

10. Defeat 敗

We here consider how victory and defeat are treated in the CC. We find that the Lǚ court viewed military operations not in a chivalric or moralizing way, like characters in Dzwǒ Jwàn 左傳 (DJ) *stories* of Spring and Autumn events, but in a cold-eyed, state advantage way.

Victory. In the 500 military CC entries, the word “victory” (shèng 勝) never occurs. Of the ruler prowess culture which is so conspicuous in the Near East,¹ or the warrior’s honor/reward ethos which is reflected in numerous Jōu bronze inscriptions, there is not a trace. It is reasonable to assume that an honor ethos characterized Spring and Autumn *warriors*, but the Lǚ court viewpoint, as reflected in the Lǚ court chronicle, evidently differed.

What was that viewpoint?



Defeat. The basic verb for “defeat” is bài 敗, which appears 16× in the CC. An alternate and apparently more severe term, bài-jī 敗績, also occurs 16×. The element jī 績, which never occurs separately in CC, can mean “spin” (as in Shī 133B3 不績其麻 “not spinning her hemp”) or mere “accomplishment” (as in (Shī 244E2 維禹之績 “it was the work of Yǔ”). How one gets from this to the *negative* accomplishment of bài-jī is something of a puzzle. A possible clue is the DJ 8/8:2 phrase gūng-jī 功績 “[then he will achieve] a *meritorious* result,” leaving it open for jī to be qualified in the opposite sense, as “[incur] a 敗績 *disgraceful* result.”

However that may work out etymologically, our empirical question must be: What is the meaning of bài-jī, as distinct from bài, in the CC?

Shame. All defeats are shameful for a warrior. Perhaps (as Legge’s “disgracefully defeated” suggests) the defeats labeled bài-jī were *especially* shameful. We note in support that some instances of bài-jī occur in the home territory of the defeated force, where a win would normally be expected.

¹For the notably unreticent victory monuments of Near Eastern rulers, see for example Drews **Bronze Age** 49-50 (Egypt) or Liverani **Deeds** (Mesopotamia).

But others do not, and since most *bài-jī* defeats do not involve Lǚ, it would have had no role in punishing the leaders; information about humiliation *as such* would thus have had no operative value for the Lǚ court. The *term* may have arisen among warriors, but that is not its *content* in the CC.

Individuals were undoubtedly rewarded for merit, but no such reward is recorded in the CC, which does however show that those guilty of military failure were punished. Thus, the year 0632 began with a Jìn invasion of Wèi (5/28:1). Mǎi, an uncle of Syī-gung, had been remiss in protecting Wèi from invasion (戍衛不卒戍), and Syī-gūng put him to death (刺之; 5/28:2). A force under a Chǔ officer (楚人) had gone to the relief of Wèi (5/28:3), but was defeated by Jìn and its allies (*bài-jī*; 5/28:5); Chǔ later killed its high officer Dǔ-chǔn (殺其大夫得臣; 5/28:6).

Protocol. With two exceptions,² the subject of *bài-jī* is the defeated *host* (shī 師), not its *leader*, which in the CC is a ruler or a deputized kinsman or noble. This reluctance to impute defeat to the ruler applies not only to Lǚ, but also to Chí, Sùng, Wèi, Yēn, Chín, Jìn, Jǔng, and Chǔ. It presumably reflects a CC convention of respect for rulers *as such*.³ This may explain why the *bài-jī* statements are always in the passive voice, but it does not help us with the difference between *bài-jī* and *bài*.

Severity. Another possibility is that *bài-jī* defeats are more severe than *bài* defeats. DJ 3/11:1 explains: 敵未陳曰敗某師，皆陳曰戰，大崩曰敗績 “when the enemy is not drawn up in order it says ‘defeated the X host,’ when both are in order it is a battle (*jàn*); a great collapse is called *bài-jī*.” Legge may be influenced by this note in sometimes translating *bài-jī* as “suffered a great defeat.” It is true that some *bài-jī* are followed in the chronicle by a period where the state undertakes no new military actions.⁴ But others are not, and some states are militarily active *in the same year* as their *bài-jī* defeat.⁵

Disorder. The disorder motif appears in a Tán Gūng (Lǐ Jì) gloss to *bài-jī*: 驚賁失列 “were startled into flight, and lost cohesion.” But a fleeing army can recover its morale if it can regroup, or if it is rallied by its leader. And what use could information about a *temporary* rout have had at the court of Lǚ?

