by on either side lived only very poor people. I alone stayed behind at my place to keep an eye on developments. But in no time my eldest brother came back and said, "Blood has been spilled on the main streets. What are you waiting here for? If all four of us brothers face life or death in the same place, then whatever happens, we'll have no regrets." So, respectfully carrying our ancestral tablets, I accompanied him to my elder brother's house, where we hid along with his wife and son, our youngest brother, my own wife and son, two of my wife's sisters, and her younger brother.

By dusk the sound of Qing soldiers slaying people had penetrated to the doorstep, so we climbed onto the roof for temporary refuge. The rain was heavy, and several of us huddled under one blanket, so every strand of our hair got soaked. The sounds of lamentation and pain outside struck terror from the ears to the soul. Not until the stillness of late nighttime did we dare let ourselves down from the roof by the eaves, light the stove, and cook something to eat.

Fires had started all over the city—more than ten close by and innumerable ones farther away. The red glare was reflected in the sky like lightning; the crackling of the fires bombarded my ears incessantly. Faintly one could also hear the most pitiful sounds, and the mournful aura was extremely chilling—horrid beyond description. When our rice was ready, we just looked at each other, so anxious and tearful that we couldn't use our chopsticks, nor could we think what to do. My wife took the silver that she had given to me previously and broke it into four portions, one for each of us brothers to keep, and we hid the pieces in our topknots, shoes, and waistbands. She also found a tattered robe and a pair of old shoes. After I changed into those, we lay wide awake till dawn. . . .

On the 26th [May 21], the force of the flames abated somewhat, and the sky also gradually cleared. So again we ascended to our rooftop hideout and found more than ten people already concealing themselves

in the rain gutters. Suddenly a man emerged from a chamber to the east and climbed straight up the wall with a saber-wielding soldier in fleet pursuit. But when the soldier saw my group, he let that man go and began chasing me. Terrified, I fled downward off the roof, followed by my brothers, and we ran more than a hundred paces before stopping. After this incident I was separated from my wife and son and no longer knew if they were alive or dead.

The shrewd soldiers, fearing that many were in hiding, tricked people with a "warrant to assuage the populace," which stated that no one who came out voluntarily would be executed. So those who'd been hiding vied to comply, and soon fifty or sixty people had gathered, half of them women. One of my elder brothers said, "If the four of us alone run into fierce soldiers, we won't be able to avoid calamity. It would be better to cast our lot with that group, for larger numbers make it easier to evade harm. Even if the worst happens, we'll have been together in both life and death and have no regrets." Because our minds had become muddled and we had no better idea for saving our lives, the other three of us perfunctorily agreed, and together we joined the larger group. The three Manchu soldiers in charge searched my brothers and got all their silver, but they didn't search me.

Some women came up, and two among them called out to me. I recognized them as the concubines of my friend Zhu Shu, and I anxiously stopped them. The two concubines' hair had fallen loose, they were partially naked, and they stood in mud so deep that it reached their calves. One was embracing a girl, whom a soldier lashed and threw into the mud before driving her away. One soldier hoisted a sword and led the way, another leveled his spear and drove us from behind, and a third moved back and forth in the middle to make sure no one got away. Several dozen people were herded like cattle or goats. Any who lagged were flogged or killed outright. The women were bound together at their necks with a heavy rope—strung one to another like pearls. Stumbling with each step, they were covered with mud. Babies lay everywhere on the ground. The organs of those trampled like turf under horses' hooves or people's feet were smeared in the dirt, and the crying of those still alive filled the whole outdoors. Every gutter or pond that we passed was stacked with corpses, pillowing each other's arms and legs. Their blood had flowed into the water, and the combination of green and red was producing a spectrum of colors. The canals, too, had been filled to level with dead bodies.

