

The Heavenly Rebellion, final days

March 24th, 1864

I have now had my first taste of battle; enemies are at the walls of Tianjing.

I, Muchen Xiao, have lived in the heavenly capital from before the Taiping came. I am not a member of the religion officially, but I have lived under it and worked for them, I know the Imperial army will not differentiate such people from the real rebels. My brother Zu has gone off with the army, and I have heard no report of his fate as of yet.

Yesterday was the end of the first attack, which began on the 14th. The imperial Hunan army tried to scale our walls with ladders, but we drove them back, It was haunting seeing all those men in piles of dead and wounded outside the walls. I sit now, overlooking their camps from the safety of a tower. They have gone silent now, but they are obviously planning something new.

I wish this war had never happened, I was a simple merchant in bamboo parchment and other goods, I did not make much, but it was enough to survive by. I was wealthy enough to learn to read and write. This new order has slightly improved my situation by removing some of the hated Machu in the higher positions in the city. All that is nought now, as we are now equals in this fight to protect ourselves from destruction. Men and woman lay in grave below being covered by earth.

April 10th, 1864

The siege has been going on for too long now, the people are starving, the enemy rabble outside continues to pound at the gates, I shudder to think of what will happen if the city falls.

It is clear now that no relief will come, unless the enemy gives up, we will perish.

In a chance of fate, I am one of the only unit leaders left and have been promoted to commander over one ten-thousand men in the east just below the central city, there is talk among the other commanders of fleeing the city and taking refuge with allies in the west. I do not see how, the city is surrounded and more enemies come every day.

July 3rd, 1864

The enemy has taken the fortress Dibao castle on the hill above the city and is now bombarding us full time. They are preparing for the final assault; General Li is preparing to try and counter it. The enemy is raising the ground to get over the wall and digging tunnels to undermine our gates.

July 25th, 1864

We have fled the city. The battle for the city was fierce, but after the gates fell at Jubao and Tongji, the men lost hope. There was fierce fighting for the streets of the city, but it was not enough. General Li long with a thousand men, of which I was a part, and the Kings son have escaped the city disguised as Qing militia.

As we peered down into the city, we witnessed the brutal sacking and have received reports in the days since. The death toll is catastrophic, tens of thousands have died. I fear the population of Tianjing will no longer exist after it is done.

We are facing pursuit from seven hundreds of cavalry, I fear we will not get far. This will be the last of my writings, within the week, I will be no more, may my spirit find its ways to the halls of the true God of Hong Xiuquan.