

*Heaven and Earth*

*Spring and Autumn rulers saw themselves as poised between higher powers above and intrinsically hostile contemporaries below. These essays explore several aspects of that larger situation. They are largely word studies, since it is with such specifics that the court was concerned, and it is only in the specifics that we can hope to understand what they were doing.*

*The powers above were of two types. One was the celestial : the sun, moon, and to a lesser the planets, which exerted their beneficent influence (as long as the calendar could be kept in step with the seasons, on which all depended), but sometimes, when things in nature seemed themselves to get out of alignment, malign. Sky and earth were scanned for anomalies: the uncanny or the merely unseasonable. Aspects of solar behavior, from the eclipses to the calendar, get a chapter of their own.*

*More approachable were the unseen spirits, especially the ancestral ones, whose good will might be sought by sacrifices. The list of entities requiring sacrifice increased as time went on, and as the state's concept of itself and of its duties evolved.*

*Merely human, if now obsolescent, were the obligations to the Jōu overlord, who had long ceased to exercise that function, leaving behind however a tradition of custom and ceremony which Lǚ, at least still observed – as long as the residual Jōu power itself approved, which was not always the case.*

*Military matters take up two chapters, and the diplomacy surrounding war gets another two. How battles were fought or avoided is a subject with its own fascination. Some space must go to refuting wrong ideas about the period, many of them deriving from the insidiously readable Dzwo Jwàn.*

*The final earthly consideration is society itself, which we consider under three topics which recur in the chronicle: the killing of individuals by the state, in which a rudimentary sense of law may be discerned (law codes as such are a characteristic of the Warring States period); the rise of non-noble persons in state service and their grudging recognition by our chronicler, who preferred to keep his old terminology as long as he could; and a look into the emotions of the ruler and his court, expressing in verbal nuances (the use of one or another of two words for “and”) what was not practical to resent in diplomacy or to work out on the field of battle.*