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## The *Zuozhuan* Account of the Death of King Zhao of Chu and Its Sources

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## The *Zuozhuan* Account of the Death of King Zhao of Chu and Its Sources

Jens Østergaard Petersen

### Introduction

During recent decades, considerable advances have been made in the study of the form of *Zuozhuan* 左傳 narrative;<sup>1</sup> studies of the ideological contents of *Zuozhuan* have appeared as well.<sup>2</sup> In these studies hypotheses on the sources of *Zuozhuan* are advanced, new methodological perspectives being applied to the centuries-long debate about the authenticity and date of this text. Though highly suggestive, these hypotheses have generally been of an indirect nature, interpretations of the literary form and ideological contents of *Zuozhuan* serving as point of departure for inferences about which material might have been used to compose this text. I will not here undertake an appraisal of these contributions, but instead examine the relationship between a single *Zuozhuan* entry and its parallels in the early literature, in the hope that an approach to the question of the origins of *Zuozhuan* can be developed which builds on the principles of textual criticism.

The methodological issues I wish to raise can be addressed by considering the opposite stands on the *Zuozhuan* taken by two modern Chinese scholars, Liu Zhenghao 劉正浩 and Xu Renfu 徐仁甫.

Liu Zhenghao is interested in how paraphrases of *Zuozhuan* passages in later literature can be interpreted as glosses on *Zuozhuan* expressions. Liu has collected most existing parallels to *Zuozhuan* accounts in Han and pre-Han texts, holding that these in each and every case used *Zuozhuan* as source, and that the way they paraphrase the *Zuozhuan* text reflects their understanding of this classic, an understanding that is valuable since it predates the commentaries.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to gauge to what extent this way of looking at the relationship between *Zuo-*

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<sup>1</sup> David C. Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722-453 B.C.E.* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Liu Zhenghao 劉正浩, "Taishigong Zuoshi Chunqiu yi shu" 太史公左氏春秋義述, *Taiwan Shengli Shifan Daxue guowen yanjiu jikan* 臺灣省立師範大學國文研究集刊 6 (1962), 259-425; *Zhou Qin zhuzi shu*

*zhuan* and its parallels is shared by present-day Sinologists, but (excepting the *Guoyu* 國語, which is special and which Liu does not treat), it is probably the prevalent view that parallels to *Zuozhuan* accounts in texts which manifestly are later than *Zuozhuan* derive from *Zuozhuan*. However, if one holds that the *Zuozhuan* author based himself to a considerable extent on pre-existing material, being patently unable to produce ab novo his voluminous work, one can hardly agree with Liu without committing oneself to the view that all the texts used in this way by the *Zuozhuan* author simply vanished after the *Zuozhuan* had been completed, leaving no other trace in the transmitted literature. This does not appear plausible, for while it is often the case that a popular anthology may squeeze out of existence the texts it derives from, there is no evidence that *Zuozhuan* was widely circulated before the Eastern Han. I think we would be wrong in ruling out the possibility that part of the material utilised by the *Zuozhuan* author has survived, however circuitously, by being rendered in texts other than *Zuozhuan*, text that are perhaps transmitted to this day. A number of the parallels collected by Liu may thus render, more or less directly, the material used to compose the *Zuozhuan*, not the *Zuozhuan* itself.

Xu Renfu, working with basically the same material as Liu Zhenghao, holds that *Zuozhuan* is a late Western Han forgery and that it draws to a large extent on texts transmitted to this day (including the *Shiji* 史記).<sup>4</sup> Xu's arguments mostly consist in the claim that the *Zuozhuan* is stylistically superior to its parallels and that it would be strange if the often inept parallels should derive from *Zuozhuan*. This is not very convincing, since this "argument" relies solely on the very weak postulate that no one would ever adapt a *Zuozhuan* passage and produce a version which lacked the dense textual qualities that *Zuozhuan* is generally admired for. Be that as it may — I do think that Xu Renfu may now and then have a point, especially when he calls attention to structural differences between the *Zuozhuan* and the parallel accounts, some of which are indeed difficult to see occurring in the direction from *Zuozhuan* to the parallels, and that some of his claims therefore merit closer scrutiny. Xu Renfu builds on the (almost) universally discredited idea that *Zuozhuan* is a forgery perpetrated by Liu Xin 劉歆, which means that practically no present-day Sinologists would agree with him. With our knowledge of the date of compilation of the texts involved (shaky as it may be in part), the influence from parallel accounts on *Zuozhuan* can, at the most, be indirect (excepting, of course,

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*Zuozhuan kao* 周秦諸子述左傳考 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1966); *Liang Han zhuzi shu Zuozhuan kao* 兩漢諸子述左傳考 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1968). Relevant to the present discussion are pp. 414-416, 216-217, 188-189, respectively, of these three works. Belonging to the "old text" tradition of classical studies, Liu does not discuss parallels between *Zuozhuan* and other of the Six Classics; these are in this tradition regarded as equally non-derivative. Liu Zhenghao's predecessors in this area are Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1869-1936) and Liu Shipai 劉師培 (1884-1919). Occasionally, Liu Zhenghao takes a more flexible stand on the issue of the primacy of *Zuozhuan*; cf. footnote 59 below.

<sup>4</sup> Xu Renfu 徐仁甫, *Zuozhuan shuzheng* 左傳疏證 (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin, 1981). Relevant to the present discussion are pp. 408-409.

quotations from *Shi* 詩, *Shu* 書 and so on).<sup>5</sup> That is, it might be worthwhile examining whether some of the texts Xu Renfu regards as sources of *Zuozhuan* do not derive from some of the many texts that are held to have served *Zuozhuan* as sources.

For all their differences, Liu Zhenghao and Xu Renfu share one basic assumption, namely that only two groups of texts can have interacted, *Zuozhuan* and the extant texts that contain parallels to *Zuozhuan* accounts: either *Zuozhuan* was copied by its parallels (Liu's position) or *Zuozhuan* was copied from its parallels (Xu's position).

Behind this lies the assumption that, basically speaking, the same texts were available to a Han or pre-Han person that are available to us today. This, of course, contradicts all we know about the transmission of early Chinese texts, knowledge which has been radicalised by archaeological finds in recent decades. We have learnt to expect that modern (that is, post-Western Han) editions of texts differ significantly from the editions that circulated in Western Han and pre-Han times. Basically, when confronted with a transmitted text hailing from early times, we would do best to regard it as testimony to its early state, not as a faithful reflection of it. We also now know that it makes little sense to discuss textual interaction in Han and pre-Han times on the assumption that we have even moderately adequate knowledge about which texts were available to persons living then. Every text implicates a wealth of other texts, with which it interacted in various ways, and every text transmitted to us has its prehistory.

With all the uncertainty this implies, we have to consider the possibility that texts existed which are unknown to us and to constantly bear in mind that all texts with which we are acquainted were different, in ways we can only attempt to reconstruct, in pre-modern times. The dilemma posed by the positions of Liu Zhenghao and Xu Renfu can perhaps be solved if we admit the possibility of influence on *Zuozhuan* by such "unknown sources," but the challenge is to do so in a way, which always builds on the evidence of extant texts and proceeds by transparent arguments.

A model for this is furnished by the practices and insights developed in textual criticism. In short, if we wish to argue that a certain source was used by the *Zuozhuan* author, we have to reconstruct it first, for we cannot inspect it directly. In order to reconstruct an *edition* of a *text* which is closer to the original than the editions at hand, one compares these and attempts to explain them as testimony to an edition upon which they all are based, directly or indirectly. The same approach can be applied to different *versions* of the same *account*, such as, e.g., stories paralleled in the early literature.

The point is that in order to explain the early forms of a certain story, we have to explain the whole set of extant versions of this story, to account for all their similarities and all the peculiarities. If one compares, as Liu Zhenghao and Xu Renfu are wont to, one *Zuozhuan*

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<sup>5</sup> The aim of the present study is not to determine the absolute dates of the texts concerned, but to establish influences on *Zuozhuan* of archetypes of parallels to *Zuozhuan*; all of these parallels are contained in texts which I hold to have been compiled after *Zuozhuan* was compiled.

account with one parallel, there is very little one can say with any degree of certainty about the filiation of the two accounts, except, in the manner of Xu Renfu, that one feels that one is more "developed" than the other. If no external evidence is at hand, it is very difficult to establish the relationship between two texts (or two versions of the same story). When more than two texts are concerned, however, one can argue that a peculiarity shared by two versions against a third testifies to a common ancestry for the two against the third (or that contamination is at issue).

If we regard the case of the relationship between *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* as basically closed,<sup>6</sup> the early text that contains the largest overlap with *Zuozhuan* is *Guoyu*. This is not the place to rehearse the centuries-long discussion about the relationship between these two texts;<sup>7</sup> I will only note that one of the major reasons why the discussion of this topic is often quite inconclusive is that the larger part of the parallels between *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* are particular to these two texts, making the "triangulation" often necessary for studies of textual filiation impossible.

When a reconstruction of this kind is performed, certain features of the editions/versions at hand are explained by hypothesising that editions/versions that we may not possess, had certain features. Such features can be quite abstract in nature; it is thus not a question, in the case at hand, of reconstructing the material used by the *Zuozhuan* author *verbissima verbis*, surely an impossible task, but to attempt to deduce whether or not the source in question had certain characteristics — had a certain narrative progression, mentioned certain persons, used a word within a certain range of words, and so on.

I wish here to discuss a *Zuozhuan* account with a fairly large number of parallels in the extant sources, to examine these in order to reconstruct some features of the version from which I deem that they all ultimately derive and to explore how the *Zuozhuan* account may be considered an adaptation of this. Several clusters of parallels exist that make possible this kind of argument; I have here chosen the two didactic stories which occur in the account of the death of King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (515-489), recounted in *Zuozhuan* under the sixth year of Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公, mainly on account of the relatively few challenges they pose to the conventional understanding of the rôle of the *Zuozhuan* author as an historian. In subsequent

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<sup>6</sup> That the *Shiji* derives a considerable amount of material from the *Zuozhuan* has been shown by Bernhard Karlgren, "On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan," *Göteborgs Högskolas årskrift* 32 (1926); Kamata Tadashi 鎌田正, *Saden no seiritsu to sono tenkai* 左傳の成立と其の展開 (Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1963), pp. 110-175; and Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, "Sashi tangei josetsu" 左氏探源序説, *Tōhōgaku* 東方學 81 (1991), pp. 1-12.

<sup>7</sup> Among the many studies of this topic, see Liu Jie 劉節, *Gushi kaocun* 古史考存 (Beijing: Renmin, 1958), 315-322; Alan Imber, *Kuo Yü: An Early Chinese Text and Its Relationship with the Tso Chuan* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1976); William G. Boltz, "Notes on the Textual Relationship Between the Kuo Yü and the Tso Chuan," *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 53 (1990), 491-502; Zhang Yiren 張以仁, *Chunqiu shi lunji* 春秋史論集 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1990); Jeffrey Walter Bissel, *Literary Studies of Historical Texts: Early Narrative Accounts of Chong'er, Duke Wen of Jin* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996); Wang Jingyu 王靖宇, *Zhongguo zaoqi xushiwen lunji* 中國早期敘事文論集 (Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan, 1999).

instalments, I will treat the story about Jin's conquest of Guo and Yu (*Zuozhuan* Xi 2), the story about Qi Xi and his recommendations (*Zuozhuan* Xiang 3), and the story about the floods in Song (*Zuozhuan* Zhuang 11).

My argument emphatically does not concern *all* of the sources that the *Zuozhuan* appears to have had, only a small — and, I admit, from a certain point of view, insignificant — part, namely the didactic stories that *Zuozhuan* abounds in.<sup>8</sup> *Zuozhuan*, e.g., derives a wealth of information from chronicles, broadly speaking,<sup>9</sup> and any general study of the sources of *Zuozhuan* that failed to examine these would be seriously defective. However, since we have no texts that belong in this category with which we can compare *Zuozhuan*, arguments concerning its dependence upon these must resort to indirect evidence and often reach but vague conclusions. In this situation, it is perhaps instructive to study in detail *Zuozhuan*'s didactic stories, since we here often have the material requisite upon which to build arguments of a textual nature. If we gain some insight into the way the *Zuozhuan* author worked with these sources, perhaps our understanding of the weightier parts of *Zuozhuan* will also be furthered.

Arguments about textual variants and lineation are notoriously difficult to follow. The two stories I discuss will be rendered integrally in their *Shuoyuan* 說苑, *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* versions when these are taken up for discussion,<sup>10</sup> but in order to make it possible to gain a synoptic view of the issues involved, all texts discussed are presented in an interlinear format in the appendix.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper I advance two kinds of argument. In one kind I attempt to establish that the *Shuoyuan* version of the stories about King Zhao of Chu comes close to the source used by the *Zuozhuan* author in his rendition of these stories. In another kind of argument, I examine the probable origins of the parts of the *Zuozhuan* rendition that are not paralleled in the extant literature and attempt to explain how the *Zuozhuan* narrative came to include these elements and why it has the form it has; here I attempt to fathom which concerns motivated the *Zuozhuan* author when he formed his account. The arguments which seek to establish *that* the *Zuozhuan* is based on a version of the story close to that found in *Shuoyuan* can stand alone and do not depend on those of the second kind, but they gain in interest, I think, if it can be explained *how* and *why* the *Zuozhuan* account came into existence — even though arguments of the latter kind

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<sup>8</sup> See the classical study by Ronald C. Egan, "Narratives in *Tso chuan*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37 (1977), pp. 323-352.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Wang He 王和, "Zuozhuan cailiao lai yuan kao" 左傳材料來源考, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究, 1993.2, 16-25.

<sup>10</sup> For background information on the various texts discussed, see *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Michael Loewe (Berkeley, Calif.: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> This format makes possible a consecutive reading of the *Shuoyuan* (SY/B, SY/A), *Zuozhuan* (ZZ/B), *Han Shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (HSWZ) and *Kongzi jiyu* 孔子家語 (KZJY) versions of the stories; since the *Shiji* version is differently structured, one has to follow the SJ/A to SJ/D sequence to read the *Shiji* version consecutively (the same applies to *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 [NLZ], which follows *Shiji*).

are necessarily more uncertain than arguments of the first kind. The first kind of argument is predominantly found in the first part of the paper, whereas the second kind dominates towards the end.