We are thus at a definitional impasse.

²An officer of Wèi in 3/28:1 (0668) and the ruler of Chǔ in 8/16:6 (0575). The first of these is the first time that a defeated host was led by someone other than a ruler; this was a new situation for the CC scribe. The Gūngyáng and Gǔlyáng commentaries labor over the second instance; they suggest that the reason for the difference is that the Chǔ ruler was personally wounded.

³For the ruler’s feelings as reflected in CC, see **Nuances**.

⁴A famous instance is the battle of Chǔng-pú, for which see **Syī-gūng**.

⁵See CC 2/13:1, 3/9:5, 6/6:2, 7/2:1, 8/2:2, and 8/16:2.

A way out of the definitional impasse is to notice the distribution of *bài* and *bài-jī*. The simplest statement is that *bài-jī* only occurs in a military encounter which is called a *jàn* 戰 “battle.”⁶ Then the information conveyed by *bài-jī* is not that a *bài* defeat was particularly severe, or that it resulted in loss of cohesion, but simply that it occurred in the course of a “battle.” It would follow that mere “*bài*” defeats occurred in encounters that did *not* qualify as “battles.”

So we may next ask: What is a battle?

Hypothesis. Many participants in *bài* encounters are non-Sinitic states or nonstate peoples like the *Dí*, who did not possess the Sinitic art of chariot fighting, or may sometimes have fought differently. Between Sinitic states, CC information sometimes implies a non-formal encounter: a skirmish or surprise attack. Here the DJ definition seems to work. We propose this hypothesis: in a *jàn* encounter, two forces are drawn up and engage; valor, not preparedness, determines the result. The result may be inconclusive (as in 8 *jàn* entries). But *if it is* conclusive, shame attaches to the loser, as it would not if the loser had merely been taken unprepared.⁷ Defeats in these less formal, non-*jàn*, contexts are not entered in the CC as *bài-jī*, but as *bài*.

We now check this hypothesis against the relevant CC data. These comprise the 23 *jàn* (including 15 *bài-jī* defeats), the one *bài-jī* *not* resulting from a *jàn*, plus 16 *bài*, for a total of 40 items. We note that these entries comprise only 8% of CC military events. Spring and Autumn forces largely avoided the set-piece battle, and preferred the unopposed raid or the incidental skirmish: actions which perhaps conferred no great military glory upon the expedition *leaders*, but which nevertheless achieved results that were of interest to the *state*.

The CC “*Jàn*” Battles

2/10:4 (0702). Inconclusive. In summer 0714, *Lǚ* walled *Láng* 郎 (116°47' E, 35°1'N), near a bend in the *Sè* River. This gave *Lǚ* a protected outpost near to *Sùng* and *Tsáu* 曹. *Tsáu* was also of interest to *Wèi*. In autumn the *Lǚ* ruler went to meet the ruler of *Wèi*, who did not appear; some difficulty between *Lǚ* and *Wèi* had passed beyond diplomatic resolution. At the end of 0702, *Wèi* with *Chí* and *Jǐng* fought a **battle** with *Lǚ* at *Láng*, but *Lǚ* maintained its position at *Láng*.⁸ In the next, the allies covenanted at *Wù-tsáu* 惡曹, probably to discuss action against *Lǚ*, but no such action occurred.

⁶The only *bài-jī* that is *not* the outcome of a *jàn* is the *Jōu* King’s defeat by the *Máu* *Rúng* in 8/1:6 (0590). The CC regularly shows deference to the *Jōu* King, and thus is unlikely to have used *bài-jī* here in an openly derogatory sense; see further n22 below.

⁷Note the implications of “en garde.” A stab in the back is not a duelist’s victory.

⁸DJ says that the quarrel arose over *Lǚ*’s distribution of rations, and was settled by *Lǚ* appealing to the order established by *Jōu*, a typical piece of ritualistic imagining.

2/12:9 (0700). Inconclusive. The Prince of Lǚ had covenanted with Sùng in the 7th month of 0700, but after further meetings in the 8th and 11th months, Lǚ covenanted instead with Sùng's enemy Jvng. In the 12th month, Lǚ and Jvng invaded Sùng, and a **battle** was fought. The outcome is not mentioned.

