"THE ONE THAT PERVADES THE ALL" IN ANCIENT CHINESE POLITICAL THOUGHT: THE ORIGINS OF "THE GREAT UNITY" PARADIGM*

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> Why does [the *Chun qiu*] begin with "the King's first month?"—To magnify the unified rule [*da yitong* 大一統] (*Gongyang zhuan,* Yin 1)

The immense pluralism of Chinese political thought of the Zhanguo era (戰國, 453-221)[1] is well known. The contending "one hundred schools" (*baijia* 百家) suggested diverse, and sometimes mutually exclusive visions of the proper mode of rule, social systems, ruler-minister relations, human nature, social mobility, warfare, human relations with the transcendental, and almost all other aspects of political, social, economic, military, and religious life. Despite these varieties, one can distinguish certain basic ideas Zhanguo thinkers held in common. The most important of these is, probably, the unanimous rejection of the Eastern Zhou (東周, 772-256) multi-state system, and the consequent advocacy of the ideal of unified rule. This common ideal of the Zhanguo thinkers had a strong impact on subsequent Chinese political thought; moreover, its impact is well perceived in current Chinese political culture. This unanimous rejection of anything but the politically unified realm allowed the resurrection of the Chinese empire after frequent periods of disunion, internal turmoil and foreign conquest.

Most scholars in China and abroad recognize the importance of the "Great Unity" (*da yitong* 大一統) paradigm in Chinese po-

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[1] Hereafter all dates are before the common era, unless indicated otherwise.

litical culture.[2] It is less clear, however, when and how this ideal emerged. Some trace its origins to the Former Han dynasty (206 BCE-8 CE); others suggest that it appeared in the Later Han (25-220 CE) or due to the idealization of the Han rule during the subsequent period of disunion (220-589); while yet others regard the Sui-Tang unification (589-906) as the crucial period during which the ideal of unitary state was formed.[3] Scholars similarly disagree about the reasons for the emergence of the "Great Unity" ideal. Recently, in a most iconoclastic study, Edward Schafer argued that this ideal was nothing but a myth, "a persistent dream, an unachieved ideal of an archaic golden age," while Prasenjit Duara similarly suggested that the quest for unity was mostly a production of traditional imperial historiography.[4] Contrarily to these views, I would like to suggest that the *Da yitong* paradigm was not a mere historiographic convention or legitimiz-

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[2] See, for instance, Benjamin Schwartz, "The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present," in: John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order.* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 279; Fairbank, "The Reunification of China", in: Fairbank and Roderick MacFarquhar, eds., *Cambridge History of China.* Vol. 14: *The People's Republic. Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1949-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 14-21; A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao,* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989) 4; Jacques Gernet, "Introduction," in: S.R. Schram, ed., *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987), xix-xx; Karl Bünger, "Concluding Remarks on Two Aspects of the Chinese Unitary State as Compared with the European State System," ibid., 320-323; Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *China: Vielvölkerreich und Einheitsstaat von der Anfängen bis Heute* (München: Beck, 1997).

[3] See, for instance, Michael Loewe, "China's Sense of Unity As Seen in the Early Empire," *T'oung Pao* 80, 1-3 (1994), 6-26; Mansvelt B.J. Beck, "The Fall of the Han," in M. Loewe and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China,* Vol. 1: *The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.—A.D. 220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 369-376; Qiu Jiurong 邱久榮, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de 'da yitong' sixiang" 魏晉南北朝時期的大一統思想, *Zhongyang minzu xueyuan xuebao* 中央民族學院學報 4 (1993), 45-51; Denis Twitchett, "Introduction," in: Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3: *Sui and T'ang China, Pt. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 7. For the late Zhanguo-early Han dating, see Yanaka Shinji 谷中信一, "Sengoku jidai kR̄ki ni okeru tai ittR̄ shisR̄ no tenkai" 戰國時代後期における大一統思想の展開, in: *Nihon Chūgoku gakkai gojū shūnen kinen ronbunshū* 日本中國學會 50周年記念論文集 (TR̄kyR̄, 1996), 1303-1320. For a less convincing attempt to trace the origins of the *da yitong* paradigm to the Western Zhou period, see Xiao Junhe 蕭君和, *Zhonghua tongyi shi* 中華統一史 (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu, 1997).

[4] See Schafer, "The *Yeh chung chi*," *T'oung Pao,* 76, 4-5 (1990), 148; Duara, "Provincial Narratives of the Nation: Federalism and Centralism in Modern China," in his *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 184 *et passim.*

ing device, but a reasonable political solution to the immanent state of anarchy embedded in the multi-state system in Chinese history. To clarify this point I shall trace the origins of this ideal to show, first, that the Great Unity paradigm was not an outcome of, but rather a precondition for the imperial unification of 221 BCE; and second, that the Zhanguo thinkers' quest for unity was not a search for a "non-existent chimaera," as Schafer suggested, but a rational response to the disintegration of the Eastern Zhou multi-state order.

In the first part of this paper I shall outline the dissolution of the international order of the Chunqiu period (**春秋**, 722-453) and the subsequent abandonment of the statesmen's attempts to build a viable multi-state system. The evolution of the quest for unity among Chunqiu and Zhanguo thinkers will be discussed next. In the concluding section I shall make some comments on the impact of the Great Unity ideal on Chinese political culture throughout the imperial period and thereafter.

A. The Futile Search for International Order

The relative stability of the early Zhou gradually eroded during the Western Zhou period (1045-772). As generations passed, kinship ties between the Zhou kings and the overlords (*zhuhou* **諸侯**) weakened and could no longer ensure royal supremacy, while a steady decline in dynastic military and economic power further undermined its dominance. The collapse of the Western Zhou in 771 ushered in a new multi-polar world, where old rules of interstate hierarchy based on the overlord's rank and proximity to the Zhou house were gradually replaced by new ones, which reflected primarily an actual balance of power among rival states. The first two centuries of the Eastern Zhou were a period of incessant search for a viable international order. Yet none of these attempts to restore stability could cope with the advancing disintegration of the Zhou system.

We may discern three major stages in the Chunqiu search for a viable multi-state order. The early Chunqiu international system was dominated by Zhou ritual norms (*li* **禮**). Particularly under the hegemony of Lord Huan of Qi (**齊桓公**, r. 685-643), *li* became a proxy of international law. Later, as the unilateral hegemony of Lord Huan faded and *li* was all but abandoned, international relations were managed in the framework of the so-called alliance system, led by the contending superpowers of Jin **晉** and Chu **楚**.

This system, however, also proved inadequate to stabilize inter-state relations, and even the unique peace conferences held in the states of Song 宋 (546) and Zheng 鄭 (541) were to no avail. In the late Chunqiu years, brutal hegemonies of the southern and south-eastern states of Chu, Wu 吳 and Yue 越, which lacked even the pretense of abiding by accepted rules of managing inter-state relations, marked the final collapse of the international order. The Zhanguo world was dominated by the notion that might is right; and as no serious attempt was made to preserve a viable multi-state system, the solution for international turmoil had to be sought elsewhere.

In retrospect, the end of the Western Zhou is regarded as the irreversible breakdown of the Zhou order. Yet for the early Chunqiu statesmen this outcome was not at all obvious, and the Zhou legacy continued to influence many aspects of their lives. Especially in the early Chunqiu, the newly emerging multi-state system functioned in accord with the Zhou rules of international ritual, the most important of which was revering the Zhou Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子); in the early Chunqiu an irreverent attitude to the Zhou king could result in a punitive expedition against the culprit.[5] The major problem of this system, obvious already in the late eighth century, was that the ritual supremacy of the Sons of Heaven was not substantiated by economic and, most importantly, military power. The growing disparity between the name and the actuality demanded a readjustment of the extant order. This, indeed, happened, under the aegis of Lord Huan of Qi—the first and the most powerful of the Chunqiu "hegemons" (*ba* 霸).

Lord Huan skillfully combined military superiority with legitimacy, derived from the support of the Zhou Son of Heaven. Throughout his career Lord Huan, together with his famous aide Guan Zhong (管仲, d. 645), never failed to display a reverent attitude towards the king, despite the latter being a de facto protégé of the powerful Qi leader.[6] Lord Huan furthermore strictly

[5] See, for instance *Zuo zhuan* (Yin 9: 65; Yin 10: 70). All quotations from the *Chun qiu* 春秋 and the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (hereafter the *Zuo*) follow Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981). For the nature and reliability of the *Chun qiu* and the *Zuo* records, see Yuri Pines, "Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period: The Reliability of the Speeches in the *Zuo zhuan* as Sources of Chunqiu Intellectual History," *Early China*, 22 (1997), 77-132.

[6] Lord Huan demonstrated his reverence to the Zhou king during the assault

abided by international etiquette norms, even though while acting as the king's surrogate he redirected part of the inter-state ceremonies from the Zhou court to that of Qi. Moreover, to prove his unshakable adherence to the *li* norms which prohibited, among other things, the annihilation of weak states, Lord Huan generally refrained from willful annexations; indeed, the most remarkable feature of his policy, lauded throughout subsequent ages, was "preserving ruined states, continuing interrupted sacrifices" (*cun wang guo, ji jue si* 存亡國，繼絕祀).[7] In addition, Lord Huan's explicit adherence to international ritual norms even encouraged him to intervene in the struggles over succession in neighboring states to protect the legitimate heirs and to punish the usurpers.[8]

These actions underline Lord Huan's strong commitment to preservation and improvement of the multi-state system and may explain why the Qi leader became a paragon of the good hegemon throughout the Chunqiu period and thereafter. Nonetheless, despite Lord Huan's positive image, the foundations of his international order proved to be too shaky. Aside from his military superiority, Lord Huan's prestige relied on two major factors, namely the support of the Son of Heaven, who remained the main source of legitimacy in the Zhou world, and the explicit commitment to preserve weak states, which introduced a degree of stability to inter-state relations of that age. But as both these pillars of the ritual-based multi-state system collapsed within few decades following Lord Huan's death, the entire international order based on unilateral hegemony faded away.

The most important development of mid-Chunqiu international politics was the rapid decline of the Zhou kings' position.

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on Chu in 656, and during the Kuiqiu 葵丘 meeting in 651; Guan Zhong behaved similarly during the 648 court visit.

[7] See *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, Xi 僖 17, 8: 2398. Although at the earlier stage of his career Lord Huan annexed the statelets of Tan 譚 in 684 and Sui 遂 in 681, he abandoned this practice as his hegemony was established. To the contrary, Lord Huan restored in 661-659 the states of Wei 衛 and Xing 邢 which had been destroyed by the Di 狄 tribesmen; and in 646, he restored the state of Qi 杞, a victim of Song 宋 aggression.

[8] Lord Huan intervened in the succession struggles in Lu in 661-660 and in Jin in 651. Reportedly, he refrained from annexing the state of Lu because of the latter's explicit adherence to Zhou ritual norms (*Zuo*, Min 閔 1: 257). Furthermore, Lord Huan refrained from assisting the rebellious Prince Hua 太子華 of Zheng, since such action would violate international ritual norms (*Zuo* Xi 7: 317-18).

New leaders who succeeded Lord Huan were less inclined to display reverence towards powerless Sons of Heaven. The change became explicit soon after Lord Huan's death, when Lord Wen of Jin (晉文公, r. 636-628), the second of the prominent Chunqiu hegemons, openly challenged the superiority of King Xiang (襄王, r. 651-619). In 635, Lord Wen arrogantly demanded sumptuary privileges of the Zhou kings; when the king disagreed, Lord Wen retaliated by *summoning* the king to the inter-state meeting of 632.[9] This appalling disregard of ritual norms dealt a mortal blow to royal prestige. Throughout the sixth century Zhou kings were progressively marginalized, as their nominal protectors, the lords of Jin, rarely bothered themselves even with inviting royal envoys to the inter-state meetings.[10] Within few decades kings ceased to be players of any importance on the international scene.

This change was of far-reaching consequences for Chunqiu international life, as it induced a redefinition of the nature of hegemony. As long as the Zhou kings' prestige remained intact, the hegemon who enjoyed their support could claim ritual supremacy over other overlords. Now, as arrogant Jin leaders largely absolved themselves of the pretension to act on behalf of the Son of Heaven, this meant that their international power derived primarily from their military superiority. But similar claims could be made—and actually were made—by other states as well. Powerful overlords, rulers of Chu, Qin 秦, and Qi, refused to submit to Jin's hegemony. Without adequate ritual means to impose its authority, Jin had to rely primarily on coercion, which indeed happened. The legitimacy vacuum created with the decline of Zhou prestige was never effectively filled in.

Aside from the decline of the royal authority, the changing attitudes towards the destiny of tiny states also marked the breakdown of Lord Huan's legacy. The need to attain new lands—the

[9] This overt violation of international ritual was so astonishing that Lu scribes dared not record it in the *Chun qiu* and substituted it with a neutral sentence: "The Heavenly king hunted at Heyang." (Xi 28: 473).

[10] For the statistics of Zhou envoys' participation in the alliance meetings, see Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, "Shunjû Shinpa kô" 春秋晉覇考, *Shirin* 史林 76 (1993), 392-401. Only after Jin's power seriously declined in the late sixth century did its leaders attempt to regain international prestige by inviting the royal envoys to the 529 and 506 alliance meetings; these efforts were, however, of little consequence and could not disguise the increasing marginalization of the Zhou house in Chunqiu politics.

major source of the political and economical well-being of the overlord—invalidated the ritual imperative to preserve extinguished polities.[11] Annexations occurred during Lord Huan's hegemony as well, but it was after his death that their pace visibly intensified.[12] In the first generations after Lord Huan, an appeal to the principle of preserving ruined states could occasionally influence policy-makers,[13] but by the mid-Chunqiu it became ridiculous. In 548, the eminent Zheng leader, Zi Chan 子產, remarked:

> In antiquity, the Son of Heaven's territories were one *qi* 圻 (a thousand *li* 里 squared), while the overlords' were [only] one *tong* 同 (a hundred *li* squared), and so on in decreasing order. Now great states already [have] many *qi*—how could this be without invading the smaller [states]?[14]

Four years later Sima Hou 司馬侯 of Jin frankly admitted:

> Yu 虞, Guo 虢, Jiao 焦, Hua 滑, Di 翟, Yang 楊, Han 韓, Wei 魏—all of them belonged to the Ji 姬 clan, but thanks to [annexing] them Jin became great. If small states were not invaded, where would we get [lands] to seize? Since lords Wu and Xian we have annexed many states—who can regulate this?[15]

Zi Chan's and Sima Hou's candor reveals a profound change in the statesmen's attitude towards international ritual norms. In the mid-seventh century, Lord Huan restored the extinguished polities; other seventh-century rulers occasionally emulated his exam-

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[11] Newly acquired territories could be distributed as allotments to the ruler's relatives and allies, or become dependencies (*xian* 縣), ruled by an appointed official; incomes from such dependencies enhanced the ruler's revenues. In each case, acquiring new lands was essential to the ruler who hoped to withstand both domestic and foreign challenges. Moreover, since the mid-Chunqiu period, powerful aristocratic lineages likewise invaded weaker polities to acquire more land.

