

# The THREE KINGDOMS

三國演義

VOLUME 1

## The Sacred Oath

The epic Chinese tale of loyalty and war  
in a dynamic new translation

LUO GUANZHONG

Translated by YU SUMEI

Edited by RONALD C. IVERSON





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## Dedication

To my son, Winston, and my daughter, Aimee, who, from a toddler's age to adulthood, were thrilled with my telling and retelling of the stories from this great book.

With sincere gratitude to Yu Sumei for accepting the challenge to work with me to create a new translation of this classic literature with the goal of turning it into an exciting novel. My belief is that it is not just what you say but how you say it. My appreciation to Yu Sumei's daughter who typed out each page. They worked diligently for two years to produce a uniquely compelling version of this epic work, complete with footnotes for clarification of certain events and words in the text. My gratitude extends to a friend, Shen Li who was instrumental in recommending and introducing me to Yu Sumei.

And certainly a note of gratitude to Cheryl Banks for her suggestions as to improving the look of the book, as well as her many hours of help in preparing this text for printing which ultimately led to its publication.

No dedication would be complete without the mention of my many Chinese and American friends who encouraged me to continue this new translation and share it with the world. May readers enjoy the journey as much or beyond what we have experienced in the production of this classic, which will live in perpetuity.

Ronald C. Iverson



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## List of Main Characters

Cai Mao—brother-in-law of Liu Biao

Cao Cao (Cao Meng-de, A.D. 155–220)—prime minister to Emperor Xian, controls the real power of the state; later created Duke of Wei, Prince of Wei and posthumously, Emperor Wu of Wei Dynasty

Cao Hong—cousin of Cao Cao and senior officer under him

Cao Pi (A.D. 187–226)—second son of Cao Cao, later first emperor (Emperor Wen) of Wei Dynasty, which he established in A.D. 220

Cao Ren—cousin of Cao Cao and senior officer under him

Cao Rui—son of Cao Pi, later Emperor Ming of Wei

Cao Shuang—son of Cao Zhen, enemy of Sima Yi

Cao Zhen—senior officer of Wei

Cao Zhi (Cao Zi-jian, A.D. 192–232)—favorite son of Cao Cao and a famed poet

Chen Deng—advisor to Lu Bu but later plots his destruction

Chen Gong—chief advisor to Lu Bu

Chen Lin—notable scholar, first served as advisor to Yuan Shao but later surrendered to Cao Cao

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Chen Wu—senior officer of Wu

Cheng Pu—senior officer of Wu

Cheng Yu—advisor to Cao Cao

Deng Ai—commander of the forces of Wei after Sima Yi

Dian Wei—bodyguard to Cao Cao

Diao Chan (Sable Cicada)—singing girl at Wang Yun's house, who helps her master destroy Dong Zhuo; concubine of Lu Bu

Ding Feng—senior officer of Wu

Dong Cheng—general of Han and relative to the imperial house, who receives the secret edict from Emperor Xian to assassinate Cao Cao

Dong Zhuo—governor of Hedong, later establishes himself as prime minister of Han; set up Emperor Xian in place of his brother, Emperor Shao, in order to build his own power

Emperor Shao (Liu Bian)—son of Emperor Ling and Empress He, deposed and murdered by Dong Zhuo

Emperor Xian (Liu Xie)—brother of Emperor Shao, a puppet ruler controlled by his ministers; deposed by Cao Pi in A.D. 220 (r. A.D. 189–220)

Empress Dowager He—mother of Emperor Shao, sister of He Jin; murdered by Dong Zhuo

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Fa Zheng—Liu Zhang's official who helped Liu Bei acquire the rule of Shu

Feng Ji—advisor to Yuan Shao, enemy of Tian Feng

Gan Ning (Gan Xin-ba)—senior officer of Wu, famed for his bravery

Gao Shun—officer under Lu Bu

Gongsun Zan—patron of Liu Bei and one of the seventeen lords who join forces to wage war on Dong Zhuo; commits suicide after being destroyed by Yuan Shao

Guan Lu, famous sage

Guan Ping—adopted son of Guan Yu, killed by Sun Quan

Guan Xing—elder son of Guan Yu

Guan Yu (Guan Yun-chang, A.D. ?–219)—sworn brother of Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, Lord of Hanshou, famed for his valor and rectitude; respected greatly by Cao Cao

Guo Jia (Guo Feng-xiao)—trusted advisor to Cao Cao

Guo Si—fellow rebel with Li Jue after the downfall of Dong Zhuo

Guo Tu—advisor to Yuan Shao and later to his eldest son Yuan Tan

Han Dang—senior officer of Wu

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Han Sui—warrior from the northwest, sworn brother of Ma Teng

He Jin—brother of Empress Dowager He and commander of Han forces; murdered by eunuchs

