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The Search for Stability: Late-Ch'un-ch'iu Thinkers

It is commonly assumed by historians that the life and ideas of Confucius (孔子; 551–479 BC) mark the beginning of Chinese intellectual history. Indeed, the three centuries after him were the most important period in the history of Chinese thought, but the centuries preceding should not be overlooked. We are forced to ask where the roots of the intellectual breakthrough are located. What developments preceded the age of Confucius?

We know that Confucius claimed to be a transmitter, not a creator.[1] What did he transmit? Traditional Chinese scholars assumed that it was the legendary wisdom of the founders of the Chou dynasty: King Wen (文王; d. 1050 BC), King Wu (武王; d. 10[illegible] BC), and the Duke of Chou (周公; d. 1036 BC).[2] May we not assume, however, that Confucius was also influenced by his immediate predecessors and contemporaries? Although the influence of Ch'un-ch'iu-era (春秋, 722–453 BC) discourse in subsequent intellectual developments is but rarely the focus of scholarly interest, careful study suggests that the Ch'un-ch'iu period bequeathed to Confucius the ideas that came to inform his *Weltanschauung*, and, moreover, in this period we can discern the foundations of many of the future controversies of the Chan-kuo (戰國; 453–221 BC) age.

The reluctance to deal with the Ch'un-ch'iu legacy may be largely due to the presumed absence of any individual philosophical treatise from this period.[3] Yet we have rich historical sources that deal with the Ch'un-ch'iu era;

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[1] Yang Po-chün 楊伯峻, annot., *Lun-yü i-chu* 論語譯注 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1992), 7.1 p. 66.

[2] I follow the dates suggested by Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Chou History* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1991), pp. xix, 217–81.

[3] For instance, Herrlee G. Creel preferred not to discuss the ideas of Confucius' predecessors since "we do not have exposition of their ideas in early and unimpeachable works." (*Confucius and the Chinese Way* [New York: Harper and Row, 1960], p. 113). Liu Yameng, who considers portions of the *Lun-yü* "the product of polemical interactions," questions, nevertheless, our possibility to define pre-Confucian "ideology… in the absence of direct and undistorted textual evidence"; "Three Issues in the Argumentative Conception of Early Chinese Discourse," *Philosophy East & West* 46.1 (1996), p. 35.

among these the unique position of the *Tso chuan* 左傳 is widely recognized. In addition to a thorough, year-by-year account of major events in the history of the Ch'un-ch'iu states, *Tso chuan* also contains hundreds of speeches attributed to various historical personalities from that period. These speeches reveal the political, ethical, and religious thought of their protagonists and may therefore serve as excellent sources for investigating the world of thought of the Ch'un-ch'iu era.

Skeptics doubt the accuracy of the *Tso chuan* speeches; they maintain that the speeches were either invented or rewritten by *Tso chuan*'s author-compiler, and therefore do not reflect the Ch'un-ch'iu intellectual milieu. Such arguments notwithstanding, careful scrutiny of *Tso chuan* speeches reveals an intellectual change from the beginning to the end of the Ch'un-ch'iu period, a change that cannot be plausibly attributed to the editorial efforts of the author-compiler and later transmitters.[4] Intellectual differences among the *Tso* protagonists rule out invention as an editorial "didactic device"; the speeches in all likelihood reflect original Ch'un-ch'iu controversies. The aim of this essay is to explore some of the differences in the *Tso chuan* by focusing on synchronic rather than diachronic divisions. The views of four leading statesmen of the late-Ch'un-ch'iu period will be compared to show, first, that their speeches reflect distinct personal views that cannot be attributed to any later forger or "unifier" of the text; second, that late-Ch'un-ch'iu intellectual differences foreshadowed and directly contributed to Chan-kuo-era controversies; and third, that certain common features of late-Ch'un-ch'iu discourse clearly distinguish it from the Chan-kuo intellectual milieu and allow us to understand better the uniqueness of Ch'un-ch'iu thought in contrast to that prevalent in subsequent centuries.[5]

The four statesmen whose views will be discussed are Shu Hsiang 叔向 (Yang-she Hsi 羊舌肸) and Nü Shu-ch'i 女叔齊 (Ssu-ma Hou 司馬侯) from the state of Chin 晉, Yen Ying 晏嬰 (Yen-tzu 晏子, Yen P'ing-chung 晏平仲) from the state of Ch'i 齊, and Tzu Ch'an 子產 (Kung-sun Ch'iao 公孫僑) from the state of Cheng 鄭. These four have much in common. They were contemporaries who all flourished from 560 to 520 BC and who shared similar

[4] See Yuri Pines, "Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period: The Reliability of the Speeches in the *Zuo Zhuan* as Sources of Chunqiu Intellectual History," *Early China* 22 (1997).

[5] The stimulating study of Onozawa Seiichi 小野精一 points out clear differences between the views of late-Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers; "Shunjū koki kenjin setsuwa no shisōshi teki kōsatsu josetsu" 春秋後期賢人説話の思想史的考察序説, *Chūtetsubun gakkai hō* 中哲文學會報 1 (1974), pp. 70–95. Vitalii Rubin similarly suggested in "Tzu-Ch'an and the City-State of Ancient China," *TP* 52, (1965), p. 9, that the unique style of Tzu Ch'an's *Tso* speeches may serve as proof of their authenticity.

problems and participated in the common discourse. They all held high ministerial positions in their respective states, and each attempted to determine the political course of his ruler. Contemporaries as well as later generations considered them as paragons of political wisdom; hence the text of *Tso chuan* not only frequently quotes their speeches but also lauds their achievements either with remarks by the narrator or by quoting Confucius.[6] Besides, all four knew each other and engaged in numerous policy discussions that elucidate their different approaches to crucial political issues. The similarities make the comparison of ideas illuminating. Furthermore, the four statesmen belong to the generation just prior to that of Confucius, and thus represent an intellectual milieu in which Confucius' own ideas were formed. By investigating their thought we may therefore clarify the context in which Confucius was working and better understand various of his ideas.

In the following, the basic views of the four statesmen on the crucial international (that is, Ch'un-ch'iu interstate) and domestic issues will be outlined, together with their religious and ethical views. Shu Hsiang and Tzu Ch'an's famous controversy on the issue of reforms will then be discussed. This controversy, as I shall argue, foreshadowed future discussions between "conservatives" and "reformers" in Chinese history. My conclusion summarizes the views that the four thinkers held in common, as well those on which they differed, and how those views may be related to major ideas of the subsequent Chan-kuo era.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The late-Ch'un-ch'iu world was one of constant turmoil. The careers of our heroes began in the last stage of the century-old strife between the northern alliance, led by the state of Chin, and the southern, led by Ch'u 楚. The long stalemate that characterized this struggle for hegemony resulted in unprecedented peace conferences, held in the states of Sung 宋 and Cheng 鄭 in 546 and 541, respectively. These conferences brought about a significant decrease in interstate conflicts in the third quarter of the sixth century, enabling statesmen to concentrate on domestic problems.

Domestic issues in fact dominated late-Ch'un-ch'iu discourse. Powerful lineages of hereditary ministers virtually nullified the overlords' (*chu-hou* 諸侯) power in most states of the Central Plain, particularly in Chin (from 573), in

[6] Concerning the narrator's (*chün-tzu* 君子, "superior man") and Confucius' remarks, scattered throughout the *Tso*, see Eric Henry, "Confucius vs. junzi in the Zuo zhuan," a paper presented at the eighth conference of the Warring States Working Group, April 1997.

Cheng (from 566) and in Ch'i 齊 (from 548). Consequently, incessant intralineage struggles, as well as conflicts between ministerial lineages and overlords,[7] became the major threat to political and social stability. Concomitantly, members of the *shih* 士 stratum, the lower segment of the hereditary aristocracy, threatened their superiors by increasingly attempting to obtain higher ranks in the state hierarchy. The growing economic pressure of the aristocrats stimulated political awareness among commoners, particularly dwellers of the capital regions (the so-called *kuo-jen* 國人),[8] who actively participated in political struggles, contributing in no small measure to further deterioration of the hereditary hierarchic order. Therefore, restoring political and social stability and preserving hierarchic order became the most urgent tasks for statesmen throughout the Chinese world.

THE CONSERVATIVE VISION: SHU HSIANG

Shu Hsiang (d. ca. 525) belonged to the Yang-she 羊舌 lineage – the only collateral branch of the ruling lineage that survived a century of internal struggles in the state of Chin. He began his career as a petty functionary in charge of Chin's international relations; in the 660s he was appointed to the influential position of grand tutor (*t'ai-fu* 太傅) of the heir-apparent Piao 彪. In 558, when Piao, posthumously known as lord P'ing (晉平公; r. 557–532) succeeded his father, lord Tao (晉悼公; r. 572–558), at the head of Chin, Shu Hsiang's position significantly improved. For almost thirty years he remained lord P'ing's trusted aide.

Shu Hsiang witnessed the rapid decline of the Chin ruler's power at home and abroad. He summarized these negative trends in a conversation with the visiting Yen Ying:

> Our ruling house is also in its final age. The war horses are not harnessed, the high ministers do not participate in military campaigns, the lord's chariots are without riders, and the platoons have no officers. The common people are exhausted, while the palaces and chambers become more extravagant. Corpses in the streets gaze at each other, while the riches of [the families of] female favorites excessively increase. The people, hearing the lord's order, act like fleeing marauders and enemies. The Luan, Hsi, Hsü, Yüan, Hu, Hsü, Ch'ing, and Po are degraded to slaves and servants.[9] The government is at the gates of [great] houses,[10] and the people have nobody to rely on. The ruler does not repent, but indulges in pleasure to pass the [time of sorrow]. Which day will bring the degradation of the ruling house?[11]

[7] I distinguish between "ministerial lineages," whose heads held the position of "high minister" (*ch'ing* 卿) and "aristocratic lineages," whose heads were of the "noble" (*ta-fu* 大夫) rank.

[8] For the term *kuo-jen*, see Jen Ch'ang-t'ai 任常泰 and Shih Kuang-ming 石光明, "Hsi-Chou Ch'un-ch'iu shih-ch'i te kuo-jen" 西周春秋時期的國人, *Chung-kuo li-shih po-wu-kuan kuan-k'an* 中國歷史博物館館刊 4 (1982), pp. 19–28; Chao Po-hsiung 趙伯雄, *Chou-tai kuo-chia hsing-t'ai yen-chiu* 周代國家形態研究 (Changsha: Hu-nan chiao-yü, 1990), pp. 171–85.

Shu Hsiang correctly described the major maladies of Chin's situation. The greatest problem was the decline of the ruling house, which lost much of its power to heads of several ministerial lineages, the so-called six *ch'ing* 卿.[12] As the collateral branches of the ruling lineage were destroyed in internal struggles, the position of the ruling house versus powerful *ch'ing* deteriorated further. This decline of centralized rule also harmed Chin's military power. In addition, the ruler's excesses were a burden on the commoners, who began reacting to the ruler and his underlings as "marauders and enemies." Moreover, aside from the political considerations, Shu Hsiang for personal reasons disapproved of the power of the Chin high ministers and favored restoring the lord's power.[13]

Two possible ways existed to restore the power of the Chin lords. First, implementation of such administrative reforms as restricting or abolishing hereditary allotments and hereditary ministerial positions that would inevitably limit *ch'ing* power and strengthen the position of centralized authority.[14] This solution, however, was problematic. Since the early-sixth century, powerless

[9] All these were collateral branches of the ruling lineage, exterminated during the internal struggles of 621–550. The only remaining branch was Shu Hsiang's own Yang-she lineage.

[10] This refers to usurpation of political power by the leading ministerial lineages; discussed below.

[11] Yang Po-chün 楊伯峻, annot., *Ch'un-ch'iu Tso-chuan chu* 春秋左傳注 (Peking: Chung-hua 1981; hereafter *TC*), Chao 3, p. 1236. Unless noted otherwise, translations are my own; here I modify David Schaberg's translation in "Foundations of Chinese Historiography: Representation in the Zuo zhuan and Guoyu" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard U., 1996), p. 750.

[12] The system whereby the *ch'ing* led the Chin armies and also performed civilian functions was initiated by lord Wen (文公; 636–628). By the time of Shu Hsiang, only seven ministerial lineages remained: the Han 韓, Wei 魏, Chao 趙, Fan 范, Chung-hang 中行, Chih 知, and Luan 欒. The Luan lineage was exterminated in 552–550, and the remaining six lineages became known in historical literature as the "six *ch'ing*" of Chin.

[13] Despite his revered position as the ruler's trusted aide, Shu Hsiang remained vulnerable to *ch'ing* persecution. In 552, he was arrested and barely escaped death because of his younger brother Shu Hu's 叔虎 affiliation with the rebellious Luan Ying 欒盈 (*TC* [Hsiang 21], pp. 1059–62). Naturally, Shu Hsiang was less than enthusiastic about the power of the six *ch'ing*.

[14] For the importance of hereditary allotments and hereditary office-holding as sources for ministerial power, see Lü Wen-yü 呂文郁, "Chou-tai te ts'ai-i chih-tu" 周代的采邑制度, *Wen-hsien* 文獻 4 (1990), pp. 76–79; Ch'ien Tsung-fan 錢宗範, "Hsi-Chou Ch'un-ch'iu shih-tai te shih-lu shih-kuan chih-tu chi ch'i p'o-huai" 西周春秋時代的世祿世官制度及其破壞, *Chung-kuo shih yen-chiu* 中國史研究 (1989), pp. 20–30; Chu Feng-han 朱鳳瀚, *Shang Chou chia-tsu hsing-t'ai*

Chin lords were no longer able to implement significant reforms without inviting an armed response from their ministers.[15] Moreover, Shu Hsiang himself had no reason to advocate complete abolition of ministerial power. After all, he also belonged to the hereditary aristocracy; his family enjoyed high official positions for three generations, and the size of his allotments was second only to that of *ch'ing*.[16] Thus, both objective and subjective reasons discouraged Shu Hsiang from advocating radical reforms to curb the power of hereditary aristocrats.

There was, however, another way to restore the power of the Chin lords without undermining the political and social order. The alternative was basically conservative, namely, restoring the political order of the early-Ch'un-ch'iu period. Then, particularly under the rule of the illustrious lord Wen (晉文公; r. 636–628), the state of Chin enjoyed prosperity, unprecedented international prestige, together with internal stability, while the ministers' power did not compete with the lord's. Shu Hsiang, a specialist in historical writings, dreamed of a return to the glorious past.[17]

But how to restore this golden age? Shu Hsiang believed that the answer was in the realm of ethics rather than politics. The rulers and the ministers should behave correctly, manifesting their *te* (德, virtue, charisma), and preserving ritual norms (*li* 禮). On the economic level, for instance, Shu Hsiang believed that restricting extravagance (*ch'ih* 侈) would suffice to decrease the suffering of the populace – an ethical rather than an economic solution. Shu Hsiang believed that indulgence in extravagant luxury was a manifestation of moral deficiency that must bring about the inevitable punishment of rulers and ministers alike.[18] In 534 Shu Hsiang joined his fellow statesman, Master

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yen-chiu 商周家族形態研究 (Tientsin: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1990), pp. 525–93.

