

THE THREE KINGDOMS

三國



“On the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the second year of the reign of the Established Calm (Jian Ning), the Emperor arrived at the Great Hall of Benign Virtue for the full-moon ancestral rites. As he was about to seat himself, a strong wind began issuing out of a corner of the hall. From the same direction a green serpent appeared slid down off a beam, and coiled itself on the throne. The emperor fainted and was rushed to his private chambers. The assembled officials fled. The next moment the serpent vanished and a sudden thunderstorm broke.”

“Here begins our tale. The empire long divided, must unite; long united must divide. Thus it has ever been.”

JOINT CABINET CRISIS

Study Guide for Zurich Model United Nations

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THE STARTING POINT

Our crisis starts out in the aftermath of a defining battle for Imperial China: The Battle of Red Cliffs in 208 AD. It was the first trilateral military encounter of the warlords (and alter-egos of the chairs), who had emerged from the tohuwabohu the Han Dynasty had become in the beginning of the third century AD. Sun Quan, Liu Bei, and Imperial Chancellor Cao Cao had gained control of large parts of the 400-year-old Dynasty and Emperor Xian was barely

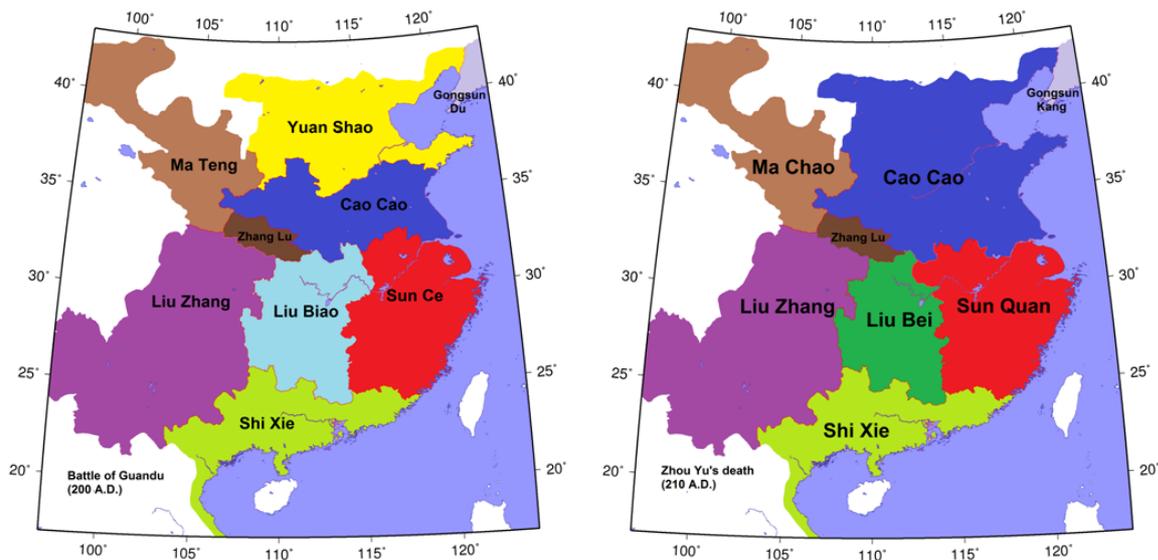


Figure 1: Territories Controlled by Several Individuals in the wake of our Crisis

more than a puppet of external interests.

In this Study-Guide you will learn about the developments that took place before the battle, focussing on the regions that would end up becoming the kingdoms of Wei, Wu, and Shu with our Warlords at the helms.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Organisation of the Han Empire

For further discussion of locations, you should know that the Empire under Han rule was divided into three levels of administration: Provinces, Commandaries, and Counties; for our crisis, we will operate on the scale of the former two. You can find a map of all of them, including approximate populations, [here](http://i.imgur.com/0lOfHjj.jpg)¹. Don't worry about precise locations too much though, as there will be a concrete strategical briefing in the beginning of the first session to

¹ <http://i.imgur.com/0lOfHjj.jpg>

bring everyone to the same page. If you want to follow the events of the guide more closely, [this²](#) map contains most relevant features and cities.