We came to the residence of the police chief, the Honorable Yao Yongyan, and went straight in the back entrance. The place was spacious, and there were piles of corpses everywhere. I thought that this would be my place of death. But we wended our way through to the front door, out onto the street, and to another house—that of a merchant from the west named Qiao Chengwang—which was the lair of the three soldiers herding our group. Upon entering, we saw a soldier who had detained several young women and who had been rifling the chests and hampers, making mountains of varicolored silks and satins.

When he saw the other three soldiers arrive, he laughed heartily and then drove the few dozen of us men into the back hall. The women were put in a side room wherein were two small square tables, three dressmakers, and a middle-aged woman, who was also working on some garments. She was a local person, heavily made up and gaudily dressed, who gestured, talked, and laughed smugly. Every time the soldiers ran across some good item, she would beg them for it, brazenly using her fawning charms. One of the soldiers at one point remarked, "When we campaigned in Korea [1627 and 1636–37], we captured women by the tens of thousands, and not one lost her chastity. How is it that wonderful China has become so shameless?" Alas, this is why China is in chaos. Then the three soldiers stripped the women of all their wet clothes, from outer to inner wear and from head to heel, and they ordered the middle-aged woman to take measurements and make alterations so the others could change into fresh new gowns. Needless to say, the women, relentlessly forced to expose their naked bodies, felt so ashamed and awkward that they wanted to die. After the women had finished changing clothes, the soldiers cuddled them while drinking wine and eating meat, doing all sorts of things with no regard for propriety.

Then one of the soldiers jumped up, drew his saber, and bellowed, "Come on, you southern savages!" By the time we got near the front of the hall, some of us men were being tied up, including my eldest brother. My elder brother said to me, "Things having come to this strait, what more is there to say?" Desperately clasping my hand one last time, he went forward, and my younger brother followed him. The men who'd been captured now numbered over fifty. If a soldier so much as raised a sword and shouted, our souls expired, and not a single one of us dared make a move. I, too, followed my eldest brother from the hall and saw that outside they were killing people; the men in the

group awaited their fate in turn. At first I thought that I'd just as soon be bound up, but all at once my heart quickened as if aided by some supernatural force, and I slipped away through the hall to the rear without anyone knowing.

In the western room of the quarters in back of that hall, some old women were still holding out, so I couldn't hide there. I went straight through to the back and found there nothing but corralled camels and horses. Unable to jump over them, I began to panic. But then I stooped down and crawled under several of the animals' bellies to get out. If anything had spooked the camels or horses and caused them to lift their hooves even slightly, I would have been mashed. . . .

I rushed to a door that led to an adjoining alley and clutched the bolt of the lock in both hands beseechingly. Although I shook it a hundred times, it wouldn't budge. When I attacked it with a rock, the sound echoed as far as the outer courtyard, and I feared detection. Having no other recourse, I began joggling it again, bloodying my fingers. Then the lock moved abruptly, and I pulled on it with all my might. With the lock in hand I anxiously tugged at the crossbar, but it, being made of hibiscus wood, had become swollen in the rain and was jammed twice as badly as the lock. I was desperately applying all my strength to raising the crossbar when the hinges broke, and the whole door and surrounding wall collapsed thunderously. My panic-stricken body fairly flew over the rubble—I don't know where the power came from. I dashed madly out the back gate and found myself at the foot of the city wall. . . .

In the neighborhood to the left of the Qiao residence I squeezed through the back door of a house and found all the hiding places already filled with people. Because they definitely wouldn't allow me to stay, I went toward the front—through five areas, all just as crowded—and didn't stop until I reached the front door. It opened onto a main street, where troops went back and forth in endless procession, so it had been abandoned as too dangerous. But I hurried in and found a bed with a canopy. I climbed one of the bedposts and squeezed myself into a hiding place above the canopy. Just as I'd caught my breath, through the compound wall I heard the voice of my younger brother shrieking and the sound of a saber hacking—three strikes, and all was silent. After a short while I also heard my elder brother say pleadingly, "I have silver at home in an underground vault. Let me get it and bring it to you." One strike, and again silence. By that time my spirit had

left its lodging, my heart was like burning lamp-oil, my eyes were parched and tearless, my bowels were in knots, about to split, and I no longer could control myself. Shortly a soldier entered with a woman under his arm and wanted to lie down with her on the bed. She refused, but he forced her. Then she said that it was too close to the marketplace to stay for very long, so in a little while the soldier took her somewhere else. I barely escaped detection!

