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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 (孔丘; 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. 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. 1027 BC), and the Duke of Chou (周公; d. 1036 BC). 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 黥秋, 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. Yet we have rich historical sources that deal with the Ch’un-ch’iu era;

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This study is partly based on my Ph.D. dissertation, "Aspects of Intellectual Developments in the Changshu Period (722–453 B.C.)," (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997). I am indebted to Irene Eber, my thesis advisor, as well as to Harold Z. Schiffer and Asa Mark’s anonymous reviewers for their insightful remarks.

1 Yang Po-ch’iu 楊伯峻, annot., Lan-yü-i-chü 論語譯注 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1992), 7.1 p. 66.


3 For instance, Hervey 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 Yamen, who considers portions of the Lan-yü “the product of polemical interactions,” questions, nevertheless, our possibility to define pre-Confucian “ideology... in the absence of direct and unadulterated textual evidence”; “Three Issues in the Argumentative Conception of Early Chinese Discourse,” Philosophy East & West 46.1 (1996), p. 35.
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. Besides, all four knew each other and engaged in numerous policy discussions that elucidated 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 related to major ideas of the subsequent Ch’ang-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. The long stalemate that characterized this struggle for hegemony resulted in unprecedented peace conferences, held in the states of Sung (from 546) and Cheng (from 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’ (ch’ou 諸侯) power in most states of the Central Plain, particularly in Chin (from 573), in

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*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 Tso chuan,” a paper presented at the eighth conference of the Warring States Working Group, April 1997.*
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THE CONSERVATIVE VISION: SHU HSIAng

Shu Hsia ng (d. ca. 525) belonged to the Yang-shi 蒲氏 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 560s he was appointed to the influential position of grand tutor (t’ai-fu 太傅) of the heir-apparent Piao 彭. In 558, when Piao, posthumously known as lord P’ing (晉公; r. 557–558) succeeded his father, lord Tao (晉悼公; r. 572–558), at the head of Chin, Shu Hsia ng’s position significantly improved. For almost thirty years he remained lord P’ing’s trusted aide.

Shu Hsia ng 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, Hsu, Yuan, Hu, Hsi, Ch’ing, and Po are degraded to slaves and servants. The government is at the gates of [great] houses, 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?

Shu Hsia ng 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 國. 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 China’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 Hsia ng for personal reasons disapproved of the power of the Chin high ministers and favored restoring the lord’s power.

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

7 I distinguish between “ministerial lineages,” whose heads held the position of “high minister” (ch’ing 聲); and “aristocratic lineages,” whose heads were of the “noble” (ts’ai 太) rank.
8 For the term kuo-ji, see Jen Ch’ang-t’i 任常第 and Shih Ku-an-ming 張光明, “Hsii Ch’un-ch’iu shih ch’i te kuo-ji” 西周春秋時期的封邑, Chung-kuo li-shih po-wu-kuan kuan-kuo 中國歷史博物館館刊 4 (1982), pp. 19–28; Chao Po-hsia ng 郭伯謙, Ch’ou-tai kuo-ji hsia-hai-t’ai yin-shih 舊唐書形名研究 (Changsha: Hu-nan chiao-yu, 1990), pp. 171–85. for the so-called kuo-ji, the ruler’s trusted aide, Shu Hsia ng remained vulnerable to ch’ing persecution. In 554, he was arrested and barely escaped death because of his younger brother Shu Hsu’s political affiliation with the rebellious Luan Yang 樂陽 (TC: [Huang 21], pp. 1193–96). Naturally, Shu Hsia ng was less than enthusiastic about the power of the six ch’ing.
9 For the importance of hereditary allotments and hereditary office-holding as sources for ministerial power, see Li Wen-yi 李文義, “Ch’ou-tai te t’ai-ch’iu-chu” 舊代的采邑制度, Wen-shih 文史 4 (1990), pp. 76–79; Ch’ien Tsung-fan 謝宗範, “Hsii Ch’un-ch’iu shih-chu t’ai shih-lu shih-kuan chih-chu chi ch’i po-hua” 西周春秋時代的世位世爵制及其破壞, Ch’ang-kuo shih yin-shih 中國史研究 (1985), pp. 20–50; Chu Feng-han 車風翰, Shang Chou-chia-ku hsiing-ch’i
Chin lords were no longer able to implement significant reforms without inviting an armed response from their ministers. 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 chin. 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’u period. Then, particularly under the rule of the illustrious Lord Wen (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.