Pinyin Pronunciation

Another useful tool for communication during the crisis is the Pinyin Pronunciation which can be applied to all names used from here on forward. You can find a comprehensive guide [here³](#).

² http://kongming.net/novel/i/map_rtk.jpg

³ http://www.ctcfl.ox.ac.uk/Pinyin_Notes.htm

THEY YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION

One of the events defining the common history of the three states and the first occasion connecting the three warlords was the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans, named after the yellow scarfs they wore on their heads in the late 100s.

In the wake of the second century, the Han Dynasty was in bad shape. Following the death of Emperor He in 105 the central government's control began to deteriorate. A line of regents ascending to the throne at a very young age made the court susceptible to eunuchs and family members struggling for influence. The resulting bloated government apparatus failed to collect taxes, exploded in cost, and, most importantly, failed to administer the significant crop reserves collected by the local branches of government, resulting in high risks of famine. This new inefficiency was the final straw for many peasants, large numbers of who were previously forced to sell their land and to become tenants, being drafted for military service and accepting very unfavourable conditions. Starting with the reign of Emperor An in 106, the associated grievances began erupting all over the country and leaders of local uprisings even started proclaiming themselves Emperor.

Out of the numerous rebels, many of which were inspired by Daoism, one was destined for greater things. Zhang Jiao, self-appointed Grand Worthy Master, working up his way up as a healer and preacher among the rebelling civilians, established his own construct parallel to the government. This hybrid of church and state with 36 branches eventually became his medium for the "Yellow Turban Rebellion" and was soon recognised as a threat by the Minister of Education, who pursued the Emperor at the time to order the execution of several conspirators. Despite these efforts, preparations to establish the Taiping Dynasty (named after the Daoist tradition Zhang Jiao was a Master of) continued at full blast. In the months before the planned simultaneous uprising of all members of the movement, one of the 36 responsible regional leaders, called Grand Parsons, even won over two of the Eunuchs at the imperial court for the cause.

At this point in the beginning of 184 events began to accelerate. Said Grand Parson was betrayed by another of Zhang Jiao's trustees and literally ripped apart in the Capital. Shortly thereafter thousands of Yellow Turbans were executed and Jiao's arrest was ordered. He in turn gave himself the title of Celestial General and called for an emergency start of the rebellion. The Yellow Turbans swept over the entire country, burning government infrastructure and killing the wealthy, thereby prompting Emperor Ling to order all local officials to engage the rebels in whichever manner possible and even to release former officials from jail to command troops. Additionally, special commanders were appointed to gather elite troops and take control of specific regions for a large-scale campaign. Among them - Cao Cao, Liu Bei, and Sun Jian (Father of Sun Quan). Once the large-scale military operation was in place, the government, or rather its armies, started gaining ground again, but before suffering defeat from the united army due to their fragmented nature, the Yellow Turbans managed to bring large parts of the country under their control, to kill or capture numerous princes and government officials, and some even gained recognition in mid-level offices

they had violently acquired. Despite the disease-driven death of Zhang Jiao and the defeat and execution of his brothers, who served him as Generals, local groups resisted destruction for another 20 years and the rebellion coined an entire generation of Han citizens with former leaders remaining in influential positions well into our crisis.

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

One of the most important concepts of Chinese political philosophy for our crisis is the concept of Tian Ming (天命), or the mandate of heaven. Democratically elected leaders are considered legitimate because a majority of the people have agreed to transfer their joint power to them. Medieval European kings considered legitimate because their power was granted to them by god who had granted earthly power to the emperor and his noblemen and spiritual power to pope and clergy. The Chinese emperors however were considered legitimate because (or rather if) they had the mandate of heaven.