[15] Shu Hsiang was still a minor when lord Li (晉厲公; r. 580–573) attempted to neutralize his powerful ministers by advancing the positions of his personal trusted favorites. This policy resulted in a violent conflict with the most powerful ministerial lineages: lord Li was murdered by Luan Shu 欒書, and posthumously humiliated by decreasing his sumptuary privileges. His successor, lord Tao, realized that open struggle with *ch'ing* was impossible; until the end of his rule he successfully maneuvered among his powerful ministers, maintaining an uneasy peace at the head of the government.

[16] For the power and wealth of the Yang-she lineage, see *TC* (Chao 5), pp. 1268–69; (Chao 28), p. 1493.

[17] On Shu Hsiang's specialty, see *Kuo-yü* 國語, "Chin yü 晉語" 7.9 (Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1990), p. 445.

[18] In 546, Shu Hsiang predicted the fall of the greedy Cheng leader, Po Yu 伯有, and in 541 he criticized the extravagance of the Ch'u leader, prince Wei 圍 (the future king Ling of Ch'u). In 544, he conversely praised the Han 罕 lineage of Cheng and Yüeh 樂 lineage of Sung, who decided to distribute grain to aid the starving population, saying that both lineages "attained the state" and "the people will come to them"; see *TC* (Hsiang 27), p. 1135; (Hsiang 29), p. 1157; (Chao 1), p. 1208.

K'uang 師曠, in reprimanding lord P'ing for overburdening the people while building the new palace: "When this palace is completed, the overlords will revolt, and the ruler will certainly be castigated."[19] The solution of economic problems was therefore simple: encourage the ruler's austerity.[20]

Austerity by the power holders, however, did not suffice to resolve the major political problem, which was the decline of the ruling house and the rise of powerful ministers. Similarly, it could not prevent the continuous disintegration of the Ch'un-ch'iu social system and its adverse impact on the aristocracy; Shu Hsiang was aware that his own lineage might follow in the footsteps of other collateral branches of the ruling lineage and become degraded to the position of "slaves and servants." His solution, shared by many other Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers, was to restore the hierarchic order based on ritual (*li* 禮).

The political and social order of the early-Ch'un-ch'iu period was based on the ritual system, inherited from the Western Chou. This system, which probably originated in the Western Chou ritual reform, regulated sacrificial rites, sumptuary rules, and kinship organization, thereby preserving social stability and interstate hierarchy.[21] During ritual performances each participant had well-defined functions according to his hereditary rank and his seniority within the lineage. This allowed for the smooth performance of the most complicat[illegible] ceremonies: each one knew his place. Many Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers believed that similar principles should be applied to political and social life generally.

After mid-Ch'un-ch'iu, the concept of *li* underwent a profound transformation. Sweeping political and social changes undermined the relevance of many Western Chou ceremonies that were no longer in accordance with the new realities. Hence, many statesmen began reconsidering the role of *li* in

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[19] *TC* (Chao 8), p. 1301. The "castigation" of duke P'ing refers to his death that indeed occurred two years after Shu Hsiang's speech.

[20] Shu Hsiang's opposition to excessess and greed was impartial; he severely castigated his greedy younger brother, Shu Yü 叔魚; when Shu Yü's predilection for bribes led to his murder, Shu Hsiang ordered *post mortem* punishment, exposing his corpse in the marketplace; *TC* (Chao 14), pp. 1366–67. Shu Hsiang's impartiality was praised by Confucius (*TC* [Chao 14], p. 1367).

[21] On the different theories of the origins of *li*, see Yen Pu-k'e 閻步克, "Li-chih chih-hsü yü shih-ta-fu cheng-chih te yüan-yüan" 禮治秩序與士大夫政治的淵源, *Kuo-hsüeh yen-chiu* 國學研究 1 (Peking, 1993), pp. 296–303; Yang Ch'ün 楊群, "Ts'ung k'ao-ku fa-hsien k'an li ho li-chih te ch'i-yüan yü fa- chan" 從考古發現看禮和禮治的起源與發展, *K'ung-tzu yen-chiu* 孔子研究 3 (1990), pp. 3–11. Recent studies strongly suggest that the Chou ritual system originated in the late-Western Chou ritual reforms. See Jessica Rawson, *Western Chou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P, 1990), pp. 93–125; Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Chou Studies: A Review Article," *Early China* 18 (1993), pp. 205–7, and his detailed discussion in "The Western Chou Ritual Reform and Its Reflection in Bronze Art," unpub. paper presented at the University of Kansas, Oct. 17, 1996.

society. These statesmen were inclined to abandon part of the ceremonies, provided "the essence of *li*" – preserving hierarchic order – remained intact. Others, conversely, continued to believe in the importance of abiding by whatever ceremonial rules were inherited from the past. The Wei 衛 chancellor, Pei-kung Wen-tzu 北宮文子, stressed the latter approach:

> The ruler has a ruler's awe-inspiring ceremonies 威儀, his ministers are in awe of him and love him, they make a model of him and imitate him, thus he is able to keep his state and his family, and his fame will last for generations. The minister has a minister's awe-inspiring ceremonies, his inferiors are in awe of him and love him, thus he is able to preserve his office, protect his kin and rule his family appropriately. When all the ruled comply with this, the superior and the inferior can fix their mutual positions. [...] Thus, when a superior man is in office, he can be held in awe; when bestowing favors, he is loved. His entrances and withdrawals can be made a standard 度; his motions can be modeled 則; his manners can be observed; his deeds and actions can become a pattern; his virtuous actions can be imitated; his voice and breath can become music; his movements contain refined culture 文, his utterances and sayings are ordered. With these [traits] he looks at his inferiors; this is called maintaining awe-inspiring ceremonies.[22]

Pei-kung Wen-tzu represented the belief, inherited from the Western Chou, that proper performance by superiors of the complicated ceremonies would assure general compliance with ceremonial rules, and consequently smooth the functioning of society as a whole. According to this view, which was especially popular early in the Ch'un-ch'iu, the ruler's abiding by ceremonial rules became the crucial precondition for preserving hierarchic order. Shu Hsiang generally shared this view.

Shu Hsiang mastered the complicated ceremonial rules, and did his best to assure proper ritual functioning of Chin's international relations. He lauded those statesmen who adhered to *li*, and severely criticized all infractions of ceremonial rules. In 531, for instance, he heard that lord Chao of Lu (魯昭公; r. 541–510) violated mourning obligations to his mother. Shu Hsiang remarked:

> The ruling house of Lu will be degraded. The ruler is in great mourning but does not abolish spring hunting; he has a three-year mourning, but does not grieve for a single day. When the state does not lament in mourning it disrespects the ruler; when the ruler does not look [like he is] grieving, he disregards his kin. When the state disrespects the ruler and the ruler disregards his kin, can he be but degraded? He will lose his state![23]

[22] *TC* (Hsiang 31), pp. 1193–95, modifying Schaberg, "Foundations," pp. 453–54.

This is only one of many examples of Shu Hsiang's criticism of foreign dignitaries who violated ritual propriety.[24] He continually reiterated his belief that infraction of ceremonial rules would result in the inevitable deterioration of the political and social order, and lead to punishment of the violator. Whatever the violation might have been – irreverent behavior during the interstate meeting, improper exterior appearance, or disregard of mourning rules, the result would be the same. It was only through strict adherence to ceremonial and ritual norms that the ruler could secure his position. These views were akin to those of Pei-kung Wen-tzu, quoted earlier.

Shu Hsiang's primary interests were apparently in the international rather than domestic realm. As the one in charge of the Chin court's international ties, Shu Hsiang hoped to restore the diminishing Chin hegemony. He believed that this task could be achieved primarily by emulating the behavior of paragon hegemons of the past, such as lord Wen of Chin and lord Huan of Ch'i (齊桓公; r. 685–643). These were believed to have achieved their supremacy primarily by relying on non-coercive *te* (德, here meaning "kindness, grace") while dealing with international problems. Their rule, particularly that of lord Huan, was characterized by strict adherence to the norms of international etiquette, reverence to the Chou son-of-heaven, and, most importantly, refraining from annihilation of small states. It was this mild policy that turned lord Huan, and to a lesser extent lord Wen, into paragons of good hegemons.

In the century that separated lord Huan's era from that of Shu Hsiang, the vision of the virtuous and trustworthy hegemon, who abides by ritual norms and resorts to non-coercive measures while dealing with other states, became a utopian dream. In the harsh realities of mid-Ch'un-ch'iu it was the power of the state, not the virtue of its leaders, that really mattered. Such aspects of international ritual as revering the son-of-heaven and preserving smaller states had

[23] *TC* (Chao 11), p. 1327. Lord Chao was expelled from Lu by the coalition of the Chi-sun 季係, Meng-sun 孟係, and Shu-sun 叔係 lineages in 517.

[24] In 552, for instance, he argued that irreverent (*pu ching* 不敬) behavior of the Ch'i dignitaries during the interstate assembly would result in an inevitably "bad end" for the violators (*TC* [Hsiang 21], p. 1063), and in 531 he predicted the death of the visiting Chou dignitary, lord Ch'eng of Shan 單成公, whose exterior appearance at the interstate meeting did not conform to ceremonial propriety (*TC* [Chao 11], pp. 1325–26). In 527, Shu Hsiang criticized violation of the mourning ritual by king Ching of Chou (周景王; r. 544–519) and predicted the decline of the royal family (*TC* [Chao 16], p. 1374).

become anachronistic long before Shu Hsiang's time, while international etiquette was becoming an empty convention.[25] Yet, unlike most of his fellow statesmen, Shu Hsiang continued to advocate mild approaches in international life, believing that thereby Chin would be able to preserve its leading position among the overlords.

Throughout most of his career, Shu Hsiang advocated adherence to *te*, international etiquette (*li* 禮) and trustworthiness (*hsin* 信) as preferable to power politics.[26] His views crystalized during the famous 546 peace conference in Sung that strived to end the Chin-Ch'u struggle. The Ch'u delegates, led by the *ling-yin* (令尹, "head of the government") Tzu Mu 子木, decided to use the conference to promote their state's leading position. They arrived at the alliance ceremony wearing armor under ritual clothes, intending to frighten the Chin envoys and force them to yield the traditional right to smear the sacrificial blood on their lips ahead of other overlords. The head of the Chin government, Chao Wen-tzu 趙文子, consulted Shu Hsiang.

> Shu Hsiang said: "What harm is there? Even an ordinary man cannot act untrustworthily: he falls down dead. And if one acts untrustworthily while assembling the high ministers of the overlords, he will certainly not succeed. Those who 'eat their words' are not the problem; no need to worry about them. [Ch'u] summons men with [the semblance] of trustworthiness, but then uses them with deceit – certainly no one will support it; how can they harm us?"[27]

Shu Hsiang's belief that untrustworthy Ch'u would inevitably "lose the overlords" was perfectly in accord with his moral vision of international superiority based on *te*; unfortunately it was at odds with contemporary reality. Chin yielded its position as the head of the alliances to its Ch'u adversaries, who seized this opportunity and dominated the Chinese world for the next seventeen years. Late-Ch'un-ch'iu overlords had no choice but to follow the stronger, rather than the more virtuous, leader. Shu Hsiang, however, ignored this unpleasant truth and continued to advocate mild policies, even at the expense of Chin's immediate interests. In 533 a land dispute arose between Chin nobles and the nobles of the royal Chou domain. The king complained, and Shu Hsiang intervened on the king's behalf, urging the Chin leaders to yield the disputed territory:

[25] For a detailed discussion on the decline of international *li*, see Pines, "Aspects," pp. 166–87.

[26] See *TC* (Hsiang 26), pp. 1116-17; (Chao 2), p. 1229; (Chao 2), p. 1230; (Chao 3), p. 1240; and (Chao 6), p. 1279.

[27] *TC* (Hsiang 27), p. 1132, modifying Schaberg's translation ("Foundations," pp. 775–76).

> How can we change the practices of [lord] Wen's hegemony? He supported and assisted the Son of Heaven, and added to this reverence. Since [lord] Wen, from generation to generation our *te* declined, and we treated ancestral Chou with violence and contempt, thus displaying our excesses. Is it not appropriate then that the overlords are duplicitous 貳? Now, the king's words are reasonable. Please, consider it.[28]

This speech is another example of Shu Hsiang's futile efforts to restore the glorious past. In the 530s Chin was at the nadir of its international power, being under threat by the ruthless and energetic Ch'u leader, king Ling (楚靈王; r. 540–529). The overlords' duplicity derived from Ch'u's undisputed military superiority rather than the deterioration of Chin's relations with "ancestral Chou." Whether Shu Hsiang's contention that lord Wen's success was due to his support of the royal house was historically correct does not concern us here; what is clear is that lord Wen's precedent was irrelevant to the situation. However, here as elsewhere, Shu Hsiang refused to admit that times were changing. He believed that the way to treat the present was to look to the past. Even personal danger could not shake this belief. In 537, Shu Hsiang was dispatched to Ch'u on an official visit. He was warned about the "intemperate 奢侈" behavior of king Ling, but dismissed the warning:

> If he is extremely intemperate, this is his trouble, how can it harm others? If we present our offerings, carefully [perform] our awe-inspiring ceremonies, protect [ourselves] with trustworthiness, behave according to ritual, be reverent at the beginning and contemplate the end, then nothing will remain unfulfilled. We shall follow [our host] without losing ceremonial rules, be reverent without losing dignity, communicate with him according to model words,[29] present [offerings] according to the old laws, assess him according to [deeds of] the former kings, make him balanced by [reminding him of the strength of] both states; then, intemperate as he is, what can he do to us?[30]

This bold manifestation of belief in the power of ritual to protect the envoys may be commendable, but it by no means accorded with realities of the Ch'u court. King Ling intended to humiliate his arch-rival, Chin, by castrating Shu Hsiang and mutilating his fellow envoy, Han Hsüan-tzu 韓宣子, but he

[28] *TC* (Chao 9), pp. 1309–10, modifying Schaberg's translation ("Foundations," p. 400).

[29] According to Yang Po-chün, "model words" (*hsün tz'u* 訓辭) refers to the speeches of the "former worthy [statesmen]" (*TC*, p. 1267).