Hua Tuo—famous physician who cures Zhou Tai and Guan Yu; killed by Cao Cao

Hua Xin—senior official under Cao Cao and Cao Pi, notorious for his cruelty toward Empress Fu

Huang Gai (Huang Gong-fu)—senior officer of Wu, whose false defection to Cao Cao plays a key role in the Battle of the Red Cliff

Huang Zhong (Huang Han-sheng)—veteran warrior, joins Liu Bei after the latter's seizure of Changsha

Huang Zu—commanding officer under Liu Biao

Ji Ling—commanding officer under Yuan Shu

Ji Ping—physician of Han court, killed by Cao Cao after failing to poison him

Jia Xu—resourceful strategist, advisor first to Li Jue and Guo Si, then to Zhang Xiu, and finally to Cao Cao

Jian Yong—advisor to Liu Bei

Jiang Gan—official under Cao Cao, an old friend of Zhou Yu's



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Jiang Wei (Jiang Bo-yue)—successor to Zhuge Liang as commander-in-chief of Shu forces

Kan Ze—senior advisor of Wu, who delivers Huang Gai's false letter of defection to Cao Cao

Kong Rong—notable Han scholar, descendant of Confucius, Prefect of Beihai; later killed by Cao Cao for his outspokenness

Kuai Yue—advisor to Liu Biao

Lady Cai—second wife of Liu Biao, sister of Cai Mao

Lady Gan—wife of Liu Bei, mother of Liu Shan (A Dou)

Lady Liu—wife of Yuan Shao and mother of Yuan Shang

Lady Mi—wife of Liu Bei, sister of Mi Zhu and Mi Fang

Lady Sun—wife of Liu Bei and sister of Sun Quan

Li Dian—officer under Cao Cao

Li Jue—chief rebel after the downfall of Dong Zhuo

Liao Hua—officer of Shu under Guan Yu

Lin Tong—officer of Wu

Liu Bei (Liu Xuan-de, A.D. 161–223)—descendant of the imperial house, sworn brother of Guan Yu and Zhang Fei,

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later Prince of Hangzhong and first ruler of the kingdom of Shu

Liu Biao (Liu Jin-sheng, A.D. 142–208)—Prefect of Jingzhou, who gives shelter to Liu Bei and leaves in his care his two sons, Liu Qi and Liu Zong

Liu Qi—elder son of Liu Biao; hated by his stepmother Lady Cai

Liu Shan (A Dou, A.D. 207–271)—eldest son of Liu Bei, second ruler of Shu (r. A.D. 223–263)

Liu Ye—senior advisor to Cao Cao

Liu Zhang—Governor of Yizhou, later overthrown by his kinsman Liu Bei

Liu Zong—younger son of Liu Biao; killed with his mother, Lady Cai, by Cao Cao

Lu Bu (Lu Feng-xian)—valiant warrior, adopted son first of Ding Yuan and later of Dong Zhuo, both of whom die at his hands; killed by Cao Cao

Lu Meng (Lu Zi-ming)—senior officer of Wu; succeeds Lu Su as commander-in-chief of forces

Lu Shang—chief counselor to King Wen of Zhou and his son King Wu, who founded the Zhou Dynasty

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Lu Su (Lu Zi-jing)—chief advisor of Wu, successor to Zhou Yu as commander-in-chief; advocates alliance with Liu Bei against Cao Cao

Lu Xun (Lu Bo-yan)—son-in-law of Sun Ce; succeeds Lu Meng as commander-in-chief of Wu forces to foil Liu Bei's attack

Lu Zhi—Han general who commands an imperial force in the suppression of the Yellow Turban Uprising

Ma Chao (Ma Meng-qi)—son of Ma Teng, later one of Liu Bei's Five Tiger Generals

Ma Dai—cousin of Ma Chao, officer of Shu

Ma Liang—advisor to Liu Bei, brother of Ma Su

Ma Su (Ma You-chang)—advisor to Liu Bei, younger brother of Ma Liang; put to death after the fall of JiETING

Ma Teng—Han general, loyal to the House of Han; killed by Cao Cao

Man Chong—advisor to Cao Cao, who persuades Xu Huang to submit to Cao Cao

Meng Da—good friend of Fa Zheng and Zhang Song; assists Liu Bei in conquering Shu

Mi Fang—brother of Lady Mi and Mi Zhu, who fails to rescue Guan Yu and is later killed by Liu Bei

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Mi Zhu—brother of Lady Mi and Mi Fang, loyal follower of Liu Bei

Pan Zhang—senior officer under Sun Quan

Pang De—formerly serves under Ma Chao but later joins Cao Cao; killed by Guan Yu

Pang Tong (Pang Shi-yuan, or Phoenix Fledgeling)—chief strategist in the Battle of the Red Cliff and later advisor to Liu Bei