Almost two thousand years before Christ's birth the ancient Chinese worshipped a supreme god called Shangdi. Over time this god transformed to become synonymous with the concept of heaven, or Tian. To some schools of thought heaven was a deity, to others like Daoism or Confucianism it was some sort of supreme ruling principle (as opposed to Di, the earth). All had in common that heaven was supreme and divine.

The concept of Tian Ming was developed during the Zhou dynasty of 1046-256 BC. The mandate of heaven determined whether a ruler was virtuous enough to rule. If he wasn't, if he wasn't able to meet the high demands or if he didn't meet his obligations, he lost the mandate and thus the right to rule.

The mandate consists of four principles:

1. Heaven gives the emperor the right to rule;
2. There is only one heaven, therefore there can never be more than one mandate and thus not more than one emperor;
3. The right to rule depends on the ruler's virtue;
4. A dynasty does not have a permanent right to rule.

If a ruling emperor had lost his mandate or was about to lose it, this was foreshadowed not only by his political and military misfortune, but also through signs and wonders in nature. Great droughts, floods, earthquakes or thunderstorms, as well as strange sightings in the night sky or the birth of monstrous animals might signal the unworthiness of the emperor. But also uprisings of rebels, defeats in battle, invasions of foreign troops or general decline in moral standards at court meant that the emperor has fallen out of favour of the heaven.

The mandate of heaven was essentially different from the European divine right of kings. The divine right of kings was given to some noble families for perpetuity. Uprising against a king was seen as a sin by most schools of thought. The mandate of heaven however was



not granted to particular families and did not last forever. Uprising against an emperor who had lost his virtue was a moral obligation. An emperor's son might follow his father onto the throne, but this was not due to his noble birth but rather due to his virtue. If he was depraved, the mandate would pass on to the next and it didn't matter if the chosen one was the son of a peasant or a nobleman. If one showed his virtue through success in battle and politics, everyone could be chosen by heaven to be the ruler of all China.

THE KINGDOM OF WEI

The last decades have not been peaceful for the Empire of Han. Repeated barbarian incursions, sectarian peasant uprisings and a sequence of ineffective regency councils for child emperors have left the Mandate of Heaven eroded in the eyes of many Chinese. Doomsday prophecies were enjoying rising popularity, and many of those who had enough to lose not to join any of the rebel groups, yet not enough to arrange for their own protection were willing to support a strongman to restore public order. Meanwhile, the two main factions at the Emperor's court, the eunuch administrators and the aristocrat in-laws of the Emperors, eroded each other's authority and the court's legitimacy even further in countless intrigues and power struggles. In 189, Dong Zhuo was the first in a line of warlords to assume the reins of power by seizing the young Emperor himself and turning him into a puppet, ostensibly to curb Eunuch influence at court. One coalition of generals to 'restore Imperial order' followed after another, alternately claiming to free the Emperor or defend him against usurpation. With the central administration failing, much of the country was split between rivaling warlords during that time.

Yet in 195, the Emperor managed to escape and returned to the ruins of his old capital, Luoyang. Hardly able to fend for itself, the Imperial Court turned to Cao Cao, a contact established by the Empress and her family. While he was only a minor warlord at this time, Cao Cao had shown great promise in earlier campaigns for Han against the Yellow Turban rebels and established an independent power base at Xu in Yan Province, not far from the Imperial center. He saw his opportunity and took in the fugitive monarch. More than the previous generals who had done so, Cao Cao knew how to play the politics of the Imperial Court as well as the strategy of military campaigns, and his publically maintained cordial relationship with the Emperor and many respected court aristocrats has bolstered his legitimacy and turned him from a warlord into the respected first man of the state.