[30] *TC* (Chao 5), p. 1267.

was dissuaded only when reminded of the inevitable retaliation by Shu Hsiang's and Han Hsüan-tzu's powerful relatives and supporters.[31] Perhaps this threat from which he barely escaped, along with the Ch'u's prolonged superiority in the international arena, had an impact on Shu Hsiang. His idealistic belief in universal applicability of ritual as the remedy for political crisis might have been shaken; new trends appeared in his thought. As Ch'u's power increased, Shu Hsiang turned to Heaven 天 for support. In 531 Ch'u besieged the state of Ts'ai 蔡. Han Hsüan-tzu sought Shu Hsiang's advice:

> Han Hsüan-tzu asked Shu Hsiang, "Will Ch'u succeed?"
>
> [Shu Hsiang] answered, "It will. The duke of Tsai committed a crime towards his ruler and was unable [to conciliate] his people, so Heaven relied on Ch'u to exterminate Tsai: can Ch'u therefore not succeed? Yet, I, Hsi, heard that the untrustworthy's obtaining good fortune does not happen twice. [...] Heaven may rely on the assistance of the wicked, but it does not bestow good fortune on them; it [lets them] accumulate evil and wickedness and then punishes them. Besides, it is as if Heaven possesses five materials 五材 and makes use of them: when their force is exhausted, it casts them away. Thus nothing will help him [king Ling], and in the end he will not prosper."[32]

Shu Hsiang apparently believed in Heaven as the ultimate source of justice. Ch'u might have temporarily enjoyed Heaven's support, but in the final account its wicked ruler could not escape a bad end. This resort to divine retribution symbolized, in all likelihood, Shu Hsiang's despair. Unable to withstand Ch'u's dominance, Shu Hsiang could only desperately long for Heaven's support: Heaven remained the only power able to restore the moral order.

Heaven did heed Shu Hsiang's appeal. Within less than two years, king Ling was murdered by his disaffected followers, and the Ch'u hegemony vanished. Shu Hsiang, who grasped the lessons of the past, reacted to the changing situation. In his final years he began to realize that balance of power, rather than a balance of virtue, rules both international and domestic life. Thus, when estimating the chances of king Ling's brother, Tzu Kan 子干, to ascend the throne of Ch'u, he argued that *te* was less significant as a factor in seizing power than political support at home and abroad.[33] His new, harsh approach crystallized in 529, when Chin attempted to reestablish its hegemony. Shu Hsiang plainly stated that the continuous reluctance of the overlords to follow

[31] *TC* (Chao 5), pp. 1267–69.

[32] *TC* (Chao 11), pp. 1323–24.

[33] See *TC* (Chao 13), p. 1350.

Chin proved that Chin must "manifest its awesomeness 示威." Consequently, he arrived at Ch'i to persuade its leaders to participate in a new assembly under Chin aegis. After a long discussion on the details of international ritual norms, Shu Hsiang finished his speech on an entirely different note:

> Since antiquity [international ritual rules] were never lost. The way of existence and ruin derives from these. Chin ritually acts as a leader of alliances. We feared that [some matters] remained unsettled; so we prepared a sacrificial animal for the alliance[34] and declared it to all the rulers in order to have the matter completed. [Now] you say: "I must dismiss it, is there any alliance at all?" Please, reconsider. My humble ruler will heed your order.[35]

Shu Hsiang's speech epitomizes the cynicism that prevailed late in the Ch'un-ch'iu period. After a lengthy discussion on international ritual and its significance, he concluded with a truly compelling argument, namely the threat of force. In diplomatic language the last sentence meant that Chin intended to enforce participation by military force. The Ch'i leaders clearly understood that the only meaningful sentence in Shu Hsiang's speech was the last one, hence, their straightforward reaction:

> The Ch'i men were frightened and said: "Our small state spoke, [but] your great state issued its regulations, how dare we not to accept [your orders] and follow them?"[36]

Later in the same year, Shu Hsiang similarly reminded Lu envoys that, "My ruler possesses four thousand armed chariots, and even if he uses them not in accord with the Way (*tao* 道), he is still awesome."[37] Clearly, a strong army was more convincing than ritual propriety. This cynicism might have reflected a deep change that Shu Hsiang underwent in the last years of his life. As his belief in a moral order based on ritual norms diminished, he began searching for new answers. When in dire straits, he resorted to Heaven; when in an advantageous position, he resorted to force. Ironically, Shu Hsiang, a person who more than any other late-Ch'un-ch'iu statesman advocated mild and non-coercive ways in international life, abandoned the old faith and followed his fellow statesmen in adopting the supremacy of power politics.

[34] This sacrifice would occur during the alliance ceremony. I follow Yang Po-chün, and read 齊 as 齊盟, i.e. as 盟.

[35] *TC* (Chao 13), pp. 1355–56.

[36] *TC* (Chao 13), p. 1357.

[37] *TC* (Chao 13), p. 1357.

THE PRACTICAL RESPONSE: NÜ SHU-CH'I

Nü Shu-ch'i (d. ca. 535), the elder contemporary of Shu Hsiang, was not a member of a strong aristocratic lineage. He served as *ssu-ma* 司馬 – a relatively insignificant position in the Chin hierarchy. As in the case of Shu Hsiang, Nü Shu-ch'i's power derived from his proximity to the Chin rulers lord Tao and lord P'ing. Like Shu Hsiang, Nü Shu-ch'i had good reasons to be critical of the superiority of the *ch'ing* and their relatives in the Chin court; and we may believe that he favored strengthening centralized rule.

Despite the obvious similarities and the personal friendship between Shu Hsiang and Nü Shu-ch'i,[38] the two men's views about major political issues differed significantly. Whereas Shu Hsiang's approach was characterized by a "conservative" trend to restore the glory of the past, Nü Shu-ch'i's interest was in the present. A practical statesmen, Nü Shu-ch'i sought to improve the position of the Chin rulers at home and abroad without regard to whether the proposed means were in accord with traditional approaches or not. Hence, his position concerning both domestic and international issues differed greatly from that of Shu Hsiang.

The major difference between them concerns the concept of *li*. Whereas Shu Hsiang considered *li* as inseparable from ceremonial rules, Nü Shu-ch'i suggested a radically innovative concept of *li*, disconnected from these rules. In 537 the visiting lord Chao of Lu impressed his host, lord P'ing of Chin, by the precise performance of complicated ceremonies. Nü Shu-ch'i, however, was not impressed:

> The lord of Chin told Nü Shu-ch'i, "Is not the lord of Lu good in performing ritual?"
>
> [Nü Shu-ch'i] answered: "How does he know ritual?"
>
> The lord said: "What do you mean? From the reception ceremony at the outskirts of the capital until the granting of departure gifts he did not violate ritual – how can he not know [ritual]?"
>
> [Nü Shu-ch'i] answered: "These are ceremonies (*i* 儀), you cannot call these ritual [norms]. By ritual [norms he must] protect his state, conduct his administration, not lose his people. Yet nowadays the administration belongs to [great] families, and he is unable to take it back. He has [a man like] Tzu-chia Chi 子家羈, but is unable to make use of him. He betrays alliances with great powers and tyrannically oppresses small states,[39] benefits from others' difficulties and is unaware of his own [problems]. The [property] of the lord's house is divided into four parts.[40] The people get their food from others and do not think about their lord, but he does not contemplate his end. This is a ruler who is personally troubled, but he does not worry about his position. Yet, these are the root and branches of the ritual, while fussing over exercising ceremonies is a trivial issue. To say that he is good in ritual – is it not far [from truth]?"[41]

This view is a radical departure from the traditional concept of ritual as inseparable from ceremonial rules. Nü Shu-ch'i unequivocally distinguished *li* from ceremonies. The latter had partially lost their importance and become "a trivial issue." *Li* as ritual norms, however, became a most powerful force to be applied to any type of political activity, such as the ruler's relations with the ruled, managing the balance of power with powerful aristocrats, efficiency of administration, and maintaining proper international relations. This separation of ritual norms from specific ceremonies became a cornerstone in the fascinating intellectual process of transforming *li* from a rigid set of specific rules into a universal principle, aimed at guiding the entire scope of activities of the individual and the state.

Aside from the redefinition of *li* (which is discussed below), Nü Shu-ch'i's speech contained a second, implicit, message. For Nü Shu-ch'i the theoretical issue of the nature of *li* did not really matter. His intention, rather, was to elucidate the Chin government's maladies that were similar to those found in Lu. The lord of Chin failed to curb the power of the leading aristocratic lineages; he faced the danger of being forgotten by the populace; and he also failed to make proper use of talented men. After all, wise statesmen like Shu Hsiang and Nü Shu-ch'i remained second-rank officials, whereas the leading positions remained in the hands of the six *ch'ing*, who owed their power to pedigree rather than to ability. Therefore, much of Nü Shu-ch'i's criticism was directed not only towards the Lu guest, but primarily towards his own lord. If heeded, Nü Shu-ch'i's implicit remonstrance could have contributed to the restoration of the ruler's power. Unfortunately for Nü Shu-ch'i, his advice was ignored.

A sober realist, Nü Shu-ch'i was by no means inclined to rely in political

[38] According to the *Kuo-yü*, it was Nü Shu-ch'i who recommended the appointment of Shu Hsiang as grand tutor; it also records Shu Hsiang's posthumous eulogy to his colleague ("Chin yü" 7.9 and 8.9).

[39] In 541, Lu invaded the state of Chü 莒 and seized the town of Yün 鄆: this action violated Lu's obligations according to the peace agreement of 546.

[40] Earlier the same year three major aristocratic lineages – Chi-sun, Meng-sun, and Shu-sun – distributed the entire state revenues among themselves, virtually nullifying the ruler's economic power.

[41] *TC* (Chao 5), p. 1266.

life on Heaven's intent, as Shu Hsiang did. Although he recognized the possibility of divine retribution, and stated on one occasion that Heaven supports "superior men,"[42] he never turned this faith into a guiding principle for political action. On the contrary, he explicitly stated that Heaven's intent is unpredictable and cannot be considered when making decisions. In 538, lord P'ing sought Nü Shu-ch'i's advice on whether it was better to continue the semblance of détente with Ch'u, or renew hostilities. Nü Shu-ch'i answered:

> It is impossible [to challenge Ch'u openly]. The king of Ch'u is intemperate. Perhaps Heaven intends to let him satisfy his desires in order to increase his maliciousness and then punish him – it is still impossible to know. Perhaps [Heaven] will let him come to a good end – this too is impossible to know. Chin and Ch'u are supported by Heaven and nobody can withstand them. You had better agree to his demands, improve your virtue, and wait whither he goes. If he returns to virtue, then even we shall serve him, not only [other] overlords. If he proceeds towards excesses and cruelty, then Ch'u will abandon him – who then will contend with us?[43]

Nü Shu-ch'i's speech can be compared to the similar proposal by Shu Hsiang, quoted above. Both speakers invoked Heaven to justify their choice of defensive tactics for Chin, but their approaches differed. Shu Hsiang, being in despair, suggested relying on divine retribution and waiting for the inevitable punishment of the ruthless king Ling. Nü Shu-ch'i, on the other hand, rejected reliance on the unpredictable intent of Heaven. Instead, he suggested concentrating on practical measures – improving the ruler's virtue. In the later conversation with lord P'ing, Nü Shu-ch'i emphasized that by "virtue" he referred to "political virtue 政德" – a generic term for proper administration. Perhaps, by improving "political virtue" Nü Shu-ch'i implied overcoming political maladies enumerated in his speech on *li* quoted above. Furthermore, the context allows the assumption that Nü Shu-ch'i intended *te* as a mild, non-coercive approach towards Ch'u; the counsel of the speech was to refrain from confrontation. Both statesmen agreed that Chin could not withstand powerful Ch'u. Yet, whereas Shu Hsiang's reliance on Heaven led to a somewhat fatalistic wait-and-see approach, Nü Shu-ch'i's sober analysis of the political situation contributed to the restoration of Chin's might. Chin should not wait for Heaven's help, but rather help itself.

Nü Shu-ch'i's practical attitude towards political problems occasionally

[42] *TC* (Chao 1), p. 1214.

[43] *TC* (Chao 4), p. 1246.

led him to the same cynical approach that characterized Shu Hsiang in old age. Nü Shu-ch'i was concerned with what benefited the ruler, rather than with what was ritually or morally appropriate. This may be illustrated by his behavior towards the tiny state of Ch'i 杞. Lu, the close ally of Chin, invaded Ch'i and seized some of its fields. Lord P'ing's mother, who was of Ch'i origin, demanded that her son intervene on behalf of her home state. Lord P'ing dispatched Nü Shu-ch'i to Lu to resolve the matter, but Nü let Lu keep part of the disputed fields. Lord P'ing's mother was infuriated and claimed that Nü Shu-ch'i accepted bribes and hence favored Lu. She added, "If the former ruler (i.e. lord Tao, lord P'ing's father) were [still] sentient, he would not support [this action]." Nü Shu-ch'i angrily replied:

> Yü 虞, Kuo 虢, Chiao 焦, Hua 滑, Ti 翟, Yang 楊, Han 韓, Wei 魏 – all belonged to the Chi 姬 clan, but by [annexing] them Chin became great. If small states were not invaded, where would we get [lands] to seize? Since dukes Wu and Hsien,[44] we have annexed many states; who can regulate this? Ch'i 杞 is a remnant of Hsia 夏, and belongs to the Eastern I (Tung I 東夷). The Lu [rulers] are descendants of the Duke of Chou, and they are friendly with Chin. It is acceptable even to grant the entire Ch'i to Lu, so what is the matter now? Lu in regard to Chin is never delinquent [in submitting] its tribute; its valuables and good things arrive in time; its ruler, high ministers, and nobles appear one after another at [our] court audiences; [our] scribes never stop recording [their visits]; and there are no empty months [in the records of Lu's tributary missions] in our treasuries. If all this is acceptable, then why should we make Lu thin and Ch'i fat? Besides, if the former ruler were sentient why should not he let you [deal with this issue] instead of using [me,] the old servant?[45]

The speech is both a polemical masterpiece and a perfect presentation of the realistic or, perhaps, cynical, approach towards interstate relations. Nü Shu-ch'i ridiculed the ritual prohibition of invading and annexing smaller states: if this prohibition were seriously considered, Chin would never attain the position of super-power. If Chin felt no problem in annexing its "brethren" of the royal Chi 姬 clan, why then should it bother itself with a small non-Hua-hsia state, that is, a state whose origins were distinctly other? And, most important, Chin benefited from its alliance with Lu, not with Ch'i; hence, it had no

[44] Duke Wu 武公 ruled Ch'ü-wo 曲沃 from 715; in 678 he killed duke Min 閔 of Chin and henceforth ruled the whole of Chin until 677; his successor, duke Hsien 獻公, ruled until 651.

[45] *TC* (Hsiang 29), p. 1160.

obligations towards the latter. Thus, whereas Shu Hsiang sought to restore Chin hegemony through strict adherence to international ritual, Nü Shu-ch'i relieved himself from moral or ritual concerns. Whatever benefited Chin was the appropriate thing to do. Nü Shu-ch'i thus foreshadowed the cynical international game of the ensuing age of Warring States.

