

17. Ch́ng F̄ng 成風 of Jwān-ýw

Ch́ng F̄ng figures in the chronicle only on the day of her death, in 0623. Here is that entry:

冬十有一月，壬寅，夫人風氏薨

- 6/4:7. Winter, 11th month, on day 39, Our Lady Madame F̄ng passed away.

Her story goes back to one of the liveliest moments in all of Lǚ history. Jwāng-gūng (r 0693-0662) died in the 8th month of 0662. Two months later, Jwāng-gūng's son and presumptive heir Bān 般 also died. Worldly readers will recognize that we are in the midst of a succession dispute. The CC next tells us that Chìng-fǔ, Jwāng-gūng's brother, went to Chí, probably to get Chí support for his candidate, the son of Aī Jyāng from Chí, With the first wife's son no longer in play, secondary wives have their chance: Aī Jyāng was a secondary wife of Jwāng-gūng. Her son, aged eight, posthumously known as Mǐn-gūng, did succeed to the position of ruler in 0661.

So Bān was dead, and Aī Jyāng's young son was recognized as the ruler. But there had been no installation ceremony, implying an unstable situation. And who benefits by an unstable situation? Those dark horses one rank down: the sons of concubines. There remained on the scene two sons of Jwāng-gūng's concubine Ch́ng F̄ng, and the elder of those sons was supported for the Lǚ rulership by the powerful Jì family.

Jwāng-gūng, who had died in the 8th month of 0662, was buried only in the 6th month of 0661. The delay is sinister; it implies things not happening according to rule, and thus with some interference with the usual rules. In the 8th month of 0661, the child ruler Mǐn-gūng met the Lord of Chí and made a covenant with him; confirming the Chí support on which his position in Lǚ depended. In that month the head of the Jì clan of Lǚ returned to the capital. That winter, the head of the Jùngsūn clan of Chí also came to Lǚ. The two opponents in the ongoing succession dispute had gathered, and things now moved quickly. Despite support by the Chí faction (and the backing of Chí is not to be despised), the child ruler Mǐn-gūng of Lǚ died in the 8th month.

Then, in quick succession, the losers fled:

九月，夫人姜氏孫于郟

- 4/2:4. 9mo, Our Lady Madame Jyāng departed for Jū.

公子慶父奔莒

- 4/2:5. [Hwán]-gūng's son Chìng-fǔ fled to Jyǔ.

And thus it happened that, against the usual odds, the son of Ch́ng F̄ng, later known as Syī-gūng, replaced the hapless Mǐn-gūng as the ruler of Lǚ.

Nor did that event immediately stabilize things. Or rather, the stabilizing of things took a more protracted if still dramatic form.

Here are some details of what happened to the leaders of the losing faction, from the sober CC chronicle record for Syī-gūng's first year:

- 5/1:1 [no succession ceremony is recorded; a sign of instability]
秋七月，戊辰，夫人姜氏薨于夷，齊人以歸
- 5/1:5. Autumn 7th month, day 5, Our Lady Madame Jyāng passed away in Yí; a man from Chí [claimed her body and] went back with it [to Chí].
八月，公會齊侯，宋公，鄭伯，曹伯，邾人于櫓
- 5/1:7. 8th month, the Prince met with the Lord of Chí, the Prince of Sùng, the Elder of Jvng, the Elder of Tsáu, and a man of Jū in Chvng.
十有二月，丁巳，夫人[姜]¹氏之喪至自齊
- 5/1:10. 12th month, day 54, the cortege of Our Lady Madame [Jyāng] arrived from Chí.

Poor Aī Jyāng, the mother of the only briefly successful successor Mǐn-gūng, died in Yí (a general name for non-Sinitic peoples of the east, here presumably one of their towns). Her body was prepared in Chí and returned to Lù for burial (as was proper; her Lǚ marriage made her, for ritual purposes, a woman of Lǚ).² Her burial was duly recorded at CC 5/2:2, in the summer of 0658.