### **The *Shuoyuan*, *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* versions of the stories about King Zhao of Chu**

In *Shuoyuan* two consecutive stories recount how King Zhao of Chu reacted when he was confronted with adverse auguries. One is about a disease which was said to be inflicted upon the king by the Yellow River and one is about some strange clouds which were alleged to portend the king's imminent illness. On both occasions masters in the arts of augury were consulted, but the king rejected their interpretations and recommendations, arguing that they were implausible and useless. The king was advised to unload his guilt by making offerings to gods outside his own territory and by sacrificing his ministers, but he refused to do so.

Both stories are paralleled in *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji*. I shall argue that the *Shuoyuan* version of the stories is independent of the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* versions and that the *Shuoyuan* version probably approximates the source utilised to compose the *Zuozhuan* version. The *Shiji* version I hold to be a conflation of the *Zuozhuan* version and a version close to that found in *Shuoyuan*.

### **The *Shuoyuan* version of the story about the strange clouds and the story about the Yellow River**

The first *Shuoyuan* story (SY/A) begins by stating that King Zhao was ill and that when cracks were read to divine the reason for this, the illness was found to be caused by the Yellow River. The court grandees requested that a sacrifice be made to the river, but the king protested, upholding the principle that feudal lords should only sacrifice to nature deities resident within their own domains and that both good and ill fortune could befall him only from the rivers of his native Chu. Consequently, he did not bring offerings. Upon hearing of this Confucius praised him for "knowing the Way of Heaven" and declared that it was befitting that the king did not lose his state.

楚昭王有疾。卜之。曰。「河為祟。」大夫請用三牲焉。王曰。  
「止。古者先王。割地制土。祭不過望。江、漢、睢、漳。楚之  
望也。禍福之至。不是過也。不穀雖不德。河非所獲罪也。」遂  
不祭焉。仲尼聞之。曰。「昭王可謂知天道矣。其不失國。宜哉  
。」

King Zhao of Chu fell ill. A divination was performed about this, and it said: "The spirit of the Yellow River is causing disaster." The court officers asked permission to offer a sacrifice with beef, mutton and pork to the River. The king said, "Stop! In ancient times when the former



kings carved up the land and conferred fiefs, [it was decreed that] sacrifices were not to go beyond the Wang. The Jiang, Han, Sui and Zhang Rivers are the Wang of Chu. Calamity or prosperity do not come from beyond these. Though I am deficient in virtue, it is not the Yellow River that I have offended." Accordingly, he did not sacrifice to it. When Zhongni heard of this, he said, "King Zhao may be said to have known the Way of Heaven! That he did not lose his state was indeed fitting!"

The second *Shuoyuan* story (SY/B) tells how in the time of King Zhao some bird-like clouds surrounded the sun for three days. Worried by this the king sent someone by coach to ask the Grand Scribe Zhouli 太史州黎 what the clouds portended. The Grand Scribe replied that illness would be visited upon the king, but that he could avoid this by sacrificing his ministers and generals. Upon hearing of this, the king's ministers and generals prepared to offer themselves in sacrifice, but the king stopped them, declaring that his own relation to the state of Chu was like that of the relation of the abdomen to the body as a whole and that the relation of his ministers and generals to the state of Chu was like that of the relation of the limbs to the body as a whole — if one were to move a disease from the abdomen to the limbs, the body as a whole would still be ill, and it would therefore be of no avail for his ministers and generals to sacrifice themselves.

楚昭王之時。有雲如飛鳥。夾日而飛。三日。昭王患之。使人乘駟。東而問諸太史州黎。州黎曰。「將虐於王身。以令尹、司馬說焉。則可。」令尹、司馬聞之。宿齋沐浴。將自以身禱之焉。王曰。「止。楚國之有不穀也。由身之有匈脅也。匈脅有疾。轉之股肱。庸為去是人也。」

In the time of King Zhao of Chu there were some clouds which resembled flying birds; they flew on both sides of the sun for three days. King Zhao was worried about this. He sent someone to ride eastwards in a postal relay coach to ask the Grand Scribe Zhouli about it. Zhouli said, "Illness will be visited upon the king himself. If he absolves himself from calamity by sacrificing the chief minister and the grand marshal, he will be fine." The chief minister and the grand marshal heard of this and fasted and cleansed themselves, preparing to sacrifice themselves to it. The king said, "Halt! That Chu has me is like the body having an abdomen. If there is illness in the abdomen, how can the illness be said to have left the body if it has been transferred to the limbs?"

Both stories feature two related themes. One theme is the king's rejection of mantic advice, a rejection which in the first story is identified with his adherence to a higher principle. The other theme (more important, I believe) is the king's refusal to assign the blame for whatever is wrong to something/someone else, in this case the "foreign" Yellow River and his ministers and generals.

In *Shuoyuan* the two stories appear to be independent in all respects. Though they presumably occur together because of their identical theme and identical main protagonist, they are not intermeshed in any way, and if one were to judge from *Shuoyuan* alone, one might well imagine that they had been brought together for the first time by the *Shuoyuan* compiler.<sup>12</sup> Since, however, *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* also render the stories in conjunction, they evidently belonged together before *Shuoyuan* was compiled.

### **The *Zuozhuan* account of the events leading up to the king's death**

In *Zuozhuan*, the two stories are told after an account of how King Zhao died in 489 while fighting Wu in aid of Chen (ZZ/B1-7), and after an account of how the king's brothers placed one of the king's sons on the throne (ZZ/B8-11).

The first account tells of the Chu preparations for the campaign against Wu and it also centres around the taking of auguries (ZZ/B2-7). Cracks were first read to tell whether the king should engage his army in battle, the answer being that this would be inauspicious; cracks were then read to tell whether the king should retreat, the answer again being that this would be inauspicious. The king then exclaimed that he would rather die than lead his army into defeat again (he did so in 506, in the battle at Boju 柏舉), just as he would rather die than flee the enemy or turn down an ally.

This story is evidenced only in *Zuozhuan*.

秋。七月。楚子在城父。將救陳。卜戰。不吉。卜退。不吉。王曰。「然則死也。再敗楚師。不如死。棄盟逃讎。亦不如死。死一也。其死讎乎。」

In autumn, in the seventh month, the Viscount of Chu was in Chengfu, preparing to aid Chen. He consulted the tortoise-shell about entering battle, and it was inauspicious. He consulted it about retreating, and it was inauspicious. The king said, "Well, then I am bound to die! It is

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<sup>12</sup> The *Shuoyuan* compiler was of course Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-8). When I discuss texts from the point of view of the material from which they were compiled, I refer to the persons responsible for the texts in question as 'compilers'; when emphasis is on the contributions the same persons made to the contents or form of the same works, I refer to them as 'authors'. Many of the texts discussed have multiple author-compilers or author-compilers that are unknown, and in the interest of uniformity I refer to all of them in this anonymous manner.

better to die than to cause the defeat of the army of Chu once again. It is also better to die than to cast aside our covenant and flee from the enemy. The dying is the same, so let me die at the hands of the enemy!"

After the story about the auguries taken by the king in order to determine whether he should engage in battle, *Zuozhuan* relates the second extra account (ZZ/B8-11), which tells how the king bequeathed the throne to Gongzi Shen 公子申 (also known as Zixi 子西), who refused the honour, then to Gongzi Jie 公子結, who likewise declined, and then to Gongzi Qi 公子啟, who accepted only after having refused five times. The three were, as we learn elsewhere in *Zuozhuan*, elder brothers of King Zhao.<sup>13</sup>

Just prior to joining the Wu forces in battle the king fell ill. He then led the Chu army in an attack on the Wu forces at Daming 大冥, but died at Chengfu 城父. Following its notice about the king's death, *Zuozhuan* tells how Gongzi Qi withdrew the Chu army from battle in order to install Zhang 章, son of King Zhao by a consort from Yue, in his own place. Having accomplished this, Gongzi Qi then returned to the battlefield, presumably to continue the campaign against Wu (*Zuozhuan* curiously does not inform us about the outcome of the battle).

This story is also evidenced in *Shiji* and *Lienü zhuan*, but, as I shall attempt to show, the *Lienü zhuan* version of this story derives from *Shiji* and the *Shiji* version from *Zuozhuan*. The *Zuozhuan* version reads:

命公子申為王。不可。則命公子結。亦不可。則命公子啟。五辭而後許。將戰。王有疾。庚寅。昭王攻大冥。卒于城父。子閭退。曰。「君王舍其子而讓。群臣敢忘君乎。從君之命。順也。立君之子。亦順也。二順不可失也。」與子西、子期謀。潛師閉塗。逆越女之子章。立之。而後還。

He charged Gongzi Shen (Zixi) with being king, but he refused. Next he charged Gongzi Jie (Ziqi), but he also refused. Then he charged Gongzi Qi (Zilü), who refused five times, after which he accepted. When they were about to fight, the king fell ill. On the gengyin day King Zhao attacked Daming. He died in Chengfu. Zilü retreated, saying, "Our king has abdicated to us subjects, discarding his own son. Dare we forget [the words of] our ruler? To follow his charge is to obey, but to appoint a ruler's son is likewise to obey. Neither of the two obediences may be neglected." He took counsel with Zixi and Ziqi, concealed

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<sup>13</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, annot. by Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (2nd edn., Peking: Zhonghua, 1990) Zhao 26.8, pp. 1474-1475; cf. Du Yu 杜預, commentary in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Taipei: Xin Wenfeng Chuban Gongsu, 1988], vol. 6) Ai 6, p. 1007, and Wei Zhao 韋昭 (d. 273), commentary in *Guoyu* (Shanghai: Guji Chubanshe, 1988), p. 576. In *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982) 40, p. 1717, they are described as younger brothers of King Zhao.

the army and shut up all roads, encountering Zhang, [the king's son] by a woman of Yue, and appointed him king, only then returning [to the army].

The king has died and his successor has been found — after these key historical events have been recounted, *Zuozhuan* presents the stories concerning the strange clouds (ZZ/B12-19) and the Yellow River (ZZB/20-24), stories which conclude with Confucius' paean to the king (ZZ/B25-30).

In *Zuozhuan*, the first story is placed in the same year as the king's death by being introduced by '是歲', whereas the second story is placed in the indefinite past (presumably before the year of the king's death) by being introduced by '初'. '是歲' refers in concrete terms to the king's stay at Chengfu which is noted in *Zuozhuan*, commenting on *Chunqiu* 春秋, to have begun in spring (CQ/A). By appending these flash-backs to the basic historical narrative, culminating in Confucius' appreciation of the king, the *Zuozhuan* author in effect presents an obituary of the king.<sup>14</sup>

是歲也。有雲如眾赤鳥。夾日以飛。三日。楚子使問諸周大史。周大史曰。「其當王身乎。若祭之。可移於令尹、司馬。」王曰。「除腹心之疾。而實諸股肱。何益。不穀不有大過。天其天諸。有罪受罰。又焉移之。」遂弗祭。初。昭王有疾。卜。曰。「河為祟。」王弗祭。大夫請祭諸郊。王曰。「三代命祀。祭不越望。江、漢、睢、漳。楚之望也。禍福之至。不是過也。不穀雖不德。河非所獲罪也。」遂弗祭。孔子曰。「楚昭王知大道矣。其不失國也。宜哉。夏書曰。「惟彼陶唐。帥彼天常。有此冀方。今失其行。亂其紀綱。乃滅而亡。」又曰。「允出茲在茲。」由己率常。可矣。」

In this year, there were clouds like a multitude of crimson birds flying on both sides of the sun; this lasted for three days. The viscount of Chu sent someone to enquire of the Grand Scribe of Zhou about it. The Grand Scribe of Zhou said, "This applies to the person of the king! If he offers a deprecatory sacrifice to it, [the evil] may be moved to the chief minister and the grand marshal." The king said, "Of what use would it be to remove a disease threatening the heart and lay it upon the limbs? If I have not committed grave errors, would Heaven cause me to die before my time? If I am guilty, I must receive my penalty; whereto should I move [my illness]?" Accordingly, he would not sacrifice.

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<sup>14</sup> See also Eric Henry, "'Junzi Yue" Versus "Zhongni Yue" in *Zuozhuan*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59 (1999), pp. 141-142, for a discussion of this passage.

Before this, King Zhao had been ill, and the tortoise-shell was consulted; it said: "God of the Yellow River is causing disaster." The king did not sacrifice to it; and when his great officers begged him to sacrifice to it at the border altar, he said, "According to the sacrifices commanded by the three dynasties, sacrifices were not to go beyond the Wang. The Jiang, Han, Ju, and Zhang Rivers are the Wang of Chu. Calamity or prosperity does not come from beyond these. Although I am deficient in virtue, it is not the Yellow River that I have offended." Accordingly, he would not sacrifice. Kong Zi said, "King Zhao of Chu knew the Great Way. That he did not lose his state was indeed fitting! The *Xia shu* says, 'That Tao Tang! He followed the constant rules of Heaven and so came to possess this land of Ji. Now his conduct has been abandoned [by his descendants], and his framework of order has been thrown into confusion, and thus it has been destroyed.' It also says, 'If you give away something, you will have that same thing.' When a person observes the constant rules of his own volition, he may be pronounced capable!"

### The narrative integration of the stories in *Shiji* and *Zuozhuan*

In *Shiji* (SJ/A-D) the stories about the strange clouds and the Yellow River are embedded in the account of the king's campaign in aid of Chen and his abdication; they are not appended to that account as in *Zuozhuan*. In *Shiji*, the auguries concerning the strange clouds (SJ/B1-8) and the Yellow River (SJ/B9-13) are both taken whilst the king was camping at Chengfu (SJ/A1-3), not prior to that event (as at least the auguries on the Yellow River are in *Zuozhuan*).

