

SPEECHES AND THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY IN ANCIENT CHINESE HISTORICAL RECORDS¹

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On May 15, 2001 the Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat, delivered a major speech on national Palestinian TV. In the evening, portions of this speech were broadcast by Israeli TV to its audience. At seven o'clock that evening, an Israeli news program in Arabic directed at Israeli Arab citizens delivered those portions of the speech that focused on the need for peace with Israel. Half an hour later, the Hebrew news program delivered a different portion of the speech, which focused on the need to struggle against the Israeli occupation. In each case the viewers watched an entirely authentic speech by the Palestinian leader, but their impressions of the speech's content were not the same: within half an hour, a peace-loving Arafat became a warmonger.

This short illustration of the possibility of manipulating authentic records for political or ideological needs should serve as a useful departure point for the discussion of the authenticity of the speeches recorded in pre-imperial Chinese historical and philosophical texts. In the following pages I shall discuss the issue of "authenticity", trying to show that at least in some cases historical records truthfully reproduce the basic content of a statesman's sayings. This never implies, however, that the speech we read in a historical text such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 is identical to what was really pronounced. An ancient historian, just like a modern journalist, had certain goals to pursue when recording a speech, and he could easily embellish it, add or edit out portions of the speech and so on. In China, as elsewhere, the political and ideological importance of the written word made historical records particularly vulnerable to shrewd manipulations. The questions to be asked, however, is to what extent these manipulations distort the content of the original speech, and whether or not the recorded speech may be used as a means to investigate the *Weltanschauung* of its putative author. As I shall try to show, the reliability of the speeches cited in historical records changed considerably, from the relatively reliable records of the Chunqiu

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period (春秋, 722-453 B.C.) to the fictionalized accounts of the Zhanguo age (戰國, 453-221 B.C.), when ideological needs utterly undermined the credibility of historical records in general, and of recorded speeches in particular.

The Origins of Recording Speeches

The tradition of recording speeches is probably as old as Chinese historiography itself. Short utterances by Shang (商, c. 1600-1046 B.C.) kings, pronounced during the divination ceremony, appear on oracle bones. The earliest chapters of the *Shujing* 書經 contain the declarations of the Western Zhou (西周, c. 1046-771 B.C.) kings; many other royal announcements uttered during the investiture ceremony appear in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions; the latter also frequently record the recipient's polite answer and his praise of the royal munificence. The inscriptions often mention a scribe (*shi* 史) or a recorder (*zuo ce* 作策) who were present at the investiture ceremony and apparently recorded the investiture speech and the recipient's reply. The presence of the scribe whose task was to record the royal announcements is also mentioned in the *Shujing*.²

Quite probably Western Zhou scribes recorded only the extraordinary speeches such as oaths, declarations and the kings' commands. This tradition is perhaps referred to by the "Yu Zao" 玉藻 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記: "[The king] acts—then the left scribe records it; speaks—then the right scribe records it."³ The speeches incised on the bones or inscribed on bronze, just like the *Shujing* announcements, were ritually important messages, and their recording was part of the general ritual duties of the scribes. We have no reason to doubt the authenticity of these early records, which may represent with high precision actual sayings of kings and high nobles. Of course, even in

² For the discussion of inscriptions, see von Falkenhausen 1993. For the *Shujing* examples, see *Shangshu Zhengyi*, "Jin Teng" 金縢 13: 195-97, "Luo Gao" 洛誥 15: 214-17.

³ See the *Liji Jijie* 禮記集解 29: 778 as well as the *Hanshu* 漢書 30: 1715. The *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 anecdote tells that when King Cheng of Zhou 成王 had jokingly enfeoffed his younger brother, Tang Shu 唐叔, the Duke of Zhou 周公 told him: "The Son of Heaven does not joke in his words. The speech of the Son of Heaven is recorded by the scribes, recited by musicians, praised by the *shi* 士", see *Lüshi Chunqiu Jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, "Zhong Yan" 重言 18:1635. Cf. a slightly different version in the *Shiji* 史記 39: 1635. The anecdote itself is of dubious reliability, but it may reflect the original scribal ritual of the Zhou court.

these cases certain manipulations were possible, such as the omission of a king's erroneous prognostications from the oracle bones record,⁴ but in general we may assume that this incipient tradition of recording speeches was sufficiently accurate and reliable. The changes might have begun when the recorded speeches lost their ritual value, but instead gained political importance.