In 208 AD, there formally is no such thing as a 'Kingdom of Wei'. In his understanding, Imperial Chancellor (丞相) Cao Cao (曹操) rules what is left of the Han Empire in the name of Emperor Xian, with the unquestioned purpose of restoring peace and stability to all of China. In reality however, his authority is limited to the Northern Plain core lands of Imperial China that are to become the Kingdom of Wei, colloquially named thus after one of the Warring States situated in roughly the same area. Since the Imperial Capital Luoyang has been sacked and plundered repeatedly in the chaos before Cao Cao's advent to power, court and administration have de facto moved to Xu in the province of Yu. The Emperor himself is now a more or less voluntary captive there, indebted to Cao Cao for his rescue from the hands of other warlords.

In a series of successful campaigns, Cao Cao has defeated most of these competitors and gradually tightened his personal grip on the state's power structure, taking care to preserve much of the Han's meticulous and fine-tuned bureaucracy to efficiently administer the territories under his control. His success in providing stability for the Imperial Core has given Cao Cao a power base and considerable source of revenue enabling his campaigns to sub-

jugate the other rebellious parts of the realm. Control over it and the Emperor also mean that his rule enjoys far greater legitimacy than any of the contenders could boast of, and until recently it seemed clear that Cao Cao was well on his way to restoring the Mandate of Heaven to Han.

Yet this seeming ascendancy came to an abrupt halt when Cao Cao personally suffered a catastrophic defeat against a hastily forged alliance of the southern warlords Liu Bei and Sun Quan at the Battle of Red Cliffs. Trying to cross the river Yangzi into Jing Province with a force of between 200.000 and 800.000 (Accounts differ), he fell to a bait laid out by Zhuge Liang, Liu Bei's ingenious general. Cao Cao's army, both heady with victory yet also exhausted from the incessant previous campaigns, expected an easy victory against the much weaker southern force, but what they had thought to be a delegation sent across the river to negotiate terms of surrender turned out to be ships filled to the brim with inflammable straw and oil. In the ensuing chaos, Cao Cao's army was put to rout and while many drowned in the river or were slain by enemy soldiers, even more got lost in the unfamiliar marshlands on their shattered retreat. The Chancellor himself made a narrow escape back to his capital, and while the southern forces appear to weak for now to use their momentum for an aggressive campaign, reuniting All Under Heaven seems to have failed for now. The fragile internal stability of Cao Cao's personal rule is being put to trial by this defeat, and it will soon become apparent whether his claim to represent the one legitimate Han government can persevere or is destined to enter the history books as yet another warlord state.

Military Assets

The core of Cao Cao's forces is made up of 3 different groups:

His personal army, raised initially privately by himself and his kinsmen like Cao Ren and from Yan Province and other territories under his administration. 100,000

The 'Qingzhou Corps', a euphemism adopted by the bands of former Yellow Turban Rebels that were pardoned by Cao Cao in return for their lifelong service during his time as a general. Anything from common bandits to highly skilled and experienced skirmishers. Numbers subject to extreme variation. 30,000

Tiger and Leopard Knights 5000

All in all, has access to about 300,000 men, of which 200,000 were deployed at the Red Cliffs.

THE KINGDOM OF SHU

Liu Bei, a former warlord and senior individual from the court of the Han dynasty, drove the Shu Han starting from the end of the Eastern Han dynasty. Liu Bei built up himself as a forbidding general during the Yellow Turban Rebellion in which he utilized a volunteer armed force to win significant triumphs against the Taoist rebels in the West, achieving a more inclusive elimination than in the North. He was then named his first legitimate title as the prefect of Anxi, but showing his pure honesty, he resigned this as opposed to than kneeling to a corrupt inspector. When Dong Zhou took the capital from the Yuan, and there was the sequential civil war, Liu Bei set up what would be a long contention with Cao Cao, promptly joining the powers of Tao Qian against those of Liu Bei. In spite of the fact that Cao Cao was at first effective, it was the rise of Lu Bu within his kingdom which permitted Liu Bei to bring a drive up in resistance to the Cao movement; he did this locally through gaining the support of the two most predominant clans in the area: the Chen and the Mi. This support proved critical with the loss of Tan Qian when the Mi clan insisted that Liu Bei is named the ruler of the territory over Qian's sons, which Bei reluctantly acknowledged.