二十七年春。吳伐陳。楚昭王救之。軍城父。十月。昭王病於軍中。有赤雲如鳥。夾日而蜚。昭王問周太史。太史曰。「是害於楚王。然可移於將相。」將相聞是言。乃請自以身禱於神。昭王曰。「將相。孤之股肱也。今移禍。庸去是身乎。」弗聽。卜而河為祟。大夫請禱河。昭王曰。「自吾先王受封。望不過江、漢。而河非所獲罪也。」止。不許。孔子在陳。聞是言。曰。「楚昭王通大道矣。其不失國。宜哉。」昭王病甚。乃詔諸公子大夫。曰。「孤不佞。再辱楚國之師。今乃得以天壽終。孤之幸也。」讓其弟公子申為王。不可。又讓次弟公子結。亦不可。乃又讓次弟公子閭。五讓。乃後許為王。將戰。庚寅。昭王卒於軍中。子閭曰。「王病甚。舍其子讓群臣。臣所以許王。以廣王意也。今君王卒。臣豈敢忘君王之意乎。」乃與子西、子綦謀。伏師閉

塗。迎越女之子章。立之。是為惠王。然後罷兵。歸。葬昭王。  
In spring, in the 27th year, Wu attacked Chen. King Zhao of Chu went to Chen's aid, camping at Chengfu. In the 10th month, King Zhao fell ill in the camp. There were crimson clouds resembling birds flying on both sides of the sun. King Zhao asked the Grand Scribe of Zhou about this, and the Grand Scribe said: "This will harm the king of Chu, but the harm can be moved to the generals and ministers." When the generals and ministers heard of this, they requested permission to sacrifice themselves to the spirit. King Zhao said, "My generals and ministers are my limbs; if I were to move this calamity [to them], how would it have left this body?" He would not comply. He consulted the tortoise-shell and [it said that] the Yellow River was causing disaster. The grandees asked to sacrifice to the Yellow River. King Zhao said, "Ever since my predecessors received their fief, our Wang have not gone beyond the Jiang and Han Rivers. Moreover, the Yellow River is not what I have incurred blame from." He stopped them, refusing to grant permission. Confucius was in Chen and heard what [the king] had said; he stated, "King Zhao of Chu has comprehended the Great Way! That he does not lose his state is indeed fitting!" King Zhao's illness worsened and he called together the royal scions and grandees, saying, "I am unworthy! Twice have I dishonoured the Chu army — that I have been able to die of old age today is my luck!" He abdicated to his younger brother Gongzi Shen; he would not accept. Then he abdicated to his next younger brother Gongzi Jie; he would not accept either. Then he abdicated to his next younger brother Gongzi Lü, who, after having refused five times, agreed to become king. When he was about to enter battle, the king died in the camp on a gengyin day. Zilü said, "The king was very ill, discarding his own son and abdicating to us subjects. I agreed in order to soothe the king's mind. Now the king is dead — should I dare to forget the king's intention?" Then he planned together with Zixi and Ziqi; they concealed the army and shut the roads, encountering Zhang, son of a woman of Yue, establishing him as king (he was King Hui); after that he dismissed the army and returned in order to bury King Zhao.

According to *Shiji*, after the king was taken ill at Chengfu some strange clouds were sighted, so first the Grand Scribe was asked for an interpretation and then cracks were read (presumably by the court crack-readers). On both occasions the king rejected the advice offered him, and he was praised for this by Confucius — who at that very moment happened to be

staying in Chen (SJ/B14). The king's illness worsened (SJ/B15) and he abdicated (SJ/C1-2), dying just as the battle with Wu was about to commence (SJ/C3), whereupon Gongzi Qi and his brothers installed Zhang as king. After disbanding the troops at Chengfu, Gongzi Qi then returned to the capital and buried King Zhao (SJ/C4-7).

According to *Shiji*, King Zhao's abdication was motivated by a belief that he would soon die of illness, whereas in *Zuozhuan* the context indicates that the king was motivated by a belief that he would soon die in battle. Similarly, according to *Shiji*, Gongzi Qi stated that he had accepted the king's abdication in order to please the ailing king, and it is hinted that the king's wish to appoint a brother crown prince was due to the delirious effects of his illness (SJ/C4). In *Shiji* both the king's abdication and the auguries concerning the strange clouds and the Yellow River thus revolve around the king's illness, and one may speculate that the *Shiji* author did not use the *Zuozhuan* story about the auguries taken by the king before he engaged in battle with Wu because he found it impossible to adapt to this theme.

*Shiji* holds all events to be linked to the king's illness, which creates a high degree of narrative consistency, whereas the train of events as narrated in *Zuozhuan* is somewhat difficult to follow. According to *Zuozhuan*, the king foresaw his own death in battle, but was then taken ill, after which, seemingly without having recovered from his illness, he proceeded to lead his army in the attack on Daming, only to die at Chengfu — the cause of death is not specified, but it is surely reasonable to suppose that the king died of his illness. In *Zuozhuan*, we are thus led to believe that the king was ill while in the field and that his premonition about his own death in battle was mistaken, whereas in *Shiji*, the king fell ill while in the field, whereupon his illness aggravated, causing his death before he engaged in battle. The *Zuozhuan* account is, at best, difficult to understand, whereas the *Shiji* account is simple and straightforward, being concerned with the king's illness from beginning to end.

In the speech he delivers prior to his abdication (SJ/B15), the king says that he considers himself fortunate to be able to die of old age (以天壽終), but, according to the information available to us, he can at the most have been thirty-three years of age when he died.<sup>15</sup> We must assume that this information was accessible to the *Shiji* author as well. How dying of old age and dying of illness can be harmonised is indeed unclear. In forming this speech, the *Shiji* author may have been misled by the fact that in *Zuozhuan* the king protests that Heaven would not cause his premature death if he was innocent (不穀不有大過, 天其天諸; ZZ/B18) — "the king was innocent, therefore he must have died of old age," the *Shiji* author appears to have reasoned.

Tagigawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太郎 held this speech to be the work of the *Shiji* author himself.<sup>16</sup> This presumes that the *Shiji* author did not know (or make use of) traditions that are

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<sup>15</sup> He can only have been eight years old when he was installed as king and he reigned for a total of twenty-seven years; Yang Bojun, commentary in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Zhao* 26.8, p. 1474.

<sup>16</sup> *Shiki kaichū kōshō* 史記會注考證 (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunka Gakuin, 1932-34) 40, p. 46.

unknown to us, which is plausible to the extent that the speech can be explained as fulfilling a function created by the narrative form given to the *Shiji* account and as the result of an (understandable) misconstrual of elements of the sources that we know were at the disposal of the *Shiji* author. I believe that both these considerations apply in the case at hand and that Takigawa was right in attributing the creation of the speech to the *Shiji* author. One can, of course, claim that this misconstrual was made in an unknown source that the *Shiji* author simply rendered faithfully (if thoughtlessly), but such a claim is only relevant in an argument to the effect that, e.g., the *Shiji* author never "nodded" — it is not of consequence in a discussion of the probable sources of the *Zuozhuan* account.

The speech may have been inspired by *Zuozhuan* on one further point. According to *Zuozhuan* the king foresaw that he would cause the Chu army to suffer defeat a second time (再敗楚師) if he engaged in battle, whereas according to *Shiji* the king regretted the circumstance that the Chu army had suffered defeat twice under his command (再辱楚國之師). Though *Shiji* does not render the story about the auguries taken before engaging in battle with Wu, the notion that *two* defeats were involved could be due to influence from the *Zuozhuan* story about these auguries — the Chu defeat at Boju and the defeat *foreseen* in *Zuozhuan* at Chengfu are intended (King Zhao did not lead Chu to defeat on any other occasion, according to the sources at our disposal). If this is the case, the *Shiji* author again confuses his sources.

If the *Shiji* author did not utilise sources other than *Zuozhuan* to describe the king's abdication, we must assume that if *Shiji* does not accord with *Zuozhuan* this is because the *Shiji* author attempts to rationalise the material at his disposal. This makes sense in other connections as well. *Zuozhuan* is thus silent about the outcome of the battle, but in *Shiji* we are told that the battle was called off by the retreating Gongzi Qi (SJ/C7). *Shiji* also states that Gongzi Qi returned to the capital (歸) to bury the king after having travelled (where to, if not the capital?) to install Zhang as king, whereas *Zuozhuan* informs us that he set out on his way back to the battle-field (還) after installing Zhang (ZZ/B11), which is quite a different matter. *Zuozhuan* leaves us in the dark about certain facts that it would be obvious to enquire about, whereas *Shiji* tries to make sense, but we should be wary of attributing the intelligibility of the *Shiji* account to more than the *Shiji* author's rationalisation of the information he was presented with in *Zuozhuan*.

According to *Zuozhuan* the king was taken ill at least twice, whereas in *Shiji* he was taken ill only once. In *Shiji* the king is said to have died of the same eruption of the same illness that occasioned the questioning of the Grand Scribe and the taking of auguries. According to *Zuozhuan*, however, while the illness may conceivably have been the same, the king was clearly taken ill on two different occasions, '初' clearly referring to a time well before the time referred to by '是歲'.

While the sources agree that the king was ill in the story about the Yellow River, they disagree about the king's state of health in the story about the strange clouds. *Shiji* is unequivocal



cal, as prior to its rendering of the story it states that the king was ill while in his camp (昭王病於軍中) (SJ/A3). In *Shuoyuan*, however, the clouds are clearly taken to warn that illness *will* be inflicted on the king (將虐於王身) (SY/B3), and we must be allowed to presume that he was in good health when the story took place. In *Zuozhuan* there is, as in *Shuoyuan*, nothing to indicate that the king was ill at the time in question. The king says that *if* one attempted to rid an illness affecting the abdomen by transferring it to the limbs this would be unproductive: the passage is metaphorical and does not state that the king was *physically* ill at the time (SY/B6-7; ZZ/B17-18) — though conceivably the king may have become ill as a result of not following the mantic advice. This suggests that the circumstance that the king is ill in the *Shiji* version of the story about the strange clouds is also due to the *Shiji* author's integration of the story about the Yellow River into the story of the king's illness and death while in the field.

Seen in relation to the *Shuoyuan* version, in which the two stories are completely independent, *Zuozhuan* may also be said to integrate the story about the strange clouds into the story about the king's illness and death in the field, for the circumstance that *Zuozhuan* dates the story about the strange clouds to the year of the king's death, introducing it by '是歲', is certainly an attempt to link it with the illness which led to the king's death: the king was cursed by the strange clouds and became ill *because* he refused to shift his illness to others. If so, *Zuozhuan* integrates the story causally, but not narratively, whereas *Shiji* integrates the story narratively as well as causally. In *Zuozhuan* only the story about the Yellow River is not integrated in a definite way, being solely introduced by '初'. One should note, however, that if the *Zuozhuan* author has integrated the story about the strange clouds because it supplies the reason for the king's eventual death, the *Zuozhuan* author in effect attributes causality to the same phenomenon to which King Zhao is praised for not attributing causality, leading to a discrepancy between the moral of the story (as voiced by Confucius) and its narrative logic.

The highly integrated nature of the *Shiji* account is also revealed by its choice of words. According to *Shiji*, the king's ministers requested permission to sacrifice themselves to appease the strange clouds and wished to offer prayers to the Yellow River, '請自以身禱於神' (SJ/B5) and '請禱河' (SJ/B10), but, to judge from the extant versions of the stories, the *Shiji* sources for the two stories can hardly both have contained the characters '請' and '禱'.<sup>17</sup> It would appear that in this case the *Shiji* author harmonised terminology when adapting the stories, making the two episodes echo one another.

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<sup>17</sup> In *Shuoyuan* story about the strange clouds, '禱' is probably used for '禱', 'to sacrifice (especially live-stock)', and thus does not mean 'to supplicate'. Compare the use of '以身禱於桑林' and '以身為犧牲' in the story about how Tang 湯 stopped a drought, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 9, p. 479 (see also *Huainanzi jiaoshi* 9, p. 906; 19, p. 1940). Since obviously something is being offered and more than a prayer is involved, this is the only interpretation which makes sense of the king's protest and simile it employs. Whether '禱' is used in the same sense in the *Shuoyuan* story about the Yellow River is unclear. In *Shiji* '禱' is presumably used in the same sense in both instances, but it is unclear what to make of '以身禱' if '禱' is interpreted as 'to supplicate'.

### The context of Confucius' appreciation of King Zhao

The *Shiji* author often uses the life of Confucius as a guideline to fix the chronology of events of Confucius' time.<sup>18</sup> In *Shuoyuan* and *Zuozhuan* Confucius' appreciation of King Zhao concludes the story about the strange clouds. In *Shiji* the two stories are integrated into the story of the king's death, but the episode of the strange clouds is directly followed by the episode involving the Yellow River, after which Confucius makes his appreciation, and in *Shiji* Confucius therefore comments on the character of the king, as revealed on both occasions, immediately following the king's death.

The *Shiji* integration of the itinerary of Confucius into the story of the death of King Zhao is presumably caused by a misconstrual of the time Confucius made his statement according to *Zuozhuan*. In *Shuoyuan* the king is said to have been ill, but it is in no way implied that this was the illness which led to his death, and in *Zuozhuan*, by means of the expression '初', the king's illness is placed in the past, some time prior to the king's death. Neither *Shuoyuan* nor *Zuozhuan* therefore implies that Confucius made his appraisal of the king immediately following the king's death, nor do they as much as hint that Confucius was staying in Chen at the time he made his appraisal. The integration of the life of Confucius into the life of King Zhao of Chu appears to be the work of the *Shiji* author alone. The Chu king was in Chen when Confucius made his appreciation — and therefore Confucius must have been there as well, the *Shiji* author must have reasoned.

In *Zuozhuan*, the '宜哉' of the appreciation should probably be taken to refer to the past ("it was appropriate that he did not lose his state"), not to indicate a prognostication. On the presumption that it must have appeared plausible to the original author of the story to have Confucius make this appraisal, one could attempt to find a point in the career of the king which it would fit.

