HEAVENLY KING SEAL (yu san): Made in 1860 or 1861, the largest seal on this seal identifies it as the official seal of the Heavenly King. In Chinese society, even today a seal serves as a crucial confirmation of any documents authenticity. In this case not only would certify that any document bearing this mark was indeed from the Taiping government. All Chinese would have understood that the Taiping seal essentially, sealed the Taipings no longer perceived themselves to be subject to Qing rule.

EIGHT KINGS or EIGHT DIRECTIONS (biwai): How do you interpret a historical tradition when the authors of the text left no precise explanation? Some historians suggest that the seventh line of the seal refers to the top kings in the Taiping hierarchy along with Heaven, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, while still others simply propose it as an allegorical reference to the Taiping Kingdom by indicating the cardinal directions. It remains a mystery.

HUAEN (Tai): Heaven is one of the most fundamental concepts within Chinese ideas about death and the afterlife (whether it be Confucian, Daoist or Buddhist). Chinese emperors portrayed themselves as the Son of Heaven and ruling with the Mandate of Heaven (that is, they were Heaven had given them the right to rule). The Taiping leader, Hong Xiuquan, was not the Son of Heaven, rather he was receiving orders from Heaven.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: The jade seal measures 8 inches along each side and is 1’ inch thick. The handle rises nearly three inches above the top. The seal handle, top and underside are each adorned with carvings of two phoenixes facing a sun, dragons, and stylized clouds. These symbols are also carried over to the imprint visible here to which is also added styled water. Note the almost utter absence of any traditionally "Christian" symbols.

TRANSLATION OF THE HEAVENLY KING SEAL: (numbering refers to the KEY in the lower right corner)

1 - God the Father
2 - Heavenly Elder Brother Jesus Christ
3 - Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan, the Son
4 - Ruler of the Bountiful Earth
5 - Savior and Young Monarch
6 - True King, Gufeng (the Crown Prince)
7 - Long live the Eight Kings
8 - Eternally granting Heaven’s favor
9 - Eternally maintaining Heaven and earth
10 - In gracious harmony
11 - [and] eternal peace
12 & 13 - Peace (topping). The two characters form the term from which the movement takes its name "Taiping"

HEART OF THE TAIPING SEAL: (in the center of the seal)

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tudents of American history are often surprised when they learn that the war in which
the greatest number of Americans died was not World War Two or World War One, but the
American Civil War (1861–1865) in which more than 600,000 people perished. In
China, the mid-nineteenth century cast a similar shadow of loss across its history, but on
a much larger scale. Between 1851 and 1864, conservative estimates suggest that 20 mil-
onion Chinese lives were lost as a result of the Taiping Rebellion. Its destruction cut a swath
across the wealthiest and most prosperous areas of southern and central China from
Guangxi province in the south to Shanghai on the eastern seaboard. The Taiping’s char-
ismatic leader, Hong Xiuquan, challenged the imperial court with a movement based on
Christian teachings. His ideology was shaped by visions in which he claimed to have visited
heaven. In this heavenly visit he learned he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ and
told by God to rid the earth of “demons.” Hong’s message quickly garnered acceptance
in the ethnically diverse province of Guangxi (to the west of Guangdong) where many
Hakkas lived. Simultaneously, it attracted the less desirable attention of the Qing govern-
ment which sought to squash Hong’s heterodox teachings. Extraordinarily, the Taipings
struggled to unite several victories against government troops, which prompted Hong
Xiuquan in January 1851 to announce the founding of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great
Peace (Taiping Tianshu) to reassert himself the Heavenly King.

The ideological teachings of the Taipings stimulated political and social changes unpre-
cedented in China’s two thousand year imperial history. Many historians suggest the Taiping
movement, with its emphasis on land redistribution and gender equality, foreshadowed the
cataclysmic Communist revolution a century later. Despite its name, in many ways the
Taiping Rebellion was just as much a civil war as the American “War between the States.”
Many contemporary Western eyewitnesses referred to it as the “Chinese Civil War,” pitying
the Qing imperialists (and their primarily northern supporters) against the Taipings (and
their southern core of support). Other historians suggest that, given the radical social, reli-
gious, and political changes advocated by the Taipings, it is far closer to a “revolution” than
a civil war. The Taiping movement, as seen in the documents below, proposed a radically
different vision of society and of the world in which they lived.