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 (禮). On the economic level, for instance, Shu Hsiang believed that restricting extravagance (侈任修) 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. In 534 Shu Hsiang joined his fellow statesman, Master

K’uang 呂惠, in reproaching 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.” The solution of economic problems was therefore simple: encourage the ruler’s austerity.

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’u-ch’u 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’u-ch’u thinkers, was to restore the hierarchic order based on ritual (禮).

The political and social order of the early-Ch’u 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. 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 complicated ceremonies: each one knew his place. Many Ch’u-ch’u thinkers believed that similar principles should be applied to political and social life generally.

After mid-Ch’u-ch’u, 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...
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 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 侶, 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'ung-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 Ch'in'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. 541-530) 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 disregards the ruler; when the ruler does not look [like he is] griev-

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 Ch'in 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 (晉桓公; r. 685-643). These were believed to have achieved their supremacy primarily by relying on non-coercive 德 (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 humiliation of small states. It was this mild policy that turned lord Huan, and to a lesser extent lord Wen, into paragons of good hegemonies.

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 resists to non-coercive measures while dealing with other states, became a utopian dream. In the harsh realities of mid-Ch'ung-ch'iu it was the power of the state, not the virtue of its leaders, that really mattered. Such aspects of international relations, as revering the son-of-heaven and preserving smaller states had

24 TC[Chao 11], p. 1327, Lord Chao was expelled from Lu by the coalition of the Ch'iu sun 季孫, Meng sun 孟孫, and Shu-er sun 叔孫. Lineages in 517.
become anachronistic long before Shu Hsiang's time, while international etiquette was becoming an empty convention. Yet, unlike most of his fellow statesmen, Shu Hsiang continued to advocate mild approaches in international life, believing that thereby China would be able to preserve its leading position among the overlords.

Throughout most of his career, Shu Hsiang advocated adherence to  
INTERNATIONAL ETIQUETTE (li 禮) and trustworthiness (xin 信) as preferable to power politics. His views crystallized during the famous 546 peace conference in Sung that strived to end the Ch’u-Ch’u struggle. The Ch’u’s delegates, led by the ling-yin (今尹, “head of the government”) Tzu Mu 子末, 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 Ch’en 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 Ch’in 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?”

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 li; 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 Ch’in’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:

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 謀? Now, the king’s words are reasonable. Please, consider it.

This speech is another example of Shu Hsiang’s futile efforts to restore the glorious past. In the 530s Ch’in was at the nadir of its international power, being under threat by the ruthless and energetic Ch’u’s 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 豈多” 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, 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?

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, Ch’in, by castrating Shu Hsiang and mutilating his fellow envoy, Han Huian-tzu 韓宣子, but he
Chin proved that Chin must “manifest its awesomeness.” Consequently, he arrived at Ch’i to persuade its leaders to participate in a new assembly under Chin hegemony. After a lengthy 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 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.

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 force 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.”

Later in the same year, Shu Hsiang similarly reminded Lu envoy that “My ruler possesses four thousand chariots, and even if he uses them not in accord with the Way, he is still awesome.” 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.

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34 This sacrifice would occur during the alliance ceremony. I follow Yang Po-chin, and read 为天子而终，i.e. 为藩属.
35 TC(Chao 13), p. 1555-56.
36 TC(Chao 14), p. 1557.
THE PRACTICAL RESPONSE: NÜ SHU-CH’I

Nü Shu-ch’i (d. ca. 533), the elder contemporary of Shu Hsiang, was not a member of a strong aristocratic lineage. He served as tsu-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 Ping. 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,14 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 Ping 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 (li 禮), 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 子家稽, but is unable to make use of him. He

betrays alliances with great powers and tyrannically oppresses small states,20 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 fusing 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’s view is 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 heedful, 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

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14 According to the An-zu-ju, 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 (“Chiu yü” 7.9 and 8.9).