King Zhao was certainly in imminent danger of "losing his state" (失國) when after the battle of Boju (506), seventeen years before his death (489), he was driven by the Wu army to flee his capital Ying 郢. Although he succeeded in returning the following year (505), he was actually very close to "losing his state" — indeed, one might argue that he *did* lose it for a brief period of time, witness, e.g., the appraisal attributed to the duke of Chen in *Zuozhuan* that "the state of Chu has been defeated and its king has fled" (國勝君亡).<sup>19</sup> It could be the case that Confucius' appreciation of the king should be viewed against *this* historical background and be construed as "though King Zhao almost lost his state in the battle of Boju, it was surely fitting that he did not lose it after all, but was able to return afterwards to his capital." The appreciation could be understood by the *Zuozhuan* author to have been made at any time following 505 and the time of Confucius' own death. The important point is that the appreciation was made on the

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., the treatment of the same event; *Shiji* 36, p. 1583.

<sup>19</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Ai* 1.4, p. 1607.

background of the king's defeat at Boju, not on the background of the king's death at Chengfu.

Though the *Shuoyuan* version of the story is undated, the story about King Zhao's flight from his capital was probably fairly widely known, since it was part of the popular tale of the revenge which Wu Zixu 伍子胥 wrought on King Ping of Chu 楚平王.<sup>20</sup> Admittedly, this does not apply with equal force to the story about King Zhao's return to Ying, but conceivably Confucius' appreciation of King Zhao would be understood on the background of this story as well, even in the absence of any explicit reference to it.

Whereas Confucius in *Zuozhuan* makes his appreciation at some indefinite point in time, presumably after 505, in *Shiji* he must be held to have pronounced on the king in 489 (or immediately following this). However, regardless of how we construe Confucius' appreciation, the *Shiji* account is involved in considerable narrative inconsistency. If Confucius is taken to refer to contemporary events, he will be saying that, considering the king's unwillingness to unload his blame on others shown now (in 489), it is seemly that he will not lose his country — after which the king loses his life! If Confucius refers to events of the past, he will be saying that, considering the king's unwillingness to load his blame on others shown now (in 489), it is proper that he did not lose his country (in 506-505) — in order for this statement to appear even remotely plausible, we would at least have to have some indication that the king was equally morally enlightened before (which of course he was not, in the common understanding). In either way the *Shiji* account is defective and the defectiveness appears to arise from a misconstrual of the time and reference of Confucius' appreciation.

According to the *Shiji* "Hereditary House of Confucius," Confucius on his wanderings visits Chen on two occasions and stays once more in an unspecified place on the border of Chen and Cai (陳、蔡之間).<sup>21</sup> Whilst Confucius stays on the border of Chen and Cai, King Zhao of Chu communicates his intention to appoint and enfeoff him — *Shuoyuan* parallels this story, apparently independently of *Shiji*.<sup>22</sup> Confucius prepares to go, but finds his way blocked by the grandees of Chen and Cai who do not wish to see Chu prosper under his guidance. Finally, the Chu army helps him proceed to Chu. Gongzi Shen, however, dissuades King Zhao from presenting Confucius with office and fief, insinuating that Confucius will establish an empire of his own. In the autumn of the same year, King Zhao dies.

In *Shiji*, a series of dialogues between the main disciples and Confucius are said to have taken place in between these events. As has been noted by among others Watanabe Takashi 渡邊卓, the *Shiji* chronology of Confucius' wanderings has some extremely curious features.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> David Johnson, "The Wu Tzu-hsü *Pien-wen* and Its Sources," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40.1 (1980), pp. 93-156; 40.2 (1980), pp. 465-505. The story is translated by Victor Mair in *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 123-165.

<sup>21</sup> *Shiji* 47, pp. 1922-1923, 1926-1928, 1930-1933.

<sup>22</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, annot. by Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987) 17, pp. 419-420.

<sup>23</sup> Watanabe Takashi, *Chūgoku kodai shisō no kenkyū* 中國古代思想の研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1973), pp.

Though the *Shiji* author had ample material on Confucius, I believe a good case can be made for the hypothesis that *Zuozhuan* presented him with most (if not all) the chronological pegs on which to hang the events of Confucius' life, and that the chronology of the "Hereditary House of Confucius" is the result of his attempt to fit the undated sources at his disposal into the chronological framework he discerned in *Zuozhuan*. This is not to say that the *Shiji* author interpreted *Zuozhuan* correctly: several features of the rather twisted nature of the chronology of Confucius' years in exile can be accounted for by the *Shiji* author's misinterpretation of the date and time of Confucius' appreciation of King Zhao of Chu.

Whereas, chronologically speaking, Confucius' appreciation appears most apposite on the background of King Zhao's 505 return to Ying, ideologically speaking, one might say that it gains in intelligibility if viewed on the background of the story about how King Zhao wanted to appoint Confucius to high office. This story is probably one of the (presumably quite late) stories that were meant to show how close Confucius came to implementing his Way. The "special relationship" that was supposed to obtain between Confucius and the king also shows itself in a story, evidenced in both *Shuoyuan* and *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語, in which Confucius prophesied that King Zhao would become hegemon (*ba* 霸),<sup>24</sup> surely an unlikely development for this sorry ruler.

### The derivation of the *Shiji* version of the stories

The relation between *Shiji* and *Zuozhuan* is actually more complicated than I have implied above. Though it certainly builds on *Zuozhuan*, the *Shiji* rendering of the stories about the strange clouds and the Yellow River cannot be explained solely as the *Shiji* author's adaptation of the *Zuozhuan* account.

In the story about the strange clouds, *Shiji*'s '將相聞是言，乃請自以身禱於神' can hardly be derived from *Zuozhuan*'s '大夫請祭諸郊', whereas it is closely mirrored in *Shuoyuan*'s '令尹司馬聞之，宿齋沐浴，將自以身禱之焉', of which it might well be a condensation. *Shiji*'s '是害於楚王' can also more reasonably be interpreted as a paraphrase of *Shuoyuan*'s '將虐於王身' than of *Zuozhuan*'s '其當王身乎' (more about '當' below). There is thus reason to hold that the *Shiji* rendering of the story about the strange clouds builds on a source in addition to *Zuozhuan*, a source which, in some respects at least, is close to *Shuoyuan*.

There is one important point on which *Shiji* and *Zuozhuan* agree against *Shuoyuan*: both hold the person asked for an interpretation of the strange clouds to have been 周太史/周大史, whereas according to *Shuoyuan* the person was 太史州黎. The *Shiji* reading is almost certainly due to influence from *Zuozhuan*. Another indication of such influence is the occurrence in *Shiji*

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<sup>24</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 18, p. 465; *Kongzi jiaoyu zhuzi suoyin* 孔子家語逐字索引, ed. by D. C. Lau (Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵) (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1992) 8.16, pp. 13-14.

of the phrase '然可移於將相', paralleled only by *Zuozhuan*'s '可移於令尹、司馬' (we shall examine below what is the probable origin of the *Zuozhuan* phrase). However, influence from *Zuozhuan* on *Shiji* is what we expect. There are other points on which such influence is not in evidence.

In the story about the Yellow River, *Shiji*'s '先王受封' is closer to *Shuoyuan*'s '先王割地制土' than to *Zuozhuan*'s '三代命祀'; *Shiji* presumably paraphrases a sentence similar to that in *Shuoyuan*. *Shiji*'s use of '過' likewise relates it to *Shuoyuan*, rather than to *Zuozhuan* and its '越'. There is thus reason to suppose that *Shiji* builds on sources in addition to *Zuozhuan* in the case of the story about the Yellow River as well.

The *Shiji* version thus in several instances agrees with *Shuoyuan* where *Shuoyuan* is at variance with *Zuozhuan*.

The *Lienü zhuan* rendition contains a number of puzzles which may cast doubt on the transmitted version of the *Shiji* (see below), but the *Shiji* rendition of the two stories is probably a conflation of the *Zuozhuan* version of the stories and a version of the stories close to that in *Shuoyuan*.

In the subsequent narrative in *Shiji* about how the king renounced the throne before his death there are conspicuous verbal agreements between *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji*, and there is no reason to suppose that *Zuozhuan* did not serve as the sole source for this part of the *Shiji* account. The king cedes the throne to three persons, only the third accepting. In *Zuozhuan*, these three appear, as mentioned above, to have been the king's elder brothers.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the *Shiji* author misconstrued the relationship between the king and his brothers, influenced by stories, such as those involving Ji Zha 季札 and Duke Jing of Song 宋景公, in which the king abdicates to his younger brother who then abdicates to *his* younger brother (and so on), or perhaps the *Shiji* author was confused by the circumstance that the Chu royal house did not uphold the principle that one could not marry persons that were not of one's own generation.<sup>26</sup>

### **The *Lienü zhuan* and *Kongzi jiayu* versions of the stories**

In order to illustrate the female virtue of self-sacrifice, the *Lienü zhuan* author has inserted into the story about the strange clouds the figure of Yue Ji 越姬 (the mother of Zhang, referred to as '越女' in *Shiji*), who committed suicide to accompany her lord in death.<sup>27</sup> Here, the story about the strange clouds has been appropriated to tell a story about the principled devotion of Yue Ji

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<sup>25</sup> *Shiji* elsewhere holds Gongzi Shen to be the younger brother of King Ping of Chu, the father of King Zhao; *Shiji* 40, p. 1714.

<sup>26</sup> The situation is confusing: the mother of King Zhao was a concubine of King Ping, but she had been brought to Chu to marry King Ping's (erstwhile) crown prince, Wangzi Jian 王子建, who was born to King Ping by a concubine from Cai 蔡 and who was thus the brother of the (future) King Zhao. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 19.2, p. 1401; *Shiji* 5, p. 197; 40, p. 1712.

<sup>27</sup> This passage is omitted in the interlinear presentation.

to her unprincipled lord, who finally mends his ways.

The *Lienü zhuan* version (LNZ/A-D) is very close to the *Shiji* version from which it unquestionably derives.<sup>28</sup> *Lienü zhuan* thus states that Gongzi Shen and his brothers are King Zhao's younger brothers (LNZ/D1); this must be due to the circumstance that *Shiji* (erroneously) calls them the king's '弟'.

However, though it follows the *Shiji*, the *Lienü zhuan* contains a number of minor discrepancies where contact with *Shuoyuan* could conceivably be in evidence. The phrase '是害王身' (LNZ/B3) thus parallels *Shuoyuan*'s '將虐於王身', rather than *Shiji*'s '是害於楚王', in its use of the expression '王身'; '將請以身禱于神' (LNZ/B5) contains a '將' which *Shuoyuan* has ('將自以身禱之焉') but *Shiji* does not ('乃請自以身禱於神'). '庸為' (LNZ/B7) is also the *Shuoyuan* reading, but *Shiji* only has '庸'. Even though Liu Xiang compiled both *Shuoyuan* and *Lienü zhuan*, I am reluctant to posit conflation or the use of an intermediate source on the basis of such minute discrepancies. *Lienü zhuan* does not appear to be a text where great care has been taken to collate different versions of stories in order to present improved versions of these; stories were taken, generally from the *Shiji*, and made relevant to the theme of female virtuousness. I rather think we have to consider the possibility that the modern editions of *Shiji* have been edited and that *Lienü zhuan* is based on an early version of *Shiji*. A systematic study of the relationship between *Shiji* and *Lienü zhuan* is needed to clarify this.

As it offers no certain independent testimony to the stories discussed, the *Lienü zhuan* version will be left out of consideration in the following discussion.

The *Kongzi jiayu* version (KZJY) to all appearances derives from the *Zuozhuan* version. The *Kongzi jiayu* variant '沮' for *Zuozhuan*'s '睢' is supported by *Zuozhuan* quotations in *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 and *Chuxue ji* 初學記.<sup>29</sup> While this could mean that it was original with *Zuozhuan*, *Zuozhuan* elsewhere refers to the same river using the character '睢',<sup>30</sup> and '沮' might equally well be a vulgarisation. The variants in the first *Shu* quotation suggest that the *Zuozhuan* version has been corrected by the *Kongzi jiayu* author by use of a different tradition of the *Shu*. The *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 has '厥道' with *Kongzi jiayu* where *Zuozhuan* has '其行', indicating influence from this forgery (possibly perpetrated by the *Kongzi jiayu* compiler himself).<sup>31</sup>

Offering no independent testimony, there is no reason to consider *Kongzi jiayu* in the following discussion.

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<sup>28</sup> *Gu Lienü zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 古列女傳逐字索引, ed. by D. C. Lau (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1993) 5.4, p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> Li Fusun 李富孫, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan yiwen shi* 春秋左傳異文釋 (*Huang Qing jingjie xubian* 皇清經解續編, ed. by Wang Xianqian 王先謙, 1888) 10, p. 19a.

<sup>30</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ding 4.3, p. 1545; King Zhao of Chu crosses the 睢.

<sup>31</sup> R. P. Kramers, *The School Sayings of Confucius* (Leiden, 1950).

### The *Han Shi waizhuan* version of the story about the Yellow River

There is a close relationship between the *Shuoyuan* version of the story about the curse of the Yellow River and a *Han Shi waizhuan* (HSWZ) story about King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 (613-591).<sup>32</sup>

The major difference between the *Han Shi waizhuan* and *Shuoyuan* versions, aside from their different main protagonist, is that in *Han Shi waizhuan*, the king is said to have recovered from his illness, this being (somewhat incongruously, it appears to me) the effect of his scepticism in the matter of the auguries, and therefore '三日而疾有瘳' is unique (and central) to the *Han Shi waizhuan* version. There are also minor differences, such as the order in which the two pairs of rivers are mentioned and *Han Shi waizhuan*'s '寡人' for *Shuoyuan*'s '不穀', but the story is obviously the same.