Despite the massive scale of the Taiping Rebellion and its radical theology, Hong
Xiuquan’s Heavenly Kingdom was not alone in its attempt to topple the Qing dynasty.
The Qing court faced five other full-scale rebellions in virtually every corner of the empire
between 1851 and 1877. There was the Miao Rebellion (1854–1873) in southwestern
province of Guizhou, the Panthay Rebellion (1856–1873) in the neighboring province of
Yunnan, the Yakub Beg Rebellion (1864–1877) in the northernwestern province of Xin-
jiang, the Hui Rebellion in the bordering provinces of Gansu and Shaanxi (1862–73)
and the Nian Rebellion (1853–1860) in the eastern province of Shandong. To continue
the analogy with the American Civil War, it would be as if President Lincoln in 1861
faced not only a secessionist government of the southern states lasting for over a decade,
but also had to cope with full-scale uprisings (with functioning rebel regimes) in Califor-
nia and Arizona, another in Washington and Oregon, as well as a posse revolt some-
where in Maryland. Such a comparison is imperfect since many of the Chinese rebellions
were in more remote regions along China’s distant frontiers. In these regions large numbers
of indigenous peoples had strong transnational relations, especially the ties between
Muslim groups in northwestern China with their Islamic Central Asian neighbors.

Nonetheless, the ultimate Qing military victories over all these rebellions reveal the
durability and persistence of the Qing court. The six mid-nineteenth century Chinese rebelle-
ions at their peak controlled broad areas of China challenging Qing rule in the north-
west, southwest, and the Yangzi valley. Only the extreme southern and northern parts of
the empire escaped severe loss of life and property.

Needless to say, such a pervasive wave of rebellion pushed the Qing government to
its fiscal, military and operational limits. Yet it also compelled the Qing government to
innovate by instituting non-traditional solutions to the widespread anarchy in what has
come to refer to as the “Self-Strengthening Movement.”

TAIPING REBELLION

Making sense of a foreign society, culture and religion is difficult under any circum-
stances. Deciphering meaning from events that occurred over a century and a half ago
in the volatile circumstances present in nineteenth century China is especially arduous.
The Taiping Rebellion adds yet another layer of complexity to this task since many of
the Taiping doctrines were adopted from Christianity yet retained a distinctly Chinese
character. The fusion of these two make it easy to dismiss Hong Xiuquan’s revelations
as the extravagant ravings of a madman. Yet they also demonstrate innovative, often
misinterpreted fundamental Christian teachings. Yet his writings offer important insights into the Taiping movement’s success within a Chinese context. For example, we might be tempted to view the poems that follow each of the Taiping’s Ten Commandments (3.3) as a superfluous departure from the Commandments of the Old Testament. But to do so would miss the pre-
emptive function, a function that enabled Taiping adherents to make sense of this rad-
ically different set of ethical beliefs. To use his reading of the Bible—one that challenges
traditional Western interpretations—as a litmus test for the validity of the Taiping Rebel-
lion as a whole, would be deeply flawed. This is particularly the case since Hong Xiuquan’s
quasi-Christian views were only one part of the Taiping’s appeal. The Taiping leadership
deftly tapped into the deep (and widespread) ethnic prejudice against the Manchu Qing
court, as is seen in their strong anti-Manchu stance (3.1). They also drew on a profound
desire for social change in their land and social policies (3.2, 3.4). However, there is no
doubt that the trajectory of the Taiping movement followed that of many other utopian
political movements. Extravagance and infighting among the leadership quickly fol-
lowed its early success and lead ultimately to its downfall.

3.1 TAIPING ANTI-MANCHU PROCLAMATION (1852)

The non-Chinese origins of the Manchu Qing dynasty remained a common rallying cry
among many Chinese rebels. This attitude resulted from the pervasive animosity among
the Han Chinese towards the Manchu ruling class. In the following document, two of
Hong Xiuquan’s deputy kings, Yang Xiaying and Xiao Chaoqun appeal to the strong anti-
Manchu sentiments of the Chinese populace with a level of vitriol typical of the

HONG XIUQAN (1824–1864) —Leader of the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864). Born in the southern Chi-
inese province of Guangdong of Hakka ethnicity. Failed to pass the civil service exam in five attempts
before he formed the Society of God Worshipers in Guanzhu. He proclaimed himself the Heavenly King
of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace “healing” his followers in a failed rebellion against the Qing.
Died, likely by suicide, on June 1, 1864.