[12] See Hsu Cho-yun's statistics for the pace of state annihilations (*Ancient China in Transition* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965], 58). During Lord Huan's reign almost all the annexations occurred at the hands of Chu, Qin and Jin, that is in the areas beyond the effective control of Qi.

[13] For instance, in 639 Cheng Feng 成風, mother of Lord Xi of Lu (魯僖公, r. 659-627), persuaded her son to intervene and restore the state of Xugou 須句 (*Zuo*, Xi 21: 392), and in 632 Lord Wen of Jin was dissuaded from extinguishing the state of Cao 曹 (*Zuo*, Xi 28: 474). In both cases a successful appeal was made to the Zhou ritual and to Lord Huan's model.

[14] 且昔天子之地一圻，列國一同，自是以衰。今大國多數圻，若無侵小，何以至焉？ (*Zuo*, Xiang 襄 25: 1106).

[15] 虞、虢、焦、滑、翟、楊、韓、魏，皆姬姓也，晉是以大。若非侵小，將何所取？武、獻以下，兼國多矣，誰得治之？ (*Zuo*, Xiang 29: 1160). Lords Wu 武 and Xian 獻, ruled Jin from 678 to 651.

ple. One century later, however, two of the most respected statesmen[16] considered these sentiments obsolete. The unrestrained quest for lands, a lack of normative or institutional arrangements which could prevent annihilation of tiny states,[17] and the increasing cynicism of politicians undermined the relative stability created by Lord Huan. Prominent leaders no longer believed in the possibility of ensuring a viable multi-state order; having arrived to the conviction that might is right, they acted accordingly.

When the ritual-based order of Lord Huan's age collapsed, it was replaced by the so-called system of alliances, the only meaningful attempt to recognize bi-polarity or even multi-polarity as a norm of functioning of the Chinese world. Alliance leaders (*meng zhu* 盟主), Jin in the north and Chu in the south, sought to replace the Zhou kings as a legitimate focus of power. They protected their allies from outer enemies, played the role of arbiter in intra-alliance conflicts, and intervened to resolve internal conflicts in allied states. The elaborate ceremony of a common oath emphasized the ritual superiority of the leader of an alliance, who presided over the ceremony, was the first to smear sacrificial blood, and in all likelihood was responsible for drafting the text of the common oath.[18] Yet the grandeur of alliance ceremonies

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[16] For more on Zi Chan's and Sima Hou's life, thought, and role in late Chunqiu life, see Yuri Pines, "The Search for Stability: Late Ch'un-ch'iu thinkers," *Asia Major* 10 (1997), pp. 14-18, 31-38.

[17] For details on state annihilation in the Chunqiu-Zhanguo period, see Chen Pan 陳槃 *Chunqiu dashi biao lieguo juexing ji cunmie biao zhuandao* 春秋大事表列國滅絕及存滅表撰考, Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1988, (rev. ed.).

[18] The alliance (*meng* 盟) required a solemn ceremony which included preparing a written oath, sacrificing an animal, and smearing its blood on the participants' lips. The text of the oath was kept in special repositories (*mengfu* 盟府). Deities were invoked to guard the oath. Allies met periodically to renew (literally "rewarm," *xun* 尋) the alliance; in certain cases they assembled without performing an oath ceremony. Such assemblies (*hui* 會) were considered less binding than an alliance, since they invoked no deities and no written oath. For the detailed description of *meng* see W.A.C.H. Dobson, "Some Legal Instruments of Ancient China: The *Ming* and the *Meng*," in: Chow Tse-tsung, ed., *Wen-Lin: Studies in Chinese Humanities* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Mo Jinshan 莫金山, "Chunqiu lieguo menghui zhi yanbian" 春秋列國盟會之演變, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊, 1 (1996), 14-18; Susan R. Weld, "The Covenant Texts at Houma and Wenxian," in: Ed. L. Shaughnessy, ed., *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts* (Berkeley: Society for Study of Early China, 1997), 154-160. For the leader's responsibility for the text of the common oath, see Weld (although her study is based on the Houma

did not suffice to fill in the vacuum of legitimacy created with the decline of the Zhou house; solemn oaths could neither stop the infractions of mutual obligations nor prevent allies from shifting their allegiances. Besides, the co-existence of two contending alliances was a source of constant tension and warfare. These factors, in the final account, prevented the alliance system from becoming a cornerstone of viable international order.

Lack of respect for alliance obligations, and particularly shifting allegiances, became the major malady of the mid-Chunqiu period. The state of Zheng alone changed sides no less than ten times within a period of fifteen years (612-597), thereby invalidating the meaning of the alliance oaths.[19] Statesmen's appeals to the principle of mutual trust (*xin* 信) were in vain; similarly ineffective was reliance on deities as guardians of the alliance.[20] A common reaction to these arguments is represented by the Chu *sima*, Zi Fan 子反, who justified in 576 his intention to discard an alliance with Jin, with a frank statement:

> When the enemy's [conditions] are favorable [to our attack], then we shall advance—what alliance exists [in such case]?[21]

Zi Fan had little concern for the moral aspects of his treachery; nor did he fear divine retaliation. His cynical attitude towards alliances was shared by many other contemporary statesmen, as

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alliances, concluded between the head of the aristocratic lineage and his retainers and followers, we may plausibly assume that inter-state alliances followed a similar pattern). The question of precedence in smearing sacrificial blood was of primary importance, as exemplified in frequent struggles over this issue: for instance, between Chu and Jin during the 546 and 541 alliances, between Wei 衛 and Cai 蔡 in 506, and between Jin and Wu in 482. Alliances by definition imposed hierarchic order and implied inequality. Mark Lewis correctly asserted that alliances were primarily a vehicle of one state's hegemony over another (*Sanctioned Violence in Ancient China* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1990], 44-5).

[19] Zheng was allied with Jin in 632-612. In 608 it concluded an alliance with Chu; in 606 it re-established friendly ties with Jin only to abandon it for Chu in 603; next year another alliance with Jin was concluded; in 599 Zheng shifted its allegiance to Chu and then immediately back to Jin; in 598 an alliance with Chu was concluded, betrayed and re-established once more in 597.

[20] Invocation of deities was a common part of the alliance formula. For instance, the oath of the 632 northern states' alliance said: "If anybody betrays this alliance, let him be punished by the numinous deities, let him lose his army; let him enjoy no fortune in his state and let this be extended to his grand-grandsons, young and old alike" (*Zuo*, Xi 28: 466-467; cf. Xi 28: 470; see also Weld, "Covenant texts").

[21] 敵利則進，何盟之有？ (*Zuo*, Cheng 成 15: 873).

may be vividly illustrated by the twisting politics of the state of Zheng—the major victim of the Jin-Chu conflict. Tired of incessant incursions of Chu and Jin armies throughout the 560s, Zheng ministers finally decided to resolve their troubles through a cunning plan. Zi Zhan 子展 suggested concluding an alliance with Jin, then to betray it, and thus provoke Jin into a renewed incursion, causing a massive Jin military build-up in Zheng. This would prevent further Chu military expeditions and stabilize the Zheng-Jin alliance. Jin would gain Zheng's allegiance; Zheng would secure itself with the help of the Jin forces. The plan was realized in 562. Its most interesting aspect was the first alliance of Zheng with Jin—the one which Zheng immediately intended to betray. Jin attempted to enforce Zheng's submission by an extremely elaborate oath, invoking an impressive number of divine authorities, not seen elsewhere in the *Zuo zhuan*:

> Every participant of our alliance will not accumulate grains,[22] nor monopolize profits [of mountains and rivers], neither shelter criminals, nor keep traitors. [Everybody] should help others in case of natural calamity, share likes and dislikes and support the royal dynasty. If anybody violates this order, then will the Lord Inspector, the Lord of Alliances, [deities] of famous mountains and rivers, all the deities and all those who accept sacrifices, [spirits of] former kings, former lords, ancestors of the seven clans and the twelve states, [all these] numinous deities will punish him, may he lose his people, his life cut, his lineage be destroyed, his state and family overthrown.[23]

This oath was pronounced in the presence of others by the Zheng leaders who intended to violate their obligations immediately thereafter, and indeed carried out their plans. It demonstrates the deep decline in the value of alliances in the late Chunqiu period. As statesmen's belief in divine retribution declined, invoking the entire divine army to guard the oath became meaningless; only actual armies carried weight, as their systematic incursions wreaked havoc in the state of Zheng.[24]

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[22] I.e. will not accumulate grains in the case of natural calamity in the neighboring country, but rather support the neighbors. See, for instance, Qin's assistance to Jin in 647.

[23] 凡我同盟，毋蓄年，毋壅利，毋保奸，毋留慝，救災患，同好惡，奸王室。或間茲命，司慎、司盟、名山、名川，群神、群祀，先王、先公，七姓十二國之祖，明神殛之，俾失其民，隊命亡氏，踣其國家。(*Zuo*, Xiang 11: 989-90). Twelve states of seven clans are the participants of the alliance: Jin, Lu 魯, Wei 衛, Cao and Teng 滕 (Ji 姬 clan), Zhu 邾 and Smaller Zhu 小邾 (Cao 曹 clan), Song (Zi 子 clan), Qi (Jiang 姜 clan), Ju 莒 (Ji 己 clan), Qi 杞 (Si 姒 clan) and Xie 薛 (Ren 任 clan).

[24] The above discussion requires modification of W. Dobson's argument that "*meng* never lost its religious force and sanctions. ... [T]he religious beliefs which

Since neither alliances nor ritual norms could normalize interstate ties, Chunqiu statesmen became increasingly cynical about the possibility of a reasonable and non-violent international order on the whole. This trend is best exemplified by the changing views of the nature of international leadership throughout the Chunqiu period. Although many sympathized with the model of Lord Huan, a powerful yet mild international leader, who protected small states and preferred the power of non-coercive virtue (*de* 德)[25] to naked force, few sixth-century leaders believed in their ability to emulate this mode of conduct. They realized that only the leader who can enforce compliance could become a true hegemon, even though his behavior might diverge from ritual or moral norms. Thus, whereas most early Chunqiu discussants believed that strict adherence to *de* would suffice to ensure the hegemon's dominance, by the mid-Chunqiu this notion was no longer considered realistic.

The change was gradual. From the late seventh century the *Zuo zhuan* speakers began emphasizing punishments (*xing* 刑) and awesomeness (*wei* 威) as indispensable attributes of the hegemon, along with non-coercive *de*.[26] Step by step, *de* was losing its importance. In a major policy discussion held in 597, the head of the

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underlie it are never questioned." ("Some Legal," 278; cf. Weld, "Covenant Texts," 389-401, 428; Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 45-6). We must distinguish between the religious formula of the alliances and the actual degree of respect towards the divine guardians of the oaths. For more on the diminishing faith in deities' prowess and in their mere existence, see Yuri Pines, *Aspects of Intellectual Developments in the Chunqiu Period (722-453 B.C.)* (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 129-137.

[25] *De* is one of the most multifaceted terms in ancient Chinese political and ethical discourse. In the context of hegemony discussions, *de* primarily, although not exclusively, referred to mild, non-coercive means of exercising the leader's power; it was often mentioned along with complementary opposites as "force" (*li* 力), "punishments" (*xing* 刑 or *fa* 罰) and "awesomeness" (*wei* 威). In Western Zhou-Chunqiu discourse *de* also meant "charisma, *mana*," and "moral virtue." For more on the evolution of the meaning of *de*, see Vassili Kriukov, "Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of *De*)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 58 (1995), 314-33; Kominami Ichirô 小南一郎, "Tenmei to toku" 天命と徳, *Tôhô Gakuhô*, 64 (1992), 1-59; Al. S. Martynov, "Kategoriia *de*—sintez 'poriadka' i 'zhizni' ", in: L.N. Borokh et al., eds., *Ot Magicheskoj Sily k Moral'nomu Imperativu: Kategoriia De v Kitajskoj Kul'ture* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1999), 26-75; Pines, *Aspects*, 97-109, 232-51, 353-58. For the notion of *de* as a major attribute of Lord Huan's hegemony, see *Zuo*, Xi 4: 292; Xi 7: 317; Xi 9: 327.

[26] See *Zuo*, Xi 15: 366; Xi 25: 434; Wen 文 7: 563.

Jin government, Shi Hui 士會 (Fan Wuzi 范武子), urged his fellow officers to refrain from engagement with the powerful King Zhuang of Chu (楚莊王, r. 612-591). Shi stated that King Zhuang was a virtually irresistible adversary, since he skillfully combined *de, xing* and proper military and administrative policy. Shi Hui's opponent, Xian Hu 先穀, disagreed with Shi's proposal. He argued that whatever advantages King Zhuang possessed, Jin could not allow itself to avoid engagement, since its hegemony derived exclusively from military superiority, and any leniency towards the enemy would be unforgivable.[27] For Shi Hui, thus, *de* was one—but not the only—component of a hegemon's power; while Xian Hu entirely dismissed the importance of *de*, arguing that only mi-litary might mattered. Despite their differences, both statesmen agreed, therefore, that *de* alone was insufficient to ensure international superiority. This discussion foreshadowed a major shift in the notion of hegemony which occurred throughout the sixth century.