However, the *Han Shi waizhuan* version does not have significant verbal similarities with *Shiji* or *Zuozhuan* that are not shared by *Shuoyuan*. It appears to be a story about the curse of the Yellow River similar to that found in *Shuoyuan*, adapted to fit King Zhuang of Chu, which has had its moral "strengthened" by adding that the king recovered from his illness. In *Han Shi waizhuan* the story is used to explain how King Zhuang became hegemon. King Zhuang figures in the lists of Chunqiu hegemonies; this could explain why the *Han Shi waizhuan* author chose to feature King Zhuang instead of King Zhao.

The panegyric attributed to Confucius differs considerably (HSWZ/6, 8), though some points of contact with the *Shuoyuan* version are in evidence. There is, one might argue, a structural similarity between *Han Shi waizhuan* and *Zuozhuan* that is not shared by *Shuoyuan*: in both *Zuozhuan* and *Han Shi waizhuan* Confucius quotes classics to illustrate the virtues of the king. This is hardly significant, however, since the classics Confucius quotes are different, and I do not think that it presents grounds for assuming influence between *Han Shi waizhuan* and *Zuozhuan* — one expects Confucius to do such things and rather wonders at his reticence in *Shuoyuan*.

There are a number of features of the *Han Shi waizhuan* version that could be important to assessing the relationship between the *Shuoyuan* and *Zuozhuan* versions. In *Han Shi waizhuan*, the grandees recommend that the king 用牲; this agrees with the *Shuoyuan* reading '用三牲焉' but is at variance with the *Zuozhuan* reading '祭諸郊'. The king begins his rebuttal of the recommendation that offerings be made by uttering '止' in both *Han Shi waizhuan* and *Shuoyuan*, but not elsewhere. Also, according to *Han Shi waizhuan*, the king refers to the circumstance that 古者聖王之制, 祭不過望, which is definitely closer to *Shuoyuan*'s '古者先王, 割地制土, 祭不過望' than *Zuozhuan*'s '三代命祀, 祭不越望', both in its use of '古者聖王' and in its use of '過'. '制' is used in different senses in the two passages — perhaps

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<sup>32</sup> *Han Shi waizhuan jishi* 韓詩外傳集釋, annot. by Xu Weiyu 許維遜 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1980), 3, pp. 90-91.

corruption (followed by rationalisation) is at play in *Han Shi waizhuan*, but whichever is the case the character '制' ties together *Han Shi waizhuan* with *Shuoyuan*; the *Shuoyuan* reading is here corroborated by *Shiji* whose '受封' is probably a paraphrase of a passage similar to *Shuoyuan*'s '割地制土', not of *Zuozhuan*'s '三代命祀'.

All in all, where *Han Shi waizhuan* differs from *Zuozhuan*, it is corroborated by *Shuoyuan*.

### Preliminary conclusions, Part 1

Above we have seen that among the sources rendering one or both of the stories about King Zhao, only that found in *Shiji* shows signs of being influenced by *Zuozhuan*. That *Shiji* draws on *Zuozhuan* should not surprise us, but what does perhaps cause some wonder is the circumstance that *Zuozhuan* has only supplied the *Shiji* author with the framework for the stories, but not the stories themselves (except for the designation of the person consulted in the story about the strange clouds and the phrase with '移'). We see this pattern repeatedly: *Zuozhuan* furnishes *Shiji* with the chronological clues and the general structure of the stories, but for the actual wording of the stories, *Shiji* avails itself of other sources. I believe that it does not strain credulity to assume that the *Shiji* author is able to perform such feats of textual integration, for we see the same level of textual sophistication evidenced elsewhere in the work, e.g., in the chronological tables. Also, the "scissors-and-paste" method that this implies also fits with what else we know about the way the *Shiji* author worked.<sup>33</sup> That *Shiji* should be the only source to depend on *Zuozhuan* is not so strange, for though the circulation of *Zuozhuan* was quite limited until Eastern Han times, the *Shiji* author had special access to imperial libraries.

Among the various versions of the two stories, except that in *Shiji*, in all cases where there is agreement between a source other than *Zuozhuan* that contains a parallel to the *Zuozhuan* story and *Zuozhuan* itself, there is also agreement among the non-*Zuozhuan* sources themselves. It is thus unnecessary to posit the influence of *Zuozhuan* on sources other than *Shiji*. There are many cases where a non-*Zuozhuan* source disagrees with *Zuozhuan*, but this in itself of course does not show that the source in question does not derive from *Zuozhuan* — changing some things, adding some things, deleting some things: all this is to be expected when stories like these are transmitted and improved (though we should in each case seek to explain why the changes have occurred).

However, how are we to account for the fact that several versions agree in disagreeing with *Zuozhuan*, when these versions do not, as far as we can ascertain, depend upon one another? It is highly improbable that the same changes should have arisen independently in

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<sup>33</sup> William Nienhauser, "A Reexamination of "The Biographies of the Reasonable Officials" in The Records of the Grand Historian," *Early China* 16 (1991), pp. 209-233.



several versions of the stories. This appeals to the most basic principle of textual criticism, and even though the differences are at times inconsequential and marginal, this principle carries considerable weight. The testimony to the stories has to be explained in its totality — even though derivation may go either way if the different versions are viewed in pairs, there are often ways in which the line of derivation can be shown *not* to be possible, if all the versions are taken into consideration.

It is of course *conceivable* that the sources that agree in disagreeing with *Zuozhuan* are not independent, but there are no positive indications that this is the case, and an appeal to this possibility is thus wanton — if it were allowed, *any* claim about “possible” sources would have to be admitted.

Again, it is, in a certain (but somewhat uninteresting) sense of this word, *possible* that *Zuozhuan* version of the stories is original and all the other versions derivative. However, if we postulate this, we are committed to defending a number of rather improbable hypotheses. We will first have to posit that at a relatively early stage someone disentangled the stories from the chronological framework in which they are lodged in *Zuozhuan*, altered their morals, removed their *Shu* quotations, discarded the story about the pre-combat omens, and so on. Admittedly, it is within the realm of the possible for this to have happened,<sup>34</sup> but we additionally have to posit that this unknown source served as source for all the remaining parallels, *Zuozhuan* having no direct influence on them (except on *Shiji*), and that, after having effected this influence, the modified version disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving no trace behind. Aside from its use by the *Shiji* author, *Zuozhuan* was to exert a direct influence only once, on this (hypothetical) source of all non-*Zuozhuan* versions of the stories.

I think that it will be agreed that such assumptions are highly implausible. The reverse — that *Zuozhuan* is directly influenced by *Han Shi waizhuan* and/or *Shuoyuan* — is likewise implausible, given our knowledge about the time of compilation of these texts.

The more plausible solution appears to be to postulate the existence of a version of the stories that (ultimately) served as source for the versions found in *Zuozhuan*, *Han Shi waizhuan*, *Shiji* and *Shuoyuan*. All these versions testify, directly or indirectly, to this original version, but the *Shuoyuan* version is the most interesting among these, because (as I will attempt to show below) it shows signs of being more likely to be the original. The *Zuozhuan* version is interesting as well, but mainly on account of the modifications that were made to the original story, modifications that were to influence *Shiji*.

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<sup>34</sup> The *Shi Chun* 師春, a text excavated in A.D. 281 which was probably written in the 4th century B.C., is said to contain extracts of *Zuozhuan* divination accounts (*Jinshu* [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974] 51/1433), but unfortunately not even a quotation remains of this work, making it impossible to evaluate the validity of this claim. I know of no other Han or pre-Han works which could have contained similar extracts.

### The origin of the *Shuoyuan* version of the story about the strange clouds

It is through a comparison of the *Shuoyuan* and *Zuozhuan* versions of the stories that I believe we can get closer to the sources employed to compose the *Zuozhuan* version.

Of crucial importance for assessing the relationship between the *Shuoyuan* and the *Zuozhuan* versions of the story about the strange clouds is the circumstance that whereas in *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* the king asks an unnamed 周太史/周大史 for advice (ZZ/B13), in *Shuoyuan* he consults a 太史 with the name '州黎' (SY/B2). This is significant first of all because of its specificity, but also because an important figure, with what may safely be regarded as a variant of this name, Bo Zhouli 伯州犁, is mentioned repeatedly in *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*.<sup>35</sup>

The father of Bo Zhouli was a man of Jin. After he was killed, Bo Zhouli fled to Chu where he became 大宰 and was killed in the coup of 541. The *Shuoyuan* version dates the events of the story to "the time of King Zhao" (楚昭王之時), so it is of course impossible that Bo Zhouli should have been asked by King Zhao of Chu in 489 about the strange clouds — King Zhao of Chu acceded to the throne in 516 and any contact between the two is out of the question. How this problem could be solved I will attempt to address below.

While the *Shuoyuan* version reading thus does not make sense chronologically, the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* readings '周大史' and '周太史' have likewise proven difficult to explain, for though the expressions '周史' and '周內史' are quite common,<sup>36</sup> the *Zuozhuan* version of the story about the strange clouds supplies the only example in the pre-Han literature of the expression '周大史'/'周太史'.

In his *Zuozhuan* commentary, Fu Qian 服虔 (fl. 184-189) wrote that all the feudal houses had 太史,<sup>37</sup> and that they were in charge of the documents that the Zhou house had bestowed on the various feudal lords, for which reason they were called '周大史'. Why the 太史 of King Zhao of Chu, alone of all known 太史, should be called by this designation, is a question Fu Qian does not attempt to address, and one must question whether he had concrete support for his interpretation, or whether he was not forcing sense out of *Zuozhuan*. Of some interest is the fact that he continues to report an alternative interpretation, namely that the person asked for

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<sup>35</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Cheng 15.5, p. 876; Cheng 16.5, p. 884; Xiang 26.6, p. 1115; Xiang 27.4, p. 1131; Zhao 1.1, pp. 1199, 1203; Zhao 1.13, p. 1223; Ding 4.3, p. 1542; *Guoyu* 11, p. 407; see also *Shiji* 31, p. 1465 and 66, p. 2174. Wei Zhao, in his commentary on *Guoyu* 20, p. 634, also writes '黎' instead of '犁'. — The *Shuoyuan* mention of 周史州黎 is also noted by Zhang Binglin; *Zhang Taiyan quanji* 章太炎全集, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Renmin, 1982), pp. 770-771. Zhang, however, postulates that the person in question was called '州大史' and that this expression gave rise to '周大史'. Since '州黎' is clearly a 名, however, half of it cannot be used in the manner suggested by Zhang; the standard way of referring to 史 is to mention their 名 after the character '史', not their 姓 or 氏 before the character '史'.

<sup>36</sup> See the convenient table, Kamata Tadashi, *Saden no seiritsu to sono tenkai*, p. 64, and Yang Bojun, commentary in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Huan 2.2, p. 90.

<sup>37</sup> Fu Qian's commentary is rendered by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* Ai 6, p. 1007. Du Yu supplies no interpretation.

advice by the Chu king was the 大史 of Zhou — the 周史 or 周內史, officials of the Zhou court, are often asked for mantic advice in *Zuozhuan*.<sup>38</sup> That Fu Qian found it pertinent to report this alternative interpretation presumably shows that he had no convincing proof for his primary interpretation — that it was based on conjecture.<sup>39</sup> One should also note that, according to *Zuozhuan*, King Ling of Chu 楚靈王 (540-528) had even recently complained that Chu had not received bestowals from Zhou, whereas Qi, Wei, Jin and Lu had.<sup>40</sup> This makes Hui Dong 惠棟 (1697-1758) conjecture that when Wangzi Chao 王子朝 fled to Chu with the records of Zhou (周之典籍),<sup>41</sup> he carried along with him someone who took care of these, and that this person was consulted about the strange clouds, but, as Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 remarks, such a refugee scribe would hardly be called a '周大史' (nor, for that matter, a '周史').<sup>42</sup>

The testimony of *Zuozhuan* in this matter is thus also difficult to make sense of.

We should note that '州' and '周' are homophonous, the pronunciation of both words being reconstructed according to Li Fanggui 李方圭 as \*tjəw.<sup>43</sup> The character '史' is reconstructed as \*srjəg and '犁' as \*ljəg. As '史' is phonetic in '吏' (\*ljəgh), the element 'l', very close to 'r', can be accounted for.<sup>44</sup> The pronunciation of '史' and '犁' was thus quite similar and one could be mistaken for the other. One may also note that '宰', \*tjəgx, and '史', \*srjəgx, have identical medials and finals.

While each of these resemblances may be dismissed as inconsequential, their aggregate suggests that the expressions '周史' and '州犁', and, possibly, that '大宰' and '大史' as well, have been confused.

Two explanations appear to be possible. One is that '州犁' is a bona fide name which, perhaps influenced by the '大史' occurring in front of it, was misinterpreted as '周史'. An intermediate form, probably never actualised in any text, '大史周史', would then have to be posited, a form which has been rationalised in *Zuozhuan* as '周大史' and which led to the *Shiji* reading '周太史'. The other explanation posits the corruption of '周大史' into '大宰州犁'.

If '州犁' is original, there are two possibilities. One is that a person, different from the earlier Bo Zhouli, with the name '州犁' held the office of 大史/太史 during the reign of King

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<sup>38</sup> See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhuang 22.1, p. 222; Xi 16.1, p. 369; Wen 14.7, p. 604.

<sup>39</sup> This has not deterred scholars from doing their utmost to support Fu Qian. The arguments by Hui Dong and Zhang Binglin are conveniently summed up Kamata Tadashi, *Saden no seiritsu to sono tenkai*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>40</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 12.11, p. 1339.

<sup>41</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 26.9, p. 1475.

<sup>42</sup> It is said that Lu received many ritual officers and implements, including some Zhou documents (典策), as a special favour in the early days of the dynasty (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ding 4.1, p. 1537), and it is also the case that Lu had an official called '周人' (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ai 3.2, p. 1620), who, according to Du Yu, was in charge of these documents — the meaning of '周人' is, however, also in dispute.