2/13:1 (0699). Conclusive. In the 2nd month of 0699, larger forces (Lǚ, Jì 紀, and Jvng vs Chí, Sùng, Wèi, and Yēn) renewed the fight; in that **battle**, Wèi and its allies were **defeated (bài-jī)**. In effect, the indecisive battle of 0700 was taken up with new allies in 0699 and fought to a finish. The issue seems to have been Lǚ presence in the Sùng and Wèi sphere of interest.⁹ Neither could put together a combination that would expel Lǚ from its advanced position at Láng.

2/17:3 (0695). Inconclusive. In the 1st month, Lǚ made a covenant with Chí and Jì 紀 at Hwáng 黃, a place nearer to Chí and Jì than to Lǚ; Lǚ was thus probably the constrained party. In the 2nd month, Lǚ covenanted with nearby Jū 郟, perhaps as a counter to the Chí covenant. In the 5th month, Lǚ fought a **battle** with Chí in Lǚ; the Chí incursion was probably a reprisal for the Jū covenant. In the 8th month, with forces from Sùng and Wèi, Lǚ made an unopposed incursion into Jū, presumably in repudiation of its covenant with Jū. In the 1st month of 0694, the Prince of Lǚ covenanted with Chí, and later went to Chí with his wife. The Chí/Lǚ battle seems to have been a demonstration. Though a standoff, it had made its point: Lǚ renounced Jū and adhered to Chí.¹⁰

3/9:5 (0685). Conclusive. Lǚ had made cause with a Chí faction in spring. That summer, Lǚ invaded Chí, explicitly in support of Prince Jyòu 紂 as a candidate to succeed the deceased Chí Syāng-gūng. In the 8th month, Lǚ fought a **battle** with a Chí force and was **defeated (bài-jī)**. The long time spent by Lǚ in Chí presumably allowed a superior force to be assembled against it. Next month, in a separate action, Chí captured and killed Prince Jyòu. This Lǚ attempt at internal interference, which is understandable in view of previous Chí behavior toward Lǚ, led to a long period of enmity between Lǚ and the successful Chí candidate, the famous Chí Hwán-gūng.

3/28:1 (0666). Conclusive. In the summer of 0667, Lǚ covenanted with Chí, Sùng, Chv̄n, and Jvng, though not Wèi.¹¹ At the end of 0667, the Prince of Lǚ met with the Lord of Chí in Chv̄ng-pú, in Wèi; again, Wèi was not present. In the 3rd month of 0666, A Chí officer led a force, invaded Wèi, and fought a **battle** with a Wèi force which was **defeated (bài-jī)**.¹²

⁹DJ, Gūngyáng, and Gǔlyáng differ as to why this battle was fought.

¹⁰DJ here imagines a Lǚ/Chí border dispute for which there is no support in CC. A point of interest in this sequence is that it shows that a weak state (Lǚ) could be forced to renounce a covenant (here, one previously made with Jū) by a strong state (Chí).

¹¹For solidarity against Chǔ. For the special term 同盟; see **League**.

¹²DJ describes a Chí force led by the Lord of Chí; this conflicts with the CC record.

5/15:12 (0645). Defeat implied. Chín and Jìn **battled** at Hán, and Chín captured the Lord of Jìn, implying a damaging defeat. The general term *bài-jī* seems to be replaced in this entry by specifics which indicate who had lost.¹³

5/18:3 (0642). Conclusive. Chí Hwán-gūng died at the end of 0643. In the next month, a force from Sùng, Tsáu, Wèi, and Jū attacked Chí, hoping to influence the resulting succession dispute. That summer, a Lǚ force went to relieve Chí, with no stated result. In the 5th month, the Sùng contingent of the previous joint force (still in Chí after four months) fought a pitched **battle** with a Chí force; the Chí force was **defeated** (*bài-jī*);¹⁴ the Dí people came to the aid of Chí. In the 8th month, Chí Hwán-gūng was finally buried. As in 3/9:5, we see the neighbor states attempting to intervene in Chí politics at a time of presumptive Chí political confusion and military weakness.

5/22:3 (0638). Inconclusive. In autumn 0639, the rulers of Sùng, Chǔ, Chǔn, Tsài, Jǜng, and several other states (but not including Lǚ) had met to make a covenant. At the meeting, the others had seized the ruler of Sùng and forthwith invaded Sùng. That winter, pursuing a parallel interest of its own, Lǚ invaded small nearby Jū, without any stated result. At the same time, an envoy from Chǔ came to present to Lǚ some of the spoils of the Sùng invasion; Lǚ at this time was sympathetic to Chǔ's attempt to expand its influence into the north. In the 12th month, the Prince of Lǚ met with Chǔ and its allies. At that meeting, the ruler of Sùng was released from captivity, perhaps at the suggestion of Lǚ. In the 3rd month of 0638, Lǚ again invaded Jū, and this time took its territory Syw-jyè 須句. In summer, the rulers of Sùng, Wèi, Syw 許, and Tǜng had attacked Jǜng.