The sixth century *Zuo zhuan* speeches reflect the bifurcation of the concept of hegemony between the traditional view that emphasized virtue, and the new, cynical assumption that naked force is the most important pre-condition for attaining international dominance. While statesmen from the small states continuously espoused *de* as the only quality essential for a hegemon to ensure his position, Jin and Chu leaders dismissed these views. Desperate cries for an international leader who would secure order and protect the tiny states[28] were dismissed by the superpowers' representatives. A short dialogue may illustrate this point. In 582, Jin invited its allies to "rewarm" (i.e. renew) their alliance. The head of the Lu 魯 government, Ji Wenzi 季文子, resented Jin's arbitrary policies, and declined the invitation:

> Ji Wenzi said [to the head of the Jin government], Fan Wenzi 范文子: Your *de* is not strong, of what use is the renewal of the alliance?
>
> Fan Wenzi answered: We are diligent in consoling [the overlords], broad-hearted in treating them, firm and strong in controlling [them], [use]

[27] See *Zuo*, Xuan 宣 12: 722-726.

[28] The most significant of sixth century discussions on virtuous hegemony was that of the Qi statesman, Guo Zuo 郭佐, who tried in 589 to dissuade the victorious Jin army from humiliating the defeated Qi (*Zuo*, Cheng 2: 797-98; see also Xuan 11: 711; Xiang 9: 969; Xiang 11: 993-94; Xiang 24: 1085). For the small states representatives' desperate hopes for a merciful hegemon who would put an end to the international turmoil, see *Zuo*, Cheng 7: 832; Zhao 昭 16: 1376.

numinous deities to tie them [by alliances]; mild to the submissive, and yet invade the duplicitous—this is second to *de*.[29]

Powerless, Ji Wenzi had to resort to moral arguments to protect the interests of his state. His invocation of *de*, however, did not impress the Jin leader. Though politely admitting that force is "second to virtue," Fan Wenzi disillusioned his partner, reminding him of Jin's ability to "invade the duplicitous," which meant that Jin's hegemony relied primarily on its military superiority. Fan Wenzi's contemporaries shared his belief in the ultimate superiority of naked force. Three years later, Zi Fan of Chu ridiculed the polite speeches of the Jin envoy, saying that the only possible meeting between the leaders of both states would take place on the battlefield; and several years later Zheng ministers admitted that the only principle that guided their foreign policy was "to follow the strongest."[30]

In this atmosphere of increasing cynicism, when most statesmen abandoned whatever hopes their predecessors might have cherished for attaining international stability, a last major attempt to revitalize the alliance system was made, namely the 546-541 peace conferences. In 546, the Song *sima*, Xiang Xu **向戌**, used the stalemate in the Jin-Chu conflict to gather the hostile superpowers and their allies for an unprecedented peace meeting.[31] The resultant peace agreement implied the merger of two conflicting groups into one super-alliance, headed simultaneously by Jin and Chu. However, the atmosphere of mutual mistrust and the general belief in naked force as the only compelling argument undermined the agreement from the very beginning. Already at the first meeting in 546 a quarrel over precedence occurred: who would be the first to smear sacrificial blood on his lips? The issue was of crucial importance: he who smears the blood first would gain ritual—and political—advantage over other allies.

Chu leaders decided to resolve the matter in the easiest possible way: they arrived at the meeting wearing armor, thus indicating their readiness to obtain precedence by force. The *lingyin*

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[29] **季文子謂范文子曰：德則不競，尋盟何為？范文子曰：勤以撫之，寬以待之，堅強以御之，明神以要之，柔服而伐貳，德之次也。** (Cheng 9: 842-843).

[30] See *Zuo*, Cheng 12: 857-58; Xiang 9: 971.

[31] See the detailed discussion on the 546 conference in Kano Osamu **河野收**, "Chûgoku kodai no aru hibusô heiwa undô" **中國古代の或る非武裝平和運動**, *Gunji shigaku* **軍事史學**, 13, 4 (1978), 64-74.

(head of the government), Zi Mu 子木, dismissed his colleagues' criticism: "Chu and Jin have lacked mutual trust for a long time, [seeking] only benefit in [their] undertakings. If [our] wishes are fulfilled, who needs to talk of trustworthiness?"[32] The bitter resentment of the Jin delegates, and the Jin envoy Shu Xiang's 叔向 claims that the treacherous Chu would "lose the overlords' [support]" were of little consequence. In 541, Zi Mu's successor, *lingyin* Wei 圍, again overawed the overlords with military might. To avoid another humiliation, the Jin envoys suggested to "rewarm" the 546 alliance without conducting a new alliance ceremony. This was their acknowledgment of the inefficacy of the alliance system as a whole.

The violent atmosphere at the peace conference was only a prelude to the subsequent infraction of the peace agreements and the rapid disintegration of the alliance system as a whole. Soon after the 541 meeting, Chu *lingyin* Wei dismissed his nephew, King Jia'ao (郟敖, r. 544-541), and established himself as a new king, posthumously known as King Ling of Chu (楚靈王, r. 540-529). This ruthless and energetic leader whose actual power was comparable to that of Lord Huan of Qi, lacked whatever pretensions his predecessors might have displayed to abide by norms of ritual and mutual trust. After pondering for a while the advantages of applying the norms of international etiquette when dealing with the overlords, King Ling finally decided to resort to naked force as the only appropriate language of international intercourse. At the apex of his career, King Ling intended to humiliate his arch-rival, the state of Jin, by mutilating the visiting head of the Jin government, Han Qi 韓起, and castrating a leading Jin noble, Shu Xiang. Although King Ling's aides, fearful of possible consequences, dissuaded him from this plan, the incident marked the complete demise of international ritual norms. Throughout his brief career, King Ling missed no opportunity to annex weaker states and to use military force against his neighbors. His plans to "attain all under Heaven" failed, but his rule may be considered for all practical purposes as the *coup de grâce* to the attempts to stabilize the Chunqiu multi-state system.[33]

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[32] 晉楚無信久矣・事利而已・苟得志焉・焉用盲信？ (*Zuo*, Xiang 27: 1131).

[33] See *Zuo*, Zhao 4: 1250; Zhao 5: 1267-68; Zhao 13: 1350. For more about King Ling, see Abe Michiko 安倍道子, "Guanyu chunqiu shidai de Chu wangquan" 關於春秋時代的楚王權, in: Hubei sheng Chushi yanjiuhui 湖北省楚史研 究會, *Chu lishi yanjiu zhuanji* 楚歷史研究專輯 (n.p., 1983), 257-262.

In 529 King Ling was overthrown, and his brutal hegemony ended. However, the ritual facade of inter-state relations was irreversibly lost. Even the traditional-minded Jin statesman, Shu Xiang, came to the conviction that without "manifesting awesomeness" (*shi wei* 示威) Jin would not be able to restore its prestige.[34] Jin leaders accordingly behaved with increasing arrogance. In 503, for instance, two Jin nobles, acting on behalf of the head of the Jin government, Zhao Jianzi 趙簡子, decided to teach the treacherous Lord Ling of Wei (衛靈公, r. 534-493) a lesson. At the alliance ceremony they claimed that Wei could not be considered an independent state, but rather was a dependency of Jin; they then seized Lord Ling's arm and pushed it into the vessel with sacrificial blood. Such an awful humiliation would have been unthinkable in early Chunqiu years but became common at the end of the sixth century.[35]

The ascendancy of the southern powers, Wu and Yue, in the late sixth and the early fifth centuries marked the further deterioration of established norms of international life. These southerners, with only a superstitious commitment to the Zhou ritual culture, never ceased to astonish statesmen form the Central Plain either with unreasonable demands for a ten-fold increase of tribute obligations, or the arrest of an overlord during the alliance meeting, or a resort to arms to enforce precedence at the alliance ceremony.[36] Under such conditions even Confucius's disciple, Zi Gong 子貢, mocked Wu pretensions to invoke ritual norms in the international relations.[37] The atmosphere of overall

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[34] *Zuo*, Zhao 13: 1353-1357. For Shu Xiang's career, see Pines, "The search for stability," 4-13.

[35] For the Lord Ling of Wei affair, see *Zuo*, Ding 定 8: 1566. Another example occurred in 510, when the *lingyin* Zi Chang 子常 of Chu arrested the rulers of two of Chu satellites, Tang 唐 and Cai 蔡, who refused to offer him bribes, and held them in custody for three years. Superpowers evidently discarded even the semblance of ritual propriety.

[36] See *Zuo*, Ai 哀 7: 1640-41; Ai 12: 1672; *Guoyu* 國語 [Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1981], "Wu yu" 吳語 15.6, pp. 605-6 for the aforementioned cases. It is worth reminding that neither Wu nor, particularly, Yue belonged to the Zhou ritual system prior to the late sixth century BCE; in all likelihood they were culturally and ethnically distinct from the Zhou world. See Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments 770-481 BC" in: M. Loewe and Ed. L. Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China, From The Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 525-39.

[37] See *Zuo,* Ai 7: 1641; cf. Ai 12: 1672.

cynicism which prevailed in the late Chunqiu years may be best exemplified by the great southern statesman, Wu Zixu (**伍子胥**, d. 484). A self-made man whose family was executed in Chu, Wu Zixu, due to his political and military skills, found his way to the highest positions in the newly emerging superpower of Wu.[38] Wu Zixu represented an entirely new approach to political questions. Restricted neither by moral nor ritual considerations, an outsider to the Central States, he was free of the burden of traditional values. Wu Zixu believed that military superiority was the only way to ensure Wu's supremacy. He explained this in 494 in a speech intended to dissuade young King Fuchai (**夫差**, r. 495-473) from sparing Wu's arch-enemy, the state of Yue. After mentioning the miraculous resurrection of Shao Kang's **少康** family, the remote ancestors of King Goujian of Yue (**句踐**, r. 496-465), Wu Zixu stated:

> Goujian is able to [treat people as] relatives, and devotes himself to bestowing goodness; in bestowing goodness nobody is forgotten, and in [treating people as] relatives, no one's achievements are neglected. [Yue] has existed on the same lands as we do, and for generations they have been our enemy. Therefore, to overcome it but not to seize its territory, and moreover to preserve its existence, means to contradict Heaven and to prolong [the life of] the adversary. Even if you repent later, you will be unable to reverse the case. The decline of the Ji **姬** clan can be expected every day. Living among the *manyi* "barbarians" and prolonging the life of adversaries—[if you try] thereby to obtain hegemony, [you] shall certainly fail.[39]

Wu Zixu's speech is a manifesto of a new era. Neither *de*, nor any other moral or legal obligations were required of the hegemon. To achieve supremacy he had to pursue his political course resolutely and spare no enemy. That the enemy, Goujian, was apparently a virtuous ruler, made him even more dangerous and the task of annihilating him more urgent. In the seventh century preserving ruined states was recognized as one of the major achievements of Lord Huan of Qi, and was seen as the quintessence of the legitimacy of his hegemony. In the early fifth century, Wu Zixu's attitude, conversely, may be summarized by an

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[38] Wu Zixu became a legendary figure already in the Zhanguo period, particularly due to his unusual biography. For details of the legend of Wu Zixu, see David Johnson, "Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-Hsü," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (1981), 255-271.

[39] **句踐能親而務施，施不失人，親不棄勞，與我同壤，而世為仇讎。於是乎克而弗取，將又存之，逆天而長寇讎，後雖悔之，不可食已。姤之衰也，日可俟也。介在蠻夷，而長寇讎，以是求伯，必不行矣。** (*Zuo*, Ai 1: 1605-6).

ugly modern Chinese proverb: "Beat down the drowning dog" (*da luo shui gou* 打落水狗). Harsh political reality invalidated both moral norms of international behavior and whatever institutional solutions existed to resolve inter-state conflicts. International politics, as understood by Wu Zixu, were a zero-sum game, with only one possible survivor.

Wu Zixu's speech foreshadows the new age of the Warring States. The disintegration of the ritual system and the system of alliances left the Zhanguo international scene in complete turmoil and inaugurated a war of all against all. Zhanguo statesmen attempted to preserve mutual trust among the rival states through a system of exchanging hostages, but with little if any success.[40] The law of the jungle: "The flesh of the weak is the food of the strong" (*ruo rou qiang shi* 弱肉強食)[41] dominated the international life of the last pre-imperial centuries. The collapse of moral norms in Zhanguo international relations became notorious. Even if part of the stratagems presented in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, a Zhanguo compendium of political intrigues, exaggerate the treachery, the violation of mutual obligations and relentless profit-seeking by the leading states, the general atmosphere of mutual mistrust as depicted in this compilation are beyond doubt. A reader of the *Zhanguo ce* easily discerns that ways of diplomacy collapsed. A speech attributed to the famous strategist, Su Qin (蘇秦, d. 284), vividly depicts the disintegration of the multi-state order:

> In ancient times, envoys drove their chariots shaft against shaft, and talked about mutual ties. All under Heaven unanimously engaged [in these activities], allying horizontally and unifying vertically,[42] [but] weapons and armor were not stored, civilian means and soldiers were deployed simultaneously; overlords were confused, and mistrusted [each other]; myriad ways

[40] Hostages (*zhi* 質), usually the scions of the ruling house, were exchanged with the ally state to prevent violation of the treaties and perpetuate cordial ties. Exchange of hostages, however, did not prevent Zhanguo statesmen from betraying their allies. For the complications that arouse around hostages, see He Jianzhang 何建章, annot., *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 戰國策注釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), "Qi ce 3 齊策" 10.1: 351-53; "Chu ce 2 楚策" 15.8: 544-45; "Wei ce 2 魏策" 23.16: 880.

[41] This saying was first used by Han Yu (韓愈, 768-824 CE) in *Song Futu Wenchangshi xu* 送浮屠文暢師序 to designate the law of the jungle which rules the society that lacks ritual and propriety (Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元, ed., *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注 [Shanghai: Guji, 1986], 253).

[42] The vertical (*zong* 縱) alliance was directed against Qin; the horizontal (*heng* 橫), conversely, was a pro-Qin alliance. Both alliances intermittently dominated Zhanguo foreign relations.