HAKKA (HEJIA) —An ethnic minority prominent in southern China. Many of China’s most prominent
leaders were Hakka, including Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan, the Song family, and Deng Xiaoping.

SELF-STRENGTHENING MOVEMENT (c. 1861–1894) — A movement beginning in 1861 largely
stemming from the urgent need to counter the mid-nineteenth century Chinese rebellions. Initially, the
campaign consisted of military reforms adopted by Zeng Guofan and later broadened to adopt western
methods in education, industry and diplomacy.

TAIPING REBELLION (1851–1864) — The largest of China’s mid-nineteenth century rebellions, it was
led by Hong Xiuquan which at its height ruled over 30 million people and lasted thirteen years before
finally being suppressed by Qing military force.

CHARTER 3 ■ Mid-Nineteenth-Century rebellions and Qing Responses

49

48 PART ONE ■ Late imperial China (1644–1911)
Oh people, listen to our words! It is our belief that the empire is God's empire, not the Manchu's empire; that food and clothing are God's food and clothing, not the Manchu's food and clothing; sons, daughters, and commoners are God's sons, daughters, and commoners, not the Manchu barbarians' sons, daughters, and commoners.

The Manchu crept in and threw China into turmoil. China, with its vast territory and immense population, shamefully tolerated the Manchu barbarous actions, without considering them improper. Can the Chinese still consider themselves human? Ever since the Manchu spread their poisonous influences throughout China, the flames of oppression have risen up to heaven, the vapors of corruption have defiled the celestial throne, the filthy odors have spread over the four seas, and their devilishness exceeds that of the five barbaric tribes of old. Yet the Chinese dejectedly lowered their heads and willingly became their servants. Is China devoid of people prepared to stand up?

China is the head and Manchuria is the feet. China is the land of spirits and Manchuria is the land of demons. Why is China called the land of spirits? Because the Heavenly Father, the majestic God, is the true Spirit; heaven and earth, mountains and seas are his creations, therefore from time immemorial the land of spirits has been called China. Why are the Manchus considered demons? Because the demonic serpent—the demon of Hell—is a wicked demon and the Manchu demons worship only him. Thus, we should from now on treat the Manchus as if they are demons.

But so how have the feet assumed the place of the head? How did the demons steal the land of spirit; driving Chinese to turn into demons? Using all the bamboo from the South Mountain cannot completely record all of the Manchu's wickedness; and using all the waves of Eastern Sea cannot wash off their vast sins. We shall enumerate the facts, which are known to all, and discuss them briefly:

The Chinese have Chinese characteristics; but now the Manchu have ordered them all to shave their hair, leaving a long tail in the back, thus making the Chinese appear like animals. The Chinese have Chinese dress and hats; but now the Manchus have ordered us to wear different style barbarian clothes and monkey caps, abandoning the robes and head-dresses of ancestors. All with the purpose to make Chinese forget their roots.

The Chinese have Chinese family relationships. A previous false demon, Kangxi, secretly ordered each Manchu to take control of ten families and rape the Chinese women hoping that the Chinese would all become Manchu barbarians. The Chinese have Chinese wives, but now the Manchu demons have accosted all the beautiful girls of China to be their concubines and slaves. The Manchu dogs have tarnished three thousand beautiful women; one million beautiful young women have been forced to sleep with the stinking foxes. Thinking of it hurts our hearts; speaking of it pollutes our tongue. The reputation of all Chinese women has been put into question.

[...] The Manchu barbarians are like dogs and pigs. There are those of you who are educated and know your history, yet you do not feel the slightest shame. There was a time when Wen Tianxian and Xie Fangle...
preferred to die than serve the [Mongol] Yuan dynasty; Shi Kefa and Gu Shi would rather die than to serve the [Manchu] Qing. You, our esteemed listeners, are all well aware of these precedents. We estimate that Manchu's population is no more than a hundred and thirty or forty thousand, while we Chinese number no fewer than fifty million. How humiliating it is for some fifty million to come under the oppression of one hundred thousand.

Fortunately divine virtue has now returned and China has revived its senses. As men's hearts lean towards order, there are signs that the Manchu barbarians are surely to be soon destroyed. The demon's preordained two-hundred-and-ten-year long rule has come to an end, and the rightful sovereign has already appeared. The Manchu's crimes have reached their just end.

