

Welcome to the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. This is episode 153.

Last time, after many delays and postponements, the kingdom of Jin finally decided to march South. Its army was cutting through Wu territory like a hot knife through butter, or if you prefer the Chinese equivalent of that saying, like a knife through bamboo. They were knocking on the doorstep of Jianye, the Wu's capital city, but there was dissent back home about whether to press forward. The senior court official Jia Chong wanted to recall the troops on account of fatigue and disease, but his colleague Zhang Hua (2) spoke against it, prompting Jia Chong to scold Zhang Hua.

But Sima Yan was like, if you're done, Mr. Let's Recall the Army, I would like to say something, seeing how I'm, you know, emperor and all.

"It is my intention to continue," he said. "Zhang Hua just happens to share my opinion. There is no need to bicker."

And just then, a dispatch arrived from the Jin grand commander Du (4) Yu (4), also urging Sima Yan to continue pressing the troops forward. With all second thoughts erased, Sima Yan promptly gave the order to advance.

With that command, the Jin army resumed its course on land and water, and just like before, the people of Wu surrendered at the first sight of their banners. When Sun Hao heard this, he turned pale.

"The Northern army draws nearer by the day," his officials told him. "And our soldiers and people are surrendering without a fight. What should we do?"

"Why do they not fight?" Sun Hao said.

Oh, I don't know. Could be that decade-plus of hell you just put them through? That would be my guess. Sun Hao's officials now pointed the finger at the chief eunuch that had been mucking things up at court, saying that if Sun Hao would execute him, then they would all go and fight it out with the enemy.

"But he is just a eunuch," Sun Hao said. "How could he have doomed the state?"

To this, everyone at court shouted, “Your majesty, did you not see what the eunuch Huang Hao (4) did to the kingdom of Shu?!” And then, the mob decided that they weren’t even going to ask for permission from their lord. They just weren’t going to take it anymore. The court officials all stormed into the palace, tracked down that eunuch, cut him to pieces, and -- just to show how much contempt they had for this guy -- ate his flesh, raw.

Wiping grisly human remains from his chin, the official Tao (2) Jun (4) said, “The warships under my command are all small. Please give me 20,000 troops on large ships. That will be enough to defeat the enemy.”

So Sun Hao did as he requested and sent the imperial guard to accompany Tao (2) Jun (4) to go up river to face the oncoming foe. Meanwhile, the Forward Army General, Zhang Xiang (4), led the navy into the river. But just as they were about to set sail, a strong gale kicked up from the northwest. All the banners of the Wu forces were blown over. Seeing this, most of the men said thanks but no thanks, and they scattered rather than get on the ships. So Zhang Xiang was left with all of a few dozen men.

Meanwhile, the Jin naval commander Wang Jun (4) was directing his fleet down river. When they passed the Three Mountains, the boatmaster said, “The winds and waves are too strong, the boat cannot go on. Please wait until the wind dies down a bit before we continue.”

Enraged, Wang Jun pulled out his sword and said, “I am on the verge of taking Jianye. Do not mention stopping!” And so he ordered his troops to keep advancing with drums rolling. The Wu general Zhang Xiang (4) saw this mighty fleet coming at him, and then he turned and looked at the few dozen men standing behind him, did some quick mental math, and promptly surrendered.

“If you are sincere about surrendering,” Wang Jun said, “then serve as my vanguard.”

Zhang Xiang said no problem. He turned his ships around, sailed to the foot of the city of Jianye, and got the guards to open up the gates. He then invited the Jin forces in.

When Sun Hao heard that the enemy had breached the city, he contemplated slitting his own throat. But a couple of his officials said, hey, why don't you just do what Liu Shan did? Sun Hao went oh yeah, that works, too. So he did the whole tying himself up and going to surrender with a coffin in tow thing, and all his officials followed. Wang Jun untied him, burned his coffin, and accepted the surrender, treating him with the courtesy due to a king. And just like that, the kingdom of Wu was no more. Its four provinces, 43 districts, 313 counties, 523,000 people, 32,000 officials, 230,000 troops, 2.3 million civilians, 2.8 million bushels of grain, 5,000-some ships, and 5,000-some women of the royal harem, now all belonged to Jin.

The next day, that army that Sun Hao had sent out under the command of Tao (2) Jun (4) disintegrated without a fight, and the main Jin army arrived. The day after that, the Jin commander Du Yu arrived. He rewarded the troops, opened the storehouses and distributed their contents to the civilians. So the combination of not being slaughtered and getting some swag made the people very happy. One guy wasn't happy though. The General of Chariots and Cavalry, Sun Xiu (4), faced South and wept, saying, "Long ago when Sun Ce (4) was in his prime, he founded this enterprise as a mere commandant. And now, Sun Hao has given away the Southlands! Truly, the blue sky has no end. What kind of a man has done this!"

When Du Yu's report of his success reached the Jin court, Sima Yan and his officials celebrated. At the banquet, holding a cup, Sima Yan wept and said, "This is thanks to Yang Xu (4). Pity that he cannot see it himself!"