Speeches in Historical Narrative: The Zuozhuan

The *Zuozhuan* (hereafter the *Zuo*) is the most detailed narrative history from the pre-imperial period, and its role in forming Chinese historiographic tradition can be compared only to that of the *Shiji* 史記. In addition to a thorough, year-by-year account of major events in the history of the Chunqiu states, the *Zuo* also contains hundreds of speeches attributed to various historical personalities from the Chunqiu period. These speeches play an important role in the *Zuo* narrative, as they explain, predict or analyze most important events; speeches often serve as a crucial device, which allows a reader to draw lessons from history. Accordingly, many scholars have suggested that the speeches were either invented or at least heavily polished by the author/compiler of the *Zuo*, and hence basically reflect his personal outlook, rather than that of the putative protagonists. This view, I believe, may be disputed.⁵

One of the major problems which face scholars who deal with the *Zuo*, is the question of the primary sources used by its author/compiler. Since none of these sources survived, many scholars tend to neglect them altogether, and attribute the entire set of literary devices and interpretative techniques used in the *Zuo* to its author. I believe, however, that many of these devices and techniques reflect primarily the nature of the *Zuo*'s sources, which mediate between actual events of Chunqiu history and the *Zuo* narrative; and the evidence furthermore suggests that most of the speeches cited in the *Zuo* also originated from its primary sources.

Few would doubt that the *Zuo* is a compilation of earlier accounts of Chunqiu history. For instance, Ronald Egan and Wang He pointed

⁴ Keightley 1999: 207-230, particularly p. 223, note 30.

⁵ The following discussion is largely based on my earlier, more detailed studies of the reliability of the speeches in the *Zuo*, for which see Pines 1997a, 2002: 14-39.

at numerous short narratives scattered throughout the *Zuo*, which in all likelihood existed as independent units prior to the compilation of the *Zuo*.⁶ The *Zuo* also contains larger units of texts from different states, as indicated by the uneven coverage of different states throughout the narrative. Domestic and foreign affairs of certain states are presented in great detail for several years, while at other periods the same state almost disappears from the narrative. This disappearance cannot always be explained by changing political circumstances in the given state; in all likelihood it suggests that the *Zuo* compiler had no access to material from this state at the given period of time.⁷

These are only preliminary observations, but even they suffice to indicate that the author/compiler of the *Zuo* must have resorted to primary materials from different Chunqiu states. What was the nature of these materials? The scrutiny of the *Zuo* text suggests that these were not confined to the official annals of the Chunqiu states, such as the *Chunqiu* 春秋 of the state of Lu 魯, and to oral tradition.⁸ In addition, the compiler must have had at his disposal detailed written records from several Chunqiu states. This is suggested by, among other things, the abundance of minute details, such as dates, official titles, personal and place names, which cannot plausibly derive either from the official annals, or from oral anecdotes. Furthermore, different portions of the *Zuo* text employ different calendrical systems, which reflects actual differences between calendrical systems current in different Chunqiu states, such as Jin 晉 and Lu (for details, see below). Moreover, we may discern slight but recognizable grammatical changes from the beginning to the end of the *Zuo* narrative, which again strongly suggests reliance on written sources.⁹

⁶ Egan 1977; Wang He 1993.

⁷ The changing coverage of major Chunqiu states is best exemplified by the disappearance of several major powers, such as Jin 晉, Zheng 鄭 and Chu 楚 from the last years of the *Zuo* narrative, see Pines, 2002: 32-33. Similar patterns may be observed elsewhere. For instance, the *Zuo* discusses in meticulous detail the internal life of the Zhou royal domain for the second half of the sixth century B.C., but provides no information about Zhou for the early fifth century; conversely, internal affairs of the state of Qi 齊 are all but absent from the *Zuo* narrative for the first quarter of the sixth century, but rapidly resurface thereafter.

⁸ These are often assumed to be the primary sources of the *Zuo*. See, for instance, Maspero 1978: 361-362; van der Loon 1961: 25-26; Schaberg 1996a: 13-28. For a revised and more attenuated presentation of Schaberg's views, see Schaberg 2001: 315-324.