20 In 541, Lu invaded the state of Chü and seized the town of Yün 雲; 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. 1280.
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," 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 Ping 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 whether he goes. If he returns to virtue, then we even 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 Ping, Nü Shu-ch'i emphasized that by "virtue" he referred to "political virtue" – a generic term for proper administration. Perhaps, by improving "political virtue" Nü Shu-ch'i implied overcoming political maladies enumerated in his speech on it quoted above. Furthermore, the context allows the assumption that Nü Shu-ch'i intended it 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 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 毌. Lu, the close ally of Chin, invaded Ch'i and seized some of its fields. Lord Ping's mother, who was of Ch'i origin, demanded that her son intervene on behalf of her home state. Lord Ping dispatched Nü Shu-ch'i to Lu to resolve the matter, but Nü let Lu keep part of the disputed fields. Lord Ping'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 Ping's father] were [still] sentient, he would not support [this action]." Nü Shu-ch'i angrily replied:

Yu 虞, Kuo 趙, Chiao 趙, Hua 晏, Ti 項, Yang 楊, Han 韓, Wei 魏 – all belonged to the Chi 嬰 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 毌 is a remnant of Hisia 有, and belongs to the Eastern I [Tang I 田夷]. 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 嬰 clan, why then should it bother itself with a small non-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 TC (Chao 1), p. 1214.
45 TC (Chao 4), p. 1246.
44 TC (Chao 29), p. 1176.
obligations towards the latter. Thus, whereas Shu Hsian 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 蕭, which was conquered by Ch'i in 567. Like Shu Hsian and Nü Shu-ch'i, Yen Ying's power derived from his position as the close aide of lords Ling (梁景公; r. 581–554), Chuang (齊莊公; r. 558–548), and particularly lord Ching (齊景公; r. 547–540). 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 Ch'ao-hsien compendium 蕭子春秋. 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 T'ao ch'un, 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 Hsian in 539, Yen Ying summarized it as follows:

\[\text{That is to say, four tou are one ou, four en are one fa, and ten fa are one chung}\]

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

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

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

\[\text{The "people" (min 民) here and elsewhere refers primarily to the commoners, especially inhabitants of the capital and its outskirts. In certain cases, however, speakers referred to min as containing large segments of aristocracy as well.}\]
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. 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 (water-resource official), firewood in the marshes kept by the yi-hou (mountains-and-lakes official), salt and clams in the sea kept by the chi-wang (fish-and-salt-resource official). People from the remote outskirts join the administration; keepers of the toll-gates near the capital willfully 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].

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 Chi’s 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 “licitious pleasures.”

Yen Ying’s treatment of economic issues deserves special attention. A resident of the highly commercialized state of Chi, 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 Hsuan of Chi (齊宣王).

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 Chi’s economic problems.

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 Chi’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 Chi. A series of bloody coups from 554 to 548 severely undermined the authority of the Chi’s rulers: 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 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?

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

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55 TC [Chao 20], p. 1417.
56 Some aspects of Yen Ying’s views can be found in Meng-ting ch’u 萬時曲 (Peking: Chung hua, 1992), pp. 310-37.
57 The rapid deterioration of the ruler’s power in Chi began with lord Ling’s death in 554. The powerful Ts’ui Chu arranged a coup d’état against the heir-apparent Ya 公子暇 and then established his protege, lord’s son 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 Chuang.
58 The assertion that the ruler only informed the minister of the plans for the Song people, which he then executed, is widely accepted as true (TC [Hsiao 21], p. 1008).
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 humanness and propriety (or, righteousness) cannot be considered regicide.65 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.66 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'ü 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 "T'o chuan" ever suggested that the ministers had become active participants in decision making.67 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'i] Chü 梁丘駸 is harmonious (ho 和) with me."

[Yen Ying] answered: "Chü conforms (t'ung 同) with you, how can he be harmonious?"

65 Yung, Meng tzu i chu, pp. 36-37.
66 The concept of "correcting the names" (ch'eng ming 名正) 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'i, for a different view, see Hershock G. Creel, Shen Pu-hsi: A Chinese Political Philosopher of the Fourth Century B.C. (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1974), pp. 111-20.