[...] The beneficent God has bestowed a great favor on the Chinese empire and ordered our Supreme ruler, the Heavenly King, to reign. How could the Manchu be allowed to occupy and misrule China for any longer? You, our esteemed listeners, have lived in China for generations; who is not God's child? If you can follow Heaven's order in destroying the demon, rise up and avoid Fang Feng's mistake of belatedly rallying to the cause. An official in this life, you will be a hero beyond compare; in Heaven you will enjoy eternal glory. If you are stubborn and refuse to change [your allegiance]; if you defend that which is false and reject that which is true, in life you will be a Manchu demon and in death a Manchu ghost. The line between right and wrong is clear; Chinese and barbarians are each clearly distinguished and have their distinct reputation. One and all should follow Heaven's destiny and emancipate themselves from the demons so you can once again be human.

You, our esteemed listeners, have long suffered from the Manchu calamity; if you are still unable to make up your mind to unite and sweep away the Manchu, how will you face God high above in Heaven? We have begun the righteous fight. For Heaven, we wreak vengeance [on the Manchu] in God's name. For those on earth, we liberate China's sufferings. We must clear away the Manchu entirely to enjoy the happiness of peace [Taiping - pun on the meaning of peace and the label of their movement]. Those who obey Heaven's order will be abundantly rewarded. Those who disobey Heaven will be executed. Make this proclamation known throughout the empire – let all hear and obey it.

3.2 THE DAYS WHEN THE TAIPINGS ARRIVED AT NANJING (1853–1854)

Zhang Runan, a pro-Qing scholar official, wrote the following eyewitness account of the Taiping capture of Nanjing. He remained in the city for over a year until the autumn of 1854 and published his observations three years later to considerable public interest. His description is unique for the amount of detail it gives about the Taiping's early reforms, such as segregation of the men and women, communal dining halls, and daily prayers. While Zhang paints these in a rather negative light, many Chinese commoners, who prior to the Taiping's rise to power could not expect a daily meal, were less critical.

Questions

1. How do you think the Taipings were received after taking control of Nanjing?
2. What elements of Zhang's report would have most shocked the Qing scholar officials who read it?

The moment they entered the city [Nanjing], the bandits [the Taiping rebels] went up and down the streets, shouting aloud that all residents must close their front doors and that anyone who dared to venture into the streets would be immediately killed. They also issued an order that a piece of paper with the
whether they obey the Commandments and orders or disobey the Commandments and orders, and whether they are diligent or slothful. On the first seventh seven, the forty-ninth day, the Sabbath, the colonel shall to a certain sergeant’s church, on the second seventh seven, the forty-ninth day, the Sabbath, the colonel shall then to another sergeant’s church, visiting them all in order, and after having gone the round he must begin again. The captains and lieutenants shall do the same.

Each man throughout the empire who has a wife, sons, and daughters amounting to three or four mouths, or five, six, seven, eight, or nine mouths, must give up one to be a soldier. With regard to the others, the widowers, widows, orphaned, and childless, the disabled and sick, they shall all be exempted from military service and issued provisions from the public granaries for their sustenance.

Throughout the empire all officials must every Sabbath, according to rank and position reverently present sacrificial animals and offerings, sacrifice and worship, and praise the Heavenly Father, the Supreme Lord and Great God. They must also expound the Holy books; should any dare to neglect this duty, they shall be reduced to husbandmen. Respect this.

MUSLIM REBELLIONS

After the Taiping Rebellion struck at the heart of the Qing empire, several other uprisings broke out in quick succession. This was, in no small part, a result of the Qing’s attention being diverted from its border regions in order to fend off the fierce Taiping assault. The longest, most organized and—from the Qing perspective—most menacing of these were the Muslim rebellions that occurred in the southwestern and northwestern corners of the empire. The Panthay Rebellion (1856–1872) took place in the multi-ethnic southwestern province of Yunnan. This rebellion followed a series of officially condoned massacres in which over 10,000 Muslim men, women and children were slaughtered. Although the catalyst for the rebellion was the anti-Muslim sentiment of the Han Chinese, the rebellion also reflected the multi-ethnic context in which it took place. Similarly, the Yakub Beg Rebellion of the newly annexed Xinjiang region in northwestern corner of China underscored the Qing's tenuous hold on a decidedly un-Chinese and transregionally positioned territory. This rebellion, unlike the Panthay Rebellion, reflected the lingering and complex transregional religious and ethnic ties that many of its new subjects shared with China’s Central Asian neighbors. Both rebellions, like the Taiping Rebellion, were notable in that effective and independent governments were created that ruled over large areas of territory for more than a decade.