The room had a false ceiling, apparently made of straw matting. It couldn't sustain a person's weight, but one could use it to reach the rafters. I grasped each rafter with both hands and made my way up them until I could prop my feet on the center beam. Below, the matting shielded me from view, and in between, it was as black as lacquer. Soldiers still came and thrust their spears up through the ceiling. But finding the space empty, they thought there was no one up there. So I was able to go a whole day without encountering any soldiers. Below me, however, I don't know how many people were run through with swords and spears. . . .

After a long while, the horsemen thinned out, and on either side of me I heard only people's mournful cries. Because half of us brothers had been killed, and I had no way of divining whether my eldest brother still lived, I thought that I should try to track down my wife and son, even though I didn't know where they were, and perhaps get to see them again. So, using the beam, I slowly got down and crept stealthily to the street out front.

There in the street, severed heads lay cushioning one another, and in the gathering darkness one couldn't tell whose was whose. I stooped over the corpses and called out all around but got no response. At a distance to the south I saw a swarm of people coming toward me carrying torches. I quickly evaded them and fled along the city wall, where I tripped repeatedly on the piled-up bodies. Each time something alarmed me, I lay flat on the ground and pretended to be a stiff corpse. At length I reached a small street, where people were startling and bumping into each other in the dark. By contrast, on the main thoroughfares torches were so ubiquitous that it was like broad daylight. I walked from early to mid evening before reaching my elder brother's house. The door was closed, and at first I didn't dare knock. But momentarily I heard a woman's voice—my sister-in-law's—so I tapped lightly and my wife answered the door. My eldest brother had returned earlier, and my wife and son both were there. I sobbed with my eldest

brother, but I couldn't bring myself to tell him right away about our other two brothers' being killed. My sister-in-law questioned me, but I didn't tell her the truth about her husband.

I asked my wife how she had avoided trouble, and she told me: "When the soldier came at us and you fled, everyone else did the same except me. I held our son Peng in my arms and tried to kill myself by jumping off the roof, but it didn't work. My younger sister, having tripped and injured her foot, was lying there with me when a soldier came and took the two of us into a room. Inside were several dozen people all tied together like a string of fish. The soldier, ordering me and the other women to keep an eye on the rest and not let anyone get away, then went out carrying a saber. Another soldier came in, seized my sister, and left. After a long while, I didn't see any more soldiers come, so I tricked the other women and got out, whereupon I ran into Old Lady Hong. We helped each other back to our former place, so I fortunately escaped the fate of the other captives. . . ."

On the 27th I asked my wife where she'd hidden [with Old Lady Hong, a relative of the wife of my elder brother], and she took me circuitously to a spot behind a coffin, where no one ever went and where there were only some old tiles and worthless bricks. Squatting in the overgrowth, I placed my son on the coffin and covered him with a reed mat. My wife crouched toward the front end of the coffin and I toward the other end. If we lifted our heads or stretched out our legs, then the tops of our heads or our feet could be seen. We took shallow breaths and packed ourselves in by tucking in our hands and feet.