⁹ Although the *Zuo* author/compiler unified the language of his sources in accordance with current grammatical rules, in some cases he did not alter the original language, presumably when two or more different usages were acceptable. The most

It is therefore highly likely that the *Zuo* was compiled from earlier scribal records. But what would these records have looked like? While we cannot answer this question with great precision, we may nevertheless assume that they were short narrative histories, which employed some of the interpretative techniques that are commonly attributed to the *Zuo* author. For instance, the predictions of future events, which are scattered throughout the *Zuo*, allowing the readers to assess the future course of events and to learn which policy choices were acceptable, are one of the major interpretative devices employed throughout the narrative. Most scholars, who have discussed the role of predictions in the *Zuo*, have assumed that it was the author of the *Zuo* who put predictions into the mouths of his protagonists.¹⁰ This assumption, however, may be questioned.

Let us examine one case. In 655 B.C., Duke Xian of Jin (晉獻公, r. 676-651 B.C.) planned to annex the states of Guo 虢 and Yu 虞. The *Zuo* presents a detailed account of Duke Xian's moves and their outcome. Among others, the narrative cites a prediction made by Bu Yan 卜偃, a divination specialist at the court of Jin. In the eighth month Bu predicted that the state of Guo would be extinguished between the ninth and the tenth month of the year.¹¹ Immediately after Bu Yan's prediction the *Zuo* reports that the state of Guo was indeed annihilated, but that this happened on the first day of the twelfth month.

Should we then consider Bu Yan's prediction to be incorrect? Not necessarily. Bu Yan used the Xia 夏 (Jin) calendar, according to which Guo was indeed conquered on the first day of the tenth month. The *Zuo* reported the day of the final annihilation of Guo according to the Zhou (Lu) calendar, the twelfth month of which was identical to

visible cases of linguistic change in the *Zuo* are the changing frequency of the use of synonymous particles *yu* 于 and 於 (although in this case stylistic considerations also influence the distribution of these particles), and the substitution of *qi* 其 as a rhetorical question particle with *qi* 豈. In both cases a clear change occurs from the more archaic usage, characteristic of the Western Zhou texts, toward a modern one, which is akin to that of the early Zhanguo writings. For details, see Pines 2002: 217-220; for other examples of changes in the language of the *Zuo*, see also He Leshi 1988.

¹⁰ The best discussion of the role of predictions in the *Zuo* narrative can be found in Schaberg 2001: 182-183 and 192-195. For a common attribution of predictions to the *Zuo* author, see Mori Hideki 1976; Zhang Weizhong 1997; Lewis 1999. For a more attenuated argument, which attempts to connect predictions to the oral transmission of the *Zuo* speeches, see Schaberg 1997: 136-137. For a radically different approach, to which I owe much of my analysis, see Wang He 1984.

¹¹ See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注 (hereafter the *Zuo*).

the tenth month of the Xia calendar, while the details of the Jin activities preceding the conquest were copied from the Jin records. The calendrical discrepancy suggests that Bu Yan's prediction appeared originally in the Jin records, and was copied into the *Zuo* without significant modifications. Had the *Zuo* author invented Bu Yan's prediction, he would certainly have used the same calendar throughout the story; as this is not the case, we may plausibly assume that the prediction was a contribution made by the Jin scribe. This is one of many examples of predictions that the author transmitted more or less verbatim from his sources, but even this single example suffices to challenge the assertion that the predictions should invariably be considered one of the *Zuo* author's devices.¹²

Predictions are only one kind of the literary devices commonly attributed to the *Zuo* author, which may in fact be traced to the *Zuo* primary sources.¹³ This in turn suggests that the *Zuo* is basically a compilation of earlier narrative histories, which were incorporated into it without significant modifications, just as portions of the *Zuo* and other Chunqiu and Zhanguo texts were later incorporated into the *Shiji*.¹⁴ It is therefore highly likely that a significant proportion of the speeches were also incorporated into the *Zuo* from earlier Chunqiu narrative histories. This assertion, however, does not resolve the controversy regarding the speeches' authenticity. The speeches after all could have been invented by Chunqiu scribes, whose records served as the primary material for the *Zuo* compiler, or could have been modified or simply invented by the *Zuo* author/compiler himself.

Can we regard the *Zuo* speeches merely as a product of scribal imagination? Without entirely ruling out this possibility, we should consider first the above-mentioned Zhou (and Shang) tradition of recording important speeches. Quite probably Western Zhou scribes recorded only the extraordinary speeches such as oaths, declarations and kings' commands. By the time of the Eastern Zhou, however, this tradition encompassed broader activities; instances of recording statesmen's speeches are mentioned several times in the *Zuo* and in

¹² For more examples of the predictions copied into the *Zuo* from its sources, see Wang He 1984.