Profiting from the distraction, Lǚ in the 8th month moved into Jū territory. This time a Jū force opposed Lǚ, and a **battle** was fought near Jū. No details are given, but later entries do not suggest success.¹⁵ It seems that a Lǚ attempt to take territory from Jū was met by a force sufficient to thwart it: a successful blocking action. Probably both forces were small, and this would qualify as a "battle" because *this* time the Jū force was drawn up and ready to resist.

5/22:4 (0638). Conclusive. As the conclusion of the series of events affecting Sùng, in the 11th month Sùng fought a **battle** with Chǔ and was **defeated** (*bài-jī*).¹⁶ Sùng being thus weakened, Chí invaded Sùng in spring 0637, and besieged Mín 緡.

¹³On this blank canvas, DJ spins a huge tale of depravity and aggrieved loyalty.

¹⁴It is from this line of the CC that the 敗績 illustration on p67 above is taken.

¹⁵DJ invents a *bài-jī* defeat for Lǚ, and a tale of neglected advice to explain the defeat. Listening to advice, according to DJ, is the fundamental virtue of a ruler.

¹⁶DJ explains this defeat as the Sùng ruler's failure to listen to advice. As always, DJ is unaware of the grand strategical aspect of the text on which it is commenting.

5/28:5 (0632). Conclusive. Chí had twice invaded Lǚ territory in 0634. In response, a Wèi force had entered Chí. A Lǚ envoy had gone to Chǔ to ask military assistance. That winter, Chǔ invaded Sùng and besieged Mín, the city Chí had attacked in 0637. Evidently with the aid of that force, Lǚ invaded Chí and took Gǔ 穀. In the winter of 0633, a joint force from Chǔ, Chǔn, Tsài, Jǜng, and Syǔ 許 besieged Sùng. Lǚ had met with the besieging forces in the 12th month, when they made a covenant in Sùng. Now come the tremendous events of 0632. In spring, Jìn invaded Tsáu and Wèi. Mǎi, a son of Lǚ Jwāng-gung and an uncle of Syī-gung, had been remiss in protecting Wèi from invasion; Lǚ put him to death. A Chǔ force had gone to the relief of Wèi. In the 3rd month, Jìn invaded Tsáu, seized its ruler, and handed him over to Sùng.

Then in the 4th month, with contingents from Chí, Sùng, and Chín, Jìn fought a **battle** with Chǔ at Chǔng-pú; Chǔ was **defeated (bài-jī)**; Chǔ killed its high officer Dǔ-chǔn, who had led the defeated Chǔ force. His error, like that of Lǚ in 0685, was seemingly to remain so long in enemy territory that a superior force could be assembled to oppose him. The Chǔ defeat was a rout. It so weakened Chǔ that for eight years Chǔ made no further military effort, and then only to attack Jyāng 莒, a small and nearby state.¹⁷

6/2:1 (0625). Conclusive. In the second month, Jìn and Chín **battled** in Pǔng-yá; Chín was **defeated (bài-jī)**. There is no other CC information that would permit us to form a more precise impression of this encounter. See next.

6/7:6 (0620). Unstated. A **battle** was fought between Chín and Jìn. No outcome is stated by the CC. As with other matters relating to Chín, the most distant of the states mentioned in CC, the Lǚ chronicler in this case may have lacked information.

6/12:7 (0615). Unstated. Another **battle** of unspecified outcome between Chín and Jìn. Chín had earlier sent a friendly mission to Lǚ, probably to dissuade it from assisting Jìn, as Lǚ would do on a later occasion (8/12:1f).

7/2:1 (0607). Conclusive. In spring, forces of Sùng and Jǜng met in **battle**; Sùng was **defeated (bài-jī)** and Hwà Ywǎn, the Sùng leader, was taken prisoner.¹⁸ A Chín force invaded Jìn, and that summer joined with Sùng, Wèi, and Chǔn to invade Jǜng, perhaps to gain the release of Hwà Ywǎn. Here, in contrast to 5/15:12 above, we have *both* a statement of defeat *and* information about the capture of the defeated leader.