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 zitherists and dulcimerists were to hold a single tone, who could listen to it? This is how conformity (t'ung 同) is unacceptable."

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,68 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,
although Yen Ying's vision seemingly influenced Confucius, it remained too radical for contemporary or later thinkers. 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. 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" (ch'eng hsin 争心) 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 ofForexample/benefit/profit (li 利) - one of the important ethical categories of Ch'un-ch'i 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'i. After the mid-Ch'un-ch'i period, however, it became an entirely positive goal of political action and the most prestigious achievement: "Virtue (te 道) and righteousness (yi 義) are the root of benefit," Some people are eager to sacrifice their lives to benefit the state;" 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 (郱文公) of the tiny Shannung Peninsula state of Chu 邛.

Lord Wen of Chu divined by reading cracks about moving the capital to I 綦. The scribe said: "[Moving is] beneficial 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." Lord Wen's speech definitely indicates that by the mid-Ch'un-ch'i 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 (ch'eng 政), aristocrats benefited from seeking more lands and riches. This opened the way to struggles (爭) and disorder (亂). Thus, the acquisition 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'in Feng 枯封 was defeated, his lands were distributed among the victors. Yen Ying, however, refused to accept sixty settlements in the fief of Pei-tien 饒殿. 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...
riches, but because I am afraid to lose the riches. Besides, riches are like cloth and silk that are measured and restricted hibit by fu units hibit to prevent change [of measures]. When the people’s life is plentiful, they pursue benefit/profit (lit hibit). 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).”

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” (sheng te 正德). In subsequent years Yen Ying became increasingly critical of benefit-seeking, considering it the ultimate cause of the domestic turmoil in his state. In 538, Yen Ying clarified his approach, when he urged Chu’s powerful leader Ch’en Wu-yü 權無宇 to yield his newly acquired lands to the lord:

Yielding is the master of virtue. Yielding is “a resplendent virtue 歲德.” Whoever has blood and breath, has a spirit of contention. Therefore, the seeking of benefit/profit (lit hibit) cannot persist. Try to excel in righteousness. Righteousness is benefit’s root. Accumulating benefit/profit will bring misfortune.”

Although Yen Ying continued to juxtaepose 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.” 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.

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’in-ch’iu thinkers con-

sidered 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 Ch’ing asked Yen Ying if there was a way to prevent the Ch’en ascendency. 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; officials do not exceed [their responsibilities]; 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.”

[You 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, daughter-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; daughter-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.”

[You Ying] replied: “The former kings received it from Heaven and Earth to rule their people, therefore it was elevated by the former kings.”

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 Hsia, but were akin to Nü Shu-ch’i’s vision. Those promoted by

71 I disagree with Tu Yü’s interpreting lan 蓋 as “do not lose office”: it seems from the context of the speech that Yen Ying worried that the shih 聖 would “overwhelm” the nobles (te-fu 太夫). Note that Yen Ying himself belonged to the hereditary aristocracy.
72 That is to say, officials do not usurp the power of their superiors, especially that of the duke.
73 TC (Ch’ao 36), p. 1480.
74 Note, that if Li ch’i is to be trusted, Yen Ying himself was not the staunch supporter of the ceremonial norms; hence he is criticized several times (“Yen kung 燉公”) 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 ideal 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 *Tao 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.21 His vision of ritual had a profound impact on later thinkers, such as Hsün-tzu (*荀子*; ca. 310–248) and Chiu I (*賈誼*; 200–168).20

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* 習大夫) 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.31 Thus, Yen Ying evidently did not advocate the principle of *“elevating the worthy”* (*shang kien 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 Niu Shu-ch’i conversely argued

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’u Ch’ü and Li Kuan 蒯款, recommended executing the scribe (*shih 史*) and the invocator (*chu 呪*) who had failed to obtain from the deities good fortune for the lord. Yen Ying dismissed their proposal:

If the ruler possesses virtue (*li*), 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, licitously, and willfully; he behaves excessively and neglects the norms; disregards any restrictions, and thinks nothing of resentment and hostility [among inferiors]. [Such a ruler] disregards 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.32