When the Jin commander Wang Jun returned to the capital, he took Sun Hao with him. When Sun Hao went to court to see Sima Yan, Sima Yan offered him a seat.

"This seat has been waiting for you for some time," Sima Yan said.

"I also set up a seat for your highness in the South," Sun Hao shot back.

This rather audacious remark brought Sima Yan to laughter. The official Jia Chong now asked Sun Hao, "I heard that when you were in the South, you were gouging out people's eyes and peeling the skin off their faces. What kind of a punishment is that?"

"It is the punishment for vassals who assassinate their lords, the punishment for liars and renegades," Sun Hao said, and that shut Jia Chong up. Why? Well, remember that Jia Chong was the one who oversaw the murder of the Wei emperor Cao Mao (2), so this was hitting rather close to home, as I'm sure Sun Hao intended.

In any case, Sima Yan now bestowed upon Sun Hao the title of the Duke of Guiming (1,4), or the Duke of Accepting Fate. His descendants would be palace courtiers. All the officials who surrendered with him received honorary titles of nobility. The Wu prime minister Zhang Ti (4), the only guy who was willing to die for his kingdom, was honored in the form of a title for his descendants. The commander Wang Jun, for being first to enter Jianye, was appointed the Commanding General Who Guides the Kingdom, and everyone else got rewarded accordingly as well.

A quick postscript on the emperors of the three kingdoms that were gobbled up by the Jin. Liu Shan, the emperor of Shu, would die in the year 271. Sun Hao, the emperor of Wu, died in the year 283. And Cao Huan, the emperor of Wei, died in the year 302. All three died of natural causes.

And thus the three kingdoms have become one, under the reign of the Jin emperor Sima Yan. Like we said in the first line of the novel, "Domains under heaven, long united, inevitably divide, and long divided, inevitable unite."

A later poet wrote a long poem reflecting on the era of the three kingdoms:

Sword in hand, the Supreme Ancestor entered the capital,

Up the Tree of Dawn the Han's fiery sun did fly.

And when Emperor Guangwu the Han's rule rekindled,

The solar crow soared to the noon-day sky.  
But when the realm passed to Emperor Xian (4),  
In the Pool of Night did the fiery disc land.  
Witless He (2) Jin (4) fell for the eunuchs' coup,  
And the halls of state fell under Dong Zhuo's rule.  
Wang Yun's (3) plan struck that rebel down,  
But Li (3) Jue (2) and Guo (1) Si (4) rose up in arms.  
Across the land rebels swarmed and seethed,  
As vicious warlords bared claws and teeth.  
Beyond the river, Sun Jian and Sun Ce ascended.  
In the North, Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu commanded.  
To the west rose Liu Yan (1) and Liu Zhang (1),  
While Liu Biao's legions camped in Jing and Xiang (1).  
Zhang Miao (3) and Zhang Lu (3) had Hanzhong occupied.  
Ma (3) Teng (2) and Han (2) Sui (4) in Xiliang (1,2) fortified.  
Tao (2) Qian (1), Zhang Xiu (4), and Gongsun Zan (4)  
All cut bold figures and staked their claims.  
As prime minister, Cao Cao took power,  
Stockpiling talent, warriors and scholars.  
With the emperor in his thrall he ruled the lords  
And with his martial hosts he controlled the North.  
From Twin Mulberry Village came imperial scion Liu Bei,  
With Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, he rode to the liege's aid.  
Round the realm he scrambled, a man with no home,

With a scant force across the land he did roam.  
Three visits to Nanyang (2,2), the depth of his sincerity showed,,  
One meeting with Sleeping Dragon, the partition was foretold:  
“First take Jing Province, then the Riverlands;  
On that rich region, make your own royal stand.”  
Near death in Baidi after reigning just three years,  
Liu Bei entrusted his heir to Zhuge Liang in tears.  
With six offensives from Mount Qi,  
Zhuge Liang tried to change destiny.  
But the time of the Han had come and gone,  
His master star fell to the hills before dawn.  
Jiang Wei alone strove with might and main:  
Nine times he marched North -- all in vain.  
Then Zhong Hui and Deng Ai led armies west:  
And the Han’s domain now in the Caos’ hands did rest.  
Cao Pi, Cao Rui, Cao Fang, Cao Mao (2), and Cao Huan (4) -- the last --  
And then the empire into the Simas’ possession passed.  
Turbulence stirred before the altar of abdication,  
No mighty battle preceded the Southland’s capitulation.  
The Lords of Chenliu (2,2), Guiming (1,4), and Anle (1,4).  
Kings no more, content with their new fiefdoms and posts.  
The world’s affairs rush on, a never-ending stream;  
Destiny, infinite in its reach, no one can up-end.  
The three kingdoms are now but a dream,

For posterity to ponder in vain and lament.

Hey guess what? With that, the novel has come to an end. Yeah, I know, hard to believe. But fear not, our podcast is not quite at an end. There is one more supplemental episode coming this week, and then I'll return with one last episode to look back at this incredible four-year journey and tie up some loose ends. So, I'll see you next time on the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. Thanks for listening!