INTELLECTUAL INNOVATIONS: YEN YING

Yen Ying (ca. 580–500) belonged to the middle-ranking aristocratic lineage from the state of Lai 萊, which was conquered by Ch'i in 567. Like Shu Hsiang and Nü Shu-ch'i, Yen Ying's power derived from his position as the close aide of lords Ling (齊靈公; r. 581–554), Chuang (齊莊公; r. 553–548), and particularly lord Ching (齊景公; r. 547–490). Aside from the patronage of the lords, Yen Ying also enjoyed remarkable popular support.[46] This unique position enabled Yen Ying to play a distinctively independent role in Ch'i politics, and to avoid involvement in the major internal conflicts that occurred throughout his life. His popularity did not diminish after his death: numerous anecdotes concerning Yen Ying's life were collected in the Chan-kuo-era compendium *Yen-tzu ch'un-ch'iu* 晏子春秋.[47]

Yen Ying lived in a period of turmoil; he witnessed the decline of the ruling house of Ch'i, the assassination of the Ch'i ruler, violent intralineage strife, and a general decline of the social and political order. More than any other contemporary statesman, he realized that the new situation required new approaches, and that many concepts, views, and even terms of early- to mid-Ch'un-ch'iu discourse required a reevaluation. Insofar as we rely on *Tso chuan*, Yen Ying should be recognized as a bold, perhaps the most creative, thinker of the entire Ch'un-ch'iu period.

The situation in the state of Ch'i during Yen Ying's lifetime was not much better than in Chin. In a conversation with Shu Hsiang in 539, Yen Ying summarized it as follows:

> This is the last generation, and I do not know whether Ch'i will become the possession of the Ch'en lineage. The lord abandoned his people, and they turned to the Ch'en lineage. Since days of old, Ch'i had four measures: *tou*, *ou*, *fu*, and *chung*. Four *sheng* are one *tou*, and every next measure quadruples the previous one up to *fu*, while ten *fu* are one *chung*.[48] The Ch'en lineage adds one degree to each scale, so their *chung* is larger. When they lend grain, they use the house measures, and when they collect it they use the public ones. The products of mountains and forests [at their] markets do not cost more than in the mountains; fish, salt, oysters, and clams do not cost more than in the sea.[49]
>
> The people divide their [labor]-force into three; two-thirds go to the lord, while one-third remains for their sustenance. [Provisions] in the lords' storage are rotten, while "three old" are freezing and starving to death.[50] At the capital markets, shoes are cheap while prostheses are expensive.[51]
>
> While the people suffer, there are those who sigh in compassion. [Hence, the people] love [the Ch'en lineage] as their parents and turn to them as flowing water. Even if they did not intend to attain the people, can they avoid this?[52]

Yen Ying correctly foresaw that the ruler's mismanagement and cruelty, counterbalanced with populist measures by the powerful Ch'en 陳 (T'ien 田) lineage, would bring about the decline of the ruling house and the Ch'en ascendancy. An astute thinker, Yen Ying realized the increasing role of the commoners, the people, in political life of the late-Ch'un-ch'iu era.[53] Indeed, the residents of the capital participated actively in the internal struggles in the state of Ch'i from the latter half of the sixth century, and their support contributed greatly to the ultimate success of the Ch'en lineage. Thus, Yen Ying was among the first to identify the people as one of the major players on the political scene.

[46] In 548, when the leading nobles, Ts'ui Chu 崔杼 and Ch'ing Feng 慶封, assassinated lord Chuang and massacred his supporters, they dared not harm Yen Ying, saying that he is "the hope of the people," and one who spares him would "attain the people"; *TC* (Hsiang 25), p. 1099.

[47] *Yen-tzu ch'un-ch'iu* was probably compiled in the mid-Chan-kuo Chi-hsia 稷下 academy in the state of Ch'i. Although parts of these anecdotes are definitely related to Yen Ying's activities, they were too heavily polished and edited to be considered a reliable source for Yen Ying's thought. For more on this text, see Kao Heng 高亨, "Yen-tzu ch'un-ch'iu te hsieh-tso shih-tai" 晏子春秋的寫作時代, in *Wen-shih shu-lin* 文史述林 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1980), pp. 382–98; Ch'en T'ao 陳濤, "Ch'ien-yen" 前言, in *Yen-tzu ch'un-ch'iu i-chu* 晏子春秋譯注 (Tientsin: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1996), pp. 1–13.

[48] That is to say, four *tou* are one *ou*; four *ou* are one *fu*, and ten *fu* are one *chung*.

[49] The Ch'en lineage, therefore, yielded part of their economic interest to "gain the hearts of the people." They lent higher amounts of grain than they actually collected back; moreover, they refrained from collecting levies, thereby preserving low market prices in the areas of their rule.

[50] Commentators disagree on the precise definition of the "three old." In any case it is clear that Yen Ying referred here to the suffering of the commoners.

[51] Criminals were punished by cutting off their foot. Yen Ying implies that because so many people were punished, the demand for prostheses became higher than demand for shoes.

[52] *TC* (Chao 3), p. 1236.

[53] The "people" (*min* 民) here and elswhere refers primarily to the commoners, especially inhabitants of the capital and its outskirts. In certain cases, however, speakers referred to *min* as containing large segments of aristocracy as well.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Yen Ying realized that the people's miserable conditions derived not only from the ruler's extravagance and excesses, but also in no small measure from economic mismanagement. To be sure, Yen Ying condemned lavish consumption; moreover, unlike others he also adhered to principles of extreme austerity in his personal life.[54] However, he understood that the solution to economic problems was in the economic rather than the moral sphere. He clarified his views in 522, when he enumerated malpractices of lord Ching's administration.

> Unacceptable actions are: timber in the mountain forests kept by foresters, reeds and rushes in the lakes kept by the *chou-chiao* 舟鮫 (water-resource official), firewood in the marshes kept by the *yü-hou* 虞侯 (mountains-and-lakes official), salt and clams in the sea kept by the *ch'i-wang* 祈望 (fish- and salt-resource official). People from the remote outskirts join the administration; keepers of the toll-gates near the capital wilfully charge levies; hereditary officials forcefully buy commodities. Announcements of [government] orders lack standards; taxation lacks [proper] measures; palaces and chambers are renovated daily; licentious pleasures are not avoided. Inside, favored concubines willfully rob at the markets; outside, favored ministers issue false orders in the outskirts, and one who does not satisfy their personal desires and demands is punished. The people are sick of bitterness; husbands and wives all curse [the lord's government].[55]

Yen Ying outlined three major problems that jointly contributed to the people's alienation from the government. First, the government's intervention in economic activities, particularly commerce, decreased the profitability of people's undertakings and undermined their livelihood. Second, the malpractices of Ch'i officials, like willful charges of taxes and levies and forced purchase of commodities, overburdened the populace. Finally, Yen Ying did not forget the lord's excesses, as indicated by the massive remodeling of palaces and "licentious pleasures."

Yen Ying's treatment of economic issues deserves special attention. A resident of the highly commercialized state of Ch'i, Yen Ying was aware of the importance of decreased governmental interference in commercial activities. These views foreshadowed a quasi-"laissez faire" approach, suggested two centuries later by Mencius (孟子; ca. 372–304) to king Hsüan of Ch'i (齊宣王; r. 319–301).[56] Furthermore, Yen Ying paid attention to the malpractices of the lord's administration, reflecting his sensitivity to the administrative issues. As for the lord's excesses, Yen Ying evidently regarded it as the least important of Ch'i's economic problems.

[54] E. g., *TC* (Chao 3), pp. 1237–38; cf. *Shih-chi* 史記 (rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1992) 62, p. 2134.

[55] *TC* (Chao 20), p. 1417.

Economics and the people's livelihood were only one of many aspects of Yen Ying's concern. Unable to change the political situation in his state, he nevertheless dedicated remarkable efforts to analyzing it and supplying theoretical solutions to Ch'i's internal problems. Of particular interest to him was the issue of the ruler's position and his proper relations with the ministers. This was one of the most acute problems in Ch'i. A series of bloody coups from 554 to 548 severely undermined the authority of the Ch'i rulers;[57] lord Ching, Yen Ying's chief patron, remained for most of his life a powerless spectator of the incessant feuds between the leading lineages.

Yen Ying realized that this situation invalidated earlier views of the ruler-minister relationship that presumed the minister's unquestioned obedience to the lord. Accordingly, he suggested a radically new approach, namely that the minister's allegiance to the ruler was not unconditional but depended on the ruler's proper conduct. In 548, after Ts'ui Chu 崔杼 murdered lord Chuang, Yen Ying reacted:

> To rule the people – does it mean to abuse the people? [The ruler] is the master of the altars of soil and grain. To serve the ruler – does it mean to think of one's emoluments? [The minister] should nourish the altars of soil and grain. Therefore if the ruler dies for the sake of the altars of soil and grain, then the minister should die with him. If he flees for the sake of the altars of soil and grain, then the minister should flee with him. But if he dies or flees for personal reasons, then unless one is among his personal favorites, who will dare to be responsible for this?[58]

Yen Ying clearly distinguished between the ruler as a private person and the ruler as a political institution. The minister ought to serve the ruler only in public matters, but he had no mandated responsibilities towards the ruler as a private person. Moreover, the ruler could not count on the obedience and

[56] Yang Po-chün, annot., *Meng-tzu i-chu* 孟子譯注 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1992), pp. 36–37.

[57] The rapid deterioration of the ruler's power in Ch'i began with lord Ling's death in 554. The powerful Ts'ui Chu arranged a coup d'etat against the heir-apparent Ya 公子牙 and then established his protege, lord's scion Kuang 公子光, posthumously known as lord Chuang. Yet ungrateful lord Chuang soon seduced Ts'ui Chu's wife. In 548 Ts'ui Chu retaliated: he murdered the lord and his followers and established a puppet lord Ching.

[58] *TC* (Hsiang 25), p. 1098. I modify the translation of Burton Watson, *The Tso Chuan* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1985), p. 146.

loyalty of his ministers unless he performed his duties and "upheld the altars of soil and grain," that is the state. Finally, Yen Ying introduced the concept of the "false" ruler, one who neglected his basic duties. This concept might have influenced Mencius' later observation that killing the ruler who violated the norms of humaneness and propriety (or, righteousness) cannot be considered regicide.[59] Yen Ying's interest in defining which ruler is "real" and which ceases to be real anticipated later discussions on "correcting the names" in Chinese political thought and philosophy in general.[60] Yet, the most important point for the present discussion is Yen Ying's view of the ruler's position. To ensure his authority the sovereign must abide by the rules regulating a sovereign's behavior; otherwise he may be abandoned, expelled, or even murdered.

As the crisis of centralized authority in the state of Ch'i deepened, Yen Ying further reappraised the minister's role. Western Chou/Ch'un-ch'iu tradition often depicted ruler-minister relations as the body simile, comparing ministers to the ruler's limbs. Other thinkers, like Pei-kung Wen-tzu, quoted above, argued that the proper function of the administration would be ensured only when the ministers would emulate the ruler's behavior. The ruler had to behave as a model to his underlings, while the ministers were supposed merely to imitate him. Both views assigned ministers with the relatively passive task of the ruler's obedient subordinates and recipients of his influence; no Ch'un-ch'iu thinker quoted in *Tso chuan* ever suggested that the ministers had become active participants in decision making.[61] Yen Ying realized that these outdated views became incompatible with the late-Ch'un-ch'iu realities of strong ministers and weak rulers. Contrary to the above-mentioned theoretical premises, many Ch'un-ch'iu ministers operated as independent actors, virtually neglecting the ruler's will. Yen Ying therefore tried to reconcile the theory and the practice by advancing a new view of proper ministerial behavior. He stated his new approach in 522, during a conversation with lord Ching. The lord remarked:

> "Only [Liang-ch'iu] Chü 梁丘據 is harmonious (*ho* 和) with me."
>
> [Yen Ying] answered: "Chü conforms (*t'ung* 同) with you, how can he be harmonious?"

[59] Yang, *Meng-tzu i-chu*, pp. 36–37.

[60] The concept of "correcting the names" (*cheng ming* 正名) is traditionally attributed to Confucius; but it is clear that obsession with "proper names" (particularly regarding rank) appeared much earlier, perhaps in the course of the ritualization of Chinese society in the late-Western Chou. This concept played an important role in scribal conventions as reflected in the Ch'un ch'iu; for a different view, see Herrlee G. Creel, *Shen Pu-hai: A Chinese Political Philosopher of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1974), pp. 111–20.

[61] For details, see Pines, "Aspects," pp. 305–11.

> The lord asked: "Are harmony and conformity different?"
>
> [Yen Ying] answered: "They are different. Harmony is like a stew. Water, fire, jerky, mincemeat, salt, and plum [vinegar] are used to cook fish and meat; they are cooked over firewood. Then the master chef harmonizes them, mixes them according to the taste, compensating for what is insufficient and diminishing what is too strong. The superior man (*chün-tzu* 君子) eats it to calm (*p'ing* 平) his heart.
>
> "It is the same with the ruler and minister. When there is something unacceptable about what the ruler considers acceptable, the minister points out the unacceptable in order to perfect the acceptability [of the ruler's plan]. When there is something acceptable in what the ruler considers unacceptable, the minister points out the acceptable in order to eliminate the unacceptable. In this way the government is equalized (*p'ing* 平) and without transgressions, and the people have no contending heart." (After supplying further examples of the harmonious complementation of tastes and musical tones, Yen Ying concluded):
>
> "As for Chü, he is not like this. Whatever you consider acceptable, Chü also says it is acceptable, whatever you consider unacceptable, Chü also says it is unacceptable. This is like complementing water with more water: who will be able to drink it? If the zithers and dulcimers were to hold a single tone, who could listen to it? This is how conformity (*t'ung* 同) is unacceptable."[62]

The vision of Yen Ying is the most radical expression of a late-Ch'un-ch'iu minister's self-confidence. The mutually complementary ruler and minister are reminiscent of the body simile, but Yen Ying goes further in defining the role of the minister. In the body simile ministers are indispensable but have no active role; they are mere "limbs," obedient servants of the "head" – the ruler. The simile of harmony is different. Harmony of tones and flavors does not require an ultimate leader,[63] and implicitly refers to *equality* of the minister and the ruler. Yen Ying, therefore, implied that the ruler is merely *primus inter pares*, while the minister is not a passive recipient of the ruler's influence but an active participant in decision making. This radical reassessment of ruler-minister relations reflected the severe deterioration of the ruler's power in the late Ch'un-ch'iu and the intellectual boldness of Yen Ying. Yet,

[62] *TC* (Chao 20), pp. 1419–20, modifying Schaberg, "Foundations," pp. 712–13.

[63] Later thought emphasized the hierarchical nature of the flavors, and especially tones; the *kung* 宮 tone became a direct simile of the ruler (*Li chi* 禮記, "Yüeh chi" 樂記; in Sun Hsi-tan 孫希旦, comp., *Li chi chi-chieh* 禮記集解 [Peking: Chung-hua, 1995], p. 978). Yet, there is no evidence that Yen Ying was aware of this hierarchy or implied it in his speech.

although Yen Ying's vision seemingly influenced Confucius,[64] it remained too radical for contemporary or later thinkers.[65] Nobody dared to "institutionalize" Yen Ying's vision of complementarity in the situation of ruler and ministers. Perhaps political thinkers were aware of the dangers of imposing further limitations on the ruler's power.