Lu Bu was then beaten by the powers of Cao Cao and obliged to seek amnesty with Liu Bei. This partnership was short-lived, nevertheless, and by 196, Liu Bei surrendered to the forces of Lu Bu amid a war of attrition in Donghai. Lu Bu esteemed the new loyalty of Bei, consequently holding the Yuan from finishing them. Nonetheless, when Bu attacked Cao Cao, Bei fled to meet Cao Cao who then resupplied his unit and helped him support his forces. The list of defections resumed until 201 when the battle of Guandu Cao Cao defeated Yuan Shao, pushing Liu Bei to seek refugee with the accommodating Liu Biao. Liu Biao faltered the strength of Liu Bei and thus, until his passing in 208, did nothing to stop the developing influence of Cao Cao. When Liu Biao passed away, and his son surrendered to Cao Cao, Liu Bei fled with 100,000 supporters just to be hunted down by Cao's mounted force causing them to fled south with a force of fewer than 100 men.

Aided and driven by Bei's emissary Zhuge Liang, the Bei units joined with the Sun Quan to meet the Cao forces in the battle of the Red Cliff. In spite of the way that their troops were half the size of Cao's, their insight into the territory and predominance in maritime warfare granted them victory. The region of the Yi Province was then in seeing of Liu Bei following his victory, and the governor Liu Zhang got Liu Bei and assisted him in securing his army in the territory. Bei's military counsel Pang Tong prompted Bei that the best strategy to take the Yi Province was to take control of Zhang's northern armed forces, which he succeeded in handling in spite of Zhang altering generals to keep away from surrendering. When Pan Tang died in battle, Liu Bei attacked Lou in the absence of better ideas which prompted a drawn-out and costly attack. When the city eventually fell, Bei wedded Zhang's sister to solidify his power. Liu Bei only has Hanzhong left to portray himself as a major power which he foresees to accomplish in the near future.

THE KINGDOM OF WU

The third realm that emerged out of the tumultuous period in Chinese history that culminated in the Battle of Red Cliffs, was the Kingdom of Wu (吳), south of the great river Yangtze. It was founded and thereafter reigned by the legendary general Sun Quan (孫權) who defeated the warlord Cao Cao (曹操) of Red Cliffs by setting his own fleet on fire.

Much unlike the other kingdoms of the period, Wu was no fine-tuned, meticulous bureaucracy, but a rather wild piece of land. Sun Quan's royal court had ministers, but the real power lay in the hand of the countless generals, officers and warlords that surrounded the warrior-king Sun. The court was characterized by plots and intrigues as the different families and generals sought to increase their power in the nascent kingdom and their influence on the freshly-crowned leader.

Moreover Wu wasn't as ethnically homogenous as other parts of the old empire. In the eyes of the contemporaries, although home to the age-old and legendary "Capital of the South", Nanjing (南京), Wu was considered to be semi-barbaric and it was obvious that Sun Quan didn't effectively control all the territories which his realm occupied. The Vietnamese who settled in the South did acknowledge Sun Quan and his governor Shi Xie as their ruler. The barbaric Shanyue tribesmen, who haunted the mountains in the South however, refused to subdue to Sun Quan and frequently raided surrounding villages of Chinese peasants. How could Sun Quan's young and relatively unstable kingdom handle the tribesmen who had been resisting efforts of submission by the powerful Han dynasty for several centuries already?

By many Northerners the South at that time was seen as depressed backwater in contrast to the flourishing cities on the other side of the Yangtze. However the South under the Wu dynasty was to catch up rapidly and during the following centuries would rise to be one of China's economic powerhouses, trading with both its Vietnamese and Cambodian neighbors, as well as with far-off places like the Middle-East.