> arose together, and it was impossible to arrange them in order. Statutes and decrees were prepared, [but] the people became increasingly deceitful; documents and ordinances were piled in disarray, [but] the hundred clans found them insufficient; superiors and inferiors bore mutual grudges, and the people had nobody to rely on. As the words were clarified and items arranged, increasingly more weapons and armor arose; [despite] outstanding and compelling arguments, offensives and wars never stopped; [despite] gorgeous sayings and refined words, the world lacked proper government; tongues were worn off and ears deafened, but no achievements were seen; [rulers] acted according to propriety, bound [alliances] of mutual trust, but All under Heaven lacked close relations.[43]

Su Qin summarized the woeful inadequacy of diplomatic means to achieve international stability. Despite generations of treaties, agreements and alliances, despite the "gorgeous sayings and refined words" of the envoys, mutual mistrust among the overlords was impossible to overcome; accordingly, "offensives and wars never stopped." Similarly, incessant efforts at attaining proper government, issuing ordinances and laws, could not pacify the people within each state, and mutual mistrust between superiors and inferiors further aggravated the situation. Definitely, this situation could not continue.

The speech quoted above may not have been pronounced by Su Qin, but may have been prepared by his followers, the masters of alliances (*zonghengjia* 縱橫家), as teaching material for future generations of diplomats.[44] Whoever the author may have been, the arguments evidently reflected the common belief of Zhanguo statesmen. Diplomacy failed to save the people from incessant bloody conflicts, and the subsequent turmoil, treachery, deceit and bloodshed inflicted unbearable suffering on elites and commoners alike. A solution was badly needed. But of what kind? How to achieve it? These issues dominated late Chunqiu and Zhanguo political thought, resulting in the unanimous quest for political unification of All under Heaven.

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[43] 古者，使車轂擊，言語相結，天下為一，約從連橫，兵革不藏，文士並飭，諸侯亂惑，萬端俱起，不可勝理。科條既備，民多偽詐；書策稠濁，百姓不足；上下相愁，民無所聊；明言章理，兵甲愈起；辯言偉服，攻戰不息；繁稱文辭，天下不治；舌弊耳聾，不見成 功；行義約信，天下不親。(*Zhanguo ce*, "Qin ce 秦策 1" 3.1: 74).

[44] Not all of the *Zhanguo ce* speeches are of similar verity; some may be based on authentic records of the court speeches, while others, such as Su Qin's speech presented above, might have been prepared as training material for future diplomats. For more on the historical reliability of *Zhanguo ce* speeches, see James I. Crump, *Intrigues: Studies of the Chan-kuo Ts'e* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), 29-75; K. V. Vasil'ev, *Plany Srazhaiushchikhsia Tsarstv* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 33-164.

B. "Stability in Unity"

By the late Chunqiu it became obvious that neither institutional arrangements nor moral norms of international behavior, not even the efforts of powerful hegemons, could preserve a viable multi-state system. The Zhou world order was on the verge of collapse. On the ruins of tiny Chunqiu states new, powerful and territorially integrated political entities had appeared, the so-called seven hero-states (*qi xiong* 七雄) of the Zhanguo age.[45] Ritual bonds connecting the parts of the Zhou world were weakening; strong peripheral states such as Qin and Chu began emphasizing their unique characteristics and adopted distinct rites; we may even suggest that some kind of distinct identity appeared in different parts of Chinese world.[46] Yet none of the known Zhanguo thinkers endorsed these developments; on the contrary, they did their best to reverse the tide and re-integrate the Zhou world. What were the reasons behind this drive for unity?

Several parallel developments contributed towards tightening the ties between various parts of the Chinese world despite the political disintegration. First, late Chunqiu to early Zhanguo economic developments galvanized inter-regional connections. The

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[45] These were Qin in the North-West, Qi in the East, Yan 燕 in the North-East, Chu in the South, and three former components of the state of Jin—Wei 魏, Han 韓 and Zhao 趙—in the heartland of the Central Plain. Almost two dozens other states survived the fifth century as the tiny remnants of the Chunqiu world order; all these were annexed throughout the Zhanguo period by the "hero-states." For the territorial integration of the Zhanguo states, see Mark E. Lewis, "Warring States Political History," in: *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 593-619.

[46] Throughout the Chunqiu period, Qin and Chu were considered states "of a different clan" (*yixing* 異姓), but definitely belonging to the common Zhou culture; hence, unlike the polities established by the Rong 戎 and Di 狄 tribesmen, they routinely participated in alliances with other Hua 華 states. In Zhanguo texts, however, we frequently find identification of both peripheral superpowers with the Rong, Di, or Man 蠻 "barbarians" (see, for instance *Zhanguo ce*, "Wei ce 3" 24.8: 907, for the state of Qin; Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1992], "Teng Wen gong A" 滕文公上 5.4: 123-125, and *Gongyang zhuan passim* for the state of Chu). This change in identification might have been inspired by conscious attempts of Qin, and particularly Chu, to adopt new rites, apply new definitions for ritual paraphernalia, and other steps aimed to distinguish themselves from the Zhou rules and to establish a distinct identity, for which see Falkenhausen, "The Waning of the Bronze Age," 525 and his *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 318-19.

increasing productivity of agriculture promulgated by the introduction of iron implements, new fertilizers and better irrigation, along with more sophisticated industrial production, led to the growing commercialization of the Zhanguo economy. The rise in commercial activities increased regional interdependence; economic ties across the Chinese world surpassed the boundaries among individual states.[47] This economic integration and interdependence softened the centrifugal impact of political conflicts.

Second, military developments during this period likewise contributed to the increasing sense of a common fate of the Chinese world. In the early Chunqiu, military conflicts were mostly confined to neighboring states, while long-distance expeditions were infrequent. Within a century, however, the situation changed completely. Deep penetration into enemy lands became common tactics, and states formerly considered remote became active participants in military conflicts throughout the Central Plain and beyond.[48] In the complicated politics of the late Chunqiu and Zhanguo age, internal political conflicts routinely enticed powerful neighbors—and even relatively distant states—to intervene, seeking political and territorial benefits to themselves.[49] Under these conditions, no single state could seek stability and prosperity for itself unless the universal order could be ensured.

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[47] See the detailed discussion by Yang Kuan 楊寬, *Zhanguo shi* 戰國史 (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1998, rev. ed.), 89-150; Hsu Cho-yun in *Ancient China*, 116-126; cf. Lev Perelomov, *Imperiia Tsin'—Pervoe Tsentralizovannoe Gosudarstvo v Kitae* (Moscow: Nauka, 1961), 22-34.

[48] The first military encounter of the Qi and Chu forces in 656 was an astonishing experience to the participants. The Chu envoy told Lord Huan: "You live near the Northern Sea, I live near the Southern Sea, even the smells of [sacrificial] horses and oxen do not reach each other; now, unexpectedly you entered my lands—what is the reason?" (*Zuo*, Xi 4: 289). Chu leaders evidently considered Qi as too remote a state to become a real enemy. A century and a half later, however, the situation completely changed. In 506, the south-eastern state of Wu launched an unprecedented campaign against Chu, penetrating deep into the Chu heartland and invading the Chu capital, Ying 郢. It was only the military assistance of Chu's north-western neighbor, Qin, that helped Chu to recover its lands. Thus, for the first time two opposite parts of the Chinese world were linked in the same campaign, inaugurating the age of long-distance expeditions. For Zhanguo warfare, see Yang Kuan, *Zhanguo shi*, 303-316 *et passim*.

[49] The examples of such interventions are too numerous to be surveyed here; suffice it to mention that the inter-lineage struggle in the state of Song in 522-520 brought about the troops from the states of Wu, Jin, Cao 曹, Qi, Wei 衛 and Chu—almost half of the Chinese world! Understandably, this situation obliterated distinctions between domestic and foreign affairs.

Third, and perhaps most important for our discussion, the migration of statesmen across the Chunqiu and Zhanguo states perpetuated cultural links between these states and thus served as an important integrative force. Already in the Chunqiu period, ministers and members of their lineages who left their native states for various reasons settled in other parts of the about-to-be Chinese world, bringing with them their cultural heritage, thereby strengthening cultural links across China.[50] The phenomenon of peripatetic advisors of the Zhanguo period, who frequently crossed borders in search of better appointment, is well known and does not require detailed discussion. This constant change of allegiance on behalf of the leading statesmen and thinkers prevented or at least weakened the feeling of separatist identity among the elites.[51]

Thus, despite political disintegration, many factors combined to provide Eastern Zhou statesmen with the sense of belonging to a common economic, military and mostly cultural realm—All under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下). This feeling of commonality is reflected in the increase of the use of the term *tianxia* in the speeches and texts of that age. It had been marginal in pre-sixth century discourse, but since the mid-Chunqiu its usage visibly intensified.[52] Whatever the exact boundaries of All under Heaven

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[50] For instances of Chunqiu statesmen's migration, see Zhang Yanxiu 張彥修, "Chunqiu 'chu ben' kaoshu" 春秋出奔考述, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 6 (1996), 21-25; Zhao Faguo 趙發國, "Xianqin Qidi renkou qianyi shitan" 先秦齊地人口遷移試探, *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢 1 (1997), 171-187.

[51] This generalization, however, requires further elucidation. In the state of Chu, for instance, where hereditary aristocracy preserved its leading position throughout the Zhanguo period, the feeling of separatist identity was apparently more pronounced than in the other states. Suffice it to mention the extremely strong anti-Qin feelings, peculiar to the Chu area, as mentioned in the "Basic Annals of Xiang Yu" 項羽本紀, *Shiji* 史記 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 7:300. By the late Zhanguo period, Qin also might have increasingly perceived its otherness; hence Qin aristocrats developed a kind of paranoia concerning foreign advisors, and even intended to expel all the foreigners (*Shiji*, 87:2541-42).

[52] The term *tianxia* appeared first in the Western Zhou period, but its occurrence in Western Zhou texts is few and far between. *Tianxia* is mentioned only twice in the Western Zhou chapters of the *Shu jing* ("Shao gao" 召誥, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991] 15:213, and "Gu ming" 顧命 18:240) and twice in chapters which cannot be attributed with certainty to the Western Zhou period ("Li zheng" 立正 17:232 and "Lü xing" 呂刑 19:251). In the *Shi jing* the term *tianxia* occurs only once ("Huang yi" 皇矣, Mao 241, *Shisanjing* 16: 521); it appears twice in its pre-compound form "under the heaven" (*tian zhi*

were to Chunqiu and Zhanguo thinkers, it is clear that the focus of their political concern became the entire Zhou world, not a single state.[53]

The increasing interest in the affairs of *tianxia* had immediate political implications. Chunqiu and Zhanguo statesmen and thinkers came to the conclusion that it was no longer possible to attain social and political stability for their states unless external factors were taken into consideration. In a society which lacked either clear distinctions between the external and the internal realm, or acceptable ways of settling international conflicts, the quest for peace for a single state was meaningless. The multi-state system could bring no stability to the war-torn Zhou world. In these conditions, "disputers of the Dao" gradually reached a consensus: "stability is in unity." The only alternative to continuous bloodshed and turmoil was the unification of the realm.

Confucius (**孔子**, 551-479) was probably the first to clearly outline the advantages of the unified rule over All under Heaven. The *Lunyu* cites his saying:

> When the Way prevails under Heaven, rites, music and punitive expeditions are issued by the Son of Heaven; when there is no Way under Heaven, rites, music and punitive expeditions are issued by the overlords. If they are issued by the overlords, few [states] will not be lost within ten generations; if they are issued by the nobles (*dafu* **大夫**), few will not be lost within five generations; when the retainers hold the destiny of the state, few will not be lost within three generations.[54]

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xia **天之下**) ("Bei shan" **北山**, Mao 205, 13:463 and "Ban" **般**, Mao 254, 19:605). To my knowledge, the term *tianxia* does not occur in bronze inscriptions (according to the index to Shirakawa Shizuka's **白川靜** *Kinbun tsûshaku* **金文通釋** [Kobe: Hakutsuru Bijutsukan, 1960-1984]). Its occurrence in the first half of the Chunqiu period is extremely rare: the *Zuo* records only four references to *tianxia* in the speeches of the eighth and seventh centuries. It appears 18 times, however, in the speeches of the second half of the Chunqiu period.

[53] *Tianxia* in Chunqiu-Zhanguo discourse usually referred to the Zhou world united by the common cultural-ritual values. Yet, for some Zhanguo thinkers like Mozi, *tianxia* included non-Chinese tribesmen as well (Wu Yujiang **吳毓江**, *Mozi jiaozhu* **墨子校注** [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993], "Jian ai C" **兼愛下** 16: 178-79). Sometimes, conversely, *tianxia* was used in the narrow meaning; in the late Zhanguo it occasionally referred only to the eastern states, excluding Qin (see, for instance, Zhou Zhongling **周鍾靈** et al, *Han Feizi suoyin* **韓非子索引** [Beijing Zhonghua shuju, 1982], "Chu xian Qin" **初見秦** 1:729-30). See also a discussion by Ishii Komei **石井宏明**, *Dongzhou wangchao yanjiu* **東周王朝研究** (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue, 1999), 172-175.

[54] **天下有道，則禮樂征伐自天子出，天下無道，則禮樂征伐自諸侯出。自諸侯出，蓋十世希**

Confucius was not the only Chunqiu thinker who sought a remedy for the ongoing process of political and social disintegration. However, none of his contemporaries, insofar as the *Zuo zhuan* may be trusted, ever suggested to restore the political potency of the Son of Heaven. High-ranking ministers of the Chunqiu states were, predictably, not interested in ceding the de facto sovereignty of their states to Zhou kings. Confucius, whose low position encouraged him to consider the benefits of the realm as a whole rather than of a single state, was, therefore, the first to suggest that only concentration of political power in the hands of a king would stop the ongoing fragmentation and turmoil.[55]

Confucius, thus, favored unitary rule. But how to achieve this goal? Here as elsewhere the solution suggested by Confucius was in accord with his principle to "transmit, and not to create."[56] Namely, the political potency of the Son of Heaven had to be restored in accord with the Western Zhou ritual norms. This solution, however, could not have been really convincing: the continuous decline of a Zhou order rendered the possibility of the Zhou restoration unrealistic. New generations of thinkers had to search for solutions elsewhere.

The second of the major pre-Qin thinkers, Mozi (**墨子**, c. 468-390), went one step further towards pursuing the goal of political unity. Mozi, a proponent of the ideal of "universal love," considered political and social fragmentation a major malady of contemporary society. In the "Elevating Uniformity" (or "Identifying with Superiors," *shang tong* **尚同**) chapters, Mozi depicted the dire results of disunity:

> In antiquity, when the people were just born, it was the time of the lack of punishments and [proper] administration. When we inquire into the speeches [of that period], [we see] that the people had different [concepts of] propriety/righteousness (*yi* **義**). Therefore, one man had one propriety,

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不失矣；自大夫出，五世希不失矣；陪臣執國命，三世希不失矣。(Yang Bojun **楊伯峻**, *Lunyu yizhu* **論語譯注** [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991], "Ji shi" **季氏** 16.2: 174).