Shen Pei—advisor to Yuan Shao, and later his youngest son Yuan Shang

Sima Yan—grandson of Sima Yi; first emperor of Jin Dynasty after forcing the abdication of Cao Huan, last emperor of Wei Dynasty

Sima Yi (Sima Zhong-da)—advisor to Cao Cao, father of Sima Zhao, who later overthrows Wei Dynasty and establishes Jin Dynasty

Sima Zhao—son of Sima Yi, father of Sima

Sun Ce (Sun Bo-fu, A.D. 175–200)—eldest son of Sun Jian, brother of Sun Quan; enlarges the territory he inherits from his father east of the Yangtze River; later assassinated

Sun Jian (Sun Wen-tai, A.D. 155–191)—founder of Wu and father of Sun Ce and Sun Quan; killed by Liu Biao's men

Sun Qian—senior counselor to Liu Bei

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Sun Quan (Sun Zhong-mou, A.D. 182–252)—second son of Sun Jian and brother of Sun Ce; succeeds them to be ruler of the land of Wu and later Emperor of Wu (r. A.D. 229–252)

Taishi Ci—valiant warrior of Wu

Tao Qian—Prefect of Xuzhou, who yields his district to Liu Bei

Tian Feng—advisor to Yuan Shao

Wang Ping—officer of Shu

Wang Yun—senior official of the Han court, who instigates the “chain” scheme to destroy Dong Zhuo, but is later killed by Li Jue and Guo Si

Wei Yan (Wei Wen-chang)—senior officer under Liu Bei, later commander of Hanzhong; distrusted by Zhuge Liang

Wen Chou—general under Yuan Shao, slain by Guan Yu

Xiahou Ba—son of Xiahou Yuan, cousin of Xiahou Dun

Xiahou Dun—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao

Xiahou Yuan—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao; later killed by Huang Zhong

Xu Chu—bodyguard of Cao Cao

Xu Huang—senior officer in the service of Cao Cao

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Xu Sheng—senior officer of Wu

Xu You—advisor first to Yuan Shao and later to Cao Cao; killed by Xu Chu

Xun You—advisor to Cao Cao, nephew of Xun Yu

Xun Yu (Xun Wen-ruo)—senior advisor to Cao Cao

Yan Liang—general under Yuan Shao, slain by Guan Yu

Yang Feng—officer under Li Jue, but later leaves him to serve Emperor Xian; killed by Liu Bei

Yi Ji—advisor to Liu Biao first, but later joins Liu Bei, to whom he exposes Cai Mao's plot to harm him

Yu Fan—advisor to Sun Quan

Yu Jin—senior officer under Cao Cao

Yuan Shang—youngest son of Yuan Shao

Yuan Shao (Yuan Ben-chu, A.D. ?–202)—born into a family of high-ranking officials of Han; leader of a confederacy army against Dong Zhuo; rules four northern districts but is later destroyed by Cao Cao

Yuan Shu (Yuan Gong-lu, A.D. ?–199)—brother of Yuan Shao, assumes the title of emperor at Shouchun but is soon destroyed by Cao Cao

Yuan Tan—eldest son of Yuan Shao

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Yue Jin—senior officer under Cao Cao

Zhang Ba—officer under Lu Bu

Zhang Bao—son of Zhang Fei

Zhang Fei (Zhang Yi-de, A.D. ?–221)—sworn brother of Liu Bei and Guan Yu; courageous warrior, fiery-tempered after drinking

Zhang He—senior officer under Yuan Shao but later joins Cao Cao

Zhang Liao (Zhang Wen-yuan)—formerly served under Lu Bu but later surrendered to Cao Cao; friend of Guan Yu

Zhang Lu—ruler of Hanzhong; later defeated by Cao Cao

Zhang Song—official of Shu, but secretly persuades Liu Bei to kill his old master and take his land

Zhang Xiu—one of the feudal lords

Zhang Zhao—chief counselor to Sun Quan

Zhao Yun (Zhao Zi-long)—warrior of unusual strength and resourcefulness; loyal follower of Liu Bei

Zhong Hui—commander of Wei

Zhong Yao—senior official of Wei

Zhou Tai—senior officer under Sun Quan

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Zhou Yu (Zhou Gong-jin)—commander-in-chief of the forces of Wu, who directs the Battle of the Red Cliff against Cao Cao; rival of Zhuge Liang

Zhu Jun—Han general

Zhuge Jin—elder brother of Zhuge Liang, advisor to Sun Quan

Zhuge Ke—officer of Wu, son of Zhuge Jin

Zhuge Liang (Kongming, or Sleeping Dragon, A.D. 181–234)—hermit of Nangyang, later chief counselor to Liu Bei; his ingenious policy of uniting Wu to oppose Wei leads to the emergence of the balance of power among the three kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu; his wisdom and military skill enable Liu Bei to set up his own rule

Zhuge Zhan—son of Zhuge Liang



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