Keep your head, lose your hair: one order that ruled 267 years | Shenzhou · Beijing 03

《神州大地》第 4 集 · 語言：English · 時長：13:26

出處：sylogs.com — 歡迎轉載分享，請注明出處

In the second year of the Shunzhi
emperor — 1645 — a notice went up in
Beijing. From the day it was posted,
everyone inside the city and outside it
had ten days to shave their heads.
Under the notice stood eight characters,
and they were not ambiguous.
Keep your head, lose your hair.
Keep your hair, lose your head.
How much is a head of hair
worth?
The previous films dealt in things that
can be drawn on paper.
Walls. An axis. Street plans.
The lines of a treaty.
This one is different.
The thing in this film fits on
no map and appears in no treaty.
It grew on every person, from birth
to death.It ran for two hundred
and sixty-seven years.
To understand that order, start with something
it would be easy to get wrong:

the braid was not a Qing invention.
Shaving the front of the skull and
leaving a single tail behind was a
shared habit of the northern steppe peoples.
The Wuhuan did it.
The Xianbei, the Khitan, the Jurchen,
the Mongols — all of them.
The reason was practical: a long forelock
snags when you ride, and grows hot
under a helmet.There was also a
belief attached. In shamanic practice the braid
is where the soul rests, part of
a person's life. If a soldier died
far from home and the body could
not be carried back, the braid was
sent home alone and buried with full
rites. There is a name for it:
shao xiao bian — "sending the little braid
home".So the shaving itself was never
the issue. What the Qing did was
turn a custom into a statute.
And it did not happen in one
step. In 1644, the year the Qing took
Beijing, the order was issued once
and withdrawn in public, because resistance was
too sharp.In 1645 it came back,
and harder. The text set a deadline:

everyone inside and outside the capital to
be fully shaved within ten days.
Each province, ten days from the day
the notice reached it.
The wording left nothing open.
Evade it, cling to your hair,
argue a case — no leniency.
An official who raised the matter again
in memorial — executed without pardon.
From that day, hair was no longer
a matter of taste, and no longer
a matter of ethics.
It was a political category.
Who proposed that second edict?
The record keeps one name: Sun Zhixie.
A man from Shandong, a jinshi of
the Ming, who submitted to the Qing
after they came through the pass and
took a post at court.
At the time the court sat in
two ranks, Manchu and Han.
To show where he stood, Sun shaved
his own head and dressed in Manchu
clothing, then walked over and stood in
the Manchu rank. They saw a Han
man and would not have him.
He went back to the Han rank;

they looked at the Manchu clothes and
would not have him either.
Standing in neither, he asked the regent
Dorgon for permission to re-issue the head-shaving
edict.Dorgon agreed. The ten-day deadline comes
from there.This passage rests on a
Qing author, Wang Jiazhen, and his Notes
from the Yantang — written by a man
of that generation, recording not only where
an order came from, but how it
grew out of one man's humiliation.
A grudge, though, does not make a
policy. Something else put the edict back
on the table.The Qing had just
seated themselves in Beijing.
The frontier was not settled, and from
the throne it was not yet possible
to tell a subject from an enemy.
Hair, of all things, was a sign
that could be read at a glance.
If it is a sign, it has
to be inspectable. This passage is about
how it was inspected.
The legally defined style in the early
Qing was the coin-and-tail: the whole front
of the head shaved, a patch at
the crown the size of a copper

coin left to grow, plaited into a
thin tail that hung at the back,
no thicker than a rat's.
That style was not left loose in
the telling. It had a measurable standard:
the patch that was left had to
pass through the square hole of a
copper coin.Overshooting could kill you.
In 1651 a commoner named Ding Quan was
beheaded because he had left his patch
too large, and the local official was
punished along with him.
Set the standard at the width of
a coin's hole and the intention is
legible: what was wanted was not beauty,
it was recognisability. Stand in the street
and you can see at once who
shaved, who did not, and who left
too much.So why this shape?
Not because it was handsome, and not
because it was ugly — because it was
a mark of loyalty you could check
at a glance and measure with a
ruler. That is the design.
There is one more thing about this
style that few people know: the Qing
itself changed it.Early on, it was

the coin-and-tail. By the middle of the
dynasty the patch had grown to the
size of a palm and the tail
had thickened into the pig-tail.
In the last few decades the front
was shaved and the back combed into
a heavy braid — which is the hairstyle
you see in Qing palace dramas today.
The evidence for this is hard.
In 1793, the artists travelling with the Macartney
embassy drew Chinese men of the Qianlong
reign. What they drew is still the
coin-and-tail. Not the version on television.
So: one and the same ancestral rule,
three different hairstyles in two hundred and
sixty-seven years. The braid in those pictures
belongs only to the last few decades
of its life.
The order went out.
Resistance followed. This passage gives both sides.
The sharpest case was Jiangyin, a county
town in the south, on the Yangtze.
In the sixth intercalary month of 1645,
the magistrate of Jiangyin restated the order.
Local gentry knelt to ask that they
be allowed to keep their hair.
They were shouted out of the room.