[55] The quoted passage belongs to what is often considered as the later stratum of the *Lunyu* (D.C. Lau, *The Analects* [London: Penguin, 1979], 222-227). Yet, the content of this passage, namely the reference to "the retainers who hold the destiny of the state," evidently reflects Confucius' own experience, that is the 505-502 usurpation of power in the state of Lu by Yang Hu **陽虎** and his clique of retainers. Accordingly, we may suggest that the quoted passage does represent Confucius' authentic views.

[56] **述而不作** (*Lunyu,* "Shu er" **述而** 7.1: 66).

> two men had two proprieties, ten men had ten proprieties. The more men there were, the more concepts of propriety appeared. Consequently, each man justified his own propriety rejecting thereby others' propriety, so that human contacts were based on mutual rejection. Thus, within [the family] fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers fell into resentment and hatred, were alienated and were unable to unite in harmony. The hundred clans under Heaven all used water, fire and poisonous drugs to harm each other. Even those who enjoyed extra strength were unable to work for others; surplus commodities rotted, but nobody distributed them among others; good ways were concealed and nobody taught them to others. The disorder in All under Heaven reached the level of birds and beasts.[57]

Mozi's apocalyptic vision of the beast-like world of war of all against all was placed in the unspecified past, but this was only a rhetorical device. The audience of the fifth century BCE easily identified the state of turmoil depicted above with their contemporary conditions. Yet resorting to the widespread device of "using the past to serve the present," Mozi invented a historical narrative to serve his needs:

> It was clear that the disorder under Heaven derived from the absence of the ruler. Therefore, the worthiest and the most able in All under Heaven was selected and established as Son of Heaven. When the Son of Heaven was established, he apprehended that his force was still insufficient; hence, again [he] selected the worthiest and the most able in All under Heaven and placed them in the position of the Three Dukes. After the Son of Heaven and the Three Dukes were established, they apprehended that All under Heaven is vast and huge, and one or two persons cannot clearly know the distinction between the beneficent and the harmful, the true and the false in regard to the people of the distinct lands; thus they divided it into myriad states, and established the overlords and the rulers of the states.[58]

Mozi explicated that the only remedy for universal disorder was the establishment of a universal ruler. But, again, how to achieve this goal? Unlike Confucius, Mozi cherished no hopes for a Zhou restoration; and he similarly disliked the idea that the unification would be achieved by force. Unable to resolve the contradiction between insistence on unification and the lack of means to

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[57] 古者，民始生，未有刑政之時，蓋其語，人異義。是以一人則一義，二人則二義，十人則十義。其人茲眾，其所謂義者亦茲眾。是以人是其義，以非人之義，故交相非也。是以內者父子兄弟作怨惡，離散不能相和合。天下之百姓，皆以水火毒藥相虧害，至有餘力不能以相勞，腐朽餘財不以相分，隱匿良道不以相教。天下之亂，至若禽獸然。 (*Mozi*, "Shang tong A" 尚同上 11:109).

[58] 夫明乎天下之所以亂者，生於無政長。是故選天下之賢可者，立以為天子。天子立，以其力為未足，又選擇天下之賢可者，置立以為三公。天子三公既以立，以天下為博大，遠國異土之民，是非利害之辯，不可一二而明知，故畫分萬國，立諸侯國君。 ("Shang tong A" 尚同上 11:109).

achieve it, Mozi preferred to place the emergence of a unitary state in the imaginary past. Mozi did not specify who was supposed to select the worthiest to become the Son of Heaven;[59] but he left no doubt that after the Son of Heaven's position had been established, rule would be concentrated in his hands. His narrative continues:

> [...] After the leaders were established, the Son of Heaven proclaimed to the hundred clans of All under Heaven: "Whenever you hear of good or bad, you must report to your superiors. You must unanimously approve whatever the superiors approve, and you must unanimously disprove whatever the superiors disprove. When the superiors are wrong, you must admonish them, and when there are good men among the inferiors, you must recommend them. One who conforms upward and does not ally with the inferiors is to be rewarded by superiors and praised by inferiors. [...] One who allies with the inferiors and is unable to conform upwards will be punished by the superiors and destroyed by the hundred clans.[60]

In this passage Mozi discards whatever superficial semblance his ideal state has to the Western Zhou model. Such features as meritocratic appointments, close surveillance of office holders, and most importantly unification of thought and behavior throughout the realm marked Mozi's radically new approach to the issue of state formation. The loose unity of the Western Zhou could no longer satisfy those thinkers who sought to stabilize All under Heaven. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that two centuries later certain aspects of Mozi's vision came to influence the founders of the first empire.

Both Confucius and Mozi expressed their dissatisfaction with political fragmentation of the Zhou world; both favored unified rule over the realm. New generations of thinkers developed these ideas, providing, furthermore, philosophical stipulations for the goal of unification. The most interesting, albeit somewhat ne-

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[59] Did Mozi envision a kind of election in which all members of society agree on choosing the leader best able to impose stability and act for a mutual benefit, or did he consider omnipotent Heaven as the single Elector? It is likely that the ambiguity was intentional: explicitly propagating popular election of the supreme ruler might have been too radical a departure from the extant rules of hereditary succession to be advocated even by such a bold thinker as Mozi. See also a discussion in Liu Zehua 劉澤華, *Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi siwei* 中國傳統政治思維 (Liaoning: Jilin jiaoyu, 1991), 313-14.

[60] 正長既已具，天子發政於天下之百姓。盲曰：聞善而不善，皆以告其上。上之所是必皆是之，上之所非必皆非之。上有過則規諫之，下善則傍薦之。上同而不下比者，此上之所賞而下之所譽也。[...] 下比而不能上同者，此上之所罰而百姓所毀也。("Shang tong A" 11: 109-110).

glected contribution in this field was that of the *Laozi* 老子.[61] The *Laozi*'s political ideal is commonly identified with its communal utopia of the "tiny state, small population," proposed in no. 80. A careful reading of the text, however, suggests that the author did not confine his vision to a small state, as argued by A.C. Graham;[62] on the contrary, we may assume that he envisioned a unified realm and even provided a metaphysical basis for this goal.

The *Laozi* commonly identifies *Dao* as the One (*yi* 壹 or 一); this Oneness refers to the epistemological unity of the universe, to the single progenitor of the "myriad things" and to the single principle of the functioning of the Cosmos and of society. The importance of the principle of Oneness in the *Laozi* is commonly recognized; it was emphasized already by Zhanguo thinkers.[63] Particularly important for our discussion are the political implications of this principle, which are not confined to the statement that "Lords and Kings obtained the One to become Rectifiers of All under Heaven."[64] Since the *Laozi* presumed correspondence between political and metaphysical orders, this meant that the unifying principle of Oneness on the cosmic level had to be matched by the political unity below. Accordingly, elevation of the Oneness leads to the elevation of the ruler:

> Therefore, the *Dao* is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and the King is also great. There are four greats in the state, and the King is one of these.[65]

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[61] The authorship and dating of the *Laozi* (*Daodejing* 道德經) remain a controversial issue which cannot be dealt with in sufficient detail here; particularly, recently excavated late fourth century BCE Guodian 郭店 slips with portions of the *Laozi* further complicate the problem (see Jingmenshi bowuguan 荊門市博物館, *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 [Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998]). Doubtless, *Laozi* (or proto-*Laozi*?) existed in the fourth century BCE, although the received text(s) may be the result of the third century BCE editorial efforts.

[62] See A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 234.

[63] For the identification of "Supreme oneness" (*taiyi* 太一) as the most important of *Laozi*'s principles, see, for instance, Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今注今譯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), "Tianxia" 天下 33. 880; cf. *Han Feizi*, "Yang quan" 揚權, 8.739. For the importance of One or Oneness in the *Laozi*, see nos. 54; 42; 39. The Guodian slips contain a chapter on Supreme oneness as the progenitor of the universe ("Tayiyi sheng shui" 太一生水, *Guodian*, 125), which is identified by Cui Renyi 崔仁義 as a part of "Laozi A" text (see his *Chujian Laozi yanjiu* 楚簡老子研究 [Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1998]). This may provide further evidence for the importance of Oneness in the *Laozi*.

[64] 侯王得一以為天下正 (following the Mawangdui versions; see Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi jiaozhu* 帛書老子校注 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996] no. 39).

[65] 故道大，天大，地大，王亦大。圍中有四大，而王居一焉。 (no. 25). This is in accord

This passage attributes to the ruler an unprecedented metaphysical importance that by far surpasses Shang-Western Zhou religious legitimacy of the monarch.[66] Elevation of the King to the position of virtual equality with *Dao*, Heaven, and Earth, the three ultimate unifying forces of the Cosmos, eventually led to the notion of the Single Ruler in All under Heaven. That *Laozi* indeed envisioned unification of *tianxia* is suggested by his remarks scattered throughout the text which discuss the proper way to "attain All under Heaven:"

> One who wants to seize All under Heaven through action, I see that he would not gain it. All under Heaven is the sacred vessel, it cannot [be attained] by acting. One who acts is defeated, one who holds it loses it.[67]

And again:

> All under Heaven is constantly seized by lacking activities. When one is active, it does not suffice to seize All under Heaven.[68]

This lack of "activities" (*shi* 事) apparently refers to various administrative undertakings and particularly to warfare.[69] To seize its small neighbors, *Laozi* suggested, the great power should display submissiveness and humility rather than resort to arms.[70] These passages which deal with practical aspects of attaining

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with both Mawangdui versions; Guodian version places Dao after Earth (*Guodian chumu*, 112). Wang Bi uses *yu* 域 instead of *guo* 國. Some other editions (Fu Yi's 傅奕 and Fan Yingyuan's 范應元, for instance) substitute King (*wang* 王) with the less politically loaded Man (*ren* 人) (see *Boshu Laozi*, 351-52). However, the context, particularly the mention of the state (*guo* 國), suggests that the Mawangdui and Wang Bi's versions are correct.

[66] For the religious legitimacy of the Shang-Western Zhou monarchs, see Liu Zehua, *Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi siwei*, 1-5, and 31-34.

[67] 將欲取天下而為之，吾見其不得已。夫天下神器也，非可為之也。為者敗之，執者失之。 (no. 29). I follow Wang Bi's version (*Boshu Laozi*, 377).

[68] 取天下，常以無事。及其有事，不足以取天下。 (no. 48; compare no. 57).

[69] The *Laozi* regarded weapons as "inauspicious utensils" (*xiongqi* 兇器) and accordingly proposed restricting warfare to the necessary minimum, satisfying one's needs without self-glorification, without displaying martial spirit (*wu* 武), and without rage (*nu* 怒). See nos. 30, 31, 68, 69.

[70] "The great state displays humility towards the small state, then it seizes the small state; the small state displays humility towards the great state, then it is seized by the great state. [...] The great state desires nothing more than attaining and nurturing others; the small state desires nothing more than serving others. In order to enable both to fulfill their desires, the great must display humility" 大邦以下小邦，則取小邦；小邦以下大邦，則取於大邦。 [...] 大邦者，不過欲兼畜人；小邦者不過欲入事於人。夫皆得其欲，大者宜為下。 (no. 61). I follow the Mawangdui A version (*Boshu Laozi*, 123-25).

universal rule strengthen our assumption that *Laozi* considered political unity as a logical outcome of its emphasis on the cosmic Oneness of the *Dao*. This interpretation of the *Laozi* was shared, indeed, by most Zhanguo thinkers.

Scrutiny of late Zhanguo texts suggests that whereas *Laozi*'s vision of "tiny states" had little impact on Zhanguo thought,[71] its elevation of the King significantly influenced later discourse. The concept of the ruler's equality with *Dao* had a particularly strong impact on political forms of Daoism, usually identified as the Huang-Lao 黃老 school. These commonly emphasized the unique position of the ruler, his virtual equality with Heaven and Earth and his function to cherish the lives of all beings.[72] The unique position of the ruler as the generator of the proper order in All under Heaven implied that he had to preside over the unified realm. Shen Dao (愼到, fl. late fourth century)[73] plainly stated:

> In ancient times, the Son of Heaven was established and esteemed not in order to benefit the single person. It is said: when All under Heaven lack the single esteemed [person], then there is no way to carry out the principles [of orderly government, *li* 理], carrying out the principles is done for the sake of All under Heaven.[74]

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[71] It is tempting to defy two millennia of commentatory tradition and to reinterpret the famous no. 80 of the *Laozi* in accord with the above analysis. The first phrase, *xiao guo gua min* 小國寡民 is commonly translated as "A tiny state, small population." If, however, we accept *xiao* and *gua* as verbs in imperative form, a common usage in the *Laozi*, then the text would read "Make states tiny and their population sparse," which may be a useful recommendation for a future unifier; in that case 國 *guo* must refer to an easily controlled unit of the unified realm. Then the text would be simply another recommendation to the despotic centralizing ruler, and it would be in accord with no. 3, for instance.

[72] The *Jing fa* 經法 manuscript unearthed in 1973 in Mawangdui states: "The ruler of men [equals?] Heaven and Earth." (人主者，天地之【】也.) The missing character is in all likelihood *san* 參 [one who stands in trinity with]. See Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu 馬王堆漢墓帛書整理小組, *Jing fa* 經法 [Beijing: Wenwu, 1976], "Lun" 論, p. 27). Similarly, the authors of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 attributed to the Son of Heaven the unique Heaven-like function of cherishing the life of all human beings generated by Heaven (Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoyi* 呂氏春秋校釋 [Shanghai: Xuelin, 1990], "Ben sheng" 本生 1:20).

[73] For Shen Dao's views, see Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 72-5; Randall P. Peerenboom, *Law and Morality in Ancient China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 229-234. Shen Dao's views of the political implementation of the *Laozi*'s theory were echoed by Han Feizi (see Hsiao-po Wang and Leo S. Chang, *The Philosophical Foundations of Han Fei's Political Theory* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986], 6-12).