Wu was the fascinating Wild South of the nascent Three Kingdoms, a place where society's fabric wasn't as rigid as in other places, where one could rise to power rapidly but fall out of favour even faster, where black spots of uncontrollable tribes' land remained on the maps and campaigns didn't only target external enemies but also "barbarians" inside its borders, a land ridiculed for its backwardness but at the same time home to cultural treasures and rapid development. The following chapters will provide a more in-depth look into this vibrant kingdom.

Latter Wu before the Battle of Red Cliffs

The South under Han Rule

At the end of the second century AD the Han emperor in Luoyang (洛陽市) formally controlled the whole South and had divided it into three provinces. Historically the Han Chinese people had been living in the North, while the South was inhabited by Non-Chinese like the Zhuang or different Tai peoples. That was about to change however, as the rulers in far-away Luoyang enforced efforts to colonize the South and integrate the territories more firmly into the Chinese cultural sphere. Massive amounts of Chinese immigrants crossed the Yangtze and wandered South. Their aim however was not to extend the emperor's influence southwards but rather to escape the grasp of the all-encompassing power of the ruler and look for more freedom.

The settlers aggressively promoted Chinese culture and the region was constantly troubled by conflicts between its native inhabitants and the settlers from Han China. In the harsh south of the empire they couldn't rely on protection by the central government, its bureaucracy or army. Therefore the settlers had to put their trust into their extended families, clans or mutual defence alliances in order to survive. This capacity of self-defence in combination with the massive increase in population led many (Chinese) Southerners to the belief, that a culturally Chinese state south of the yellow river could exist independently of the emperor in Luoyang. In earlier times the specific topography and sparse population of the region had made it easy to be controlled without significant bureaucratic effort. These times were now gone.

Enter the Sun Family

One of the clans that inhabited the South was the Sun family. The family, neither particularly wealthy nor distinguished, settled just south of what later would become Shanghai in a place that would come to be known by the name of Hangzhou.

One member of this otherwise inconspicuous clan however rose to fame as a war leader, first in his native South and thereafter in the whole empire. He went by the name of Sun Jian (孫堅). First he successfully defeated rebels in his war-torn native South. Soon he got an opportunity to prove his strategic skills outside the Southern provinces...

In the 80s of the second century AD China was haunted by Social Conflict as the mysterious sect of the Yellow Turbans (黃巾之亂) had turned against the emperor. These rebels were mostly peasants enraged and radicalized by an unfolding agrarian crisis and largely absent harvests. But they were also led by radical political and religious ideas. Their leaders, the infamous Zhang brothers, propagated some sort of proto-communism: equality of all people and common ownership of all goods. They worshipped Huanglao, some sort of Daoist deity, and often celebrated extensive mystery plays that involved sacrificial offerings and trance.

The Yellow Turbans naturally posed a great danger to the strictly hierarchical society represented by the Han emperor and, most importantly, questioned the emperor's mandate of heaven. He therefore answered the uprising with full military force. One of the generals deployed to crush the insurgents was the successful southern warrior Sun Jian. After the successful campaign and a brief stint in northwestern Liang, Sun Jian returned to the South where he had been appointed Grand Administrator of Changsha by the emperor. In Changsha, which had been prone to trouble as it was common to this part of the continent, he managed to establish military order.

In 189, when the death of emperor Ling plunged Luoyang into chaos, a man named Dong Zhuo managed to seize power in the imperial court. A coalition, which Sun Jian, loyal to Ling's heritage, readily joined, began to form against the usurpator. This was the beginning of the war that would tear China in three. Sun Jian, who commanded the troops of his patron Yuan Shu, wanted to attack Dong Zhuo in Luoyang. However he found the age-old city burnt to the ground, the tombs of the emperors desecrated and plundered. Dong Zhuo had left for his new capital in Changan.