¹⁷This famous battle may have led commentators to regard *all* bài-jī as routs or disabling defeats; other CC entries show a more nuanced reality. It is here that DJ sees an idealized “hegemon” system as being inaugurated; see the **Hegemon** chapter.

¹⁸DJ explains the defeat as due to wrangling and betrayal among the Sùng leaders; that is, to propriety violation. Propriety, whether in the abstract or as embodied in the advice of wise ministers, is ultimately the DJ’s one mode of historical explanation.

7/12:3 (0597). Conclusive. In spring, Chǔ besieged J̀ng; in the 6th month, a relieving J̀n force **battled** with Chǔ, and was **defeated (bài-jī)**.¹⁹ Exploiting that result, Chǔ in the 12th month extinguished Syāu 蕭, near to S̀ng.

8/1:6 (0590). Anomalous. In autumn, the Royal host (王師) was **defeated (bài-jī)** by the Máu-rúng 敗績于茅戎. These Rúng presumably fought in a non-Sinitic way, hence the absence of **jàn**. It remains to ask why the defeat is stated with the passive **bài-jī** rather than the active **bài**. The latter option would have made the defeated Royal force the object of the verb,²⁰ and the subject position in the sentence may have been thought by the respectful Lǚ scribe to be the less undignified of the choices available to him.²¹

8/2:2 (0589). Conclusive. In the summer of 0590, Lǚ had covenanted with J̀n. In spring 0589, Chí invaded Lǚ's northern border. As though in retaliation, that summer Wèi fought a **battle** with Chí in Chí territory; Wèi was **defeated (bài-jī)**. See next.

8/2:3 (0589). Conclusive. Later that summer, several kinsmen of the Lǚ ruler led a force, and with forces from J̀n, Wèi, and Tsáu **battled** Chí, again in Chí territory; this time Chí was **defeated (bài-jī)**. That autumn, Lǚ took lands near the Ẁn River, which ran between Chí and Lǚ. J̀n at this period was the policeman of the north; its policy was to coordinate northern forces against incursions from Chǔ, and to keep the northern states themselves in balance, lest any become strong enough to challenge J̀n. J̀n is here maintaining a balance of power between strong Chí and weaker Lǚ.

8/16:6 (0575). Conclusive. In the 6th month, J̀n sought military aid from Lǚ; none was sent. Without help from Lǚ, J̀n **battled** a J̀ng and Chǔ allied force at Yēn-líng, and the joint force was **defeated (bài-jī)**.²² Chǔ later killed its high officer, Prince Ts̀, presumably for his responsibility for the Chǔ defeat (compare 5/28:5). The Lǚ Prince later sought to join the peace negotiations between J̀n, Wèi, S̀ng, and Chǔ, but was refused admittance. Lǚ sought to redeem itself by joining J̀n, Chí, and Jū in attacking Chǔ's ally J̀ng. A shakeup in Lǚ followed, some of the Prince's kinsmen being seized by J̀n or fleeing to Chí. In the 12th month, Lǚ covenanted with J̀n. On his return from the covenant, the Lǚ Prince executed his half-brother Yēn.

¹⁹DJ explains this defeat by saying that J̀n had ignored wise advice: a warning that Chǔ was practicing virtuous government and was thus invulnerable. We find the same kind of populist wishful thinking in Mencius, whose career (beginning in 0320) coincided in time with the final layer of the DJ.

²⁰Compare n9 above.

²¹This is the only **bài-jī** entry in which the *agent* of the passive voice is expressed.

²²Reversing its earlier analysis, DJ explains Chǔ's defeat by its violation of the canons of populist government. Theory triumphs, even if behavior is a bit inconsistent.

We here get a glimpse of factions in a small state, favoring this or that larger power. The larger powers were evidently well informed about these polarities.

10/17:6 (0525). Unstated. A Chǔ force **battled** Wú at Cháng-àn 長岸. This is far into Chǔ territory, and that penetration alone is a major Wú achievement. Distance may have been a factor in the lack of further CC information. Later CC entries implicitly credit Chǔ with a successful blocking action.