[74] 古者，立天子而貴之者，非以利一人也，曰：天下無一貴，則理無由遂，遂理以為天下也，

Shen Dao's apprehension that the Son of Heaven is the one who generates universal implementation of the principles of orderly government resembles *Laozi*'s view of the ruler as Rectifier of All under Heaven. Shen Dao left no doubt that to properly implement his function, the ruler must remain "the single esteemed" in the world. Political unity was therefore, according to Shen Dao, the precondition for implementation of the principles of *Dao* in social life. Similarly, authors of the mid-third-century BCE compendium, the *Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋, echoing the *Laozi* passage quoted above, explained the need for political unity:

> The true king upholds Oneness and becomes the Rectifier of the myriad things. The army needs the general, thereby it is unified. The state needs the ruler, thereby it is unified. All under Heaven needs the Son of Heaven, thereby it is unified. The Son of Heaven upholds oneness, thereby unifying it [the realm]. Oneness means [proper] government; doubleness means chaos.[75]

Numerous late Zhanguo texts shared the above interpretation of the *Laozi*, according to which the ruler embodied the *Dao*, and therefore had to remain the single source of authority, presiding over the unified realm.[76] Yet many other thinkers advocated the unification of All under Heaven neither because of historical precedents, nor due to philosophical reasons. These thinkers were moved primarily by the sense of urgent political necessity to put an end to the ever-increasing international turmoil, wars and suffering. These views are best represented by the following dialogue between Mencius (孟子, c. 379-304) and King Xiang of Wei (魏襄王, r. 318-296):

> [The king] asked: How to stabilize All under Heaven?
> [Mencius] answered: Stability is in unity.
> – Who is able to unify it?

(*Shenzi* 慎子, "Wei de" 威德). Quoted from P.M. Thompson, *The Shen tzu Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 240.

[75] 王者執一，而為萬物正。單必有將，所以一之也；圄必有君，所以一之也；天下必有天子，所以一之也；天子必執一，所以搏之也。一則治，兩則亂。 (*Lüshi chunqiu,* "Zhi yi" 執一, 17: 1132).

[76] See, for instance, the *Guanzi* 管子: "If there are two Sons of Heaven in All under Heaven, All under Heaven could not be arranged in accord with principles (*li* 理)" (使天下兩天子，天下不可理也). Xie Haofan 謝浩範 and Zhu Yingping 朱迎平, *Guanzi quanyi* 管子全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin, 1996), "Ba yan" 霸言 23: 357; cf. Allyn W. Rickett, *Guanzi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 355-56. For similar views see *Jing fa,* "Liu fen" 六分, pp. 16-17 (Peerenboom, *Law and Morality*, 95-96); and *Han Feizi*, "Yang quan" 揚權 8:739.

> [Mencius] answered: The one who has no proclivity towards killing is able to unify it.
> – Who will be able to follow him?
> [Mencius] answered: Nobody under the Heaven will not follow him. [...] If there is [a ruler] who has no proclivity towards killing, then the people of All under Heaven will crane their necks looking at him. If this really happens, the people will go over to him as water runs downwards: who will be able to stop this torrent?[77]

Mencius needed no lengthy explanations to persuade the king of the advantages of political unification; evidently by his time this was already the common goal of political leaders and their advisors alike. The more important issue, therefore, was not whether to unify All under Heaven, but how to do it. Here Mencius, like other thinkers cited above, had no ready solution. A thinker who denounced aggressive warfare as "leading the lands to devour human flesh, the crime that deserves no less than the death penalty,"[78] Mencius could not possibly suggest a unification by force. On the contrary, he hoped that unification would be completed by the benevolent unifier, a "true king" (*wangzhe* 王者) who would attain the heart of the people. Elsewhere Mencius stated that although "It happens that the non-benevolent attains the state, it can never happen that the non-benevolent attains All under Heaven."[79] Benevolence, not force, should unify the realm.

Mencius' statement that "stability is in unity" was shared by almost all known Zhanguo thinkers, perhaps with the exception of Zhuangzi (**莊子**, d. 286?). Earlier we surveyed views of those inspired by the *Laozi*. Followers of Confucius similarly raised the banner of unification, frequently invoking the Master's authority to emphasize the undisputed legitimacy of this goal. Some, like Mencius, quoted Confucius' alleged saying: "Heaven does not have two suns, the people do not have two kings."[80] Others, like the authors of the *Gongyang zhuan* **公羊傳**, conceived the quest for

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[77] **問曰：天下惡乎定？吾對曰：定於一。孰能一之？對曰：不嗜殺人者能一之。孰能與之？對曰：天下莫不與也。**[----] **如有不嗜殺人者，則天下之民皆引領而望之矣。誠如是也，民歸之，由水之就下，沛然誰能禦之？** (*Mengzi*, "Liang Hui Wang A **梁惠王上**" 1.6: 17-18).

[78] [...] **此所謂率土地而食人肉，罪不容於死。** (*Mengzi*, "Li Lou A" **離婁上** 7.14: 175)

[79] **不仁而得國者，有之矣；不仁而得天下，未之有也。** (*Mengzi*, "Jin xin B" **盡心下** 14.13: 328). See also *Mengzi* 1.5: 10; 2.14: 49-50; 3.5: 77; 7.7:168.

[80] **天無二日，民無二王。** (*Mengzi*, "Wan Zhang A" **萬章上** 9.4: 215). Several chapters of the *Liji* **禮記** modify this quotation: "There are no two suns in the sky, nor two kings on Earth" (**天無二日，土無二王**) (Sun Xidan **孫希旦**, comp., *Liji jijie* **禮記集解** [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996], 7:522).

unity as one of the most important aspects of Confucius' political legacy, as delivered in the *Chun qiu* 春秋.[81] Xunzi (荀子, c. 310-218), in turn, considered the ability to "jointly rule All under Heaven" as the major achievement of the Duke of Zhou (周公, d. c. 1037) and of the "Great *Ru*" 大儒 in general.[82] Elsewhere Xunzi identified the true king as the one who "turns the overlords into his servants." And again:

> To preserve the Way and virtue complete, to be the highest and the esteemed, to enhance the principles of refined culture, to unify All under Heaven, to put in order even the smallest things, to cause everyone under Heaven to comply and follow him—this is the task of the Heavenly King. [...] When All under Heaven is not unified, and the overlords are inclined to rebel, then the Heavenly King is not the person that he ought to be.[83]

Unification and the ensuing pacification of All under Heaven was, therefore, the real goal of the Heavenly King's / true king's rule in the eyes of Confucius' followers. There is no need to supply further examples of pro-unification sentiments among Zhanguo thinkers; the picture is clear enough. Interestingly, even the language of late Zhanguo discourse reflects the thinkers' aspirations for a unified realm. Although by the third quarter of the fourth century BCE rulers of most Zhanguo states appropriated the title of king (*wang* 王), thinkers of different intellectual affiliations rejected this hubris of the rulers. The terms "true king" and "Son of Heaven" in Zhanguo texts refer neither to the current self-proclaimed contemporary kings, nor to the shadowy figure of the Zhou sovereign, but exclusively to the omnipotent rulers of a future unified realm.[84] This terminology reflects the

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[81] See epigraph. The *Gongyang zhuan* was apparently composed in the mid-Zhanguo, but it was first recorded only during Jing Di's 景帝 reign in the Han dynasty (156-141 BCE). The *Gongyang* constantly insists that the Son of Heaven must rule over the unified realm; no lands can be external to his rule (Yin 1, *Shisanjing* 1:2199; Xi 24, 12:2259; Cheng 12, 18:2295). Elsewhere the *Gongyang* reiterates: "The desire of the [true] King is to unify All under Heaven" (王者欲一乎天下) (Cheng 15, 18:2297). See also Yanaka, "Sengoku".

[82] See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), "Ru xiao" 儒效 8:114-116. Later in the same chapter Xunzi plainly states that when the "Great Ru" succeeds, he "unifies All under Heaven" (大儒則一天下); see 8: 138.

[83] 全道德，致隆高，兼文理，一天下，振毫末，使天下莫不順比從服，天王之事也。 ... 天下不一，諸侯倍反，則天王非其人也。 (*Xunzi*, "Wang zhi" 王制 9:171).

[84] This analysis of the usage of the terms *tianxia* and *tianzi* in late Zhanguo discourse was suggested by H.G. Creel in *Shen Pu-hai* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1974), 59-60, 200; cf. Ishii, *Dong Zhou*, 159-167. "Kings" of the

thinkers' conviction that the current state of fragmentation of All under Heaven was an anomaly that should be overcome after unification; only then would a true king reign.

Most interestingly, even those statesmen and thinkers whose personal interests should have discouraged them from advocating unification, namely the representatives of the "school of alliances," nevertheless shared a belief in the need for unity. Although these skillful diplomats personally benefited from the Zhanguo international disorder and might have suspected that future unification would invalidate their skills, they dared not advocate legitimacy of the multi-state order. Whenever Su Qin urged powerful kings "to preserve the overlords' states," he did it invariably because this course of action might have in the short term benefited a specific ruler, not because the preservation of the ruined states was considered either normative or desirable.[85] Su Qin himself, or the anonymous authors of his speeches, realized that the international order was doomed. Hence, during his alleged meeting with King Hui of Qin (秦惠王, r. 337-311), mentioned above, Su Qin vividly depicted the demise of the multi-state system and consequently suggested "to annex the overlords' [states], to swallow the world, to declare yourself emperor and to bring about orderly rule."[86] The need for unity was apparent to everyone.

The discussion to this point shows that the quest for unity was almost unanimously endorsed by Zhanguo thinkers. Nonetheless, our analysis of Confucius, Mozi, the *Laozi* and Mencius reveals that while these philosophers sought "stability in unity," they had few if any practical suggestions regarding the ways to achieve their common goal. Indeed, the sweeping opposition of these thinkers to aggressive warfare discouraged them from advocating unification through military means. The alternatives, however, were hardly convincing: emulation of the past, suggested by Confucius, non-action, advocated by the *Laozi*, or the ruler's benevolence, preached by Mencius, might have been morally laudable but not entirely adequate means to put an end to the fragmentation of All under Heaven. Other thinkers mentioned above

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Zhanguo states dared not proclaim themselves Sons of Heaven; the only exception was the attempt by the notorious King Min of Qi (齊閔王, r. 300-283), but his claims were rejected even by the weakest of his neighbors, Lu 魯 and Zou 鄒 (*Zhanguo ce*, "Zhao ce 趙策 3," 20.13: 737).

[85] See *Zhanguo ce*, "Zhao ce 2," 19.1: 655-57; "Chu ce 1," 14.17: 508-9.

[86] 並吞侯・吞天下・稱帝而治・ (*Zhanguo ce*, "Qin ce 1," 3.1: 74).

were similarly disinclined to advocate unification "all within the seas" by military means.[87]

The thinkers' opposition to military unification derived not only from moral considerations but also from the objective conditions of their time. Prior to the mid-fourth century BCE, the level of military and administrative development evidently precluded the successful conquest of the entire realm. The huge cost of protracted campaigns convinced many, including military specialists, that these undertakings were highly unprofitable. Furthermore, prior to the mid-Zhanguo period most Chinese states were underpopulated; accordingly they lacked sufficient human resources to conquer the entire realm. For these reasons, and not only for moral considerations, Mencius ridiculed the aspirations of King Xuan of Qi (**齊宣王**, r. 319-301) to attain the world by military means, comparing these to "looking for fish by climbing a tree."[88]

By the late fourth century, however, the situation changed. Technological, economic, administrative and military changes

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[87] Xunzi, for instance, in a passage curiously reminiscent of that of Mencius, cited above, argued that the "great *Ru*" "would do nothing to attain All under Heaven if this requires acting unrighteously or killing an innocent person. The righteousness of such a ruler would be trusted by men, penetrate the land within the four seas, and then All under Heaven would respond to it like an echo" (**行一不義，殺一無罪而得天下，不為也。此君義信乎人矣，通於四海，則天下應之如嚮**) (*Xunzi*, "Ru xiao" **儒效** 8:120-121; for a more sophisticated approach, see "Wang zhi" **王制** 9:158). The most radical opposition to military unification was, perhaps, that of the late fourth-early third century BCE thinkers Song Xing **宋鈃** and Yin Wen **尹文** from the state of Qi. The *Zhuangzi* tells: "By 'To be insulted is not disgraceful' they helped the people not to quarrel, by 'Forbid aggression, disband troops' they helped the age to avoid war. With these [doctrines] they moved across the world, preaching to the rulers and educating the ruled, and although the world did not accept [their views] they stubbornly squawked without taking a rest" (**見侮不辱，救民之鬥，禁攻寢兵，救世之戰。以此周天下，上說下教，雖天下不取，強聒而不舍者也**) (*Zhuangzi*, "Tianxia" 33:870-871, modifying Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 96).

[88] See *Mengzi*, "Liang Hui Wang A" 1.7: 16. For the problems of protracted warfare see Li Ling **李零**, *Wu Sunzi fawei* **吳孫子發微** (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996), "Zuo zhan" **作戰**, 2:37. For the lack of human resources in early Zhanguo states, see *Mozi*, "Fei gong" **非攻** and "Jie yong" **節用** chapters. Inadequate resources and lack of proper administrative means to rule the recently acquired territories undermined early attempts to unify the realm by military means; Zhanguo thinkers were perfectly aware of the miserable end of King Ling of Chu, as well as that of over-ambitious Wu and Yue leaders. Prior to the late Zhanguo, military unification might have been inconceivable even to military specialists.

enabled powerful rulers to allocate more resources to military needs. Huge armies, allegedly comprising hundreds of thousands of soldiers, were able to operate in enemy territory for years. Many Zhanguo statesmen were aware of the changing circumstances. For them military unification of the realm was no longer an idle dream.[89]

Those who reacted to the changing circumstances and suggested practical ways of achieving universal pacification were political realists, namely, the Legalists (*fajia* 法家). These, to paraphrase Marx, realized that their task was not to explain the need for unity, but to suggest practical ways for achieving it.[90] Shang Yang (商鞅, d. 338) ridiculed those thinkers who advised the rulers to emulate the patterns of the sage kings of antiquity and achieve unification by primarily non-military means:

> King Wu 武王 seized those who confronted him, and appreciated those who complied; he fought for All under Heaven but elevated yielding; he seized [the world] by force, but held it by propriety/righteousness (*yi* 義). Nowadays, strong states engage in conquests and annexations, while the weak are devoted to forceful defense. Upwards, they do not reach the times of Yu 虞 [Shun 舜] and Xia 夏, downwards they do not embrace [the way of] Tang 湯 and Wu. [The ways] of Tang and Wu are blocked; hence none of the states of ten thousand chariots are not engaged in war, while none of the states of one thousand chariots are not engaged in defense. These ways are blocked for a long time, but contemporary rulers are unable to dismiss them; hence, the three dynasties lack the fourth one.[91]

Shang Yang realized that in the current age of total war states-

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[89] For military changes in the late Zhanguo period, particularly the increasing duration and scale of conflicts, see Yang Kuan, *Zhanguo shi*, 303-16; Hsu, *Ancient China*, 62-71; Lewis, "Warring States," 625-29. Although many scholars assume that the size of the late Zhanguo armies may be inflated by later historians, the data presented throughout pre-Qin sources does indicate a steady growth in the numbers of soldiers involved in military conflicts; numbers appear both consistent and not incredible (see Li Ling, *Sunzi guben yanjiu* 孫子古本研究 [Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1995], 215). See also an illuminating discussion on the population growth and the resultant military changes in *Zhanguo ce*, "Zhao ce 3" 20.1: 709.