<sup>43</sup> Reconstructions according to Axel Schlüssler, *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> In the reconstruction of Zheng Zhang Shangfang 鄭張尚芳, both are thus realised as 'r'; *Shanggu yinxi* 上古音系 (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2003).

Zhao of Chu. This is the most simple solution, but of course entirely conjectural. The other possibility is that the story about the strange clouds originally was not about King Zhao of Chu and that the person in question was the Bo Zhouli that we know from *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*. An intriguing possibility is then that Bo Zhouli was referred to in the archetype of the story by use of his office and his 名, as '大宰州犁'. According to this line of thinking, originally the 大宰 was questioned, but because the question was one normally put to a 大史, '大宰' was changed into '大史', giving rise to the form '大史州犁', which led to the '太史州黎' evidenced in *Shuoyuan*. In '大史州犁' the element '大史' led to a corruption of '州犁' to '周史', with the subsequent rationalisation of '大史周史/太史周史' to '周大史/周太史', resulting in the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* readings. In *Zuozhuan* only the locution '大宰伯州犁' occurs,<sup>45</sup> but the common way of referring to occupants of the office of 大宰 is by prefixing '大宰' to their 名 or 字, as in the case of the grandson of Bo Zhouli, who is known as '大宰嚭' and '大宰子餘'.<sup>46</sup>

Admittedly, this line of reasoning is rather strained, but are there more plausible ways of explaining the occurrence of '大史州犁' in *Shuoyuan*? It will not do to attribute the variant form to the lack of historical accuracy on the part of *Shuoyuan* — this begs the question, since we need an answer to why the "inaccuracy" (if, indeed, it is one) occurred in the first place — even mistakes in rag-bag compilations like *Shuoyuan* have to be explained. Corruptions may make a text incomprehensible (from which nothing follows) or more comprehensible (in which case the principle of *lectio difficillior* regards the less comprehensible variant as original, all other things being equal) but rarely comprehensible in two ways, unless reinterpretation is at issue. If reinterpretation is involved, what can have made *Shuoyuan* reinterpret the, on the surface, quite unobjectionable, '周大史/周太史' as the rather exceptionable '太史州黎'? I find it hard to make a convincing argument for this, but — as outlined above — there is a line of reasoning, torturous as it may be, which leads in the other direction.

Bo Zhouli was considered a wise man, and the figure of didactic stories most susceptible to alteration is the ruler; indeed, we have seen an example of this in the *Han Shi waizhuan* adaptation of the story about the Yellow River which features King Zhuang and not King Zhao of Chu.

The hypothesis that '周史' is a corruption of '州犁' accounts for the, otherwise inexplicable, *specificity* of the *Shuoyuan* reading. Whether '大史/太史' has anything to do with '大宰/太宰' is more uncertain, but an intriguing possibility. If we accept that '太史州黎' is a corruption of '大宰州犁', then the king was not King Zhao — most probably, in the original version of the story the king was an unidentified "king of Chu," and only became King Zhao when the story was associated with the story about the curse of the Yellow River.

<sup>45</sup> See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Cheng 16.5, p. 884; Zhao 1.1 p. 1199; Zhao 1.13, p. 1223.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ai 1.2, p. 1605; Ai 7.3, p. 1641; Ai 8.5, p. 1650, Ai 12.3, p. 1671-1672.

To attempt an argument for the opposite course of alteration will inevitably stumble on the specificity of '州犁'. If the editor of a text regarded '周大史' as strange, surely the easiest way to assimilate it would be to emend it to '周史' — not to introduce a specific person who was pronounced similarly to '周史'.<sup>47</sup>

The claim in *Shuoyuan* that the king sent someone *eastwards* by coach to question 太史州黎 is also very specific, but unfortunately it does not help identify the person questioned by the king, since we do not know where the king was thought to be when the strange clouds were sighted — we must bear in mind that the *Shuoyuan* story does not in any way indicate that the story took place on a military campaign in aid of Chen. The *Shuoyuan* claim is impossible to explain from the context of the *Zuozhuan* or *Shiji* versions of the story. Yang Bojun has suggested that since the king was at Chengfu, he would be closer to Zhou than to his own capital, which would point in the direction that the person consulted was a Zhou courtier. However, since Luoyang is northwest of Chengfu and north of Ying 郢, the Chu capital, this really does not solve the problem. The unexplained specificity of the *Shuoyuan* claim that 太史州黎 was staying someplace east of the Chu king suggests that the story about the strange clouds was formulated on the background of some other story wherein this feature was readily interpretable. No known historical context has the Chu king to the west of Ying (let alone Zhou) — if we want to make sense of the '東', we may perhaps conjecture that 太史州黎 was on a mission in the east when consulted by the king. It would be more convenient if we could dismiss the '東' as a corruption, but there is no positive reason for doing so — again, the *specificity* of the *Shuoyuan* version, irritating as it is, argues in favour of its originality. We cannot dismiss this character, just because it is marginal to the story, because in arguments concerning textual filiation odd and innocuous features of this kind count as evidence on an equal footing as more weighty elements.

There is one further feature of the *Shuoyuan* version that appears to contain an element as irreversible as '州犁'. According to the story about the strange clouds in *Zuozhuan*, the 周大史 recommended performing the Yong 禳 sacrifice (ZZ/B15). This sacrifice, mentioned several times in *Zuozhuan*, is offered to nature deities in order to eliminate or prevent natural catastrophes,<sup>48</sup> so there is nothing unnatural about it being performed in connection with the strange clouds. In *Shuoyuan*, there seems at first sight to be no parallel to the mention of this sacrifice, 太史州黎 advising the king with the words '以令尹, 司馬說焉, 則可' (SY/B4). According to *Zhouli* 周禮, however, the Taizhu 大祝 is in charge of six irregular sacrifices, all directed towards nature deities with the purpose of averting catastrophes. Among these are the Yong

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<sup>47</sup> The '周史' of the *Lienü zhuan* may be just such a rationalisation of *Shiji*'s '周太史' — Liu Xiang knew that there had never been an official entitled '周太史' and altered it in this work of his. The expression '周太史' is common in *Shiji*, but only in connection with Zhou; cf., e.g., *Shiji* 4, p. 147; 4, p. 159; 5, p. 201; 28, pp. 1364; 36, p. 1577.

<sup>48</sup> See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 1.12, p. 1220; Zhao 19.10, p. 1405.

sacrifice, but also the Shuo 說 sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> Likewise the Shushi 庶氏 is responsible for expelling venom (毒蠱) by means of the Shuo sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> The Shuo sacrifice seems to be mentioned only on two other occasions outside of the *Zhouli* in the early transmitted literature,<sup>51</sup> but the circumstance that '說' is used as the name of a sacrifice in *Shuoyuan* should be beyond doubt. The name of the sacrifice was changed into the name of the similar, but more familiar, Yong sacrifice, in *Zuozhuan*. To posit the opposite, that '說' is an adaptation of '祭', would strain credulity, given the extreme rarity of references to this sacrifice.

The changes postulated in connection with '太史州黎' and '說' need of course not be the work of the *Zuozhuan* author — they could have taken place in the material adapted by him. To assume that he exchanged '祭' for '說' perhaps does not strain credulity, but it is very much a matter of opinion whether the change from '太史州黎' to '周大史' should be attributed to the *Zuozhuan* author or to the author of a source used by him.

### The origin of the *Shuoyuan* version of the story about the Yellow River

The story about the Yellow River does not present features as interesting as the story about the strange clouds.

*Zuozhuan* and *Shuoyuan* differ in the terms used to describe the offerings proposed by the 大夫, *Shuoyuan* having '用三牲焉' (SY/A1) where *Zuozhuan* has '祭諸郊' (ZZ/B21). Whereas the Jiao 郊 sacrifice, primarily performed by feudal lords to ensure a bountiful harvest, is mentioned elsewhere in *Zuozhuan*, the use of 三牲 is not. It is here relevant to note (as has been done above) that *Han Shi waizhuan* agrees with *Shuoyuan*, reading '用牲'. In adapting the story, the *Zuozhuan* author may have changed '三牲' to '郊' because of the subsequent mention of the Wang 望 sacrifice; the two sacrifices were linked, the Wang sacrifice being a minor sacrifice performed after the Jiao sacrifice.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏 (*Shisan jing zhushu*, vol. 3) 25, p. 383; cf. 26, p. 816). The remaining sacrifices (祀) are 類, 造, 禴, 祭 and 攻. According to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), the Shuo sacrifice only involved offering 幣 and mainly consisted in a verbal berating (責) of the deities. In *Shuoyuan*, the sacrifice of the king's ministers seems to be involved. An explanation of this discrepancy could be that the tradition of Zheng Xuan (and *Zhouli* itself) tends to redefine ritual involving (human) sacrifice in an "elegant" way. The pronunciation of the name of the sacrifice is uncertain ("Tuo"?), as is its translation ("Dislodge"?).

<sup>50</sup> *Zhouli zhushu* 37, p. 557. Other rituals in this connection are 禴 and 攻.

<sup>51</sup> *Huainanzi jiaoshi* 淮南子校釋, annot. by Zhang Shuangdi 張雙棣 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1997) 20, p. 665 (as '兌' in '禱祠而求福, 零兌而請雨'). In *Yanzi chunqiu jishi* 晏子春秋集釋, annot. by Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962) 1, p. 43, Duke Jing of Qi is said to have wanted to kill two of his ritual experts 以說于上帝. The *Zuozhuan* parallel to this story, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 20.6, pp. 1415-1418, does not contain such a locution. Li Ling 李零 (private communication, May 2000) has informed me that this sacrifice is also mentioned in excavated Qin and Chu texts, the character forms used in these being '斂' and '兌'.

<sup>52</sup> The two sacrifices are mentioned together *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xi 31.3, pp. 486-487; Xuan 3.1, pp. 668.

*Zuozhuan* and *Shuoyuan* also differ in the rationale given by the king for not sacrificing. In both the king says that the Yellow River is not one of the places Chu directs its Wang sacrifice to and he names four rivers that are. The point is that the Yellow River lies outside of Chu territory,<sup>53</sup> and, as the king states, 祭不過/祭越望. In *Shuoyuan* this is said to follow from the facts of feudal investiture (古者先王, 割地制土), whereas *Zuozhuan* explains this rule by referring to the injunctions given in ancient times to perform certain sacrifices (三代命祀).<sup>54</sup> The rationale given in *Shuoyuan* is connected with the concept of territory,<sup>55</sup> crucial to that of the Wang sacrifice, whereas the explanation given in *Zuozhuan* deals in a more vague manner with sacrifices instituted in antiquity. Here again *Han Shi waizhuan* supports *Shuoyuan*. *Han Shi waizhuan*'s '古者聖王之制' is definitely affiliated in some way with *Shuoyuan*'s '古者先王, 割地制土'.

The '過/越' variation could be due to stylistic variation, the *Zuozhuan* author seeking to avoid the repetition of characters, but, again, this is too a weak foundation to build an argument regarding derivation upon. *Zuozhuan*'s '遂弗祭' against *Shuoyuan*'s '遂不祭焉' may also be due to stylistic concerns, as the *Zuozhuan* three-character '遂弗祭', with its association of finality, is paralleled not only by the initial '王弗祭' (which is not evidenced elsewhere and may well have been supplied by the *Zuozhuan* author), but also by the conclusion of the story about the strange clouds, which reads '遂弗祭'. The *Shuoyuan* reading is in both cases supported by *Han Shi waizhuan*, and this allows us to use these variants as indications that *Zuozhuan* is not original. *Zuozhuan* has '孔子曰' instead of *Shuoyuan*'s '仲尼曰', but this can hardly be attributed any significance.

The *Xia Shu* 夏書 quotations following Confucius' appreciation have probably been added by the *Zuozhuan* author — the addition of *Shi* and *Shu* quotations is typical of the *Zuozhuan* author, as examination of numerous instances of parallels to *Zuozhuan* stories shows.

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<sup>53</sup> One should note that if the king was believed to be at Chengfu in the story, his proximity to the Yellow River would go some way towards explaining why the augury should mention this river at all. However, whether this should be accorded any weight is difficult to decide.

<sup>54</sup> The expression '命祀' appears *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xi 31.5, p. 487, in a passage which states a similar principle concerning the proper recipients of sacrifices, '鬼神非其族類, 不歆其祀'. '命祀' also appears *Guoyu* 4, p. 158. The expression '三代' occurs *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 7.7, p. 1290, in a discussion likewise involving sacrifice and a ruler's illness.

<sup>55</sup> *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 expresses the same principle as that expressed in *Shuoyuan*: "山川有不在其封內者, 則不祭也;" cf. *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏 (*Shisan jing zhushu*, vol. 7) Xi 31, p. 157.

## Preliminary conclusions, Part 2

I believe it can be said that with regard to neither story do there exist any convincing arguments for the position that the *Shuoyuan* version should have been derived from the *Zuozhuan* version or, indeed, that it has been influenced by it. On the other hand, it does not appear implausible to suppose that *Zuozhuan* derives from an account along the lines of *Shuoyuan*. The *Zuozhuan* version definitely influenced the *Shiji* version, but it appears to have left no other trace in the early transmitted literature. This is in agreement with our knowledge of the limited circulation of this gargantuan text before Eastern Han times.

If it can be shown that there exists a version of a text that does not derive from its parallel in *Zuozhuan*, we then know that this version testifies, however indirectly, to a state of the text in question that is anterior to the text as incorporated in *Zuozhuan*. If we have three versions of the same text, A, B and C, and B depends on A, whereas C does not depend on A or B, then C is on the same level as A, in terms of lineation. A is the source of *Zuozhuan* and B is *Shuoyuan*. Since *Shuoyuan* does not depend on *Zuozhuan*, within the body of witnesses as a whole, *Shuoyuan* is on a par with *Zuozhuan*'s source. This does not imply that *Shuoyuan* is identical with the source of *Zuozhuan*, indeed, it might be quite different, but it shows that it testifies independently to this source. Based on arguments concerning textual filiation, we can go no further. However, if, by means of other arguments, it can be shown to make sense to assume that a text close to *Shuoyuan* served as source for *Zuozhuan*, in that we can explain the transformations that the *Shuoyuan* story underwent by what we know about the *Zuozhuan* author's ideas and ways of working, we may be able to advance, if somewhat perilously, to a more definite view of the relationship between the two texts.