¹³ For further examples, see Pines 2002: 23.

¹⁴ Unlike in the case of the *Zuo*, scholars who studied the *Shiji* achieved remarkable results in tracing the ways in which Sima Qian (司馬遷, c. 145-90 B.C.) utilized and edited earlier historical works, such as the *Zuo*, which enable them to distinguish Sima Qian's personal input from that of his sources. See, for instance, Rubin 1966; Durrant 1995: 71-122; Hardy 1999: 148-153.

the *Guoyu* 國語;¹⁵ more examples appear in later Zhanguo writings.¹⁶ It is impossible to validate all these cases, but they definitely indicate that the practice of recording speeches existed at Chunqiu and Zhanguo courts and might have been relatively widespread. This assertion is further corroborated by a recently discovered text named *Yushu* (語書, “Speech Document”). The *Yushu*, unearthed at the site of Shuihudi 睡虎地, Hubei, contains a record of a speech delivered in the fourth month of 227 B.C. by a Qin 秦 governor of the Nanjun 南郡 commandery. The speech was immediately recorded and distributed to local officials.¹⁷ This document suggests that the practice of recording important speeches had become fairly common by the late Zhanguo period, if not earlier.

In view of these examples, one can hardly doubt that at least some of the speeches by leading personalities, quoted in the historical sources, particularly in the *Zuo*, derive from written records. It would be naïve, however, to assume that the *Zuo* speeches are the verbatim transcriptions of the original pronouncements made by Chunqiu statesmen. As we have seen from the discussion above, the speeches might have been embellished by the scribes, who for instance might have put correct predictions in the mouths of their protagonists. Doubtless, scribes also manipulated their records in accordance with their political needs, just as modern journalists do. In this respect no speech recorded in a historical compilation can ever be regarded as

¹⁵ For instance, according to the *Guoyu*, in the late seventh century a leading Lu statesman, Zang Wenzhong 臧文仲, ordered the recording of an ideologically important speech by Liuxia Ji 柳下季, see *Guoyu*, “Lu Yu 1” 魯語 4.9: 170. The *Zuo* mentions Confucius’ reading of and later recording “polite speeches” by Xiang Xu 向戌 from the state of Song 宋, originally pronounced in 546 B.C., cf. *Zuo*, Xiang 27: 1130. In 546 B.C. Confucius was still a child; hence, he must have used original accounts of Xiang Xu’s speeches, which means that these were originally recorded. The truth of these cases is impossible to verify; nevertheless, we may reasonably assume that they reflect a relatively widespread practice of recording speeches.

¹⁶ Mozi (墨子, c. 460-390 B.C.) complained that people praise aggressive politicians, overlook their unrighteous nature and moreover, “write down their speeches to be transmitted to future generations”, see *Mozi Jiaozhu* 墨子校注, “Fei Gong” 非攻 shang 17: 198. Sima Qian tells of Tian Wen 田文 of Qi whose attendant-scribe recorded Tian Wen’s conversations with his retainers, cf. *Shiji* 75: 2354. The mid-Zhanguo “Qu Li” 曲禮 chapter of the *Liji* mentions among the routine functions of the ruler’s entourage that “scribes record with brushes, attendants record speeches.” Commentators disagree whether the speeches concerned refer to the interstate meetings or to a broader range of activities, see *Liji Jijie* 4: 83; *Liji* 禮記 13. From the context it may be assumed that “Qu Li” refers to recording speeches during military expeditions. “Attendants” (*shi* 士) perhaps refers to the assistants to the scribes.

¹⁷ See Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhujian Zhengli Xiaozu 1990: 13-14; see also discussion in Pines 2002: 24.

entirely “authentic”. The question is whether or not these manipulations distort the content of the speech to such an extent that the cited speech is invalidated as a source for contemporary thought.