[90] "Philosophers were only *explaining* the world in various ways, but the task is *to change* it" (K. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" [1845], rpt. in K. Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia* [Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoj Literatury, 1985], Vol. 1, p. 3; italics in original)

[91] 武王逆取而貴順，爭天下而上義，其取之以力，持之以義。今世強國事攻並，弱國務力，上不及虞夏之時，而下不修 湯武道，湯武道塞，故萬乘莫不戰，千乘莫不守，此道之塞久矣，而世主莫之能廢也，故三代不四 (Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻, *Shang jun shu zhuizhi* 商君書錐指 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996], "Kai sai" 開塞, 7: 54-55).

men cannot follow the ways of antiquity; yielding and benevolence were of no relevance to those eager to establish the fourth dynasty. Instead, Shang Yang recommended acting resolutely at home and abroad. Warfare, in particular, was an indispensable means of acquiring true kingship. Shang Yang plainly stated that "he, whose army performs whatever the enemy dares not perform, is strong; he, who undertakes whatever enterprise the enemy is ashamed to do, benefits."[92] The moral aspects of such undertakings were of little relevance; Shang Yang visibly despised the anti-militaristic sentiments shared by his predecessors and contemporaries.[93] War was not only justified, it was the crucial means to obtain the ultimate goal of pacification.

Despite his blatantly stated militarism, Shang Yang realized that warfare alone was insufficient to ensure the ultimate success of unification.[94] It had to be accompanied with a series of political, economical, and mostly administrative undertakings which had to ensure that the newly acquired lands would be firmly integrated into the expanding state. Surely, administrative reforms aimed to enhance centralized control over the newly acquired territories began long before Shang Yang and continued for generations to follow.[95] Shang Yang, however, was the one who suggested a systematic series of measures aimed to turn the state into an apparatus of expansion with the ultimate aim of universal rule. He ominously designated his system as the One (*yi* 壹)—the single way of proper rule, particularly unifying agriculture and warfare. Agriculture would supply material resources sufficient to wage protracted wars; warfare would supply new lands that would in turn enrich the state and enable it to launch further military campaigns. By combining these the ruler would attain universal rule. Shang Yang's summarized his message as follows:

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[92] 兵行敵所不敢行，強；事與敵所羞為，利 ("Quqiang" 去強, 4:27).

[93] Shang Yang did not deny the desirability of moral goals as such, but argued that these could be dialectically achieved only by immoral means; peace and tranquillity would be then an outcome of war and violence (see *Shang jun shu*, "Huace" 畫策 18:107-113 *et saepe*).

[94] "In ancient times those who were able to rule All under Heaven had first to rule their people; those who were able to overcome the strong enemy had first to overcome their people" (昔者能制天下者，必先制其民者也；能勝強敵者，必先勝其民者也 (*Shang jun shu*, "Huace" 18:107).

[95] For early administrative reforms aimed to curb the forces of disintegration within a single state, see Zhao Boxiong 趙伯雄, *Zhoudai guojia xingtai yanjiu* 周代國家形態研究 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu, 1990); Pines, *Aspects*, 314-323.

> Therefore, my theory causes the people who seek profit to get it nowhere but from tilling; and those who want to avoid disasters to escape in no way but through warfare. Within the boundaries, there is not one among the people who is not devoted to tilling and warfare; thus they attain whatever pleases them. Hence, although lands are few, grain is plenty; although the people are few, the army is strong. He who is able to implement these two within the boundaries has completed the way of the hegemon and the king.[96]

The undeniable achievements of Shang Yang's reforms and the practical advantages of his theory of statecraft increased the appeal of his ideas in the next generations. Even critics of his approach, such as Xunzi, could not deny the practical advantages of Shang Yang's doctrine. Shang Yang's views were further modified by later Legalist thinkers, particularly Han Feizi (**韓非子**, d. 233) and Li Si (**李斯**, d. 208).[97] It was their efforts, coupled with successes at the battlefield, which facilitated Qin unification in 221 BCE. Yet military prowess, important as it was, cannot sufficiently explain Qin's success. Paraphrasing Lu Jia (**陸賈**, d. 178 BCE), we may say that it was possible to unify All under Heaven from horseback, but it was impossible to preserve the unity from horseback.[98] Other factors which contributed to the successful unification will be discussed in what follows.

C. Epilogue: Qin Unification and Beyond: *Da yitong* in Imperial Political Culture

In 256, the state of Qin annexed the Zhou royal domain, eliminating thereby the last symbol of the Zhou political system. This *coup de grâce* exacerbated the statesmen's fear of continuous disorder. Henceforth nobody could claim the position of Son of Heaven; no legitimate, even if symbolic, focus of authority remained. The authors of the *Lüshi chunqiu* bitterly lamented this

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[96] **故吾教令民之欲利者非戰不得，避害者非戰不免。境內之民莫不先務耕戰，而後得其所樂。故地少粟多，民少兵強。能行二者於境內，則霸王之道畢也** (*Shang jun shu*, "Shen fa" **愼法**, 25:139).

[97] For Xunzi's appreciation of the positive results of Shang Yang's reforms, see *Xunzi*, "Qiang guo" **強國** 16: 302-4; for Han Feizi's modification of Shang Yang's ideas, see *Han Feizi*, "Ding fa" **定法** 43: 841-42 *et passim*; for Li Si's views, see *Shiji* 87: 2539-63. For the widespread belief in the late Zhanguo that warfare is the only way to ensure unification, see *Zhanguo ce*, "Qin ce 1" 3.1: 74-5; *Lüshi chunqiu*, "Dang bing" **蕩兵** 7:383-84.

[98] See Lu Jia's saying to Liu Bang **劉邦**, cited in *Han shu* **漢書** (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua), 43: 2113.

situation, stating: "Our age is extremely foul; nothing more can be added to the suffering of the 'black-headed' [the commoners]."[99] Elsewhere they explained the reasons for their frustration:

> Nowadays, the house of Zhou is already destroyed, [the line of] the Sons of Heaven is already severed. There is no turmoil greater than the absence of the Son of Heaven; without the Son of Heaven, the strong overcome the weak, the many lord it over the few, they incessantly use arms to harm each other.[100]

However, the lamentations were premature. Just a generation after the formal demise of Zhou rule, Qin rulers finally succeeded to implement Shang Yang's dream of establishing "the fourth dynasty." After a series of brief successful campaigns, Qin forces put an end to all the six rival powers. The imperial era in Chinese history began.

The success of unification was amazing. Despite the long cherished hatred towards Qin, frequently designated by Zhanguo statesmen as "land of wolves and jackals," no significant attempt was made to reestablish the vanquished states either during the Qin campaigns of 230-221, or later, during the First Emperor's reign (221-210); no serious resistance movement tried to regain independence. Why did the leaders of the Warring States allow their kingdoms to be swallowed up with such ease?[101] A partial answer is, of course, the series of successful political and administrative measures undertaken by the First Emperor and his chief aide, Li Si, to solidify their unprecedented achievement.[102] These

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[99] **當今之世，獨甚矣，黔首之苦，不可以加矣** (*Lüshi chunqiu*, "Zhen luan" **振亂**, 7: 393).

[100] **今周室既滅，而天子已絕。亂莫大於無天子，無天子則強者勝弱，眾者暴寡，以兵相攻，不得休息** (*Lüshi chunqiu*, "Jin ting" **謹聽**, 13: 705; cf. "Guan shi" **觀世**, 16: 958).

[101] For Zhanguo hatred of Qin, see *Zhanguo ce* ("Xi Zhou ce" **西周策** 2.3: 49; "Chu ce 1" 14.17: 508; "Zhao ce 3" 20.10: 726; "Wei ce 3" 24.10: 907). Although one might have expected a prolonged struggle against the Qin conquest, aside from two ill-prepared attempts to restore the extinguished states of Zhao and Chu in 228 and 224 respectively, and a rebellion in the former Han **韓** lands in 226, the unification was remarkably smooth. It was only during the self-destructive rule of Hu Hai **胡亥**, the notorious Second Emperor (**二世皇帝**, r. 210-207), that major uprisings began.

[102] These measures included symbolic steps, such as unification of measures, weights, currency and the script, or establishment of new rites aimed to unify the realm in a common ritual framework; and practical steps to prevent resurrection of the old order, such as collecting and melting down weapons, and transferring the 120,000 "rich and powerful" families from the recently conquered states to the imperial capital of Xianyang **咸陽**. See *Shiji* 6: 235-263; Derk Bodde, "The

measures, however, although they doubtless contributed towards consolidation of the empire, do not entirely explain the rapid and undeniable success of the unification in the short term.

To answer our question we may cite one of the staunch critics of Qin, the Han statesman Jia Yi (賈誼 199-166 BCE), who wrote:

> Qin appropriated all within the seas, annexed the overlords' [states]; [its ruler] faced south and called himself emperor; thus he nourished all within the four seas, and the gentlemen of All under Heaven docilely bowed before his wind. Why did this happen?
>
> I would reply that recently the world had for a long time been without [a true] king. The Zhou house had sunk into insignificance, the Five Hegemons had passed from the scene, and no commands were obeyed under Heaven. Hence, the overlords in governing relied on strength alone, the strong impinging on the weak, the many lording it over the few; arms and armor were never set aside, and the people grew exhausted and impoverished. Now, after Qin faced south and ruled All under Heaven, this meant that there was a Son of Heaven above. The masses hoped that they would obtain peace and security and there was nobody who did not whole-heartedly look up in reverence. This was the moment to preserve authority and stabilize achievements, the foundations of lasting peace.[103]

An astute thinker, Jia Yi realized that popular support of the long-expected unification was the crucial factor in Qin's final success. After the long period of turmoil and wars, the people obtained peace and security; hence they willingly accepted Qin's domination. The Qin rulers, particularly the First Emperor, were aware of these feelings and manipulated them to legitimize their rule. The issue of peace and tranquillity for the "black-headed" people of All under Heaven was the pivot of Qin's propaganda and of the emperor's self-glorification, as exemplified by the texts of the stone tablets that he erected in the newly conquered regions of his realm. The emperor reminded everybody that he

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State and Empire of Ch'in," in: *Cambridge History of China* Vol. 1, 52-72; Li Ling, "Qin Han liyi zhong de zongjiao: guanyu 'Shiji fengshanshu' he 'Han shu jiaosizhi' de kaoguxue sikao" 秦漢禮儀中的宗教—關於《史記·封禪書》和《漢書·郊祀志》的考古學思考, paper presented at the University of California, Berkeley, February 1997.

[103] 秦並海內，兼諸侯，南面而稱帝，以養四海，天下之士斐然鄉風，若是之何也？曰：近古之無王者久矣。周室卑微，五霸既沒，令不行於天下。是以諸侯力政，眾暴寡，兵革不休，士民罷敝。今秦南面而王天下，是上有天子也。既元元之民冀得安其性命，莫不虛心而仰上。當此之時，守威定功，安危之本在於此矣 (*Shiji* 6.283, modifying B. Watson's translation, *Records of the Grand Historian* Vol. 3: *Qin Dynasty* [Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1993], 80-81).

"brought peace to All under Heaven,"[104] so that "black-headed people are at peace, never needing to take up arms;"[105] that "he wiped out the powerful and unruly, rescuing the black-headed people, bringing stability to the four corners of the empire,"[106] and that by "uniting All under Heaven, he put an end to harm and disaster, and then forever put aside arms."[107] This propaganda referred directly to the principle of "stability in unity" and we may plausibly assume that it enjoyed a positive response from the majority of the populace.

The anti-Qin rebellion of 209-207 and the ensuing civil war provided those who might have dreamt of the reestablishment of the pre-imperial order with convincing arguments in favor of continuing unification. A powerful rebel leader, Xiang Yu (**項羽**, d. 202), decided to reestablish the multi-state order, with grave consequences for himself and for everybody. Initially, Xiang Yu favored the idea of a loosely unified empire, ruled by the puppet Yi Di (**義帝**, d. 206), but he soon changed his mind. After assassinating Yi Di in 206, Xiang Yu attempted to govern All under Heaven from the position of "hegemon-king" (*bawang* **霸王**). However, the vacuum of legitimate power eventually led to chaos, and the war of all against all devastated most of the Chinese world. Under these conditions, the need for unification became apparent to all. The major reason for the ultimate success of Xiang Yu's rival, Liu Bang (**劉邦**, d. 195), was his skill in establishing himself as the only candidate able to restore unity and to bring an end to turmoil and war. The banner of unity raised by Liu Bang enabled him to attain massive support of outstanding advisors and generals. After ascending the throne, Liu Bang preserved major aspects of the Qin imperial structure intact, testifying thereby to the continuous popularity of the Great Unity ideal.[108]

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[104] See the Liangfu **梁父** inscription (219): *Shiji* 6.243; Watson, *Records*, 46.

[105] **勞苦安寧，不用兵革**. The Langye **琅邪** inscription (219): *Shiji* 6.245; Watson, *Records*, 48.

[106] **烹滅強暴，振救勞苦，周定四極**. The Zhifu **之罘** inscription (218): *Shiji* 6.249; Watson, *Records*, 51.