Just as I'd calmed down somewhat, the sound of killing pressed in on us. Wherever sword hilts clattered, a din of sorrowful cries arose, and several dozen—sometimes over a hundred—people would plead for their lives in unison. Whenever a soldier appeared, the southerners—whether few or many—would all hang their heads and grovel, or stretch out their necks to receive the sword, and not a one would dare to flee. It goes without saying that there were droves of orphaned children and widowed women, crying in hundred-voice choruses, their lamentations verily shaking the earth. By afternoon the stacks of corpses had grown mountainous, but the killing and pillaging just grew more intense [fig. 4]. When evening came, we emerged hesitantly. My son Peng had lain contentedly on the coffin and had neither cried nor spoken nor wanted anything to eat all day long. When he'd been thirsty, we'd

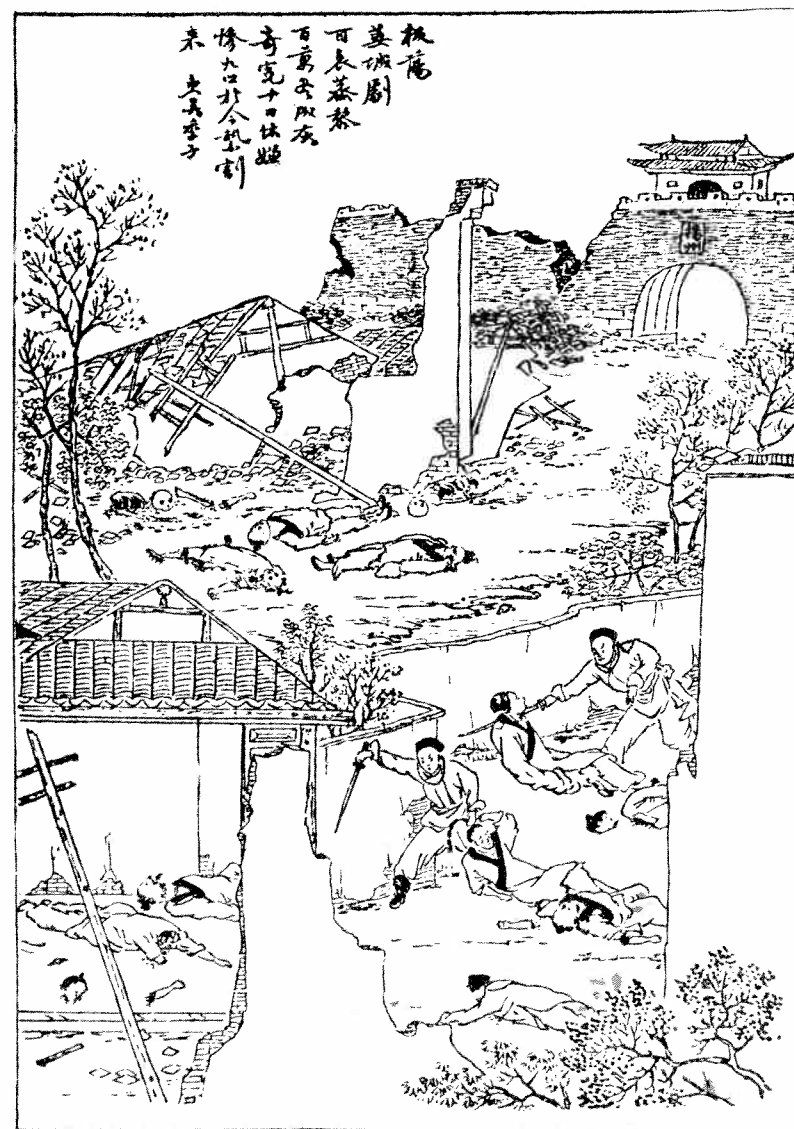


Figure 4. A late-Qing artist's visualization of the massacre of Yangzhou.

used a piece of tile to give him some gutter water, and he'd then gone back to sleep. Now we woke him up and carried him with us.

Old Lady Hong appeared and informed us that my sister-in-law had been abducted, too, and that my nephew, still in swaddling clothes, was missing. What terrible anguish! In just two days I'd lost four loved ones—my elder and younger brothers, a sister-in-law, and a nephew. Together we looked to see if there was any rice left in the mortar, but there was none. So my eldest brother and I lay pillowing each other, bearing our hunger until dawn. That night my wife again tried to kill herself and would have succeeded if Old Lady Hong hadn't intervened.