On another occasion, in 516, Yen Ying similarly discouraged Duke Ching from performing a special sacrificial ceremony to *“avert evil”*. “If virtue (*li*) is
deviant and in turmoil, then the people intend to flee; actions of invocators and scribes cannot help in this situation. 1 They 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." 2 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]." 3 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-at-des relationships ("I give in order that thou shouldst give") between human and divine beings. 4 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 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. 5 They 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'iu, it had constantly to maneuver between the northern and the southern alliance. 6 These maneuvers were not always successful, and Cheng often became merely the battlefield of its powerful neighbors. In 569, when Tzu Ch'An was still young, a Cheng official, Wang Tzu Po-p'ien 王子伯騫, described the dire results of the Chin-Ch'uo dispute over Cheng territory:

The multitudes of our humble city, wives and husbands, and men and women "have no time to tarry or stay" 7 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 sadness and do not know who will protect them. 8

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

1 For details on the government of Cheng, see Chu, Shang Chou chia-tao, pp. 580–82.
2 For details on Cheng foreign relations, see Pines, Aspects, pp. 221–28.
3 A quotation from the Shih ching, sect. "Hsiao ya 小雅," Mao no. 162, "Sah mu 師牧."
4 TC [Ts'ao 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 子贡; 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. 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. 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 skilful 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 system of taxation. 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 (kiaos) where villagers discussed government politics; at the time he claimed that public opinion must be taken into consideration in order to improve the policies. 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.

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.

93 For more on Tzu Ch’an’s reforms, see Rubin, “Tzu Ch’an,” pp. 17–21.
94 T’ieh [Hsiang 51], pp. 1951–92. This was not the only instance of Tzu Ch’an’s taking public opinion into consideration. He did so also in 559, regarding Tzu K’ung (as described above).
95 T’ieh [Chao 4], p. 1954.
96 In a political legacy given on his deathbed to Tzu T’ai-shu 子太叔, 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

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

There were, we see, clear limits to Tzu Ch’ann’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’ann 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. To chuan states: “he promoted those of the nobles (ta-yen 太人) who were loyal and frugal, and demoted those who were intertemperate and extravagant.” Thus, Tzu Ch’ann 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’ann successfully combined hereditary office-holding with the enhancing of administrative efficiency. Accordingly, he avoided serious clashes with other ministerial lineages.

Tzu Ch’ann’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’ann’s allegiance shifted as well, and he constantly refrained from alienating the powerful and frightening southern neighbor. After king Ling’s fall in 529, Tzu Ch’ann renewed the alliance with Chin. This time, however, his attitude towards the northern allies changed. At the Ping ch’u 平楚 meeting, Tzu Ch’ann stubbornly refused to raise Cheng’s tribute beyond the norm assigned to a state of the nan 男 rank. He struggled ceaselessly to obtain Chin’s assent. Tzu Ch’ann justified his unusually assertive behavior, explaining to his colleagues that the weakened Ch’u was no longer able to undertake punitive measures. Again in 526, Tzu Ch’ann politely but

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

Tzu Ch’ann, 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’ann perfectly mastered ritual rules, and often invoked them during his visits to Chin and Ch’u. 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’ann disliked. In 548, after leading a successful incursion against Ch’en 陈, Tzu Ch’ann arrived at Chin to present the loot and to justify Cheng’s aggression. The Chin hosts, however, remained unconvinced of his arguments and asked:

“Why did you attack the small [state]?”
[Ch’ann] answered: “[...].” In antiquity, the Son of Heaven’s territories were one ch’i 初 (a thousand 里 squared), while the overlords’ only one t’ung 聃 (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]?

This reply resembles the cynical justification of aggressive politics by Nü Shu-chi’s, quoted above. Indeed, despite his frequent invocation of international ritual norms, Tzu Ch’ann 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’ann 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, Ming-tzu rika, p. 25), the dividing line was between the overlords of the Ang 2 and Nan 男 rank, on the one hand, and those of the Pe 3, Fei 未 and Nan 男 rank, on the other. Tzu Ch’ann 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], p. 1589–59.
1 TC[Chao 4], p. 1248.