3.5 PANTHAY REBELLION SUMMONS TO ARMS (1868)

Written at the height of the rebel regime’s powers, the following document sought to bolster the already popular rebel government’s efforts to wrest control of the provincial capital from the last remnants of Qing rule. The Hui (Muslim Chinese), although not indigenous to Yunnan, had first settled in large numbers during the thirteenth century. The Hui comprised a large part of Kublai Khan’s Mongol army and provided many of its subsequent civil officials. By the nineteenth century the Hui had become highly acculturated, spoke Chinese and often dressed in a manner that was indistinguishable from their Han Chinese counterparts. The author of the following document, Du Wenji

HUI—A Chinese ethnic group largely defined by their practice of Islam and often referred to as ‘Chinese Muslims’ though the label does not include other Muslim groups within China such as the Uighur, Kazakhs, or Kyrgyz peoples.
CHAPTER 3 - Mid-Nineteenth-Century Rebellions and Qing Responses

(1823–1872), was the leader and strategist of the multi-ethnic rebel government. From the inception of the rebellion he sought to be inclusive of all ethnic groups including the Han Chinese. By 1869, he had fashioned a tolerant and effective government that tapped into the potential non-Chinese desires for a government that promised greater local autonomy. In structuring this government, he did not abandon his Hui and Islamic identity. His state seal (like that of Hong Xiuquan's pictured at the beginning of this chapter) included his titles in Chinese. But Du Wenxiu's also included his Arabic titles.

**Questions**

1. Does Du Wenxiu seek to promote Islamic culture and Muslims over the Chinese culture and the Han?
2. What similarities exist between Du's grievances against the Manchu Qing regime and those leveled by the Taipings (3.1)?

Wuches year 7th month 5th day [August 22, 1868]

General Du Wenxiu is leading an expedition along five fronts to recover the whole realm of Yunnan to expel cruelty and to improve the fortunes of the good and lawful: Pander for a moment the fact that the three peoples of Yunnan—Hui, Han, and the indigenous peoples—have lived peacefully together for thousands of years. Friendly towards each other and helping one another in times of need, how could there be profound divisions amongst us? But since the Manchu usurped the throne for more than two hundred years, we have been mistreated. Evil officials carrying out unfair policies caused the Shiyang Mine massacre and triggered suffering amongst us all. Those who were strong turned more violent and oppressive. Those who were weak and vulnerable had nowhere to hide. At that time, people were in such danger, but the evil Qing officials still insisted nothing was wrong, expressing no concern for the lives of the common people. What was worse, when the Han Chinese were strong they assisted the Han to kill the Hui; and then when the Hui were powerful helped the Hui to kill Han. Facing such misfortune the people's thoughts were unsettled. Witnessing such hardships and caring for the people, I cannot tolerate innocent Hui being killed by Han.

I am even less tolerant of innocent Han being mistreated by Hui. I began the rebellion in order to eliminate the Manchu demons. My goal is to save people, and resolve the strife between the Hui and Han. When the mission is accomplished, I will obey Heaven's orders.

Incompetent Qing officials, using every ploy in their bag of tricks, made policies up as they went. Now employing a new strategy, we already achieved reports of three victories within a month; mobilizing half of the military force we gained control over quite a few towns. But we have yet to rid ourselves of the demon officials and so the root of the disaster remains. Millions of people cannot live peacefully if we do not take full control of Yunnan. How can we allow others to sleep right next to our bed?

We have mobilized our entire military force, maintaining a steady flow of supplies with millions spent on expenditures. Opening five offensive fronts, each with the guns and cannons in front, followed by bow and arrows, and then long swords and short knives, all are eager to fight for the people. Swords drawn and in high spirits, our flags stretch for over a thousand li and the sounds of our shouts and drums reach the heavens. Equipped in this way, what enemy can withstand our attack? What goals can we not achieve?

**DU WENXIU (1823–1872)—**Hui leader of the Yunnan Panthic Rebellion from 1856–1872. Born in western Yunnan, he passed the civil exam at age sixteen. In 1856, after helping restore the western Yunnan city of Dali he was selected to rule the new rebel regime. He died in 1872 after surrendering to Qing troops.

**SHIYANG MINE MASSACRE (1856)—**One of several instances of Han-Hui violence occurring in the years leading up to the Panthic Rebellion in the southwestern province of Yunnan.