Thus began the reign of Syī-gūng, regarded in later days as the greatest Lǚ prince of Spring and Autumn. The Sinitic peoples, like many others, had their rule against inmarriage: wives must be from another clan; another surname. But there may be something to be said for occasional infusions of still more exotic blood. The very able Jàu Dùn had a Jīn father and a Dī 狄 mother.³ Syī-gūng's mother was non-Sinitic; Fvng 風 “wind” is not a family name, but a tribal one.

The Fvng people lived in four towns, three of them west of the Lǚ capital⁴ and one of them to the east, near the Jì stronghold Bì. It is this eastern town, Jwān-yw 顛輿, from which Chvng Fvng probably came. Probably it was Jì sponsorship that had gained her a position as Jwāng-gūng's concubine, and it was probably with Jì support that it was Chvng Fvng's son, and not a rival son more advantageously placed, who succeeded her husband Jwāng-gūng.

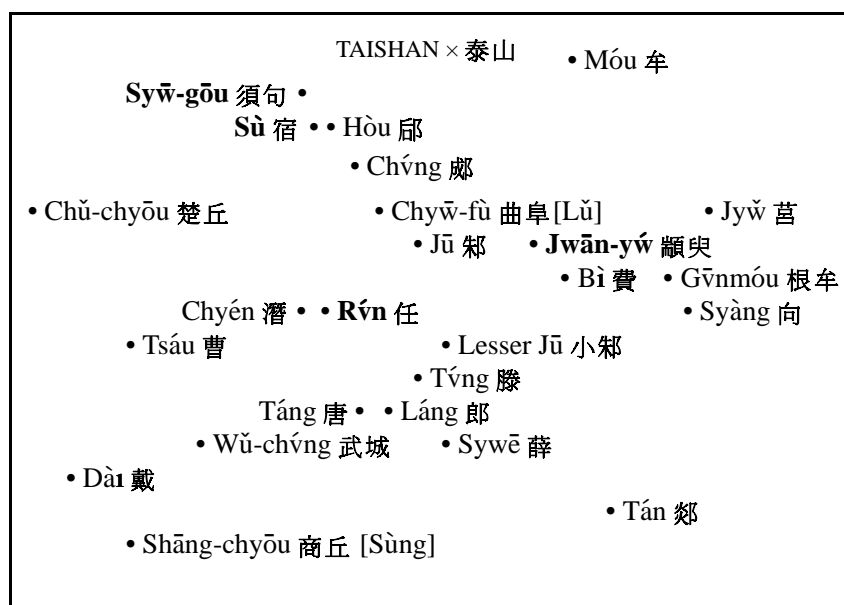
¹The CC text 夫人氏 makes no sense, and we must assume a missing 姜.

²Her sacrificial name was Aī Jyāng. The DJ spins a colorful story of her depravity and murder by her own kinsmen of Chí. The Bad Last Woman story is a standard topos, beloved of the DJ and other Warring States texts. We take this story as an invention. Did it have a basis in fact? No doubt Aī Jyāng had at some remove connived at the death of Bān, the heir of Jwāng-gūng; another woman's son. That makes her little worse than anybody else involved in the succession dispute. One of the shortcomings of hereditary rulership is that its politics often takes this violent form.

³See his profile, #4 in this series. His mother was from the Chyāng-gāu-rú, a tribe near to but probably distinct from the Dī, who seized the two daughters of their ruler and presented them to Chvng-ār (the future Jīn Wvng-gūng) and his followers in exile.

⁴They are Rvng 任, Sù 宿, and Syw-gōu 須句 (like Jwān-yw, this disyllabic name has no meaning in Chinese; it is probably a phonetic transcription from the Fvng language).

The F'ng people had their own gods: an ancestor, T'ài-h'àu 太皞, and the tutelary spirit of the Jì 濟 River (有濟, The Ruler of the Jì).⁵ The Jì River flowed north along the western edge of Lǚ. The location of the F'ng towns shows how wide that Jì domain had originally been:



* Locations Near Lǚ *

The Four F'ng Towns are **Emphasized**⁶

In early Jōu times, Lǚ had been moved from its original location near the eastern Jōu capital into non-Sinitic territory east of the conquered Shāng, to guard against any rising of the Shāng people. It seems that the Lǚ capital, Chyw'fù, was situated to dominate the territory inhabited by the F'ng people. This undoubtedly favored their assimilation, and a F'ng town once served as a place of meeting for Sinitic rulers.⁷ Ch'ng F'ng herself is a conspicuous example of assimilation: the Pocahontas of her day.⁸

⁵Parallels for this designation of a ruler include the non-Sinitic Yōu Myáu 有苗.

