

Preface

We here bring together our investigations of the Spring and Autumn period, the two and a half centuries which precede the better-known Warring States. The key difference between the two is the shift from a small elite chariot force to a mass infantry army, and the organizational prerequisite for that shift: the transformation of palace states into larger and more efficient bureaucracies, which alone could assemble the resources needed to sustain such armies.

Spring and Autumn gets its name from the Chūn/Chyōu 春秋 (CC), the chronicle of the state of Lǚ which was begun in 0722; only the part through 0481 dependably survives. The chronicle is unique: as far as we know, no other state kept one. It gives us an almost month-by-month account of events of importance to Lǚ – marriages and deaths in the leading families, freaks of weather and other ominous events, which along with eclipses were scrutinized by the court astrologer, and the usual battles and diplomatic meetings.

The Lǚ chronicle has been neglected in favor of the 04c Dzwǒ Jwàn, a long, literarily adroit commentary on the Chūn/Chyōu, which adds large doses of sex and violence, moralizing interpretations of events, and ritual comments (the 04c experts disapproved of the crude rituals which they found in the Chūn/Chyōu). The DJ is a good enough read, but for actual information about the period, coming to us straight *from* the period, there is only the Chūn/Chyōu.

The Spring and Autumn period is thus best understood from the evidence of the Chūn/Chyōu text, but the period is larger than the text. As in our companion volume *The Emergence of China*, which deals with the following Warring States period, we define the *period* as everything from the fall of Jōu (0770) to the death of Confucius (0479). The *text* begins only in 0722 and (for reasons which seemed good to the Kǔng family experts who first acquired it and attached the Dzwǒ Jwàn commentary to it) ends with an omen of 0481, rather than with the actual death of Confucius.

We present Spring and Autumn from several complementary points of view: (1) essays on major moments in Lǚ history, leading to a periodization of Spring and Autumn; (2) studies of military and social aspects of the period; (3) profiles of individuals from the time between the loss of Lǚ freedom of action after the 0632 Battle of Chýng-pú and the crisis of 0517 (the exile of Jāu-gūng); and (4) accounts of the three reigns in which the balance of power in Lǚ rebounded from that crisis to a more stable, if still precarious, condition. The Dzwǒ Jwàn, which interprets the Chūn/Chōu in a way all its own, is ignored in these pages, except for a few footnotes and (5) four supplementary chapters at the end.

For more details on the question of why the Dzwǒ Jwàn text is a bad source for the Spring and Autumn period, see the Introduction.

Conventions. Keyword citations are expanded in the Works Cited list at the end of the book. “0312” is “312 BC,” a universal convention that works also in French and German, as the well-intentioned “BCE” does not; “04th century” is sometimes abbreviated as “04c” and so on. Chinese words are spelled in the Common Alphabetic system, which is easier for beginners than other current systems; it follows the formula “consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian,” plus these conventions for vowels with no fixed English spelling: æ as in “cat,” v [compare the linguist’s inverted ʌ] as in “gut,” z as in “adz,” and yw (after l or n, simply w) for the “umlaut u” sound. Pronunciations are modern, except that a few ancient consonants are restored to distinguish some words, such as the states Wèi 衛 and Ngwèi 魏, both now pronounced “Wèi.” An equivalence table for CA and for two other systems is available beginning at page 409.

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Precursors. It takes little insight to see the falsity of the traditional story that Confucius composed the Chūn/Chyōu text as a coded enigma to convey his “praise and blame” of persons and events, and then dictated the real history to others, who wrote it down in the Dzwǒ Jwàn. Yè M̀vng-d́v 葉夢得 (1077-1148) was sufficiently annoyed by that standard view that he sought to refute it. Through him we know of a book by Sūn Fù 孫復 (992-1057), 春秋尊王發微, which discarded the “praise and blame” theory and sought to read the Chūn/Chyōu without reference to the Dzwǒ Jwàn. It did not succeed; the moralizing view was too deeply established. A new beginning was made by George A Kennedy, who saw that lack of information, not moral disapproval, could account for some omissions in the chronicle. We here follow Kennedy, in pushing past the moralizing interpretation to see what was really going on. In appreciation of Kennedy’s sensible example, this book is dedicated to him.

It follows him in another way: a focus on the text. The book does not consist of theories or inventions, our own or anyone else’s. It consists of reading in the CC chronicle. It seeks to make readers familiar with much that Spring and Autumn people hoped and did, and how their successes, their failures, and their petty irritations, were put on record. At the end, we hope that readers will have gained a direct and personal sense of what these distant and yet intelligible folks were up to, and what that may tell us about what China itself was up to, in the centuries before its appearance as the China that we know.

A Taeko Brooks
E Bruce Brooks

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