The next day, a scholar named Xu
Yong and others swore an oath in
front of the Confucian temple: my head
may be cut, my hair will not
be shaved.The townspeople put the registrar,
Chen Mingyu, in charge of the walls.
They held eighty-one days.
Couplets written by people inside the town
have been preserved, and so have their
plainer words: rather a ghost with hair
than a man with a shaved head.
After eighty-one days, the town fell.
What happened after the walls broke has
to be written out in full,
with both sets of numbers.
The defenders' own record says that in
eighty-one days they killed more than seventy-five
thousand Qing soldiers; that more than sixty-seven
thousand of their own died on and
around the walls; and that after the
town fell the killing went on for
ten days without pause until the city
was emptied, with more than one hundred
and seventy thousand killed and fifty-three people,
old and young, left alive.
Those numbers are as the defending side
recorded them. They are placed here as

they stand.Elsewhere in the south that
same year: Jiading, for shaving resistance,
was put to the sword three times.
Its death toll is given differently in
different accounts — thirty thousand in one,
more than ten thousand in another.
Both are listed. After Kunshan was taken,
fifty-three people remained.The northern record reads
differently. Han settlers in Liaodong who would
not shave their heads walked into the
Yalu River. Pursued, the accounts say the
bodies stopped the water.
And the man who had proposed the
order, Sun Zhixie, has his own ending
in these same years.
In the autumn of 1646, an armed
force under Xie Qian rose in Shandong.
Sun Zhixie had just gone home in
glory. The force took him.
The accounts say holes were pricked over
his body, bristles pushed into them,
and he was beheaded and left in
the open street.Later, Pu Songling wrote
a story in Strange Tales from a
Chinese Studio about a man who steals
a duck and grows duck feathers,
and only loses them when the owner

curses him. Some readers have connected it
to Sun Zhixie.All of this is
what people at the time wrote down.
It is set out here.
So when did the order stop?
At the end of 1910 the Qing
government's Advisory Council passed a resolution to
cut the braid. In 1912 the Republican government
issued a policy on cutting braids and
changing dress; after the revolution the Hubei
military government listed the braid among the
charges against the Qing and banned it.
The most striking scene comes on the
twelfth of February, 1912 — the day the
last emperor abdicated.The final regent,
Zai Feng, went home, picked up a
pair of scissors and cut off his
own braid. To his stunned household he
said: from today, I am an ordinary
subject.Inside the Forbidden City, Puyi did
not cut his until 1919, when his Scottish
tutor Johnston talked him into it.
And when the cutting began, plenty of
people did not want to.
One reason: the fear that a man
without a braid would be beheaded by
the authorities. Some tucked their braids up

inside their hats to look shaved.
Two hundred and sixty-seven years, one order
to the end. But when the order
went, what it left behind stayed.
Ask an old Beijinger today why you
do not get a haircut in the
first month of the lunar year,
and you will usually get one sentence:
a haircut in the first month kills
your mother's brother.The most widely circulated
explanation is a pun: "kills your mother's
brother" sounds like "thinking of the old."
Going a whole first month without a
haircut stands for going a whole year,
and the point was to remember the
previous dynasty and one's ancestors.
The belief is superstitious.
It became a custom, and the custom
was handed down.One thing outlasted even
the custom, and it is still a
physical object in this city: the barber's
carrying pole.To push the order through
quickly, the Qing court organised professional barbers and
issued them these poles.
A small cabinet hung at the back,
with a tall pole set upright and
the imperial notice — those who keep their

hair lose their heads — hung from it.
The carrying pole was red at one
end and blue-black at the other,
wrapped in leather: that was a beating
staff. There was an iron tool like
a large pair of tweezers, plucked to
make a ringing note, used together with
the shout of the eight characters from
the notice.Beyond the matting sheds set
up in the city, where passers-by were
made to go in and be shaved,
men were sent house to house through
the capital region to check.
You do not hear that ringing note
at the barber's any more.
But next spring, when you hear those
five characters about the first month,
you can know where they came from.
They came out of a notice posted
in 1645, and they have walked three hundred
and eighty years into the way people
talk today.
One braid, for two hundred and sixty-seven
years.What it did best was not
to force everyone to wear the same
hair. It was to make obedience into
something visible, measurable, and shared out among

neighbours. It did not ask you to agree. It asked you to comply.

And it ended simply: the order was gone, and what was left was a sentence.But the modern story of this city is not finished.

With the braid cut, Beijing faced a harder question — how does a three-thousand-year-old capital become a modern one?

This is our reading, not the record itself. The full transcript is at sylogs.com.

Source / 出處：sylogs.com