On the 28th I said to my eldest brother, "We don't know who might be killed today. You fortunately are still unharmed. Please take my son Peng to keep him alive a bit longer." My brother tearfully consoled me and then, taking little Peng, fled to another place. Old Lady Hong said to my wife, "Yesterday I hid inside the coffin and was fine from morning to evening. Today I should change hiding places with you." But my wife insisted that she didn't want to and, as before, concealed herself with me behind the coffin. Before long, several soldiers came in, opened the coffin, and snatched out Old Lady Hong. Although she was beaten a hundred times over, she never divulged where anyone else was, and I was very grateful to her. Soon more and more soldiers came near our hiding place, one on the heels of another. But when they happened to come into the area behind the house, they just saw the coffin and left.

All at once, more than a dozen soldiers came into the house yelling and acting fierce. I saw someone approach the coffin, and when he poked my foot with a long bamboo pole, I flinched in alarm and came out. He was a Yangzhou man—whose face I knew but whose name I'd forgotten—who was guiding the others around. I begged him to have mercy on us, and after taking some of my silver he released me, though he still had the gall to say, "I'm letting your wife off cheaply." He went back into the house and told the soldiers to let us go for now, so they dispersed.

Before I'd caught my breath, a young man dressed in red came straight at me with the point of a long sword. I gave him silver, but he also wanted my wife. She, in her ninth month of pregnancy, was crouching on the ground and absolutely refused to rise. So I lied to the man, saying, "My wife has been pregnant for many months. Yesterday she slipped and fell from the roof, causing a miscarriage. There's no way the child can be born alive. How can you expect her to get

up?" But the man in red didn't believe me, so he opened her dress to look at her belly, and what I had said was further confirmed by her trousers, which we had previously daubed with blood. So he paid no more attention to her. He had already taken a young woman, her daughter, and little boy captive. When the boy cried to his mother for something to eat, the soldier grew angry and bashed in the child's skull with one blow. Then he carried the mother and daughter away.

I told my wife that the place had become too well known, so we couldn't be safe there and should change to another location. But my wife was now determined to kill herself, and I, too, was at my wit's end with fright. So we both went into the house and tried to hang ourselves together from a rafter. But the rope, which was slung over the rafter to make two nooses, quickly broke under our weight and dropped us simultaneously to the floor. We hadn't yet gotten up when soldiers again filled the gate. They headed straight for the reception hall and didn't take time to pass through the two side corridors. So my wife and I had a chance to dash feverishly outside and into a thatched hut. It was occupied by some peasant women, who allowed my wife to stay but rejected me. I ran hurriedly into another thatched hut to the south of that one and found straw piled to the ceiling . . . in which several people were hiding. Within the piles I also spied several square tables completely surrounded by straw but with enough empty space underneath for twenty or thirty people. I forced my way in under the tables and thought I'd hit on a good stratagem. But unexpectedly the decayed wall gave way and opened a hole two or three feet high, through which some soldiers quickly detected me and the others. From outside the hole they jabbed us with long spears, and everyone closer to the outside was severely wounded, whereas I was injured in my thigh. The former were all nabbed by the soldiers, but those farther in, like me, crab-crawled out and got away.

Going back to where my wife was, I found her and the other women all lying on a woodpile, their bodies smeared with blood, gobs of excrement in their hair, their faces powdered with ashes. They looked like phantoms, and I could tell which one my wife was only by her voice. I begged the women to let me hide under some straw while they lay in a bunch on top. Holding my breath and not daring to move, I almost suffocated. But my wife gave me the end of a bamboo tube, through one end of which I could get air from above, so I was able to

survive. . . . As it grew dark, the women all got up, and at last I emerged from the straw, dripping sweat like rain.

That night we returned to the Hongs' house and found both Old Lady Hong and her husband there. My eldest brother also came and said that he'd been taken and made to carry loads, after which he'd been tipped a thousand cash and released with a flag to assure his safe return. . . .