[107] **開並天下，災害絕息，永偃戎兵**. The Zhifu inscription: *Shiji* 6.250; Watson, *Records*, 51.

[108] Although in the course of his struggle Liu Bang had to make concessions to his generals and granted them a semi-independent status of "kings"/"princes" (*wang* **王**), he never envisioned resurrecting the Zhou order. Shortly after the Han victory, independent kings were replaced by members of the Liu clan, but even this compromise derived primarily from the weakness of the central gov-

Henceforth, only a unified empire was considered a legitimate form of rule, while frequent periods of disunion were conceived of as an anomaly.

A detailed discussion on the impact of the Great Unity ideal on imperial political culture is beyond the scope of the present essay; it is not my intention here to discuss such well known topics as the importance of unification for dynastic legitimization, or the imprint of the *Da yitong* paradigm on imperial historiography.[109] It seems appropriate, however, to raise the issue of the *Da yitong*'s impact on the general pattern of Chinese history.

Recently, numerous studies have questioned the focus of traditional historiography on unified China and concentrated on the heretofore largely neglected history of those dynasties which failed to unify All under Heaven, but, nevertheless, significantly contributed to economic, cultural and administrative developments in the regions under their control.[110] These studies, coupled with a better understanding of the immense diversity of regional developments in Chinese history, allow us to modify the previous, somewhat monochromatic picture of China's past. Some scholars, however, took these developments to the extreme, coming, as E. Schafer did, to a radical conclusion that the concept of China "which was sometimes divided, sometimes reunified" is "a non-

ernment rather than from its intention to preserve autonomous units within the empire. The first century of Han rule was marked by the steady reduction of the kingdoms' size and authority until a sufficient degree of centralization had been achieved in Wu Di's 武帝 reign (r. 141-87 BCE). See the detailed discussion by Michael Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," in: *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 1, 103-179).

[109] For the traditional thinkers' emphasis on *yitong* as a precondition to *zhengtong* (正統, correct, i.e. legitimate rule), see for instance the views of Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修, 1007-1072) in *Zhengtong lun* 正統論 (*Wenzhong ji* 文忠集, 16, rpt. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1991], Vol. 1102, 129-135), and Sima Guang's (司馬光, 1019-1086) discussion in *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 69:2187; see also Yuri Pines, "Name or Substance: Between *zhengtong* 正統 and *yitong* 一統," *History: Theory and Criticism* (forthcoming). For the historiographical bias in favor of unity, see, for instance, Duara, "Provincial Narratives."

[110] See, for instance, Yang Weili 楊偉立, *Qian Shu Hou Shu shi* 前蜀後蜀史 (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1986); Rafe de Crespigny, *Generals of the South: The Foundation and Early History of the Three Kingdoms State of Wu* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1990); Ren Shuang 任爽, *Nan Tang shi* 南唐史 (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue, 1995); Terry F. Kleeman, *The Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), to mention only a few.

existent chimaera."[111] It seems that, eagerly deconstructing traditional narratives, these scholars obliterate certain important characteristics of Chinese political culture, and, therefore, neglect those factors which facilitated reunification after recurring periods of disunion.

Perhaps, contrary to the above mentioned studies, we should recall a question asked by Mark Elvin a quarter of a century ago: not why the unified empire occasionally disintegrated, but why, given the undeniable geographic, economic, linguistic and religious differences between its parts, unity was routinely restored in more or less the same boundaries as that established by the First Emperor.[112] Can we attribute this only to the common written language and common elite culture, or to the myth of unity in the past? If so, why did similar processes of resurrection of the divided empire never occur in either medieval Europe or the Arab world which shared (and in the Arab case still share) similar common traits which characterize "Chinastan"? We must pay more attention to the impact of the *da yitong* paradigm on the pattern of Chinese history.

To do so we shall briefly trace the common pattern of division of the empire. The division itself, even if facilitated by foreign conquests, can be treated as the extreme manifestation of the phenomenon of regionalism, deeply embedded in Chinese history. Even in the most tightly unified empire, regional elites and/or local potentates pursued their economic and political interests, which were frequently at odds with the interests of the imperial government. They sought to pay fewer taxes, and hoped to monopolize as many local official positions as possible—and often succeeded in doing so. In periods of relative weakness of the

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[111] See Schafer, "The *Yeh chung chi*," 148. The tendency to view China's unity as ephemeral became particularly pronounced among scholars of modern China, especially after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. and the Tian'anmen incident (see, for instance, Gerald Segal, "China Changes Stage: Regionalism and Foreign Policy," *ADELPHI*, 287 [March 1994]).

[112] See Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 17-22 *et passim*. Elvin mainly dealt with the question of why the Chinese empire did not disintegrate like its western counterparts. My emphasis is different: why, after the periods of disunion, was unity restored? In this article I discuss the concept of *da yitong* roughly within the boundaries of the first empire, the Qin. The question of the territorial limits of *tianxia* in imperial thought and political practice is too complicated to be addressed in detail here, and will deserve a separate discussion.

imperial court, local potentates could gain military power as well, and then openly defy the orders of the central authorities.[113] Nevertheless, this ever-present tension between regions and the center did not usually result in attempts to seek full-scale political independence. It was only in periods of complete breakdown of the imperial government and the void of a legitimate source of authority that regional leaders would finally secede, declaring themselves kings or emperors, adopting distinct reign names (*nianhao* 年號) and establishing separate courts.

The most interesting developments began after the formal division of the empire between local mini-empires, such as occurred in the 220s, 300s and 900s. Scrutiny of the behavior of contending regimes reveals a surprising phenomenon: none of them ever attempted to protect its independence. None tried to develop a separate "national identity"; none abandoned—at least at the level of propaganda—the desire to unify All under Heaven. These goals were actively pursued not only by Chinese regimes, such as Wei 魏, Shu-Han 蜀漢 and, at least symbolically, Wu 吳 in 220-280 CE, but also by most regimes established by the non-Han peoples during the long Nanbeichao period (南北朝, 317-589). Recently, David Honey in an inspiring study outlined the problems of legitimization facing alien rulers of China who sought the compliance of both nomadic followers and Chinese subjects. His study suggests that it was the quest to unify China and reestablish imperial order which answered the aspirations of both groups of followers. Perhaps for these reasons, most energetic nomadic and semi-nomadic rulers of Northern China in the fourth to sixth centuries frequently declared their desire to unify "all within the seas," and some of them actively pursued this goal, even to the point of self-destruction.[114]

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[113] For regionalism in Chinese history, see Franz Michael, "Introduction: Regionalism in Nineteenth-Century China," in: Stanley Spector, *Li Hung-chang and the Huai Army: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Regionalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), xxi-xliii. Closely related to regionalism is the phenomenon of regional factionalism when two or more locally based groups contest for the influence at court. This phenomenon, however, did not usually lead to the establishment of separate dynasties, and will not be discussed here.

[114] For D. Honey's arguments and for the actual policy of "legitimization through unification" adopted by Liu Yuan 劉淵 (d. 310), ruler of the Han/Former Zhao (304-329), and Shi Le 石勒 (d. 333), ruler of the Late Zhao (319-351), see Honey's "Sinification as Statecraft in Conquest Dynasties of China: Two Early Medieval Case Studies", *Journal of Asian History*, 30, 2 (1996), 115-151. For the

This situation in which all contending regimes pursued the common goal of restoring a unified empire—under their aegis, of course—created the zero-sum game which denied legitimacy to all but one regime. Certainly, adherence to the unity paradigm did not necessarily prevent rulers of regional regimes from adopting a flexible policy. For a variety of internal and external reasons, some of these leaders tended to postpone the goal of reunification, concentrating instead on ensuring the stability and prosperity of their state.[115] They could half-heartedly recognize the legitimacy of rival regimes and even establish diplomatic ties with them.[116] Nonetheless, such measures were invariably conceived of as ad-hoc temporary arrangements; no serious attempt to create a viable multi-state order was ever made after the Chunqiu period. Rival leaders were well aware of the inevitability of the forthcoming life-or-death struggle from which only one winner could emerge.

Under these conditions unification became a natural outcome of the period of disunion. The rivals, we may conclude, regarded

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self-defeating policy of Fu Jian 符堅, the emperor of the Former Qin 前秦 (r. 357-383), and his declarations in favor of unification, see Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al, comps., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 114:2914; and Michael C. Rogers, *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 161 *et passim*. For other examples of leaders of Northern dynasties declaring their desire to unify All under Heaven, see Qiu, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de 'da yitong' sixiang"; Pines, "Name or Substance?"; see also Richard B. Mather's opinion, in his *Biography of Lü Kuang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 25.

[115] An excellent example of Realpolitik calculations prevailing over ideological obligations is the politics of the Southern Song court. See details in S.N. Goncharov, *Kitaiskaia Sredenvekovaia Diplomatiia: Otnosheniia mezhdu Imperiiami Tszin' i Sun, 1127-1142* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 236-7 *et passim*. Similar views of the advantages of "protecting the boundaries and tranquilizing the people" (*bao jing an min* 保境安民) were popular among many southern regimes both during the Nanbeichao and the Five Dynasties period (906-960) (see, for instance, Li Zhiting 李志庭, "Yetan Qian Liu baojing anmin guoce" 也談錢劉保境安民國策, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 4 [1997], 92-3 *et passim*). R. Davis mentions an interesting, although not necessarily flawless suggestion that south-eastern China's regimes were particularly predisposed towards pursuing "timid retrenchment" (偏安, *pian'an*) at the expense of an assertive foreign policy (*Wind Against the Mountain* [Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1996], 142-43).

[116] See, for instance, Shu-Han's unenthusiastic recognition of Wu 吳 imperial claims in 229 (de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, 459-462). For international relations among rival regimes during the Nanbeichao period, see Wang Youmin 王友敏, "Nanbeichao jiaopin liyi kao" 南北朝交聘禮儀考, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 3 (1996) 144-154.

their states as nothing but a spring-board toward future conquest and unification, and made no serious efforts to protect their hard-won independence. After conquest by a more successful state, unless new unifiers displayed extreme cruelty or folly, no resistance movement of any consequence prevented them from reintegrating the rival states into the newly recurring empire. In many cases local elites remained largely indifferent to the outcome of the struggle, which was conceived of as the private matter of the self-proclaimed emperor, rather than the common cause of regional independence. Although former emperors and their close associates were often posthumously revered in the areas of their rule, and some of them were later deified, this popularity never resulted in a resurrection of their cause; those who lost the Mandate lost it forever.[117]

The general adherence to the *da yitong* paradigm prevented local differences from becoming politically significant; no leader in the areas of the former Zhou world ever raised the banner of separatism. Unlike in Europe and later in the Arab world, political players on the Chinese scene denied the legitimacy to regional independence; in the long term such independence was conceived of not only as illegitimate, but perhaps also as impossible. What are the reasons of this unique situation? Was it the memory of the formerly unified realm? Historical myth? "Oppressive narrative?" Not necessarily. The discussion above of the origins of the *da yitong* paradigm suggests that the quest for unity was primarily a rational choice of elites and commoners alike.

Many recent studies in China and abroad show that despite centuries-old prejudice against ages of division, these periods contributed greatly to China's cultural, technological and eco-

[117] De Crespigny summarizes the southern gentry's attitudes towards the state of Wu as follows: "Sun Quan [孫權, the first Wu emperor, r. 222-252 CE] might have hopes of imperial state, but his subordinates had more limited ambitions, they could expect to maintain some position under any regime, and they had no particular commitment to the fortunes of Wu" (*Generals of the South*, 507). For the deification of local heroes, see for instance Brigitte Baptandier, "The Lady Linshui: How a Woman becomes a Goddess," in: Meir Shahar and Robert P. Weller, eds., *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 105-149. The cults of Liu Bei (劉備 d. 223 CE), and particularly his famous advisor, Zhuge Liang (諸葛亮 d. 234 CE), still remain extremely popular in Chengdu 成都, the capital of their former empire of Shu-Han. These cults, however, by no stretch of imagination can be identified as renewed independence aspirations of the Fujian or Sichuan populace.

nomic development.[118] These achievements, indeed, are undeniable; at least in terms of intellectual history China benefited from periods of division much more than from periods of unified government. Nevertheless, this long-term perspective of modern historians was not necessarily shared by men at the time of disunion. For them division meant endemic warfare, devastation of the country, large-scale bloodshed, and, finally, the most dreadful of all—*luan* 亂, chaos. Suffice it to cite Shen Yue's (沈約 441-513 CE) description of the grave results of the mid-fifth century CE wars between the states of Northern Wei (北魏, 386-534) and Liu Song (劉宋, 420-479):

> The strong were killed, the weak—imprisoned. Of several dozens of thousands of households in the area from the Yangzi and the Huai 淮 to the Qing 清 and the Ji 濟 rivers, even one in a hundred could not flee to the lakes and the marshes. Villages became wasteland, wells were empty; none will return to hear dogs barking and cocks crying.[119]

This gloomy picture was all too common during the periods of disunion. Although astute rulers of some of the regional states, such as the Wu-Yue (吳越, 907-978 CE), succeeded to ensure relative stability and peace for their subjects, this was the exception, not the rule.[120] As China never developed adequate means of peaceful coexistence between contending regimes, and as their conflicts were not confined to border incidents but were wars of mutual extermination, the only way to stop such bloodshed was unification. Not the splendor of local courts, nor technological innovations, nor economic expansion under contending regimes, could reduce the immense suffering of the populace. The saying "stability is in unity" did not require further comment for the people of China in the past, as in the present.

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[118] See de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, 512 *et passim*; Liu Zehua, *Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi sixiang fansi* 中國傳統政治思想反思 (Beijing: Sanlian, 1987), 23-31; and a somewhat more reluctant discussion by Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄, *Tongyi yu fenlie* 統一與分裂 (Beijing: Sanlian, 1994), 193-243.

[119] 強者為轉屍，弱者為繫虜：自江、淮至於清、濟戶口數十萬，自免湖澤者，百不一焉。村井空荒，無復鳴雞吠犬 (Shen Yue 沈約, *Song shu* 宋書 [rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997], 95: 2359). For other instances of devastation as a result of internal warfare, see de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, 492 *et passim*.

[120] For the history of Wu-Yue, see Li Zhiting, "Yetan Qian Liu" and Edmund H. Worthy Jr., "Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wu Yüeh, 907-978," in: Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 17-46.