Yen Ying's innovations are not confined to economic views and the reappraisal of ruler-minister relations. Of even higher value for subsequent Chinese thought were his suggestions to restrict social turmoil. Yen Ying witnessed a series of bloody struggles among the major aristocratic lineages of Ch'i.[66] The contenders pursued common aims: to obtain more lands, more riches, and more political power. Yen Ying, who succeeded in remaining neutral throughout the years of turmoil, judged that incessant intralineage struggles threaten the rule of the hereditary aristocracy as a whole. He feared that these feuds encouraged "a spirit of contention" (*cheng hsin* 爭心) among the people, further undermining social stability. Yen Ying's major intellectual efforts were directed at calming the people's contending feelings, particularly by persuading the nobles to restrict their own "spirit of contention." To achieve this goal, Yen Ying suggested a two-fold solution. First, he reevaluated the concept of benefit/profit (*li* 利) – one of the important ethical categories of Ch'un-ch'iu discourse. Second, he further elaborated the social and political functions of ritual norms (*li* 禮).

The reevaluation of the concept of benefit/profit may be considered one of Yen Ying's most remarkable intellectual achievements. The term did not appear as an independent ethical category of discourse during Western Chou and Ch'un-ch'iu. After the mid-Ch'un-ch'iu period, however, it became an entirely positive goal of political action and the most prestigious achievement: "Virtue (*te* 德) and righteousness (*i* 義) are the root of benefit;"[67] "Some people are eager to sacrifice their lives to benefit the state;"[68] "By righteousness benefit is established."[69] These quotations indicate that the notion of profit/benefit was not opposed to that of "moral" values like righteousness and virtue, but was considered *the result of and the reason for moral action.* The most striking expression of this sentiment was provided in 614 by lord Wen (邾文公) of the tiny Shantung Peninsula state of Chu 邾.

[64] See Yang, *Lun-yü i-chu*, p. 141.

[65] *Kuo-yü* contains a similar speech on harmony, attributed to the late-Western Chou official Scribe Po 史伯 ("Cheng yü" 鄭語 1, pp. 515–16). The speech, as with the entire section on Cheng, is in all likelihood a Chan-kuo invention, which may testify to adoption of Yen Ying's views by anonymous Chan-kuo thinkers. Lev S. Perelomov's statement that the concept of harmony constitutes the backbone of the Ch'un-ch'iu intellectual legacy is a clear exaggeration (see his *Konfutsii: zhizn', uchenie, sud'ba* [Moscow: Nauka, 1993], pp. 36–38). For more on Chan-kuo views of the ruler-minister relations, see Liu Tse-hua 劉澤華, *Chung-kuo ch'uan-t'ung cheng-chih ssu-wei* 中國傳統政治思維 (Kirin: Chiao-yü ch'u-pan-she, 1991), pp. 262–70.

[66] In 548, Ts'ui Chu assassinated Lord Chuang; a year later he was outmaneuvered by his former ally, Ch'ing Feng, and forced to commit suicide. In 546 it was the turn of Ch'ing Feng to lose; he was ousted by a coalition of the Ch'en, Pao 鮑, Luan 欒, and Kao 高 lineages. Fourteen years passed and the former allies became enemies: the Ch'en and Pao lineages exterminated the Luan and Kao.

[67] *TC* (Hsi 27), p. 445.

> Lord Wen of Chu divined by reading cracks about moving the capital to I 繹. The scribe said: "[Moving is] beneficial 利 to the people and not beneficial to the ruler."
>
> The Lord of Chu said: "If it is beneficial to the people, then it is also my benefit. Heaven gives birth to the people and sets them a ruler in order to benefit them. If the people are to gain benefit, then I, the lonely man, must be with them."[70]

Lord Wen's speech definitely indicates that by the mid-Ch'un-ch'iu period benefit/profit was not only a policy goal but became a completely positive moral category. By Yen Ying times, however, the situation began changing. As the locus of power shifted from the overlords to heads of powerful ministerial lineages, the political implications of benefit-seeking changed. Whereas rulers benefited from establishing orderly government (*cheng* 政), aristocrats benefited from seeking more lands and riches. This opened the way to struggles 爭 and disorder 亂. Thus, the appropriation of benefit/profit as an ethical norm by the aristocrats could have grave consequences for the state.

Yen Ying realized the danger of the relentless pursuit of benefit/profit. In 545, after the powerful Ch'ing Feng 慶封 was defeated, his lands were distributed among the victors. Yen Ying, however, refused to accept sixty settlements in the fief of Pei-tien 邶殿. Tzu Wei 子尾, one of the leading Ch'i aristocrats, was surprised:

> Tzu Wei said: "Riches are what men desire. Why do you alone not desire [them]?"
>
> [Yen Ying] answered: "The settlements of Mr. Ch'ing satisfied his desires, therefore he fled [into exile]. My settlements do not satisfy my desires, but if I add Pei-tien, they will satisfy my desires. When desires are satisfied, the day of exile is not distant. Abroad I shall not have a single settlement to preside over. I do not accept Pei-tien not because I hate

[68] *TC* (Hsi 28), p. 467.

[69] *TC* (Ch'eng 16), pp. 880–81.

[70] *TC* (Wen 13), pp. 597–98.

riches, but because I am afraid to lose the riches. Besides, riches are like cloth and silk that are measured and restricted 幅 by *fu* units 幅 to prevent change [of measures]. When the people's life is plentiful, they pursue benefit/profit (*li* 利). Therefore, correct virtue serves as a *fu* unit to prevent deficiency and excess; this is called 'to restrict (*fu*) benefit.' When benefit exceeds, it will turn into defeat. I dare not be too greedy; this is called restriction (*fu*)."[71]

As a far-sighted statesman, Yen Ying realized that the norms of the aristocrats would become the norms of the whole populace; relentless pursuit of benefit would, therefore, result in disastrous turmoil. Accordingly, he suggested restricting benefit-seeking by the "correct virtue" (*cheng te* 正德). In subsequent years Yen Ying became increasingly critical of benefit-seeking, considering it the ultimate source of the domestic turmoil in his state. In 532, Yen Ying clarified his approach, when he urged Ch'i's powerful leader Ch'en Wu-yü 陳無宇 to yield his newly acquired lands to the lord:

> Yielding is the master of virtue. Yielding is "a resplendent virtue 懿德." Whoever has blood and breath, has a spirit of contention. Therefore, the seeking of benefit/profit (*li* 利) cannot persist. Try to excel in righteousness. Righteousness is benefit's root. Accumulating benefit/profit will bring misfortune.[72]

Although Yen Ying continued to juxtapose righteousness and benefit, righteousness apparently replaced benefit as the object of the superior man's behavior. Only a renunciation of benefit-seeking could calm the "spirit of contention" of the people. Accordingly, yielding became, in Yen Ying's eyes, "the master of virtue." In another speech Yen Ying connected profit/benefit to the mercantile sphere, emphasizing it as a characteristic of "petty men."[73] These speeches indicate his determined effort to reevaluate the notion of profit/benefit. Indeed, Yen Ying succeeded in his efforts; in the late-Ch'un-ch'iu discourse it turned from a legitimate political goal into a despised feature of petty men.[74]

Reevaluation of the notion of profit and benefit is only one aspect of Yen Ying's search for ways to restore social stability and prevent relentless contention among various social groups. Of no less significance is his elaboration of the concept of ritual norms. As argued above, most Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers considered ritual norms the most effective means to restore social hierarchy and curb the forces of disorder. The evolution of the concept from ceremonial rules into a guiding principle of political and social life was a long process, and it was Yen Ying who accomplished the task of elaborating the new definition. In 516, lord Ching asked Yen Ying if there was a way to prevent the Ch'en ascendancy. Yen Ying answered:

> "Only ritual [norms] can prevent it. In [them], the family's favors do not exceed those of the state; the people do not drift; peasants do not move [to new lands], artisans and merchants do not change [their occupation]; *shih* do not overwhelm;[75] officials do not exceed [their responsibilities];[76] and the nobles dare not seize the lord's profits."
>
> The lord said: "Good! Yet, I am unable [to implement this]. Now I want to know how ritual norms can be [used to govern] the state."
>
> [Yen Ying] replied: "Since times immemorial, ritual norms have been capable [of use in governing] the state; they exist alongside Heaven and Earth. [When] the ruler commands, ministers are reverent, fathers are kind, sons filial, elder brothers loving, younger [brothers] respectful, husbands harmonious, wives gentle, mothers-in-law kind, daughters-in-law submissive; this is ritual. The ruler commands, and yet does not violate [rules]; ministers are reverent and yet not two-faced; fathers are kind and yet educate [their sons]; sons are filial and yet remonstrate; elder brothers are loving and amicable; younger brothers are respectful and compliant; husbands are harmonious and yet act in proper way; wives are gentle and yet upright; mothers-in-law are kind and broad-hearted; daughters-in-law are submissive and tactful. Ritual [norms] are best [for managing] affairs."
>
> The Lord said: "Good! Now I want to know the origins of ritual."
>
> [Yen Ying] replied: "The former kings received it from Heaven and Earth to rule their people, therefore it was elevated by the former kings."[77]

Yen Ying's speech represents the apotheosis of the concept of ritual and the synthesis of the intellectual achievements of his predecessors. The ritual norms he advocated had nothing to do with the ceremonial rules advocated by Shu Hsiang, but were akin to Nü Shu-ch'i's vision.[78] Those promoted by

71 *TC* (Hsiang 28), p. 1150. 72 *TC* (Chao 10), p. 1317.

73 *TC* (Chao 3), p. 1238. Note that the first documented attribution of *li* to merantile profit-seeking occurred in the highly commercialized state of Ch'i.

74 On changing attitudes towards *li* 利, see Pines, "Intellectual Developments," forthcoming.

75 I disagree with Tu Yü's interpreting *lan* 濫 as "[do not] lose office": it seems from the context of the speech that Yen Ying worried that the *shih* 士 would "overwhelm" the nobles (*ta-fu* 大夫). Note that Yen Ying himself belonged to the hereditary aristocracy.

76 That is to say, officials do not usurp the power of their superiors, especially that of the duke.

77 *TC* (Chao 26), p. 1480.

78 Note, that if *Li chi* is to be trusted, Yen Ying himself was not the staunch supporter of the ceremonial norms; hence he is criticized several times ("T'an kung 檀公" B, p. 267; "Li ch'i

Yen Ying may be depicted as a mode of managing society and the state. Like his predecessors, Yen Ying searched for a way to prevent social turmoil by upholding social hierarchy. Yet, his vision of reciprocity is more complex than the model of an inferior's blind obedience and imitation of the superior's behavior, as advocated by Pei-kung Wen-tzu and others. Furthermore, adherence to ritual had to assure both social and economic stability. In addition, ritual norms, as conceived by Yen Ying, would unite the family and the state – a novel approach in the pre-Confucian age. Finally, insofar as we rely on the *Tso chuan*, Yen Ying was the first thinker who stipulated a metaphysical justification for ritual norms; he connected ritual norms to Heaven and Earth and, hence, further elevated the value of ritual.[79] His vision of ritual had a profound impact on later thinkers, such as Hsün-tzu (荀子; ca. 310–218) and Chia I (賈誼; 200–168).[80]

There is, however, an important point that distinguishes Yen Ying from the later adherents of ritual norms. For Yen Ying, the function of ritual was not confined to ensuring social stability and hierarchic order in general; it also had to protect hereditary nobles from losing their power to the rising *shih* stratum. Yen Ying belonged to the hereditary aristocracy (*ch'ing ta-fu* 卿大夫) and never forgot his origins. He knew that the ritual privileges of the *ch'ing ta-fu* stratum clearly distinguished them from *shih*. Accordingly, implementation of ritual norms would achieve the desirable result of "*shih* not overwhelming" the nobles. Yen Ying definitely opposed upward mobility by the *shih*; elsewhere he mentioned "people from the remote outskirts joining the administration" as one of the major malpractices of lord Ching's government.[81] Thus, Yen Ying evidently did not advocate the principle of "elevating the worthy" (*shang hsien* 尚賢) attributed to him by the Chan-kuo compilers of *Yen-tzu ch'un-ch'iu*.

Another interesting aspect of Yen Ying's thought is his attitude towards the divine realm. We have seen that when Shu Hsiang was in dire straits he resorted to belief in divine retribution, while Nü Shu-ch'i conversely argued

禮器," p. 647).

[79] Significantly, Yen Ying did not mention the moral aspects of *li* at all. This accorded with the thinking of his time, but differed greatly from the vision of the later Confucians. Hence, Chu Hsi (朱熹; 1130–1200) ironically mentioned Yen Ying's promise to prevent the ascendancy of the Ch'en lineage in Ch'i and added: "I don't know what he called *li* in those times, and how it could prevent this. Perhaps, he had some recommendation…" 齊田氏事，晏平仲言惟禮可以已知. 不知他當時所謂禮，如何可以已知？想他必有一主張 … (*Chu-tzu yü-lei* 朱子語類 [Peking: Chung-hua, 1986], *ch.* 93, p. 2171.

[80] It is worth mentioning that according to Liu Hsiang's (劉向; 77–6 BC) *Pieh-lu* 別錄, both Hsün-tzu and Chia I were among the early transmitters of the *Tso chuan*; Lu Te-ming 陸德明, "Ch'un ch'iu san chuan chu-chieh ch'uan-shu jen" 春秋三傳諸解傳述人 (SKCS edn., vol. 143), p. 36.

[81] *TS* (Chao 20), p. 1417. See the translation of the entire speech, above.

that Heaven's intent is unpredictable and hence should not be considered in decision making. Yen Ying's attitude differed from that of his Chin colleagues. Rather than resorting to divine retribution or ignoring the divine realm altogether, Yen Ying preferred to manipulate the divine to obtain favorable results in the mundane sphere. In 522, lord Ching suffered a severe illness. His aides, Liang-ch'iu Chü and I K'uan 裔款, recommended executing the scribe (*shih* 史) and the invocator (*chu* 祝) who had failed to obtain from the deities good fortune for the lord. Yen Ying dismissed their proposal:

> If the ruler possesses virtue (*te*), internal and external affairs are not neglected, superior and inferior hold no resentment, [the ruler's] activities do not violate [ritual] matters; his invocators and scribes deliver trustworthy words, and there is nothing shameful. Therefore, spirits and deities enjoy the offerings, while the state, including invocators and scribes, obtains good fortune. Plenty of good fortune and longevity are brought by the trustworthy ruler because his reports to the deities and spirits are trustworthy and loyal. Yet sometimes they encounter a licentious sovereign, who acts improperly within and without (that is, in his family and for the state, respectively), and superiors and inferiors are extremely resentful. [Such a ruler's] activities violate the norms; he follows his desires to feed his selfish aims; he builds high towers and deep ponds; he strikes the bells to make women dance; he cuts off the people's force; expropriates their wealth in order to satisfy his misconduct; and has no mercy for later generations. [Such a ruler] acts [like a] tyrant – oppressively, licentiously, and willfully; he behaves excessively and neglects the norms; disregards any restrictions, and thinks nothing of resentment and hostility [among inferiors]. [Such a ruler] disrespects the spirits and deities. The deities are enraged, the people suffer, but his heart is unrepentant. If his invocators and scribes speak the truth, they must report his crimes; if they conceal [his crimes] and enumerate his beautiful [deeds], they deceive and cheat; if they present no report at all, then it means that they flatter with empty words. Therefore, the spirits and deities reject the offerings and bring misfortune on his state, including invocators and scribes. Thus, demons and calamities, and orphans and sicknesses are caused by the ruler's brutality, while his words disparage the spirits and deities by deceiving them.[82]

On another occasion, in 516, Yen Ying similarly discouraged duke Ching from performing a special sacrificial ceremony to "avert evil": "If virtue (*te*) is

[82] *TS* (Chao 20), p. 1416.

deviant and in turmoil, then the people intend to flee; actions of invocators and scribes cannot help in this situation."[83] Both speeches are characteristic of Yen Ying's method of reinterpreting traditional approaches to achieve new results.