The next day was the 29th—the fifth day since the slaughter began on the 25th—and I was beginning to think that by some good fortune I might be spared, when the rumor flew around that everyone in the city was to be exterminated. Of those in the city who were still left breathing, over half then risked death to lower themselves down the outside of the city wall and make a run for it. The old official moat, which had grown clogged and no longer admitted a flow of water, became a broad, flat road [via which people were escaping]. But in so doing, they also ran into peril, because those who tried to save themselves by fleeing the city carried all their valuables with them, and this had led groups of thugs to enter the moat at night and rob people of their gold and silver. No one could do anything about it. We [my wife, son, and I] didn't think we could escape through that gauntlet, and my eldest brother couldn't bear to leave me and go by himself. So we mulled over the idea until dawn and then put it to rest.

Because we couldn't stay in the place where we'd been hiding, and because my wife had been spared harm several times because of her advanced pregnancy, I alone hid in some water plants at the edge of a pond while my wife and son lay pitifully above me. Although several soldiers came, and a few accosted them, each time the soldiers left after being paid off with small amounts. But subsequently a vicious soldier came, looking very evil with a mouselike head and hawkish eyes, and he wanted to seize my wife. She crept forward feebly and told him she was pregnant, but he didn't listen. When he tried to force her up, she rolled on the ground, refusing to rise even if it meant death. He then beat her with the back of his sword until blood soaked her clothing all the way from the inner to the outer garments. Prior to this my wife had warned me, saying, "If I meet misfortune, then I'm determined to die. Don't plead for me on the ground that we are husband and wife, because not only you but our son, too, will be implicated." So I hid at a distance in the pond grass as if I didn't know [what was happening]. But I really thought she was going to be killed. The evil

soldier, not content to leave her injured, bound her upper arms with her hair and dragged her sideways, cursing and beating her vilely. From the path in the field through a deep lane out onto the main street, the route curved over the distance of an arrow shot, and he was bent on thrashing her several times every few steps of the way. Suddenly, however, he ran into a group of horsemen, one among whom spoke several sentences to him in Manchu, so he let my wife go and left. Only then was she able to crawl back to me and have a big cry; not a patch of her skin was unbroken.

Then fires broke out again all around, and the numerous thatched dwellings on either side of the He family graveyard were engulfed in flames as soon as they ignited. The very few who had slipped through the dragnet by hiding in undiscovered nooks and crannies, once forced out by the flames, ran straight to their undoing—not one in a hundred avoided this fate. There were those who just closed their doors and let themselves be burned to death—from several people to as many as a hundred in one house. Later it couldn't be discerned how many people's bones were massed in a given room. . . . My wife, son, and I lay together toward the back of a tomb, covered with mud and dirt from head to toe, looking scarcely human. As the force of the flames mounted, the tall trees in the graveyard caught fire: they blazed like lightning flashes and sounded like a landslide. The hot wind roared angrily, and the bright sun itself appeared pale and dim. Before my eyes I seemed to see countless [Buddhist] guardian demons driving a million souls to their deaths in hell.¹⁵ When not trembling with fear, I quite lost my senses and, on the whole, no longer knew whether I was still in the human world.

Out of nowhere I heard loud, heavy footsteps and desperate, heart-stopping shouts. Turning to look toward the graveyard wall, I saw at a distance my eldest brother struggling with a soldier who had grabbed him—the same one who'd seized and then released my wife the day before! My brother, being a strong man, got free by shoving the soldier, who then hastened away. For a short interval my heart was palpitating. Then my brother, naked, his hair disheveled, dashed toward me with the soldier in close pursuit. As a last resort he asked me for some silver to save his life. Although I had only one ingot,¹⁶ I took it out and gave it to the soldier. But, not satisfied with such a small amount, he became enraged and attacked my brother with his saber. As my brother writhed on the ground, blood flowing over his whole body, my son Peng (then

four years old) tugged at the soldier, tearfully begging him to stop. But the soldier just wiped his sword on the boy's clothing and continued his attack until my brother was near death.