This broke up the alliance and plunged the north into chaos. Sun Jian, still under Yuan Shu's command, however marched to Jing to confront Liu Biao. He wouldn't survive this campaign. Nevertheless he had already laid the foundation of what was to become his own dynasty. His son, Sun Ce (孫策), although still almost a child, followed in his footsteps and took command over his father's troops merely three years after Sun Jian's decease.

Independence at Last

Sun Ce, not unlike his father, proved to be a successful warrior although he was only aged 18 when he assumed the role of general. In 195 AD he obtained approval by his patron Yuan Shu to conquer territory south of the lower Yangtze. The young leader, in a brilliant campaign, seized three commanderies. While Sun Ce was fighting south of the yellow river, his patron Yuan Shu however, by virtue of the Imperial Jade Seal that was presented to him by Sun Ce, proclaimed himself emperor of China to rival the Han dynasty.

This move was not approved by other warlords who subsequently turned against the nascent "Cheng dynasty". Sun Ce himself seized this opportunity to turn the old idea of an independent southern state into a reality and declared his independence of both the Han and Cheng emperors. He managed to greatly expand the territory of his young realm and conquered more and more land upstream. His next goal should be the seizure of Jing province, governed by long-familiar Liu Biao. His father's destiny became his. He did not live to see the attack on Liu Biao for he was murdered by the men of a local clan leader shortly before the campaign. He lived to be one score and five years.

Sun Ce's place was taken by his younger brother Sun Quan who at that time was a youngster of merely 18 years. The army officers recognized Sun Quan as their leader and in 208 AD Sun Quan could finally launch the offensive against Liu Biao in Jing. In the first months

of the year he beat the troops of Liu Biao's general Huang Zu devastatingly in latter-day Wuhan.

Meanwhile the north was in turmoil as the warlord Cao Cao had seized control of the empire. Cao Cao's next goal was all too familiar to the Sun family: The conquest of Jing. While Cao Cao's troops were approaching Jing, Liu Biao begged Sun Quan for assistance in the fight against the northerners. Sun Quan sent his commander-in-chief Zhou Yu and his navy westwards to counter Cao Cao's attack. At the Red Cliffs in the winter of 208 AD the two armies met. Due to Zhou Yu's cunning Sun Quan and Liu Bei's ships sank the superior fleet of Cao Cao and won the battle. The rest is history.

This is the point where our crisis unfolds.

The Warlord State

At the point where our crisis sets in, the kingdom whose genesis was retold by the previous chapters, was not yet known by the name of Wu. Sun Quan had not yet claimed to the mandate of the heaven and had not yet proclaimed himself emperor. Accordingly the state resembled more to an alliance of warriors than to an empire in heavenly order like the one Han empire that had just faded some years ago.

Sun Quan now controls the areas of the middle Yangtze and the lower Han, struggles however to establish his power north of the Yangtze. This results in some kind of power vacuum and the area between the Huai and the Yangtze has become a no-man's land, a buffer zone between the spheres of influence of Cao Cao and Sun Quan.

As he struggles to consolidate his power at the borders, Sun Quan manages to colonize more and more areas within his realm. Especially his officer He Qi has just managed to bring the hill people of Huang Shan under Sun's control.

In the deep South, in Jiao province, the situation has been a whole lot different however. Old-established local leader Shi Xie, or Sĩ Nhiếp as he is called in local Vietnamese, clings to power. Although Sun Quan made Shi Xie give him formal recognition as ruler and sent Bu Zhi as inspector to Lobiang, Jiao's capital, the local bigwig Shi manages to maintain a large degree of independence.

And shall you ever have doubts about which path to take; keep in mind the teachings of the ancient Daoist sages, Shen Dao, Tian Pian, Jiezi and Huan Yuan from the period of the warring states:

Remember the principle of Wu Wei from the Daodejing:

Govern without acting, never act against the Dao and choose your actions spontaneously.

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Illustrations

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