Fortunately, we may investigate this question in greater detail. The *Zuo* contains two distinct accounts of the interstate meeting of late 510 B.C at Diquan 狄泉. One of the accounts was prepared by Jin scribes, and the second by their Lu colleagues; both were incorporated into the *Zuo* due to the compiler’s unusual carelessness: he evidently considered both accounts, which employ different calendars, as referring to two distinct events. The comparison between the two accounts teaches us a lot of scribal technique in the Chunqiu age. Since I discussed this case in greater detail elsewhere,¹⁸ I shall confine myself here to the comparison between the two versions of a speech by the Wei 衛 dignitary Biao Xi 彪蹊. Biao Xi criticized the head of the Jin government, Wei Shu 魏舒, who behaved improperly during the meeting, when he sat facing south, usurping thereby the position of the ruler that should have been occupied by the representative of the Zhou king. The Jin version cites Biao Xi:

Weizi (Wei Shu) must receive great punishment! To occupy [the ruler’s] position while conducting the great affair is not of his authority. The *Shi* [jing] says: ‘Revere Heavenly wrath Dare not be playful, Revere Heavenly rage, Dare not be raging.’¹⁹ So, what can be said about [one] who dares to seize [the ruler’s] position and thereby carries out the great affair?²⁰

In the Lu version Biao Xi is cited slightly differently:

One who intends to establish [the capital for] the Son of Heaven²¹ and yet seizes [the superior’s] position thereby issuing commands, violates [the rules of] propriety (*yi* 義). One who [conducts] the great affair and yet violates propriety will be inevitably punished. Either Jin will lose the overlords, or Weizi will not escape [a bad end].²²

What can we learn from the two versions? It is clear that the speech was invented neither by the *Zuo* author nor by unanimous scribes, since it is implausible that the same speech would be invented twice. In all likelihood, we have here two records of the original speech,

¹⁸ See Pines 2002: 227-231.

¹⁹ See *Maoshi Zhengyi* 毛詩正義, in *Shisanjing Zhushu*, “Ban” 板 17: 550 (Mao 254).

²⁰ See *Zuo*, Zhao 32: 1518.

²¹ The meeting of 510 was aimed at fortifying the Zhou royal capital

²² See *Zuo*, Ding 1: 1522.

which might have been abridged or embellished by the anonymous scribes in accord with their aesthetic and political views. The differences are minimal: the Jin version contains a quotation from the *Shijing* that is not present in the Lu version, while the Lu version sounds more moralizing than the Jin account and contains a separate reference to a minister's responsibility to abide by the rules of propriety (*yi* 義). The most significant difference between the two versions concerns the precise content of Biao Xi's prediction. The Jin version contains only a promise of a "great punishment" to Wei Shu for his arrogance, while the Lu version is more specific: "Either Jin will lose the overlords, or Weizi [Wei Shu] will not escape [a bad end]."²³ Perhaps the Lu scribes used their account to retroactively predict the subsequent decline in the international prestige of Jin, which indeed "lost the overlords" four years later due to the arrogant behavior of its leaders. Yet, notwithstanding these differences, both versions agree on the basic content of Biao Xi's speech: criticism of Wei Shu's usurpation of the superior's position, and prediction of a bad end for the Jin minister.

Comparison of the two versions allows us to better understand the nature of the speeches in the *Zuo*. The quotations may not reproduce the original words of the speaker; the speech might have been polished, edited or embellished. Nonetheless, the basic content of the speech does not appear to have been distorted. Certainly, a single example is insufficient to arrive at definite conclusions. We may, nevertheless, assume from the analysis above that speeches cited in Chunqiu scribal records represent to considerable extent the views of contemporary statesmen, if not their original words.²⁴

The *Zuo* may contain a certain amount of completely imaginary speeches, just as it may contain several entirely reliable verbatim records of statesmen's sayings, but both are a distinct minority.²⁵ Most

²³ Wei Shu indeed "did not escape punishment": he died during a hunting expedition immediately after the Diqian meeting and was posthumously deprived of the cypress-made outer coffin because he hunted before returning to Jin to report on the fulfillment of his mission.

²⁴ I follow here Benjamin Schwartz's suggestion according to which the *Lunyu* 論語 presents Confucius' (孔子, 551-479 B. C.) vision rather than the original words of the Master, Schwartz 1985: 61-62.

²⁵ An example of a purely imaginary speech is the pre-suicide monologue of Chu Ni 鉏麀 of Jin who reportedly refused to assassinate the upright head of the government, Zhao Dun 趙盾, and committed suicide instead, see *Zuo*, Xuan 2: 658. For examples of what is perhaps the verbatim transcription of the original speech (or letter), see *Zuo*, Cheng 13: 861-65, Zhao 6: 1274-76, Zhao 26: 1475-79.

of the speeches evidently underwent revision by the scribes in the process of preparing their histories. As we have seen, these revisions should not invalidate the reliability of the speeches. Yet we must consider another question, namely whether the author/compiler of the *Zuo* preserved the speeches without distortion, or if he reedited them to impose his own ideological perspective.