Then he turned on me and pulled my hair, demanding more silver and striking me indiscriminately with the back of his sword. I pleaded that my silver was gone and that if he'd accept nothing but silver, then I'd gladly die—but what about other valuables? The soldier hauled me by the hair into the Hong's house, where my wife's clothing and accessories had been placed inside two urns. I emptied them under the stairs and turned out everything for him to choose from. He didn't pass up any of her jewelry, but of her garments he took just the nicer ones. Seeing that my son wore a silver chain around his neck, he used his saber to cut it off. As the soldier left, he looked at me and said, "If I don't kill you, somebody else is sure to." So I knew that the rumor about wiping out everyone in the city was true, and I fully expected to die.

Leaving our son in the house, I rushed back outside with my wife and saw that my brother's neck had gashes about one inch deep in both the front and back and that his chest was even more grisly. The two of us helped him into the Hong's house, but in querying him we realized that he was already beyond feeling pain and was only semiconscious. Having tried to make him secure, my wife and I again hid out near the tomb, where all the neighbors, too, were lying in the clumps of weeds. Suddenly what seemed to be a human voice said to me, "Tomorrow they're going to scour the city and kill absolutely everybody. You'd better give up your wife and make a run for it with me." My wife also urged me to go. But how could I leave my eldest brother in such a perilous state? Besides, I had relied before on still having some silver left. Now it was completely gone, so I didn't see how I could survive. I passed out from sheer misery and didn't come to for a long while—by which time the fires had subsided.

From far off, we heard three bursts of cannon fire, and the numbers of troops going back and forth gradually diminished. My wife, holding our son in her arms, sat in an excrement pit, where she was joined by Old Lady Hong. Several soldiers had captured four or five women, the older two of whom were crying dolefully while two of the younger ones were smiling, laughing, and enjoying themselves. From behind, two other soldiers raced up and tried to steal some of the women, and a fracas ensued. One soldier in the group tried to break it up, speaking

in Manchu. Suddenly one of them hoisted one of the younger women and crudely copulated with her under a tree. Then the two other younger women were sullied while the two older ones wailed and begged to be spared. The three younger ones shamelessly thought nothing of it when about a dozen men took turns raping them before handing them over to the two soldiers who'd run up later. By that time one of the younger women couldn't even get up to walk. I recognized her as a daughter-in-law of the Jiao family, which in ordinary times could be said to have deserved this. But under such shocking circumstances I couldn't help but sigh regretfully.

Just then I saw a man dressed in red with a rapier at his waist wearing a Manchu-style hat and black boots; he was under thirty years of age and of nobly handsome and forthright bearing. He was followed by another man, clothed in yellow with armor on his torso, who was also very imposing. And close behind them were several Yangzhou people. The man in red scrutinized me and said, "It seems that you're not like the rest of this lot. Tell me your identity truthfully." Thinking that some had gotten off because they were scholars and that others had been executed immediately for the same reason, I didn't dare blurt out the truth but instead made up something to tell him. He also pointed to my wife and child, asking who they were, and I acknowledged them candidly. He said, "Tomorrow the venerable prince [Dodo] will order that all swords be sheathed, and you three shall live." He had those behind him give us a few articles of clothing, as well as one ingot of silver. He asked how long we'd been without food, and I replied, "Five days." So he ordered us to follow his group. My wife and I were simultaneously trusting and suspicious, but we didn't dare refuse to go. [With Old Lady Hong] we reached a house where goods had been gathered in great profusion, fish and rice completely filling the place. The man in red said to a woman there, "Treat these four persons well," and then took leave of us.

After dusk my wife was distressed to learn that her younger brother had been seized by a soldier and that his fate was unknown. Soon Old Lady Hong brought out some fish and rice for us to eat, and because our house was not far from the Hong's, I took some to feed my eldest brother. His throat was so badly injured, however, that he couldn't swallow, so I stopped after a few tries with the chopsticks. As I dressed my brother's hair and washed the blood from his wounds, my heart felt as though cut out by a knife. . . .