⁶Apart from the location of the capital, we notice how closely the Lǚ clan seats (H'ou and Ch'ng north of the capital; Bì east of it) match the location of F'ng towns.

⁷The rulers of S'ng and Lǚ covenanted in Sù in 0722 (see p19), and the death of the chieftain (nán 男) of Sù, probably a tribal leader, is recorded in CC 1/8:4 (0715).

⁸DJ 5/21:4 tells a tale of how she asked Syī-g'ng in 0639 to restore Syw-g'ou, which had been conquered by Jū, to guarantee continuation of the sacrifices to T'ài-h'àu and the Ruler of the Jì [River]. By the time of the Dzwō Jwàn, T'ài-h'àu was thought to be an ancient Sinitic ruler, whose sacrifices had been entrusted to Syw-g'ou. No. T'ài-h'àu was the god of the F'ng people, but was later assimilated to the Sinitic pantheon.

Syī-gūng was no young child. From his first year, he took charge of affairs. In the 8th month he met with the rulers of Chí, Sùng, J̀ng, Tsáu, and Jū about a recent attack of Chǔ on J̀ng. In the 9th month he defeated a Jū force which was apparently operating in violation of the sense of that meeting. In the 10th month, Jì Yǒu, a representative of the Jì clan who had been given temporary leadership of the Lù force, defeated a Jyǔ army and captured Jyǔ Ná.

Thus did Syī-gūng's patrons the Jì clan enjoy the fruits of their sponsorship. The fruits included a shot at generalship, and thus a chance of glory.

Ch́ng F̄ng outlived her famous son. Syī-gūng died in 0627, in the 33rd year of his reign. To conclude Ch́ng F̄ng's story we return to the chronicle entry with which we began: the record of her death four years later in 0623:

冬十有一月，壬寅，夫人風氏薨

• 6/4:7. Winter, 11th month, on day 39, Our Lady Madame F̄ng passed away.

Ch́ng F̄ng, a girl of the F̄ng people near the Jì stronghold of Bì, cannot have been less than 13 when she was presented to Jwāng-gūng as a concubine by the Jì family. Her son Syī-gūng was probably at least 18 at the time of his successful achievement of the rulership in 0659. He ruled for a long 33 years. She outlived him, into the 4th year of the next reign, and then died, in 0623. She cannot have been less than 70, and 70 is the standard definition of "old."

And it is as an old woman that later ages remembered her. In Shī 300, which, at the time it was written, was the very last poem in the Shī repertoire, we see Syī-gūng in state. He is descended from the Jōu ancestors, the early kings, the virtuous regent Jōu-gūng, and his son, the first Prince of Lǔ. He has conquered the tribes of the Hwái, who bring him tribute; he rules all. The last stanza is a signature piece, from the man who made the Great Hall. The climax of the poem is in the *next-to-last* stanza. Here is Syī-gūng in that hall:

天錫公純嘏	Heaven confers great blessings on the Prince,
眉壽保魯	To utmost age shall he hold Lǔ,
居常與許	Occupy Cháng, and also Syǔ.
復周公之宇	Restoring the lands of the Prince of Jōu.
魯侯燕喜	The Lord of Lǔ feasts and is glad,
令妻壽母	His honored wife and aged mother . . .

And there is Ch́ng F̄ng, his aged mother, sitting in honor beside him.

Still, why, at her death, was she given the title Lady (Fū-ŕn 夫人, proper only to the first wife)? The scandal of that title has perturbed the ritual-minded for more than two thousand years. It may be that Syī-gūng's younger brother, Gūngdǔ Swèi, by far the most outstanding diplomat of that reign and the next, had brought his influence to bear on that question of protocol.

You see, she was *his* mother too.

And for his story, as the Chinese storytellers say, see the next chapter.