CHAPTER THREE

TO BATTLE AT GUANDU
197–200

Troublesome neighbours 196–198
Conduct at court
Approaches to Guandu 199–200
Yuan Shao’s Call to Arms
Decisive victory 200
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Chronology

195 summer: Liu Bei succeeds Tao Qian as Governor of Xu province
autumn: Lü Bu joins Liu Bei
196 summer: Lü Bu changes sides to help Yuan Shu defeat Liu Bei; soon afterwards Liu Bei surrenders to Lü Bu and renews their alliance
winter: Liu Bei is attacked by Yuan Shu; he is saved by Lü Bu, who then turns against him once more; Liu Bei flees to Cao Cao, who establishes him in Pei
197 spring: Cao Cao attacks Zhang Xiu in Nanyang, but is defeated; Yuan Shu takes the imperial title; he is attacked and defeated by Lü Bu; Cao Cao forms a distant alliance with Sun Ce and with Lü Bu
autumn: Yuan Shu occupies Chen state, but Cao Cao drives him away
winter: Cao Cao’s second campaign against Zhang Xiu in Nanyang
198 spring: Cao Cao’s third campaign against Zhang Xiu
summer: Cao Cao retreats, but defeats Zhang Xiu and Liu Biao’s forces at Anzhong
autumn: Lü Bu attacks Liu Bei in Pei; Cao Cao marches against Lü Bu
winter: Cao Cao besieges Xiapi city, captures and kills Lü Bu; Cao Cao settles with Zang Ba and other leaders about Mount Tai and largely controls Xu province
199 spring: Yuan Shao destroys Gongsun Zan in the north; Emperor Xian orders Dong Cheng to conspire against Cao Cao

summer: Cao Cao establishes Wei Chong in Henan; Liu Bei into Xu province; he declares against Cao Cao; Yuan Shu dies in Jiujiang

winter: Zhang Xiu in Nanyang allies with Cao Cao

200 spring: Dong Cheng’s plot is discovered and the conspirators are executed; Cao Cao attacks Liu Bei and drives him from Xu province; Yuan Shao advances to Liyang in Wei commandery

summer: Cao Cao’s victories at Boma and the Yan Crossing

autumn: two missions of Liu Bei into Runan; the armies of Cao Cao and Yuan Shao face each other at Guandu

winter: Cao Cao defeats Chunyu Qiong and destroys Yuan Shao’s supply depot; Zhang He and Gao Lan attack Guandu without success, then surrender; his army defeated, Yuan Shao abandons the field

Troublesome neighbours 196–198

As Cao Cao was engaged against Lü Bu and occupied in his dealings with the emperor, there were changes to his south and east. In 194 Tian Kai had brought his officer Liu Bei to aid Tao Qian against Cao Cao in Xu province. Liu Bei then took service with Tao Qian, who named him Inspector of Yu province, and Liu Bei camped in Pei. Later, in the summer of 195 Tao Qian became seriously ill, and on his death-bed he urged his officers to make Liu Bei his successor. When he died they issued the invitation, and after a suitable show of reluctance Liu Bei was persuaded to accept.

Liu Bei is one of the most celebrated figures of the Three Kingdoms, and his reputation in the Romance matches and perhaps surpasses that of Cao Cao. He claimed descent from Emperor Jing of Former Han, who had enfeoffed his son Liu Sheng as King of Zhongshan.

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2 The biography of Liu Bei (161–223), First Sovereign of Shu-Han, is in SGZ Shu 2.

3 Liu Sheng was enfeoffed in 154 BC and died in 112. When his tomb and that of his wife were excavated at Mancheng in Hebei in 1968, a great quantity of funerary