*Shuoyuan* (and possibly *Han Shi waizhuan*) thus testify indirectly to the state of the text used in composing the *Zuozhuan* version. It is important to remember that this in itself does not inform us about *which* features this text had, only that it had features that lead in two directions, one in the direction of *Zuozhuan* and one in the direction of *Shuoyuan*. Though we do not know with certainty what the state of the original text was, we have reason to believe that the *Shuoyuan* version is a rather faithful witness to the source of the *Zuozhuan* version, because it is difficult to explain how the "specific" features of the *Shuoyuan* version discussed above could arise, were it derived from the *Zuozhuan* version, whereas at least some degree of plausibility adheres to the suggestion that the direction of adaptation proceeded in the other direction. The *Zuozhuan* version can be presumed to be non-original if other versions agree independently against it — an argument of this kind has considerable power, though it is basically negative in nature. Though more interesting, the argument that one of these versions is more likely to have influenced the *Zuozhuan* version is weaker, since it rests on our knowledge about what the *Zuozhuan* author might have done with his sources in order to construct his own account, a "knowledge" which is obviously very indirect and uncertain.

Before entering on speculations regarding these, I would like to explore another story



which appears to have influenced the *Zuozhuan* version of the stories about King Zhao of Chu.

### The story about Duke Jing of Song and its influence upon the *Zuozhuan* version of the story about the strange clouds

When assessing the nature of *Zuozhuan*'s sources for the story about the strange clouds, one should note that a parallel of a sort exists in the story about an ominous celestial phenomenon observed during the reign of Duke Jing of Song 宋景公 (516-469). This story is rendered in almost identical words in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *Xinxu* 新序, and *Lunheng* 論衡; moreover, a condensed version is found in *Shiji* and a variant version in *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋.<sup>56</sup>

The Yinghuo 熒惑 star is in the Xin 心 constellation and Duke Jing asks Ziwei 子韋 for interpretation and advice. Ziwei predicts that calamity will strike Duke Jing, but that he can avert trouble by shifting it onto his ministers. The Duke answers that he needs his ministers to rule his state, and that it will lead to no good to cause them to become ill in his stead. Ziwei then suggests that the ruler shift the trouble onto his people, to which Duke Jing replies that if his people die, who is he to rule over? Finally, Ziwei points to the possibility of unloading the trouble onto the harvest, which Duke Jing finds wrong, for who will regard him as a legitimate ruler if he lets his people die of starvation? Ziwei congratulates Duke Jing, stating that since Heaven is sure to have heard his three good sayings, Heaven will bestow three-fold blessings upon him, which he computes to mean an extension of the duke's life-span by twenty-one years. Moreover, he predicts that the Yinghuo star will recede three mansions (astrological houses) the very same night, which it then did.

This story, with its tripartite structure and involved astrology, is more elaborate than that about King Zhao of Chu and the strange clouds, but there are striking points of contact between this story (in all its various versions) and the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* versions of the story about King Zhao of Chu and the strange clouds, in addition to their shared moral.

First, in the *Zuozhuan* version of the story about the strange clouds the Grand Scribe says: '其當王身乎' (ZZ/B14), whereas in the *Xinxu* version of the story about Duke Jing of Song Ziwei says: '禍當君身'. Other versions of the story about Duke Jing of Song contain variants of this, but all employ the character '當'.<sup>57</sup> Though there is nothing peculiar about the use of this character in *Zuozhuan*, *Zuozhuan* is the only text which employs it in the story about

<sup>56</sup> *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, annot. Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷 (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1984) 6, pp. 347-348 (quoted in the appendix); see also *Huainanzi jiaoshi* 12, p. 398; *Xinxu zhuzi suoyin* 新序逐字索引, ed. by D. C. Lau and Chen Fangzheng 陳方正 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1992) 4.27, pp. 23-24; *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, annot. by Huang Hui 黃暉 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990) 4, pp. 202-3; *Shiji* 38, p. 1631; *Yanzi chunqiu jishi* 7, pp. 435-436. The *Lüshi chunqiu* version (*Lüshi Chunqiu jiaoshi* 6, pp. 347-348) is rendered below.

<sup>57</sup> *Lüshi chunqiu*: '禍當於君'; *Huainanzi* and *Lunheng*: '禍且當君'. '當' is also used in a similar context in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xiang 25.2, p. 1096.

King Zhao of Chu, and this is significant.

Second, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, *Huainanzi*, *Xinxu* and *Lunheng* versions of the story about Duke Jing of Song have '雖然, 可移於宰相', where the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* stories about King Zhao of Chu have '可移於令尹、司馬' (ZZ/B15) and '然, 可移於將相' (SJ/B4) (*Shiji* here obviously draws on *Zuozhuan*).<sup>58</sup> The *Shuoyuan* story about King Zhao of Chu contains no parallel to this phrase, a phrase which plays a central role in the *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* versions of the story.

How are we to explain the appearance of these two passages in the *Zuozhuan* version of the story about King Zhao of Chu and the strange clouds?

I hypothesise that first the *Zuozhuan* drew on a story about King Zhao of Chu, more or less as we have it in the present edition of *Shuoyuan*. Then, influenced by the story about Duke Jing of Song, he added two concepts to it: that of '當' and that of '移'. If this hypothesis is not accepted, the question will have to be answered why *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji* alone render a version of the story about the strange clouds that employs these expressions? Is it at all plausible to hold that *Zuozhuan* served as source for the version of the story about King Zhao of Chu and the strange clouds which is found in *Shuoyuan*, when no other version of the story (except the dependent *Shiji*) contains any indication that its source contained these two central concepts? Is it not more plausible to suppose that the *Zuozhuan* author wove the story about Duke Jing of Song into his version of the story of King Zhao of Chu?

There are a number of circumstances that make this hypothesis more probable.

One notes, first of all, that the message of the story is that virtue alone can eliminate calamity — measures that seek to shift trouble unto others are self-defeating. Since the moral of the two stories is practically identical, it makes sense to suppose that they were brought together, whether by the *Zuozhuan* author or someone else who compiled the material used by the *Zuozhuan* author.

There is also a striking chronological congruence. Duke Jing of Song is promised twenty-one years more to live; according to *Zuozhuan*, he died in 469.<sup>59</sup> This means that the prediction took place (using the Chinese way of reckoning) in 489. That this is when King Zhao of Chu died may not be coincidental, and may be said to lend some support to the

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<sup>58</sup> *Lienü zhuan*, being derivative of *Shiji*, is left out of account here.

<sup>59</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ai 26.2, p. 1729-30; *Shiji* 38, p. 1631. Liu Zhenghao, *Zhou Qin zhuzi shu Zuozhuan kao*, p. 216-217, notes that the story about the duke Jing of Song parallels that about King Zhao of Chu and that the years coincide, but apparently he sees the story about King Zhao of Chu as an adaptation of the story of Duke Jing of Sung. This is an unnecessarily radical proposal; rather, conflation is at issue. There exists another story in which Duke Jing's death is predicted. In *Guwen suoyu* 古文瑣語, quoted *Yiwen lei ju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai: Guji Chubanshe, 1982), 87, p. 1502, Xing Shi Zichen 邢史子臣 predicts his own death five years hence, then the destruction of the state of Wu another five years hence, then the death of Duke Jing yet five years hence. In the catalogue of the Han imperial library, a book entitled *Song sixing Ziwei* 宋司星子韋 is listed (*Hanshu* 漢書 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962] 30, p. 1733). Presumably this lost book contained accounts similar to these.

hypothesis that the two stories in some way became associated.

There appear to be two ways in which the story about Duke Jing of Song could have influenced the *Zuozhuan* rendition of the story about King Zhao of Chu. One is that the *Zuozhuan* author found the two stories in two independent sources and brought the two stories together when arranging his material according to thematic and/or chronological criteria. Even though he decided not to use the story about Duke Jing of Song, his acquaintance with it left traces in his rendition of the story about King Zhao of Chu. The other is that only one source was used by the *Zuozhuan* author and that this source contained both stories.

I believe it is possible to argue for the second position, that the *Shuoyuan* stories which surround the two stories studied here are excerpts, directly or indirectly, of a book which contained stories with morals similar to those about King Zhao and, furthermore, that the stories surrounding the *Shuoyuan* stories about King Zhao are excerpts from this work. The multitude of didactic stories of Han and pre-Han times are generally thought to have moved from text to text as singular stories, but exceptions to this rule could exist. However, since the argument for the existence of this thematically organised book is tenuous at best and does not support the hypothesis that specifically the story about Duke Jing of Song influenced the story about King Zhao of Chu, I will not attempt to develop it here.

### **The moral dimension imparted to the *Zuozhuan* version of the stories**

We must ask the question whether, with our knowledge of the *Zuozhuan* author, it makes sense to hold that the *Zuozhuan* account has been built out of something closely resembling the *Shuoyuan* versions of the stories. Creating a "scenario" like this does not prove anything, for the speculative element is strong, but if it is difficult to imagine how the process occurred, something is bound to be wrong, either with the concrete theory of derivation entertained or with our knowledge of the habits of the *Zuozhuan* author.

We might begin by considering what the *Zuozhuan* author achieved by the manipulations I argue that he performed. What was his purpose, in addition to producing a coherent narrative?

In part, his motivation appears to have been to make the narrative an illustration of a certain moralistic view of history. In *Shuoyuan* the king is portrayed as a sceptic with regard to the irregular claims made by his advisors concerning the efficacy of performing various sacrifices, but in *Zuozhuan* — by means of the *Shu* passages he quotes and his final summing-up — Confucius rather praises the king for his moral character and especially for his moral initiative (由己率常) (ZZ/B30). The same difference is found in the way the king rejects the advice given in the story about the strange birds. In *Shuoyuan*, the king argues solely that sacrificing his ministers would be *futile*, since the ministers are an integral part of the state; in *Zuozhuan*, the king additionally discusses the issue in moral terms: if he has committed an offence, he ought to accept punishment for it himself (有罪受罰), and he asks the rhetorical

question whether Heaven would cause his premature death (天其天諸) if he was innocent (ZZ/B18). The level of discourse is therefore different, basically involving the *rationality* of mantic advice in *Shuoyuan* and the *morality* of mantic advice in *Zuozhuan*. The morality espoused by the king in *Zuozhuan* is, however, of a special kind: instead of taking all the blame upon himself, regardless of questions of guilt, which appears to be what he should do according to *Shuoyuan*, in *Zuozhuan* the king expresses his belief that Heaven will not treat him unfairly, implying that he is not required by the Way to suffer for others.

Since these elements are the point of what is distinct in the *Zuozhuan* author's additions to the *Shuoyuan* narratives, it makes sense to seek in them his main intention in reworking the materials at his disposal.

The moral dimension given the king's rejection of mantic advice in *Zuozhuan* is probably what has caused it to disintegrate causally. In the same year that he dies the king states that if he is innocent, he will not meet with premature death — whereupon he dies prematurely. The king courageously expresses his determination to die in battle — whereupon he dies of illness. There appear to be two ways of explaining these inconsistencies. One might interpret them as testifying to the documentary nature of *Zuozhuan* — this is actually what the king said, but things turned out differently, and who could blame the *Zuozhuan* author for his faithful depiction of the inconsistencies of life? The other way is to see them as testifying to the *Zuozhuan* author's imperfect integration and adaptation of his (very consistent, if somewhat simplistic) sources — he wished (for reasons which will have to be explained) to depict the king's heroic devotion to battle and to moralise the king's rejection of mantic advice, but the adjustments and additions he made to his sources gave rise to problems of narrative coherence which he did not notice (or attribute importance to). As the following discussion will show, I favour the second answer.

### **The question of unresolved dilemmas**

There is a certain lack of consistency in the attitude taken by King Zhao in the scene prior to his death and in the attitude taken by Gongzi Qi in the scene following the death of King Zhao. In both cases the narrative is structured around dilemmas. Both fighting and retreating were inauspicious, but King Zhao chose to die in battle, exclaiming "Let me die at the hands of my foe!" (其死讎乎) (ZZ/B4). In this we may presume that the king was led by considerations of honour, but we are told that, inconsequently, he died of illness. His stated objective was to avoid leading Chu to yet another defeat and to avoid disgracefully fleeing the enemy, and though by choosing to die in battle he of course avoided the latter alternative, it is not clear how he imagined that his country could avoid defeat if he, the king, was slain on the field. This also appears inconsistent. After the king's death, Gongzi Qi faced another dilemma: should he obey the king's wish that he himself become king or should he establish one of the king's sons as king? Both alternatives were compliant with the Way (川順) and both were unconditionally imperative.

Gongzi Qi and his two brothers eventually decided to establish a son of the king on the throne, thus in effect choosing to be filial (孝) rather than brotherly (弟/悌), but it is unclear according to which criterion they solved their dilemma (ZZ/B9) — was the son wiser or more capable, or did he become king because he was the eldest?

One might thus say that both dilemmas are inadequately integrated into the over-all narrative — unless one wishes to attribute to the *Zuozhuan* author the view that human motivation is inconsequential.

Seen as a whole, the episodes leading up to and following the king's death form a narrative of near-deductive integration. The king, young as he was, would presumably not appoint a successor while in the field if he did not feel certain that he was about to die, and how could he have been certain about this if he had not taken omens about it? Of course, he could have taken omens about the time of his death at any time in his life, but since he was known to have died on a military campaign, there is some logic in the suggestion that he divined about the outcome of the battle he was to engage in — the divination must then have told him that he would die in battle, no matter what he did.

I am suggesting that the narrative of the death of King Zhao was fleshed out by the *Zuozhuan* author, who extrapolated from the few facts known to him, and that the deductions he made occasioned the inconsistencies observed.