Yen Ying emphasized the role of the ruler's *te* in obtaining the divine support. This view resembles the concept during Western Chou and early-Ch'un-ch'iu of *te* as *mana*, or a "universal mediator of sacred communication."[84] Only he who possessed sufficient *te* could expect a positive response by the divine forces to his pleas. Yen Ying, while resorting to this centuries-old concept, imbued it with new meanings. His *te* was no longer a sacred substance, but rather a cohesion of appropriate political measures and particularly proper behavior of the ruler. Further elucidating his view of *te*, Yen Ying enumerated malpractices of lord Ching's government, that caused "the multitudes of the people to curse [the government]."[85] All these concerned economic and administrative mismanagement and had little if anything to do with the sacred force of *te*. Thus in order to "manifest *te*" and obtain divine support, the ruler had to concentrate on proper political measures and to improve his personal conduct.

A second interesting aspect of Yen Ying's speech concerns his reevaluation of the relationship between men and deities. The traditional view, which matured in the Shang (商; ca. 1570–1045) and continued throughout the Western Chou, emphasized the *do-ut-des* relationships ("I give in order that thou shouldst give") between human and divine beings.[86] In the Ch'un-ch'iu, many personalities, particularly the rulers, continued to believe that proper performance of the sacrificial rites and lavish sacrifices would ensure the support of the deities. This, indeed, was the presumption of lord Ching's aides who considered his illness as divine punishment resulting from improper performance of the sacrificial rites. Yen Ying, as many other mid- and late-Ch'un-ch'iu statesmen, rejected this view. He did not deny the possibility of the deities' being responsive to human activities, but the nature of the interaction changed. He argued that the deities would respond only to "trustworthy reports" of the ruler, and to deliver a "trustworthy report" the ruler ought to have "nothing

[83] *TS* (Chao 26), p. 1480.

[84] See Vassily Kriukov, "Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of *te*)," *BSOAS* 58 (1995), p. 330. For more on the Western Chou concept of *te*, see Kominami Ichirō 小南一郎, "Tenmei to toku" 天命と德, *THGH* 64 (1992), pp. 1–59.

[85] See the translation of the second part of Yen Ying's speech, above.

[86] For the Shang religious views, see David N. Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture," *History of Religions* 17 (1978), pp. 211–25; for the Western Chou, see von Falkenhausen, "Issues," pp. 146–52.

shameful" behind him. Hence, Yen Ying concluded, it is the ruler's conduct, rather than his prayers, which in the final account determine whether he and his state obtain good or bad fortune. Accordingly, the solution of the ruler's problems was in the human, not in the divine realm. Thus, behind traditional formulas of improving the ruler's *te* and emphasizing reciprocity in the relations with the deities, Yen Ying concealed an entirely different approach: it was the ruler's policy and personal conduct that really mattered. This view, shared by many other leading statesmen, foreshadowed the Chan-kuo "search for the Tao" primarily in the human realm.

A FLEXIBLE REFORMER: TZU CH'AN

Tzu Ch'an's (d. 522) life and legacy differ in some important points from that of the three statesmen discussed above. Unlike his Chin and Ch'i colleagues, he belonged to the highest segment of the hereditary aristocracy. From 569, seven lineages of the descendants of lord Mu (鄭穆公; r. 627–606) rotated the position of head of the Cheng government among themselves. Tzu Ch'an, a grandson of lord Mu, inherited the post of head in 543.[87] Thus, Tzu Ch'an did not confine himself to theoretical innovations, as Yen Ying had; he had sufficient power to implement his views in practical life.

The state of Cheng faced distinct problems, different from those of Chin and Ch'i. A small state sandwiched between the major superpowers Chin and Ch'u, it had constantly to maneuver between the northern and the southern alliance.[88] These maneuvers were not always successful, and Cheng often became merely the battlefield of its powerful neighbors. In 563, when Tzu Ch'an was still young, a Cheng official, Wang-tzu Po-p'ien 王子伯駢, described the dire results of the Chin-Ch'u dispute over Cheng territory:

> The multitudes of our humble city, wives and husbands, and men and women "have no time to tarry or stay"[89] in order to help each other. [Everything] is ravaged and destroyed, and there is no one to appeal to. People lose either their fathers and elder brothers or sons and younger brothers. All are full of sorrow and sadnnness and do not know who will protect them.[90]

The unbearable international situation was only one of the serious prob-

[87] For details on the government of Cheng, see Chu, *Shang Chou chia-tsu*, pp. 580–82.

[88] For details on Cheng foreign relations, see Pines, *Aspects*, pp. 221–28.

[89] A quotation from the *Shih ching*, sect. "Hsiao ya 小雅," Mao no. 162, "Ssu mu 四牧."

[90] *TC* (Hsiang 8), p. 959.

lems that faced Tzu Ch'an when he ascended to power. Another challenge was to ensure the compliance of the populace. In 563, Cheng witnessed what may be the first popular rebellion in Chinese history: disaffected *shih* massacred Cheng nobles, including Tzu Ch'an's father, Tzu Kuo 子國. Later, dissenting officials almost started another rebellion against the head of the government, Tzu K'ung 子孔; they were pacified only after Tzu K'ung heeded Tzu Ch'an's advice and destroyed the documents that he had prepared earlier in order to set up a system of governmental succession and that ultimately threatened the interests of other lineages.[91] The continuous tension between elites and commoners and within the aristocratic elite remained a serious challenge to Tzu Ch'an's rule.

How to cope with these problems? As Yen Ying had done, Tzu Ch'an realized the need to adjust the traditional system to contemporary realities. Unlike Yen Ying, however, Tzu Ch'an's primary interest was not in theoretical thinking but in practical steps.[92] His policies were characterized by extraordinary flexibility. He reformed the political, social, and economical system of Cheng without dismantling it, avoiding therefore conflicts with elite members and commoners alike. This internal success, coupled with skillful diplomacy, secured Cheng's international position as well. Tzu Ch'an's achievements turned him into a paragon of a wise statesman; in later generations he was lauded by, among others, such different thinkers as Confucius and Han Fei-tzu (韓非子; d. 233).

Tzu Ch'an's motto was "to save the generation" (on which, see below). He showed no interest in elaborating theoretical justifications for his policies, perhaps because he disliked any theories that could restrict political flexibility. Nor did he allow any factor – domestic opinion, obligations abroad, the established rituals of domestic and international behavior, and even divine forces – to hinder his practical steps. Such factors could be taken into consideration, but not allowed to determine his way. Indeed, the hallmark of Tzu Ch'an's success came from the neutralization of any factor that could adversely impact on his policies. He was moved only by his own understanding of state interests.

Tzu Ch'an paid serious attention to economic issues. His ideas differed, however, from Yen Ying's vision of *laissez faire*. Tzu Ch'an's steps aimed at increasing state revenues by rearranging land distribution and reforming the

[91] *TC* (Hsiang 10), pp. 979–81.

[92] Tzu Ch'an once compared policy making to farming (*TC* [Hsiang 25], p. 1108), and this may indeed epitomize his approach. A farmer needed no theories, but rather practical solutions to his problems. To succeed, he had to adjust himself to ever-changing circumstances. Similarly, a statesman ought to be flexible and react to challenges.

system of taxation.[93] It might be true that the mostly agricultural Cheng required more rather than less state intervention in the economic sphere, unlike highly commercialized Ch'i. Yet, the different approaches of Yen Ying and Tzu Ch'an also reflected different political aims. While Yen Ying was primarily interested in improving the people's livelihood to attain popular support for the lord's government, Tzu Ch'an intended, first, to increase the state revenues, and only then to satisfy the people. Their economic differences, therefore, reflect their distinct approaches to public opinion.

Tzu Ch'an's reforms naturally aroused resentment among parts of the populace. How to deal with it? Tzu Ch'an reacted, as usual, according to the circumstances. In 542, while still at the beginning of his career at the head of the Cheng government, Tzu Ch'an reportedly refrained from closing meeting houses (*hsiao* 校) where villagers discussed government politics; at the time he claimed that public opinion must be taken into consideration in order to improve the policies.[94] Several years later, however, with the securing of his position, Tzu Ch'an behaved differently. In 538, being told that the people objected to new taxes, he answered:

> What is harmful [about that]? One lives and dies in order to benefit the altars of soil and grain. Moreover, I have heard that those who do good [things] do not alter [their] measures, and therefore they are able to complete [the task]. The people should not be allowed to be unrestrained; measures are not to be changed.[95]

Yen Ying argued that when people "curse the government" it threatens the ruler's position and requires political changes. Tzu Ch'an viewed the problem differently. Public opinion could be taken into consideration whenever appropriate but never allowed to determine the political course. The final decision of "what is beneficial to the altars" was that of the leader. This view apparently foreshadowed ideas of Shang Yang (商鞅; d. 338) and Han Fei-tzu. Elsewhere, Tzu Ch'an stated that harshness, not generosity, was the preferred way to rule the people. This view is a further example of the proto-Legalist nature of his approach.[96] In the view of Tzu Ch'an, the people remained the

[93] For more on Tzu Ch'an's reforms, see Rubin, "Tzu Ch'an," pp. 17–21.

[94] *TC* (Hsiang 31), pp. 1191–92. This was not the only instance of Tzu Ch'an's taking public opinion into consideration. He did so also in 563, regarding Tzu K'ung (as described above).

[95] *TC* (Chao 4), p. 1254.

[96] In a political legacy given on his deathbed to Tzu T'ai-shu 子大叔, Tzu Ch'an stated: "Only the virtuous are able to rule the people with generosity; next best is [to use] harshness. The fire is fierce; the people watch and fear it; hence few die of it. The water is mild and weak; the people

object of the government and not active participants in policy making.

There were, we see, clear limits to Tzu Ch'an's readiness to comply with public opinion. However, he was much more sensitive to the views of his fellow aristocrats. None of his reforms ever threatened the economic and political privileges of this stratum. Even necessary administrative changes were adjusted to meet the needs of ministerial lineages. Tzu Ch'an was aware of the need to staff the Cheng government with persons of ability; but he was equally aware that demolishing the system of hereditary offices would undermine the entire stratum of hereditary nobility. Hence, he adopted a middle solution. *Tso chuan* states: "he promoted those of the nobles (*ta-jen* 大人) who were loyal and frugal, and demoted those who were intemperate and extravagant."[97] Thus, Tzu Ch'an preserved the positions of the leading nobles, particularly descendants of lord Mu, while concomitantly attempting to appoint each to position in accordance with his abilities. In this way Tzu Ch'an successfully combined hereditary office-holding with the enhancing of administrative efficiency. Accordingly, he avoided serious clashes with other ministerial lineages.[98]

Tzu Ch'an's international politics reflected the flexibility and pragmatism of his domestic undertakings. He succeeded in carefully maneuvering between Chin and Ch'u, allying Cheng with the stronger of the contenders. In the 540s he adopted a definitely pro-Chin policy, paying frequent visits there and cementing good personal ties with the powerful Chin *ch'ing*. From 541, as Ch'u began dominating the Chinese world, Tzu Ch'an's allegiance shifted as well,[99] and he constantly refrained from alienating the powerful and frightening southern neighbor. After king Ling's fall in 529, Tzu Ch'an renewed the alliance with Chin. This time, however, his attitude towards the northern allies changed. At the P'ing-ch'iu 平丘 meeting, Tzu Ch'an stubbornly refused to raise Cheng's tribute beyond the norm assigned to a state of the *nan* 男 rank.[100] He struggled ceaselessly to obtain Chin's assent. Tzu Ch'an justified his unusually assertive behavior, explaining to his colleagues that the weakened Chin was no longer able to undertake punitive measures. Again in 526, Tzu Ch'an politely but

disregard it and play in it; hence many die in it. Therefore, generosity is difficult [to be used to rule the people]" (*TC*[Chao 20], p. 1421). This and the previous speech significantly undermine Rubin's argument in "Tzu Ch'an" – that Tzu Ch'an sought a kind of democracy and cannot therefore be regarded a proto-Legalist.

97 *TC*(Hsiang 30), p. 1181.

98 Perhaps it was for these reasons that Confucius highly praised Tzu Ch'an's handling of personnel issues (Yang, *Lun-yü i-chu*, pp. 47–48, 14.7).

99 For instance, in 538, while staying as guest, cum hostage, in Ch'u, Tzu Ch'an acted as an external advisor of king Ling (*TC*[Chao 4], p. 1248).

100 The hierarchy of the Ch'un-ch'iu overlords differed from the five-ranked system, suggested

firmly refuted unreasonable demands for gifts by the head of the Chin government, Han Hsüan-tzu 韓宣子. As Chin power declined, it no longer had to be revered.

Tzu Ch'an, therefore, succeeded in making his policy relatively independent of internal and external power groups. Similarly, he disliked any ideas, political theories, and beliefs that hindered his way. His attitude to international ritual may again exemplify his flexibility. Tzu Ch'an perfectly mastered ritual rules, and often invoked them during his visits to Chin and Ch'u.[101] Rituals prescribed reciprocity in the relations between the great states and their smaller neighbors, and this was beneficial for Cheng, protecting it from mistreatment by superpowers. However, ritual norms likewise prescribed that Cheng refrain from aggressive policies towards its weaker neighbors, and this Tzu Ch'an disliked.[102] In 548, after leading a successful incursion against Ch'en 陳, Tzu Ch'an arrived at Chin to present the booty and to justify Cheng's aggression. The Chin hosts, however, remained unconvinced of his arguments and asked:

> "Why did you attack the small [state]?"
>
> [Tzu Ch'an] answered: "[...] In antiquity, the Son of Heaven's territories were one *ch'i* 圻 (a thousand *li* squared), while the overlords' [only] one *t'ung* 同 (one hundred), and so on in decreasing order. Now great states already [have] many *ch'i* – how could this come about without invading the smaller [states]?[103]

This reply resembles the cynical justification of aggressive politics by Nü Shu-ch'i, quoted above. Indeed, despite his frequent invocation of international ritual norms, Tzu Ch'an was by no means restricted by these norms. For him, international ritual was only a means of manipulation, aimed at achieving desirable results. Tzu Ch'an followed its regulations only insofar as they served his state, but he did not believe in the independent value of ritual norms.

by Mencius (Yang, *Meng-tzu i-chu*, p. 251); the dividing line was between the overlords of the *kung* 公 and *hou* 侯 rank, on the one hand, and those of the *po* 伯, *tzu* 子 and *nan* 男 rank, on the other. Tzu Ch'an insisted that Cheng, as a "second-class" state, be allowed to reduce its tribute to Chin, "the head of the alliances." See *TC*(Chao 13), pp. 1358–59.