The hierarchy of the Ch’un-ch’iu overlords differed from the five-ranked system, suggested
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, 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 Hsüan-tzu to Cheng, the elder statesmen, K’ung Chang 孔衆, failed to perform the appropriate ceremonies. One of the Cheng nobles, Fu-tzu 服叔, 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 orders 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.”

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 ch’uan contains what appear to be mutually contradictory anecdotes concerning his views of the divine. 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, Pi Tsoo 彼休 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. Pi Tsoo 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?

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.

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 Ts’un-ch’iu period, an elaborate system of sacrificial rites had come into existence. Tzu Ch’an strictly adhered to extend rites, but commonly opposed any sacrifices that exceeded the extant ritual framework. His opposition to Pi Tsao’s suggestion is only one of many examples of this kind. 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

notes. He suggested that the illness was caused by his excessive behavior, particularly marrying women of the same Chi 子 clan – an appalling violation of ancient taboos (TC [1a], pp. 1217–20). Seven years later, however, Tzu Ch’an behaved differently. Asked the reasons for lord Ping’s new illness, he suggested that it was caused by the spirit of Kun 蘇, 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 Ch’in dignitaries reflected his own uncertainty concerning the degree of the deities’ influence on human health.

107 TC [Chao 1], p. 1355.
108 For Tzu Ch’an’s practical steps after the firestorms and to avoid further disasters, see TC [Chao 1], pp. 1353–59.
109 For more on the Chou ritual system, see Lester J. Birdsey, 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, ritual code prayer and not an extraordinary action, advocated by Pi 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. He demonstrated this attitude again, in 523. The Cheng people observed dragons fighting during a flood of the Wei River, 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 religious 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:

114 In 553, the inhabitants of the Cheng capital were terrified by the ghost of Po Yu 伯夷 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.

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-eyed 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 code and achieving [their goals] through lucky conniving: This is not to be done.

When the Hsia government became disordered, it produced the Yi Code; when the Shang government became disordered, it produced the Tang 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 revered;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 Code says: "Make the virtue 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-

114 Tzu Ch' an rectified fields and ditches in 543, apparently to resolve the problem of landownership that caused the 535 rebellion; his government was "revised" after adopting a new taxation system in 538.
116 According to Yang Po-ch' ien'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?"

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, ritual behavior, trustworthiness, benevolence, and educating people towards loyalty and reverence; 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. 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. But moreover, by adopting a 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.

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. 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

120 TC (Chao 8), pp. 1274–77; modifying Schaberg, “Foundations,” 743–44.

121 Compare with Tso te ching, 57: “The more articles of laws and regulations, the more robbers and bandits appear.” 法令滋章，而姦宄多有。

122 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. 164–66.

123 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 T’ien-ye-hsien 為政議, 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.

124 TC (Chao 29), p. 1504.
device may have significantly enhanced the didactic value of scribal records.\textsuperscript{127} Nonetheless, forecasts attributed to each of the surveyed statesmen are generally in accord with his distinct views outlined above.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 correlative with outdated ceremonies. This process of redefining ritual, which culminated with Yen Ying, enabled later thinkers, particularly Hsin-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


\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{129} This observation is in accord with Benjamin Schwartz’s suggestion that the \textit{Lun-yi} presents Confucius’ vision rather than original words of the Master (\textit{The World of Thought in Ancient China} [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1985], pp. 61–62).
“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 unan

iously 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

Nor always did interests in social stability and preserving aristocratic power coincide as happened in the case of it. 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

130 On the economic thought in Kun-tzu, see Wu Pao-san 烏寶三, Kun-tzu ching-chi su-hsiang yen-chu 管子經世思想研究 (Peking: Ch'ung-kuo shih K'o-ch'ao, 1969); on the “Light and Heavy” chapters, see Liu Tse-hua, Chang kuo cheng-chi su-hsiang shih 中國政治思想史 (Hsiaochu: Che-n'ang jen min ch'uan-t'ao-shu, 1969), pp. 597–93.

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 Ch'an-k'uo 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-k'uo 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-k'uo thinkers, with the significant exception of Mo-tzu.

Of course, the question of the impact of the Ch'un-ch'iu legacy on Chan-k'uo 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.