11/4:14 (0506). Conclusive. In the 3rd month, Jìn, Sùng, Tsài, Wèi, Chǔn, Jǐng, Chí, and several smaller states had met and then invaded Chǔ. In the 4th month, the ruler of Tsài had extinguished Shǔn 沈, taken its ruler back with him, and killed him. In the 5th month, the previous allies had made a covenant. Not deterred, Chǔ besieged Tsài in the 7th month. Wú, already a major enemy of Chǔ, joined Tsài in a **battle** with Chǔ, and Chǔ was **defeated (bài-jī)**. Rather than face the inevitable, Náng Wǎ of Chǔ fled to Jǐng. Wú evidently continued to press the defeated Chǔ forces, and presently entered Yǐng, the capital of Chǔ. *By this additional information*, not by the term *bài-jī* (compare 7/12:3), we may infer that the defeat of Chǔ was a serious one.

12/2:5 (0490). Conclusive. In summer, Jàu Yāng led a Jìn force in **battle** with Jǐng, which was **defeated (bài-jī)**. There is no other CC information that would permit us to form a more precise impression of this encounter.

12/11:3 (0484). Conclusive. In spring, Gwó Shū had led a Chí force and invaded Lǚ. In the 5th month, in retaliation, Lǚ and Wú joined in invading Chí. Gwó Shū, again commanding the Chí force, sought to attack the invaders separately, and fought a **battle** with Wú; he was **defeated (bài-jī)** and captured. Again we have both the fact of the defeat and the fact of the capture (see 7/2:1). There was a meeting between Lǚ and Wú in the following autumn, 0483, but nothing came of it (compare 2/10:4).

The **battles** above surveyed, whether or not with a stated **bài-jī** outcome, are final in the sense that whatever might have been the original goal, neither force undertakes further action immediately *after* the battle (the only exception is 2/17:3, which was probably fought to make a statement rather than to secure a victory in the usual sense). For both leaders, the opposing force was, *or had become*, the “objective point.”²³

How were these encounters viewed by the respective courts? Was the Jū force in 5/22:3 told to smash the Lǚ army and faulted for its failure? Was it told to hold the position and praised for its success? We suggest the latter. There was simply no term in the vocabulary of the time for that kind of success.

²³Thus was Lee deflected from his nimble Pennsylvania raid into a losing set-piece battle with Meade at Gettysburg. A specific battle can redefine a campaign which had originally been otherwise conceived.

The CC in 5/22:3, and in several other instances seemingly of the same type, does not say “successful blocking action.” Perhaps it had no terms with which to do so, and relied on its informed readership, the Prince and the court of Lǚ, to supply that inference.²⁴

Non-Jàn Military Encounters

We next survey the other group of military encounters which are identified by CC as ending in **defeat** (bài) for one side or the other, to see if our suggestion of jàn as a formal, prepared battle will hold for these events as well.

1/10:3 (0713). Failed blocking action. In the 1st month, the Lǚ Prince had made an agreement with the rulers of Chí and Jǜng at Jǜng-chyōu 中丘. That summer, Hwèi (a brother of the Lǚ Prince; back in 0719 he had led a Lǚ force which together with Sùng, Chǚn, and Tsài forces had invaded Jǜng) led a force which with Chí and Jǜng forces invaded Sùng. No outcome is specified. In the 6th month, some weeks later, the Lǚ Prince, apparently in charge of a Lǚ force acting on its own, **defeated** a Sùng force at Gwān 菅, and quickly went on to take (chyǚ 取) Gàu 郜 and then Fáng 防. These places are not far inside Sùng, in the area for which the town of Láng 郎, which had been fortified in the previous year (2/10:4, above) was the strongpoint. One imagines that the Lǚ force brushed aside a hastily improvised but feeble Sùng blocking attempt,²⁵ and proceeded, unopposed, to take several Sùng towns.

Sùng was not much weakened: that autumn, a presumably organized joint force from Sùng and Wèi entered Jǜng, and with a force from Tsài, attacked Dài. The ruler of Jǜng attacked the allies and took Dài. None of this shows the organized Sùng force as very effective; and one gets the impression that the Lǚ ruler was a better commander than his brother. But this is not the point at issue.

In this first non-jàn encounter, it is conspicuous that the invading force defeated an enemy and then continued with what was clearly its intended goal. The goal was not *to bring on a battle* with Sùng; but *to take two towns* from Sùng. In this objective it had succeeded. The Sùng blocking attempt had failed, and the Lǚ mission had been carried out.