101 *TC*(Hsiang 22), pp. 1065–67; (Hsiang 24), pp. 1089–90; (Hsiang 31), pp. 1186–88; (Chao 4), p. 1251; (Chao 13), pp. 1358–59.

102 Tzu Ch'an certainly was not a pacifist, as argued by Rubin ("Tzu Ch'an," p. 15). Although as a youngster he expressed reservations concerning the 565 successful assault on neighboring Ts'ai 蔡, his reasons were purely pragmatic: he stated that a state that achieves military success without supplementing it with "civilian virtue" 文德 would suffer retaliation by the superpowers (*TC*[Hsiang 8], p. 956).

103 *TC*(Hsiang 25), p. 1106.

Here as elsewhere, he did not want to discard traditional conventions completely but rather make them serve actual political needs.

A similar attitude characterizes Tzu Ch'an's view of ritual in domestic life. He never neglected ceremonial rules,[104] but nor did he believe that these rules were anything more than a suitable convention. He clarified this in 526. During an official visit of Han Hsüan-tzu to Cheng, the elder statesmen, K'ung Chang 孔張, failed to perform the appropriate ceremonies. One of the Cheng nobles, Fu-tzu 富子, was annoyed by this and told Tzu Ch'an:

> "While treating a guest from the great state we cannot be frivolous, otherwise he will ridicule and offend us. Even if all of us perform ritual, they [the Chin messengers] will still despise us; and if our state loses ritual, how can we demand honorable treatment? The fact that K'ung Chang failed to find his place [during the ceremony] is demeaning for you, my lord."
>
> Tzu Ch'an angrily replied: "If my commands are inappropriate, my orders cannot be trusted, punishments are partial and unjust, imprisonment is willful and disordered, I behave disrespectfully during assemblies and court meetings, my commands are not fulfilled, we get offended by great powers, people work without results, crimes are committed but I am unaware of them – this is demeaning for me."[105]

These views again resemble Nü Shu-ch'i's. Tzu Ch'an considered ritual not as the proper performance of ceremonies, but as a general mode of functioning of the government, namely proper handling of international and domestic affairs, including judicial, economic, and administrative issues. Tzu Ch'an and Nü Shu-ch'i were concerned, therefore, with the very essence of ritual, namely preserving hierarchic order and social stability, while ceremonies, praised by Shu Hsiang, remained for these practical statesmen no more than a trivial issue.

Tzu Ch'an's attitudes towards the transcendental evidently differed from Shu Hsiang's reliance on divine retribution and Yen Ying's manipulation of ancient beliefs, but were akin to Nü Shu-ch'i's desire to exclude the divine from political calculations. Again, Tzu Ch'an's approach was rather flexible, and in fact *Tso chuan* contains what appear to be mutually contradictory anecdotes concerning his views of the divine.[106] Yet, his approach towards the role of the transcendental in earthly affairs remained remarkably consistent. Throughout his career, Tzu Ch'an continuously refrained from allowing the divine forces to interfere with policy making. In 525, P'i Tsao 裨竈 predicted that Cheng would suffer firestorms and requested performing a special prayer in order to avert the disaster. Tzu Ch'an did not permit the ritual. The following year Cheng indeed suffered a great fire. P'i Tsao predicted that the disaster would recur and renewed his request to perform the fire-averting prayer. Tzu Ch'an again rejected the request. When criticized by his deputy Tzu T'ai-shu 子大叔, Tzu Ch'an responded:

> Heaven's Way is distant, while the human Way is near; unless it can be reached, how can [Heaven] be known? How can Tsao know Heaven's Way? This man is a great talker, so why will some of his words not be true?[107]

Tzu Ch'an evidently opposed assigning Heaven an active role in the everyday work of his government. Heaven's intent was unrecognizable; hence it should not influence political activities, and prayer should not substitute for practical preparations against firestorms.[108]

Careful scrutiny of Tzu Ch'an's speeches suggests that he not only opposed assigning Heaven and deities an active political role, but also disliked unregulated human contacts with the divine forces. By the Ch'un-ch'iu period, an elaborate system of sacrificial rites had come into existence.[109] Tzu Ch'an strictly adhered to extant rites, but commonly opposed any sacrifices that exceeded the extant ritual framework. His opposition to P'i Tsao's suggestion is only one of many examples of this kind.[110] In 524, he punished officials who unsuccessfully attempted to put an end to the drought by performing sacrifices to Sang Mountain 桑山. The pretext for the punishment was the harm to the

[104] *TC* (Hsiang 26), p. 1144; (Hsiang 30), pp. 1175–77; (Hsiang 31), p. 1191.

[105] *TC* (Chao 16), p. 1377.

[106] For instance, in 541, Tzu Ch'an argued that the illness of lord P'ing of Chin could not be attributed to the terrestrial deities, since human health remained beyond the power of these deities. He suggested that the illness was caused by his excessive behavior, particularly marrying women of the same Chi 姬 clan – an appalling violation of ancient taboo (*TC* [Chao 1], pp. 1217–20). Seven years later, however, Tzu Ch'an behaved differently. Asked the reasons for lord P'ing's new illness, he suggested that it was caused by the spirit of Kun 鯀, another terrestrial deity, and suggested performing appropriate sacrifices. Either both stories originated in independent traditions concerning Tzu Ch'an's sagacity, or the different explanations given by Tzu Ch'an to the Chin dignitaries reflected his own uncertainty concerning the degree of the deities' influence on human health.

[107] *TC* (Chao 18), p. 1395.

[108] For Tzu Ch'an's practical steps after the firestorms and to avoid further disasters, see *TC* (Chao 18), pp. 1395–99.

[109] For more on the Chou ritual system, see Lester J. Bilsky, *The State Religion of Ancient China* (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1975).

[110] After the firestorms, Tzu Ch'an ordered performing a prayer, but this was a regular, ritually correct prayer and not an extraordinary action, advocated by P'i Tsao.

mountain forest that this caused and the possible offense to the spirits; yet it is quite probable that Tzu Ch'an simply disliked unregulated sacrificial activities.[111] He demonstrated this attitude again, in 523. The Cheng people observed dragons fighting during a flood of the Wei River 渭水, and wanted to sacrifice to them. Tzu Ch'an disagreed:

> When we fight, the dragons do not watch us. When the dragons fight why should we watch them? We may ask for their removal, but the river is, after all, their home. If we ask nothing of the dragons, the dragons will ask nothing of us.[112]

This anecdote epitomizes Tzu Ch'an's approach to divine forces. He was not an atheist as claimed by several mainland scholars,[113] nor did he deny the existence of the deities and the spirits. Whenever necessary, he also took into consideration the religious beliefs of the people,[114] and he definitely respected established ritual practices and did not dare to violate them. Yet, Tzu Ch'an opposed establishing additional rites and performing extraordinary sacrifices, and he likewise opposed any unnecessary contacts with the divine world. The divine forces ought to be respected, but they were by no means welcome to interfere with human activities. This approach might have foreshadowed Confucius' famous imperative "Be reverent to the spirits and deities but keep them at a distance."[115]

"TO SAVE THE GENERATION?": THE PENAL CODE CONTROVERSY

In 536 Tzu Ch'an ordered that the penal code be cast in bronze. This innovation was too much for Shu Hsiang to bear. He reacted in a lengthy letter:

111 *TC* (Chao 16), p. 1382.

112 *TC* (Chao 19), p. 1405. I follow Watson's translation, *The Tso Chuan*, p. 212.

113 For different views on Tzu Ch'an's alleged "atheism," see Chang Ai 張瑷, Li Te-yang 黎德揚, Huang Shao-pang 黃邵邦, "Tso chuan Kuo yü wu-shen-lun ssu-hsiang ch'u-t'an" 左傳國語無神論思想初探, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh-shih lun-wen-chi* 中國哲學史論文集 1 (1979), pp. 20–45; Chang Heng-shou 張恆壽, "Lun Tzu Ch'an te cheng-chih kai-ko ho t'ien-tao min-pen ssu-hsiang" 論子產的政治改革和天道民本思想, in *Chung-kuo she-hui yü ssu-hsiang wen-hua* 中國社會與思想文化 (Peking: Jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp. 139–69; Chou Ch'ien-jung 周乾榮, "Tzu Ch'an pu shih wu-shen-lun-che pian" 子產不是無神論者辨, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh* 中國哲學 8 (1982), pp. 41–50.

114 In 535 the inhabitants of the Cheng capital were terrified by the ghost of Po Yu 伯有 who allegedly had avenged his death by killing his former adversaries. To pacify the population, Tzu Ch'an ordered Po Yu's son to be appointed to the position of hereditary noble, so that he would be able to sacrifice to the father's spirit.

115 敬鬼神而遠之 (Yang, *Lun-yü i-chu*, p. 61).

> Formerly, I had expectations of you, but now they are gone. In antiquity, the former kings considered the matter and then issued regulations, but did not make penal codes, since they feared the people would be of a contentious spirit. When they still could not restrain [the people], they impeded them with propriety/righteousness (*i* 義), bound them with [proper] government, behaved to them with ritual, preserved them with trustworthiness, fostered them with humaneness. They regulated ranks and emoluments to encourage their obedience, and decided punishments strictly to overawe their perversity. Fearing that this was not enough, they instructed them concerning loyalty, rewarded according [to their] behavior, taught them their duties, commissioned them with harmony, supervised them with reverence, oversaw them with might, decided [their cases] with rigor. Still they sought sage and wise superiors, clear-sighted officials, loyal and trustworthy leaders, and kind and generous teachers. Hence the people could be employed and did not give birth to disasters and disorder. [But] when the people know that there is a code, they are not respective towards the superiors; moreover they all possess a contentious spirit, appealing to the written codex and achieving [their goals] through lucky conniving. This is not to be done.
>
> When the Hsia government became disordered, it produced the *Yü Code*; when the Shang government became disordered, it produced the *T'ang Code*; when the Chou government became disordered, it produced the *Nine Codes*; [these] three codes arose in the last generations. Now you, my lord, rule the state of Cheng; you have rectified fields and ditches; established the government that is reviled;[116] regulated three statutes and cast the penal code in bronze, hoping thereby to pacify the people. Is it not a difficult [task]?
>
> The *Shih* [*ching*] says: "Make the vir ue of King Wen a guide, a model, a pattern; daily calm the four quarters," and also says: "Make a guide and pattern of King Wen, myriad countries will follow you."[117] In that case what codes are needed? When the people know the beginning of contention, they will abandon ritual and appeal to the written [code]. Even at chisel's tip and knife's end they will contend.[118] Disordered litigation will increasingly flour-

116 Tzu Ch'an rectified fields and ditches in 543, apparently to resolve the problem of landownership that caused the 563 rebellion; his government was "reviled" after adopting a new taxation system in 538.

117 See Mao 272, "Wo chiang 我將," and Mao 235, "Wen Wang 文王," respectively.

118 According to Yang Po-chün's gloss, chisels and knives were used to inscribe the characters of the penal code; the people would allegedly quarrel on every character.

ish, and bribes will circulate everywhere. When your generation is finished, will Cheng be defeated? I, Hsi, have heard: when the state is to perish, there are plenty of regulations. Is it not spoken of in this case?

[Tzu Ch'an] wrote in his reply: "It is as you, my lord, have said. I, Ch'iao, am untalented and cannot reach the sons and the grandsons. I only attempt to save the generation. Though I cannot obey your orders, would I forget your great kindness?"[119]

Shu Hsiang's and Tzu Ch'an's dispute is perhaps the most interesting example of the open ideological controversy in the Ch'un-ch'iu period, and its significance by far surpasses the issue of "rule by ritual" versus "rule by law," and engages the entire scope of "reforms" versus "conservatism" in Chinese political history.

Shu Hsiang's vision of orderly government is based on the presumption of the *Shih ching* passage, quoted in the latter part of his speech: the emulation of the paragons of the past is the only way to secure proper rule. This view rejects the need for any substantial change, and certainly denies the necessity of reforms. The paragon rulers of antiquity, whose perfect rule Shu Hsiang depicts in the first part of his speech, needed no written codes and few if any regulations. Their rule was based primarily on abiding by ethical norms of propriety/righteousness 義, ritual behavior 禮, trustworthiness 信, benevolence 仁, and educating people towards loyalty 忠 and reverence 敬; in addition, selecting "sage, wise, clear-sighted, loyal, trustworthy, kind, and generous" leaders, officials, and teachers contributed to the further perfection of the ancients' government. The paramount standing of these moral foundations rendered such measures as rewards (ranks and emoluments) and punishments merely auxiliary policies.

According to Shu Hsiang, reforms, here meaning primarily but not exclusively the adoption of written codes, originated invariably in ages of decline. Therefore, reforms were not a remedy for, but a symptom of, decadence.[120] Shu Hsiang criticized the writing down of penal laws not only because a written code would undermine the position of the aristocrats who formerly played the role of undisputed arbiters in litigations.[121] But moreover, by adopting a

[119] *TC* (Chao 6), pp. 1274–77, modifying Schaberg, "Foundations," 743–44.

[120] Compare with *Tao te ching* 道德經 57: "The more articles of laws and regulations, the more robbers and bandits appear" 法令滋章，而盜賊多有.

[121] Rubin ("Tzu Ch'an," pp. 23–25) argued that the Tzu Ch'an penal code was the first written code in Chinese history and thus undermined the nobles' position. Creel, conversely, suggested that written codes existed already in the Western Chou; see his *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1970), pp. 161–66.

written code, argued Shu Hsiang, ruling elites recognized the irreversible decline of the past moral order, thereby undermining their own legitimacy and encouraging "a spirit of contention" in the people. A legal code was, moreover, prone to manipulations by the contending parties, further undermining social stability. Tzu Ch'an's reforms, therefore, would inevitably lead to contention and to the ultimate decline of the very order that he intended to preserve.