In the early twentieth century, in the heyday of the “doubting the past” (*yi gu* 疑古) approach, many scholars in China and abroad opined that the *Zuo* is basically a historical fiction, akin to the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.²⁶ Although such extremely critical views were much less pronounced in the second half of the century, most scholars continue to doubt the reliability of the *Zuo* speeches. It is usually assumed that the *Zuo* had certain ideological or political agenda to serve, and that the author accordingly edited or invented the speeches attributed to the leading statesmen of the past in order to serve this agenda.²⁷

The view that attributes the *Zuo* speeches to the hidden political or ideological agenda of the author has two basic weaknesses. First, it is not at all clear what this agenda actually was, aside from providing a basic historical setting for the events mentioned in the Lu *Chunqiu*.²⁸ The *Zuo* continuously defies the Procrustean bed of ideological or political purity onto which modern researchers try to force it. For instance, many scholars tend to consider the *Zuo* as serving what they define as Confucian (or, in a more attenuated terminology of David Schaberg, Traditionalist) ideology. Yet proponents of this view usually fail to explain numerous speeches and narratives scattered throughout the *Zuo* that explicitly contradict the values associated with the Confucian/Traditionalist ideals. Many of the *Zuo* protagonists, including some of the most respected Chunqiu statesmen, claim the priority of *realpolitik* over morality, and unequivocally advocate resolute action as superior to moral deliberations.²⁹ Alternatively, the moralizing effect of many speeches is undermined when they are

²⁶ See, for instance Maspero 1978: 363-64; Gernet 1982: 86; Gu Jiegang 1988: 16.

²⁷ For representative criticism of the reliability of the *Zuo* speeches, see, for instance, Tsuda Sakichi 1958: 307-48 and Watson 1989: xxi.

²⁸ For the discussion about the nature of the *Zuo* relationship to the *Chunqiu* see Zhao Boxiong 1999 and a comprehensive study by Zhao Shengqun 2000.

²⁹ See *Zuo*, Cheng 17: 902-3, Xiang 25: 1106, Xiang 29: 1160, Zhao 13: 1348, Ai 1: 1605-6.

either attributed to corrupt statesmen, or are dismissed as meaningless propaganda, or when the narrative suggests that moralizing rhetoric disguises most sinister motives.³⁰ It is precisely for these reasons Confucian purists throughout the centuries criticized the *Zuo* for losing “the great meaning” of the *Chunqiu* Classic.³¹

Facing with the difficulty of distinguishing a single ideological thread of the *Zuo* speeches, some scholars turned to look for another hidden agenda, arguing that the *Zuo* is aimed at bolstering the prestige and legitimacy of one of the Zhanguo ruling dynasties. Again, the problem of this approach, which is best represented by Hirase Takao, is that it neglects the richness of the *Zuo* speeches.³² Aside from flattering panegyrics to the forefathers of the Wei 魏, Han 韓 or Tian-Qi 田齊 ruling houses, the *Zuo* contains critical and even explicitly negative evaluations of these personalities. While it is quite probable that some passages in the *Zuo* were manufactured by the supporters of certain Zhanguo leaders, it is clear that the absolute majority of the narrative does not serve any of the Zhanguo claimants for local or universal rule. To summarize, it is impossible to establish a single ideological or political thread for the entire narrative of the *Zuo*, which makes it highly unlikely that the speeches cited in text were invented or heavily polished by the author/compiler.

A second, more important argument, which undermines the position of those who consider that the content of the *Zuo* speeches was severely reworked by its compiler, is that the speeches not only differ in their content but also display a visible pattern of intellectual change from the beginning to the end of the narrative. This change, to paraphrase Kidder Smith, “establishes a pattern no Warring States or Han forger could have built in the *Zuo*.”³³ It would be incongruous to believe that the author of the *Zuo* deliberately invented the existence of an intellectual development that spanned two and a half centuries.

³⁰ See e.g. *Zuo*, Xi 26: 474, Zhao 26: 1479, Zhao 25: 1456-1457, Zhao 27: 1486-1487, Zhao 32: 1519-1520; see also discussions in Pines 2002: 111-112, 142-146.

