

*Women and Men*

*From the famously terse entries of the Lǚ chronicle, much more can be read than has usually been realized. We here consider several individuals, some from Lǚ and some from other states, of whose doings a consecutive idea can be gained. The CC has no interest in personalities as such, though personality sometimes emerges from what it records. Chronologically, these profiles offer multiple perspectives on the course of events from Syī-gūng's reign, when the influence of the Three Clans was first felt as a counterforce in Lǚ politics, to that of Jāu-gūng, who made an abortive move to regain central control, and was driven into exile following his failure. Notable persons from Chí and Jin are included, plus some less important ones from Sùng and Wú, in part for variety, in part for geographical perspective – other states had problems too, or had a distinctive take on problems which they shared with Lǚ.*

*The most famous of the Lǚ problems was internal: the growing influence of the Three Clans. These derived from the three sons of Hwán-gūng who had not succeeded him as ruler: the Jùng (“second”) or Jùngsūn, the Shú (“younger”) or Shúsūn, and Jì (“youngest”) or Jìsūn. Each of them was assigned a town as its clan seat. Assigning sons of a ruler to border towns to prove themselves militarily, and to guard the realm from that direction, was common practice, but it could have unfortunate results, since a capable son who was not the designated heir, but occupied a strategic location, could challenge the center. The Lǚ clans evolved in that direction. Tension between the ruler and the clans led to a showdown in 0517, with the exile of Jāu-gūng, who had sought to dismantle their fortresses and thus reduce their power.*

*The first and last of these profiles are minimal: all we know of these women is their date of death, and the entries for both deaths are ritually controversial. One of the two introduces harem politics at the time of Syī-gūng's accession; the other is an example of princess diplomacy in the early years of Jāu-gūng. The latter also permits a look at the role of Wú in late Spring and Autumn.*

*Jāu-gūng had taken a wife from Wú, doubtless for political reasons, and the only thing posterity has found to say of this is that it violated the Sinitic cultural taboo against marriage of kin; here, the bearers of the Jōu surname Jī. Posterity might have spared itself the trouble; at the time of the marriage, the rulers of Wú, so far from being related to the Jōu, did not even speak a Sinitic language; the later conferral of the Jōu surname was the usual political fiction. Wú M̀vngdž, as she is known, has thus been obliterated from history except as a violation of the exogamy rule. Such is the power and reach of the ritualists, to whom much of the history of China has unfortunately been entrusted.*