²⁴We assume they were capable of doing so, though even in our time, blocking actions are not always understood. In May 1942, a Japanese naval force moved to attack Port Moresby in New Guinea; an Australian/American force opposed. Both withdrew afterward; the allied force lost the more valuable shipping. Did Japan win because its losses were less? Was the battle drawn because neither remained in possession of the field? Opinions vary. But best opinion sees a strategic victory for the allied force, because Japan’s invasion attempt was thwarted. The blocking action had succeeded, and the blocking force, albeit at considerable cost, had carried out its mission.

²⁵DJ here agrees in imagining a Lǚ attack on an unprepared Sùng force.

3/10:1 (0684). Resisted incursion. In spring the Lǚ Prince **defeated** a Chí force at an uncertain location in Lǚ, presumably resisting an incursion.²⁶ In the following month, the Lǚ Prince made an incursion into Sùng. A month later, Sùng relocated a town which may have been too far from the Sùng capital to be defended successfully against Lǚ.

3/10:4 (0684). Surprise attack. In the 6th month, forces of Chí and Sùng camped at Láng; the Lǚ Prince **defeated** the Sùng force at Shvng-chyōu 乘丘 (north of Láng). Lǚ seems to have attacked the Sùng contingent separately, weakening the joint force and thus eliminating the threat to Láng; it was something like this maneuver which Gwó Shū tried and failed to execute in 12/11:3. If the attack was a surprise one,²⁷ then lack of **jàn** need not puzzle us: there was no “battle,” rather, a less formal encounter.

3/10:5 (0684). Successful incursion. In the 9th month, Jīng 荆 (later Chǔ) **defeated** the Tsài host at Syīn 莘 and carried off the Lord of Tsài. We may suppose that here Chǔ overcame (bài) any Tsài resistance,²⁸ and went on with its decapitation strike against Tsài. Compare 1/10:3, above.

3/11:2 (0683). Circumstances unknown. In the 5th month, the Lǚ Prince **defeated** a Sùng host at Jīn 鄩, probably in territory disputed between Sùng and Lǚ, and near Láng.²⁹ CC does not let us form an idea of the encounter.

5/1:8 (0659). Circumstances unknown. In the 8th month, Lǚ covenanted with Chí, Sùng, Jvng, Tsáu, and Jū. In the 9th month, Lǚ alone **defeated** a Jū host at Yěn 偃. CC does not let us form an idea of the encounter.

5/1:9 (0659). Failed blocking action. In the 10th month, the Lǚ Prince’s kinsman Yōu 友 led the Lǚ host, **defeated** a Jyǚ 莒 host at Lì 郟, and went on to capture 獲 Jyǚ’s Ná 挈. See again Lǚ Yīn-gūng’s exploit in Sùng (1/10:3), where an encounter on the way did not deflect the invader from his purpose.

5/15:11 (0645). Circumstances unknown. Chǔ attacked Syw 徐. In the 3rd month, a Lǚ force, with forces from Chí, Sùng, Wèi, Jvng, Syw 許, and Tsàu, went to relieve Syw. Actions later that year are recorded for Chí, Sùng, and Tsáu; that winter, Sùng attacked its previous ally Tsáu, and in that month a Chǔ force **defeated** Syw 徐 at Lóu-lín 婁林. The allies having dispersed, the second Chǔ effort succeeded. CC does not let us form an idea of the second encounter.

²⁶DJ here tells the tale of Tsáu Gwèi, a commoner who on being assured of the Lǚ Prince’s assiduousness in meting out justice, symbolically joins him in his chariot and guides him to victory over Chí. This is merely more DJ populism.

²⁷To its credit, DJ also visualizes the encounter this way.

²⁸DJ complicates this scenario with a subplot of insult and revenge.

²⁹It is here that DJ (3/11:1) defines CC military terms, and gives a “disorganization” meaning to bài-jī (大崩曰敗績). This detail does not always apply, but we find the more general DJ definition of battle as a formal encounter (皆陳曰戰) to be correct.

Note that the defeated Syw force is not called a “host” 師, the standard Sinitic term; indeed, no Syw 師 host is mentioned in the CC. In 10/4:2 (0538) Syw met with others, mostly of non-Sinitic origin, including a non-Sinitic and *non-state* people, the Yí 夷 tribes of the Hwái River area. A “non-Sinitic” explanation suffices, and is consistent with other information in CC.