The next day, the 1st of the 5th month [May 25], the violence of the soldiers was not severe, but some killing and pillaging continued. . . . On the 2nd, we heard that [Qing] officials had been placed in all administrative units in the region and that assuaging placards had been carried out among all the common people, declaring that they should not be alarmed. Also, it was decreed that monks in the various monasteries were to begin cremating bodies. (No small number of women had hidden in the monasteries and then died of fright or hunger.) The book for recording cremations, when checked later, was found to list eighty thousand¹⁷—not including those who threw themselves into wells and rivers, those who closed their doors and immolated or hanged themselves, nor those who died in captivity.

On the 3rd, relief measures were announced, and we accompanied Old Lady Hong to Quekou Gate to receive some rice. . . . All those who came to carry off sacks of food had scorched pates, pulpy foreheads, and broken or otherwise injured arms and legs. They had sword gashes all over their bodies, the blood from which had clotted in patches, and their faces were streaked with trickles of blood like tears from burning red candles. In grabbing for rice, people didn't look out even for their own friends or relatives. The strong went and came back again, but the old, weak, and hurt were unable to get a scoop of grain all day.

On the 4th the sky cleared. A hot sun cooked the city, and the smell of corpses became staggering. Front and back, left and right, everywhere were pyres, the combined smoke from which was like a fog, and the rancid odor went out several dozen *li*. On this day I burned some cotton and human bones together and used the ashes to treat my brother's wounds. Tears fell from his eyes as he nodded to show his appreciation, but he couldn't speak. On the 5th . . . the sword gashes burst open and he died. Such grief!—pain beyond expression. Especially when I recalled that in the beginning of this catastrophe, there were eight of us, not counting my wife's sisters and younger brother—my elder and younger brothers, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, wife, and son—and now only three of us remained.

I've discursively recorded only what I experienced personally or saw with my own eyes from the 25th day of the 4th month to the 5th day of the 5th month—altogether ten days. . . . All I intend is that people of later generations who are fortunate to live in a peaceful world and to enjoy uneventful times, but who neglect self-cultivation and reflection and are inveterately profligate, will read this and be chastened.

3

“THEY APPEAR MORE HUMAN”:

A MISSIONARY

DESCRIBES THE MANCHUS

AFTER SUBDUING THE POPULATION of Yangzhou, the Qing army's next major objective was to cross the Yangzi River at its juncture with the Grand Canal. This feat, and the consequent collapse of Ming forces immediately south of the river, was witnessed not only by Chinese but by at least one “Western barbarian” as well—Father Martino Martini (1614–61). His records, and those of other Europeans who visited China in the Ming-Qing era, provide us with alternatives to Chinese points of view and detailed, straightforward descriptions of many things that seldom, if ever, are mentioned in contemporaneous Chinese writings—such as what ordinary Manchu soldiers were like.

The decline of the Ming dynasty in its last half-century coincided with the arrival in China of some astute observers—Christian missionaries from Europe, priests of the Society of Jesus, commonly called Jesuits. This rigorously disciplined religious order had provided shock troops for the papacy in the Catholic Reformation of the middle sixteenth century, and by the end of that century the Jesuits were leading a great wave of Catholic missionary enterprises not only in East Asia but also in the Americas. The insistence of this order that their members be accomplished in some branch of the sciences (such as astronomy or cartography), as well as have an aptitude for letters, and the expertise that many Jesuits developed in the manufacture of artillery were important factors in the acceptance they found among Chinese scholar-officials and rulers. Strongly committed to the extension of Christian teachings to all parts of the world (especially to populous countries like China), the Jesuits were remarkably flexible in adjusting to the cultures and politics of foreign lands. Indeed, Jesuits managed to ingratiate