Let us imagine the following information to have been available to the *Zuozhuan* author: King Zhao died of illness at Chengfu on such-and-such a day, while on a campaign in aid of Chen, having just attacked Wu at Daming; subsequently, Gongzi Qi, Gongzi Jie and Gongzi Shen hurried to the capital to install Zhang, the king's son, in his stead. Let us further imagine that the *Zuozhuan* author considered these facts to be fairly uninteresting and that he wished to portray the king's death in a more "philosophical" vein. Given three royal scions with a dead king far from the capital, things could certainly have turned bad — why did they selflessly install the son, when usurping the throne would have been so easy?

The *Zuozhuan* author would think back to the time when King Zhao inherited the throne and would remember that at the death of King Ping 楚平王 (r. 528-516), Gongzi Shen, the brother of King Ping by a concubine, was thought more fit to follow King Ping than Ren 壬, the king known to posterity as King Zhao, who was the son of King Ping by a concubine.<sup>60</sup> Gongzi Shen argued vehemently against his own inheritance of the throne, holding that this was not "compliant" (順), and Ren was duly established as king.<sup>61</sup> The *Zuozhuan* author would notice that the opposition between a son with a formal claim to the throne and a brother (or uncle) regarded as more wise and capable could be highlighted again with some plausibility, once more involving the term '順', and that Gongzi Shen could in effect be made to forego the

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<sup>60</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 26.8, p. 1474-1475, quoted in the appendix.

<sup>61</sup> Note the close resemblance of his speech with that Zhao Dun 趙盾 held in a similar situation in Jin; *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Wen 6.5, p. 550.

throne on two occasions. However, this time three persons were involved, so all three had to be cast in the rôle that Gongzi Shen had played 27 years earlier.

Since the king must then have sought to appoint all three royal scions, he must have had a reason for this, and the obvious reason was that he knew he was about to die. Presumably a sudden turn in the king's illness would have been sufficient to make a convincing case for his sudden demise, but since the king was on campaign, it would be more dramatic to integrate his knowledge of his imminent death into the situation he was in. Since omens were routinely taken in connection with such activities, it would have seemed obvious that the king was told of his death by an omen taken on the success or failure of the campaign.

Reasoning from the material at his disposal and feeling a desire to make the story interesting, the *Zuozhuan* author might have constructed his account in this way, but if he did not notice (or attach importance to) the circumstance that the logic-driven nature of his manipulations led to certain narrative inconsistencies.

It certainly might be the case that other explanations could be found for the curious features of the account. Be that as it may, I see at present no other way of making sense of all the circumstances of this account and therefore believe that the contents as well as the form of the pre-battle story and the abdication story are elaborations on the part of the *Zuozhuan* author.

### **The relationship between the *Zuozhuan* account of King Zhao's death and the *Chunqiu***

Another element contributing to the inconsistencies of the *Zuozhuan* account perhaps comes from the confrontation of the factual account of the *Chunqiu* with the didactic stories concerning the strange clouds and the Yellow River.

Under the first year of the reign of Duke Ai (494), *Zuozhuan* states that "In autumn, in the 8th month, Wu invaded Chen; this was because [Wu] nursed its old grudges [against Chen]" (秋, 八月, 吳侵陳, 脩舊怨也). No *Chunqiu* entry corresponds to this, though *Zuozhuan* clearly comments on some pre-existing text, possibly an edition of *Chunqiu* earlier than the transmitted edition.

In a spring notice from the sixth year of Duke Ai (489), *Chunqiu* states that "Wu attacked Chen" (吳伐陳), which *Zuozhuan* comments upon in the following way: "Wu attacked Chen; this was because [Wu] again nursed its old grudges [against Chen]. The Chu Zi said: "My former lord had a pact with Chen; I must come to its rescue." (吳伐陳, 復脩舊怨也。楚子曰:「吾先君與陳有盟, 不可以不救。」乃救陳, 師于城父。). The '復' obviously relates to the passage from the first year of Duke Ai.

From *Chunqiu* the *Zuozhuan* author would therefore have known that in the spring of 489, King Zhao was on a campaign against Wu in aid of Chen. The information that his camp was based in Chengfu (師于城父) was presumably based on another source. The Chu king's

statement of his obligation to aid Chen may conceivably be based on a pre-existing source, but its function in the spring notice as a whole is hardly more than commentarial, explaining why Chu felt obliged to aid Chen, and it adds no further knowledge of the event in question. I think we would be wrong in assuming that the *Zuozhuan* author necessarily had sources to back up this passage.

In an autumn notice from the same year, *Chunqiu* states that "In autumn, in the seventh month, on a gengyin day, Chu Zi Zhen died." (秋, 七月庚寅, 楚子軫卒). This entry forms the basis for the *Zuozhuan* account of the death of the king.

In this account, the *Zuozhuan* first states that the king was at Chengfu in the seventh month and that he was preparing to aid Chen (秋, 七月, 楚子在城父, 將救陳); later on, it then notes that he died in Chengfu on a gengyin day of this month whilst attacking Daming (庚寅, 昭王攻大冥, 卒于城父). Does this mean that the *Zuozhuan* author had two sources containing dates, one concerning when the king arrived at Chengfu and one concerning when he died? I doubt that this was the case: rather, the *Chunqiu* date has been split up, the events dated to the month setting the scene for the main event dated to the day, the king's death. There is a fair number of similar month/day splits of *Chunqiu* dates in *Zuozhuan*, typically setting off battle preparations from the battle itself and the events leading up to the death of a ruler from the death itself.<sup>62</sup>

The *Zuozhuan* author knew from *Chunqiu* when the king died, and he deduced from the source he had drawn upon for the spring entry that the king had been encamped at Chengfu, obviously assuming that the king had stayed in the same place since spring. The information that the king died whilst attacking Daming must derive from a pre-existing source, possibly the same that informed the *Zuozhuan* author that the king was camped at Chengfu.

The approach I have used above has been to peel away everything from the *Zuozhuan* account that does not present "historical facts" that the *Zuozhuan* author may be presumed to know about from chronicles at his disposal. The question is: did the *Zuozhuan* author know, from such sources, that the king had died of illness?

Let us assume that he did not. The *Zuozhuan* author then had the following information to play with: the king stayed at Chengfu in spring to attack Chen, and he died in connection with an attack on Daming on a certain day in autumn.

This opens the possibility that the *Zuozhuan* author worked with this material on two occasions. First, he wrote that, in autumn, while at Chengfu, the king took auguries and found that no way of action open to him would bring success, whereupon he decided to die on the

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<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Yin 11.3, pp. 73; Xi 15.4, p. 355-356; Wen 1.7, p. 515; Wen 2.1, p. 519; Xuan 2.3, pp. 659-662. This is not to say that such a split invariably is performed in *Zuozhuan* — it would also have been possible to have leave the opening account undated (see, e.g., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Yin 3.5, pp. 28-30; Wen 12.6, pp. 589-592); it is unclear to me why the *Zuozhuan* author used now one, now the other way of disposing such dates.

field. In anticipation of his own death, the king passed on the throne to Gongzi Qi and then attacked Daming, dying in the process. After the king's death, Gongzi Qi installed Zhang as king instead.

What we have in this way is the *Zuozhuan* account as we know it with all elements mentioning illness removed — the king had been cast in a heroic rôle instead. The account does not contain any of the inconsistencies that have been discussed above. In formulating this account, the *Zuozhuan* author presumably could have been inspired by his own description of the death of King Ping, but we do not have to assume that he used any further sources.

After he had elaborated this account, the *Zuozhuan* author decided to use the two stories paralleled in *Shuoyuan*. They both introduced the theme of illness, and the *Zuozhuan* author decided that King Zhao had died of illness, not in battle, and he incorporated the two stories in a manner which would explain this. He related the first story causally to the death of the king, noting that it took place in the same year, and then related the second story in a looser way, implying the king's health was bad. The incorporation of the two stories gave rise to most of the inconsistencies mentioned above, for now the king was supposed to die of illness, not in battle.

This is speculative, but it does supply one way of accounting for the inconsistencies of the *Zuozhuan* account, a problem which any interpretation will have to face. If the *Zuozhuan* author started out with the knowledge that the king died of illness, I see no way of imagining a "scenario" which could account for the creation of the present text. I therefore hypothesise that this "information" was derived from the two stories examined in the beginning of this article.

## Conclusions

In this paper I have argued for the possibility that in his account of the death of King Zhao of Chu, the *Zuozhuan* author used a version of the stories about the strange clouds and the Yellow River that was close to the version we know from *Shuoyuan* and that he was influenced in his rendering of these stories by a version of the story about Duke Jing of Song that has been discussed above. The *Shiji* version of the stories is the only version which shows influence from *Zuozhuan*, but in addition it builds on a version of the story close to that found in *Shuoyuan*. *Han Shi waizhuan* contains a story closely affiliated with that in *Shuoyuan* as well, but not about King Zhao. *Han Shi waizhuan*, *Shiji* and *Shuoyuan* are not dependent upon each other; the combined evidence of the three, coupled with the independent evidence regarding the story about Duke Jing of Song, constitute whatever support there is for my main thesis.

In addition to this, I have attempted to imagine what could be the provenance of the parts of the *Zuozhuan* account of the death of King Zhao that are not mirrored in sources other than the dependent *Shiji* and to construct an authoring scenario that would account for the inconsistencies in that account, as well as its distinctive message. I have attempted to show how



the inconsistencies may have arisen as the result of a two-stage composition of the account, the latter stage being motivated by the wish to express a certain moral, occasioned by the temptation that arose to have the king die of illness once the two omen-related stories were incorporated into the account of the king's death. I readily concede that other scenarios may be possible, but believe that the suggested scenario is at least possible. In studies of a similar didactic stories, which I hope to publish in the near future, I show a situation similar to that outlined in this case.

The analysis of the *Shiji* rendering of the *Zuozhuan* account has shown some of the techniques used by the *Shiji* author to marshal the material at his disposal, and the different slant put on the *Shiji* rendition makes ideas informing the *Zuozhuan* version stand out clearer.

Those acquainted with *Shuoyuan* will perhaps protest that this late Western Han text simply cannot contain material as "ancient" as I claim — the parts of it that relate to pre-Han times contain so many anachronisms and often use language characteristic of Han times, and this makes all of the text appear suspect. Dissatisfaction with the probity of the text goes back to Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721),<sup>63</sup> but we must bear in mind that, as Liu Xiang explains in the edition report he presented to Emperor Cheng, it is basically an ordering of material Liu Xiang had found in the imperial libraries, supplemented with material in his own possession and material obtained from the populace.<sup>64</sup> Aside from the chapter prefaces composed by Liu Xiang himself, the work consists entirely of "original material from ancient books" (古書原文), as phrased by Yu Jiayi 余家錫.<sup>65</sup> It would be wrong to rule out in advance that it contains material of value in the study of pre-Han China. Detailed studies of *Shuoyuan* that could illuminate this question are still lacking,<sup>66</sup> but recently D. C. Lau has examined the use of taboo characters in the text and found it to contain ancient material of an origin different from parallels in other works.<sup>67</sup> Gustav Haloun has studied the in many ways similar, but even more dubious, *Kongzi jiyu*, and has shown it to contain material more original than the parallels in, e.g., *Lüshi*

<sup>63</sup> *Shitong xin jiaozhu* 史通新校注, annot. by Zhao Lüfu 趙呂甫 (Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe, 1990), pp. 979-980.

<sup>64</sup> See my "Which Books *Did* the First Emperor Burn? On the Meaning of the Expression 'Pai Chia' 百家 in Early Chinese Sources," *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995), pp. 1-52.

<sup>65</sup> *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 四庫題要辨證 (Beijing: Kexue, 1958), p. 545.

<sup>66</sup> Studies of the text include (in addition to Yu Jiayi's study) Noma Fumichika 野間文史, "Shinjo, Setsugen kō" 新序・說苑攷, *Hiroshima Daigaku Bungakubu kiyō* 廣島大學文學部紀要 35 (1976), pp. 30-51; Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1979), pp. 49-115; Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰, "Liu Xiang 'Shuoyuan xulu' yanjiu" 劉向「說苑敘錄」研究, *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 56.6 (1978), pp. 37-42. Editions of the text include (in addition to Xiang Zonglu's edition referred to above) Tai Jingnong 臺靜農 and Liu Chongyan 劉崇堯, eds., *Shuoyuan buzheng* 說苑補正, (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan Daxue Wenxueyuan, 1962); Zuo Songchao 左松超, "Shuoyuan kaoyi" 說苑考佚, *Zhongguo xueshu niankan* 中國學術年刊 1 (1976), pp. 163-180. Parallels to *Shuoyuan* accounts are also noted in *Shuoyuan shuzheng* 說苑疏證, ed. by Zhao Shanyi 趙善詒 (Shanghai: Huadong Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1995).

<sup>67</sup> D. C. Lau, "Qin hui kao: jian jiu huizi lun gushu zhong de chongwen" 秦諱初探: 兼就諱字論古書中的重文, *Xianggang Zhongwen Daxue Zhongguo Wenhua Yanjiusuo xuebao* 香港中文大學中國文化研究所學報 19 (1988), pp. 272-286.

*chunqiu*.<sup>68</sup> I believe it possible to show by examining other parallels to *Zuozhuan* accounts that the material used by Liu Xiang for his anecdote compilations in other cases as well lies close to the sources of *Zuozhuan*. This is not to say that *Shuoyuan* does not, in places, derive from *Zuozhuan* — such cases do occur, but so do cases in which *Shuoyuan* presents material that is more original than *Zuozhuan*.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., "Fragmente des Fu-tsi und des Tsiñ-tsi: Frühkonfuzianische Fragmente I," *Asia Major* (first series) 8 (1933), pp. 437-509.

<sup>69</sup> The relationship between the *Chunqiu* commentaries and *Shuoyuan* is discussed in Noma Fumichika, "Ryū Kō Shunju-setsu kō" 劉向春秋說攷, *Tetsugaku* 哲學 31 (1979), pp. 57-83.

















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