Tzu Ch'an's brief reply is no less interesting than Shu Hsiang's long letter. This reply manifests his credo: "to save the generation." Tzu Ch'an lacked the intellectual boldness of later Legalists like Shang Yang and Han Fei-tzu, who explicitly stated that the time of the ancients had passed and could never be restored. He evidently recognized the superiority of Shu Hsiang's vision from the viewpoint of long historical perspective. Unless Tzu Ch'an dared to suggest an alternative to the political and social system inherited from the ancient sage rulers, he had no justification for departing from the way outlined by these rulers. His only remaining counter-argument was the temporary necessity to "save the generation." Thus, Tzu Ch'an subtly indicated the major flaw in Shu Hsiang's position: it was inadequate for coping with the mounting challenges of the time. "Saving the generation" was the major rationale behind Tzu Ch'an's reforms. Nonetheless, Tzu Ch'an's lack of either ability or willingness to propose his own alternative to Shu Hsiang's vision, made him vulnerable to the criticism of his conservative colleague. This implicit recognition of the long-term advantage of the opponents' vision may have remained the single most significant intellectual obstacle facing reformers throughout Chinese history.[122]

With whom did the *Tso chuan* author-compiler side? The first impression suggests that he supported Shu Hsiang, whose arguments were presented in great detail. Moreover, Shu Hsiang's opposition to the written code was echoed by Confucius himself.[123] Since the Confucian affiliation of the *Tso* author-compiler is axiomatic, we assume that he sided with Shu Hsiang. Nevertheless, a scrutiny of the case suggests otherwise. First, Shu Hsiang's expectation of the Cheng decline after Tzu Ch'an's death is incorrect: Cheng prospered under Tzu Ch'an's successor, Tzu T'ai-shu (d. 506), and remained relatively stable well into the early-sixth century. Quoting wrong forecasts is extremely rare in

[122] A similar dichotomy – that posing urgent measures versus paramount and unshakeable moral order – continued to occupy thinkers throughout most of Chinese history. See, for instance, arguments of the Han disputants recorded in *Yen-t'ieh-lun* 鹽鐵論, or the case of the Northern Sung, as discussed by James T. C. Liu in *Reform in Sung China* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1968), pp. 30 ff.

[123] *TC* (Chao 29), p. 1504.

the *Tso*; hence we may assume that by preserving Shu Hsiang's statement, the author-compiler implicitly indicated his disagreement with the Chin statesman. Second, an astute reader cannot fail to recognize the implicit irony in Tzu Ch'an's response that his plans "cannot reach the sons and the grandsons." We know that it was Shu Hsiang whose "sons and grandsons" were destroyed soon after his death, and his lineage was eliminated;[124] Tzu Ch'an's descendants, on the other hand, prospered well into the end of the Ch'un-ch'iu period. Hence, it was after all Tzu Ch'an whose plans "reached descendants," while Shu Hsiang turned out to be less provident than the first impression suggests. We may assume, therefore, that unlike Confucius, the *Tso* author-compiler sided with Tzu Ch'an and expressed his support implicitly in the narrative.[125]

SUMMARY: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG LATE-CH'UN-CH'IU THINKERS

The above discussion outlined views of four eminent statesmen of the late-Ch'un-ch'iu period. We may now summarize some basic findings, starting with the historicity of their speeches. The vision of each of these statesmen is demonstrably unique, and relates closely to the specific problems of the speaker's state and to his personal position in the state hierarchy. The undeniable difference between the protagonists' views on such issues as the nature of ritual norms, the desirability of reforms, economic problems, international policy, and human interaction with the divine forces, rules out the possibility that speeches attributed to these persons were invented or significantly polished by the author-compiler of the *Tso*. They are certainly of distinct origin.

Elsewhere, I have argued that the bulk of the *Tso chuan* speeches originated in the records of the court scribes, prepared from their primary notes taken at the courts of Ch'un-ch'iu states.[126] These notes might have been edited or polished by the scribes; and such editing may be, among others, the source of the numerous successful forecasts attributed to Shu Hsiang, Tzu Ch'an, and Yen Ying. It is difficult to assume that all these correct forecasts were really made by these statesmen; in all likelihood they have been interpolated by the scribes retroactively, after the predicted events had already happened. This

[124] *TC* (Chao 28), pp. 1491–93.

[125] This supports Eric Henry's observation regarding ideological differences between the *Tso* narrator and Confucius' remarks scattered throughout the *Tso*; see his "Confucius vs. junzi."

[126] See Pines, "Intellectual Developments."

device may have significantly enhanced the didactic value of scribal records.[127] Nonetheless, forecasts attributed to each of the surveyed statesmen are generally in accord with his distinct views outlined above.[128] Thus, we may assume that even when the scribes edited and embellished the statesmen's speech, they generally remained faithful to the views of each particular statesman. It may be plausibly assumed, therefore, that the speeches quoted above basically reflect the "vision" of the purported speakers, if not the original words.[129]

We may now outline several basic dividing lines among Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers. The most significant division, perhaps, was that between Shu Hsiang and the three others. Whereas Shu Hsiang believed in restoring the past as the only solution to the extant crisis of the Ch'un-ch'iu system, Nü Shu-ch'i, Yen Ying, and Tzu Ch'an realized that the Western Chou system was no longer adequate to cope with the challenges of the latter part of the Ch'un-ch'iu. This difference is clearly demonstrated by the distinct attitude towards ritual. For Shu Hsiang, the concept of ritual carried, inseparably, the concept of ceremonial rules, as inherited from the Western Chou. But his three colleagues conceived of ritual norms as not necessarily coterminous with outdated ceremonies. This process of redefining ritual, which culminated with Yen Ying, enabled later thinkers, particularly Hsün-tzu, to preserve its pivotal role in Chinese discourse, even though the Western Chou ritual system had disintegrated.

Statesmen differed significantly on the issue of economic policy. Each of them sought to enhance revenues and improve the livelihood of the people; but how to set about doing so? Shu Hsiang regarded economic questions as primarily an ethical issue, urging the ruler and other dignitaries to refrain from excesses and conspicuous consumption. Tzu Ch'an and Yen Ying, conversely, looked for an economic solution, either through reforms of land-holding and taxation, or by decreasing the government's interference in commercial activities. The differences between Tzu Ch'an and Yen Ying seem to reflect different conditions in their respective states. It is noteworthy, that Yen Ying's preoccupation with economics foreshadowed further development of economic thought in the state of Ch'i, which culminated in the *Kuan-tzu*, particularly the

[127] For more on the predictions in the *Tso*, see Wang Ho 王和, "Lun Tso-chuan yü-yen" 論左傳預言, *Shih-hsüeh yüeh-k'an* 史學月刊 6 (1984), pp. 13–18; Hsü Fu-kuan 徐復觀, *Chung-kuo jen-hsing lun shih* 中國人性論史 (Taipei: Taiwan shang-wu, 1984), pp. 50–51.

[128] For instance, Shu Hsiang often predicted a "bad end" for foreign dignitaries who violated ceremonial rules, while Nü Shu-ch'i conversely predicted the decline of lord Chao of Lu *despite* the fact that the latter perfectly mastered complicated ceremonial regulations.

[129] This observation is in accord with Benjamin Schwartz's suggestion that the *Lun-yü* presents Confucius' vision rather than original words of the Master (*The World of Thought in Ancient China* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P, 1985], pp. 61–62).

"Light and Heavy" (*ch'ing-chung* 輕重) chapters.[130]

Similar differences occurred in regard to the proper treatment of the people. Whereas Yen Ying regarded public opinion as one of the most important factors in determining the ruler's course, Tzu Ch'an thought otherwise. Although recognizing the significance of public opinion, the Cheng leader definitely preferred his own understanding of state interests. This difference foreshadowed, if it did not directly contribute to, the later cleavage of Confucianism (especially Mencian thought) from Legalism.

The four statesmen's views of the transcendental reflect the immense variety of Ch'un-ch'iu religious thought. Shu Hsiang, in accord with his general adherence to traditional views, considered Heaven as the source of ultimate justice and apparently believed in divine retribution. Yen Ying was perhaps less a believer than a manipulator. By redefining such traditional concepts as *te* and the *do-ut-des* relationship with the deities, he invoked the ruler's beliefs in order to promote the desirable political course. In contrast, Nü Shu-ch'i and especially Tzu Ch'an rejected divine intervention in human affairs and remained disinclined to consider the transcendental in policy making, foreshadowing Confucius' imperative to "be reverent to the spirits and deities but keep them at distance." Yet, their differences notwithstanding, Tzu Ch'an, Nü Shu-ch'i, and Yen Ying remained convinced that good fortune for the ruler and the state alike cannot be obtained only through lavish sacrifices, but must be achieved in the here and now, through action in the mundane realm.

These differences were an important source of future frictions in the Chan-kuo age. They should not, however, conceal several important views that these thinkers shared. For instance, none succeeded in suggesting a practical way to restore international stability. The explicit cynicism of Nü Shu-ch'i and Tzu Ch'an might well have reflected late-Ch'un-ch'iu statesmen's despair of any hopes to restore international order. That Shu Hsiang, a person who painstakingly attempted to restore an international system based on ritual norms, abandoned his hopes by the end of his life was ominous. His personal failure elucidates one of the major failures of Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers – their lack of ability to establish a viable multistate system. The futility of their attempts contributed in no small measure to the nearly unanimous conviction of Chan-kuo thinkers that "stability is in unity" and the subsequent development of the

[130] On the economic thought in *Kuan-tzu*, see Wu Pao-san 巫寶三, *Kuan-tzu ching-chi ssu-hsiang yen-chiu* 管子經濟思想研究 (Peking: Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh, 1989); on the "Light and Heavy" chapters, see Liu Tse-hua, *Chung-kuo cheng-chih ssu-hsiang shih* 中國政治思想史 (Hangchou: Chejiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1996), pp. 567–89.

"Great Unity 大一統" ideal.[131]

Late-Ch'un-ch'iu statesmen shared a common inclination to preserve the hierarchic social order based on hereditary rights. Like almost every other personality quoted in the *Tso*, Shu Hsiang, Nü Shu-ch'i, Yen Ying, and Tzu Ch'an belonged to the hereditary aristocracy. They feared the increasing competition from the members of the *shih* stratum and were determined to maintain the exalted position of their stratum, in general, and their lineages, in particular. This explains their common adherence to ritual. Although that concept had different definitions, Ch'un-ch'iu statesmen cited in the *Tso* unanimously believed that ritual norms were the most effective means to preserve hereditary hierarchy. The idea of ritual norms had a double advantage for the hereditary aristocrats: it protected political and social stability along with their stratum's exalted position. It is not surprising, therefore, that major attacks on ritual in the Chan-kuo period coincided with advancements in the position of the *shih*, both in society in general and in intellectual life in particular.

That Ch'un-ch'iu statesmen pursued the same goals despite their differences is seen also from their shared opposition to social mobility. None of them advocated the principle of "elevating the worthy," unless promotions remained confined to members of the nobility. Even such a bold thinker as Yen Ying explicitly disapproved of upward mobility by the *shih*. The common Chan-kuo support for the principle of "elevating the worthy" probably reflects the rejection by Chan-kuo thinkers, most of whom were *shih*, of the "aristocratic" legacy of their Ch'un-ch'iu predecessors.[132]

Not always did interests in social stability and preserving aristocratic power coincide as happened in the case of *li*. Much more complicated was the attitude towards upholding centralized rule. The statesmen, discussed above, with the major exception of Tzu Ch'an, owed their position primarily to their personal proximity to the ruler. Astute thinkers, they realized the inimical impact of the unlimited power of ministerial lineages, and were unhappy with this situation. Nevertheless, neither Shu Hsiang, nor Nü Shu-ch'i, nor Yen Ying dared suggesting substantial steps to curb ministerial power; none advocated abolition of either hereditary allotments or hereditary offices. These statesmen realized that a serious attack on the hereditary rights of the powerful ministerial lineages would undermine the position of their own lineages as well. This

[131] For "stability in unity," see Yang, *Meng-tzu i-chu*, p. 12.

[132] The "aristocratic nature" of Ch'un-ch'iu thought contributed also to the lack of interest in self- cultivation. In a society regulated by hereditary rights, personal ability played only a secondary role in one's career. Accordingly, the issue of self-cultivation remained marginal in Ch'un-ch'iu discourse. The situation apparently changed only with Confucius, a member of the *shih* stratum.

constant tension between the public goal of strengthening the state and the ruler, and the private goal of preserving the status quo, prevented Ch'un-ch'iu ministers from advocating major administrative changes. They preferred instead to resolve the problem of the increasing political power of aristocratic lineages by ethical means, advocating personal frugality, willingness to yield, and avoidance of benefit-seeking by the aristocrats. These means, they hoped, would decrease the tension between ministerial lineages and the ruler, without undermining the position of aristocratic lineages in general. Again, we see that increasingly innovative Chan-kuo administrative thought, particularly the intent to strengthen centralized rule, may be a rejection of the Ch'un-ch'iu legacy by the *shih* thinkers.

From the evidence presented above, we may cautiously outline several aspects of the Ch'un-ch'iu impact on Chan-kuo thought. The following Ch'un-ch'iu-era ideas contributed, among others, greatly to the views of Confucius and Mencius:

1. unanimous support of ritual norms;
2. treating administrative issues from the ethical point of view;
3. Shu Hsiang's desire to emulate and restore the perfect rule of the former sage kings;
4. Yen Ying's opposition to benefit-seeking;
5. Yen Ying's economic proposals of quasi-*laissez faire*,
6. and Yen Ying's support for "harmony" as opposed to "conformity."

Moreover, Yen Ying's concept of ritual had a direct impact on Hsün-tzu and Chia I.

The following views foreshadowed approaches by Legalists like Shang Yang and Han Fei-tzu:

1. Tzu Ch'an's desire to "save the generation";
2. Tzu Ch'an's determination to lead the people despite their grudges and resentment;
3. Tzu Ch'an's quest to improve state revenues;
4. and Tzu Ch'an's and Nü Shu-ch'i's cynicism in international relations.

We must note, though, that the Legalists evidently discarded "aristocratic" trends in Tzu Ch'an's thought and practice.

The emphasis of Yen Ying and others upon personal frugality might have had an impact on Mo-tzu's (墨子 ; ca. 460–390) advocacy of reducing conspicuous consumption. Finally, the prevalent Ch'un-ch'iu trend to resolve earthly affairs through earthly action without resort to divine forces, became the

common view of Chan-kuo thinkers, with the significant exception of Mo-tzu.

Of course, the question of the impact of the Ch'un-ch'iu legacy on Chan-kuo thought deserves special and more detailed discussion. From the evidence presented here, we may cautiously conclude, corroborating Benjamin Schwartz's assertion, that it was Confucius and his followers who "more truly represented some of the *dominant* cultural orientations of the past than did some of their later rivals."[133] It is precisely their role in accepting and transmitting large portions of the Ch'un-ch'iu legacy that may explain the unique position of Confucians in relation to other schools of thought.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TC	Yang Po-chün, annot., *Ch'un-ch'iu Tso-chuan chu* 春秋左傳注

133 Schwartz, *World of Thought*, p. 60, italics in original.