5/33:3 (0627). Circumstances unknown. At the end of 0628, the legendary Wvn-gūng of Jìn had died. In the 1st month of 0627, a Chín force entered Jìn at Hwá. Chí sent an inquiry to Lǚ, and in the 4th month, aided not by Lǚ but by the Jyāng Rúng 姜戎, **defeated** Chín at Syáu 穀, on the Chín/Jìn border. The Chín force had presumably gone further into Jìn meanwhile, and was here in retreat from Chí and its allies; a rear attack is possible. So too, given Chí’s Rúng allies, is a mode of warfare at least partially non-Sinitic.

5/33:8 (0627). Circumstances unknown. In summer, a body of Dí invaded Chí, and evidently also Jìn. CC later tells us that Jìn **defeated** the Dí at Jī 箕, in Jìn territory. The Jìn leader is not said to be in charge of a 師 host, and may have been fighting in a way adapted to the warfare practiced by the Dí. Details of this and other bà are not now knowable, but the prominence of non-Sinitic states and peoples in the bà list is very suggestive.

6/11:6 (0616). Circumstances unknown. In autumn 0616, the Dí had made an incursion into Chí. In the 10th month, Shúsūn Dv-chvn **defeated** the Dí at Syén 鹹, probably within Lǚ, which we must assume had also been attacked. See preceding.

8/12:3 (0579). Circumstances unknown. In the autumn of 0579, a Jìn leader **defeated** the Dí at Jyāu-gāng 交剛, probably in Jìn territory. See preceding.

10/1:6 (0541). Circumstances unknown. In the 6th month, Sywn Wú 荀吳 of Jìn led a host and **defeated** the Dí at Dà-lú 大鹵, in Jìn territory. Except for the mention of a Jìn “host,” see preceding.

10/5:6 (0537). Circumstances unknown. Shú Gūng led the Lǚ host and **defeated** a Jyǚ host at Fvn-chywén 蚡泉 in Lǚ. Possibly the Jyǚ force was surprised, so that a set-piece battle with both sides prepared did not occur.

10/23:7 (0519). Circumstances unknown. In the 7th month, early autumn, Wú **defeated** the hosts of Dùn, Hú, Shǚn, Tsài, Chvn, and Syǚ 許 at Jí-fǚ. Hú and Shǚn were extinguished, and Syà Nyè of Chvn was captured. This implies a rout for the opposing forces. Non-Sinitic Wú made its first CC appearance by attacking Tán in spring 0584; it here continues to expand into territory adjacent to it. The rout, and the capture of an opposing leader, remind us of similar jàn outcomes (5/15:12, 7/2:1); it is thus not for lack of severity or finality that this encounter is not called a jàn. A non-Sinitic way of war remains a plausible explanation. Slightly earlier, in 10/17:6, Wú had apparently been fighting in Sinitic style, and we must thus posit Wú’s capacity to fight either way.

11/14:4 (0496). Circumstances unknown. In the 5th month, the state of Yúywè 於越 **defeated** Wú at Dzwēi-lǐ 檣李. Both belonged to the non-Sinitic coastal culture; neither fielded a 師 “host.” The fighting must have been on a large scale, but it may have been conducted in non-Sinitic style.

So may all but two of the last nine events on the bà list. That possibility is our explanation for most of the failures of the CC to call an event a **jàn** battle.

Conclusion

There are two reasons why a military encounter is not called **jàn** in the CC. Either it was of Sinitic type but not formal, or was of non-Sinitic type. The term bà-jī may preserve the warrior’s shame at being bested in a contest of valor, so “disgracefully defeated” is a valid translation, but that is no longer what the CC scribes sought to convey by the term. In the CC, then, bà-jī is simply the standard term for defeat in a formal **jàn** battle. It tells us nothing specific about shame, severity, or disorganization following the battle. Any such information must be gleaned from other CC entries.

*Spring and Autumn warfare, as viewed from the top (and what the chronicle gives us is precisely the view from the top), did not seek occasions for the display of valor. On the contrary, it sought to avoid such occasions, and to achieve its ends as far as possible by unopposed military force. To the Spring and Autumn ruler, victory in a set-piece **jàn** battle may well have been second best to securing, without battle, the state’s objective: new territory gained by easy conquest, policy change induced by cheap intimidation, or successful interference in the succession crisis of some neighboring state.*

What this exercise can show us is that though the elite military honor culture certainly included the ruler of a Spring and Autumn state, the ruler was not wholly defined by that culture. He had his own view, which we might call the view of the state. Strategically speaking, his position as the ruler set him apart from those he ruled, and whom, indeed, he often led in person.