³¹ For instance, Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) exclaimed: “The malady of the *Zuo* is that it discusses what is right and what is wrong from the point of view of success or failure... it knows only benefit and harm, and knows nothing of propriety and principle”, see *Zhuzi Yulei* 朱子語類 93: 2149-50. For similar criticism of the *Zuo*, see Liu Fenglu 1955: 599; Pi Xirui 1988: 4: 44-45.

³² See Hirase Takao 1998. For a similar, albeit less elaborate, attempt to find the hidden political agenda of the *Zuo*, see Brooks 2000.

³³ Smith 1989: 448-449.

Intellectual change in the *Zuo* is therefore a major argument in favor of the reliability of its speeches.

In my earlier studies I attempted to demonstrate intellectual change throughout the *Zuo* narrative.³⁴ The scope of the present essay rules out detailed discussion of this topic, and I shall confine myself to a brief summary of my findings. One of the most visible changes in the *Zuo* is the change in meanings and modes of use of certain key political and ethical terms. First, a clear change occurs with regard to the frequency of use of certain terms. For instance, new terms, which were introduced into Chunqiu discourse, such as *ren* 仁 and *dao* 道, appear with much higher frequency in the later part of the narrative than in its early part, while similar changes do not occur with regard to those terms which were already current in the Western Zhou, such as *de* 德 and *xiao* 孝.³⁵ More important are changes in the meanings of such major concepts as *li* (禮, ritual, rites), *de*, *li* (利, benefit/profit) and others. These were profoundly reconceptualized throughout the Chunqiu period, and their meaning in the late *Zuo* differs unmistakably from that of the early part of the narrative. Chunqiu discourse, as we see it in the *Zuo*, was a dynamic response to contemporary political and social challenges. Throughout the Chunqiu period, statesmen reevaluated many crucial questions, rejecting earlier beliefs in the process.

The *Zuo* presents a complicated pattern of intellectual change. In some fields, such as the reconceptualization of the term *li* (benefit/profit) we may speak of sweeping developments, as the previously highly esteemed political goal turned into a despised feature of a petty man. In other fields, such as ethical reinterpretation of the term *junzi* (君子, “superior man”) or views of the transcendental, changes were more gradual, and we can speak only of a shift of the center of gravity of statesmen’s views rather than a complete departure from earlier concepts. In yet other areas, such as views of ritual, new ideas were endorsed by some statesmen but were bitterly opposed by others. Thus, aside from diachronic change, synchronic differences among the *Zuo* protagonists are similarly well

³⁴ Pines 1997a, 2002.

³⁵ Pines 1997a: 99-100, 2002: 37-38.

pronounced, further defying the ascription of ideological uniformity to the *Zuo*.³⁶

The diachronic and synchronic divergences among the *Zuo* protagonists strongly support the reliability of the *Zuo*. For our discussion it is particularly important that the apparent reliability of the *Zuo* indicates that in the early period of Chinese historiography, the tradition of accurate representation of the speakers' words had been largely preserved, certain embellishments notwithstanding. The situation began changing however, when ideological disputes of the Zhanguo age dictated the need to skew historical records in general and records of speeches in particular, to enhance their didactic value.

“Clarifying Virtue”: The Genre of “Speeches” and the Guoyu.

The *Zuozhuan* had an enormous impact on Zhanguo historiography and historical thought. While the interest in the past as providing possible guidelines for the future had existed from the very beginning of the Zhou period, if not earlier, it was the publication of the *Zuo* which spurred an unprecedented demand for historical writings. Sima Qian (司馬遷, c. 145-90 B.C.) vividly depicted the fever for writing historical texts that spread throughout the Zhanguo world shortly after the publication of the *Chunqiu* and the adjacent *Zuozhuan*:

Duo Jiao 鐸椒 was a tutor to King Wei of Chu (楚威王, r. 339-329 B.C.), and since the king could not read the whole of the *Chunqiu*, he selected [stories on] success and failure, and created the *Duoshi Wei* (鐸氏微, Subtleties of Mr. Duo) in forty chapters. During the reign of King Xiaocheng of Zhao (趙孝成王, r. 265-245 B.C.), his prime minister Yu Qing 虞卿 selected [extracts] from the *Chunqiu* on remote times, observed affairs of his time and likewise wrote *Yushi Chunqiu* (虞氏春秋, Springs and Autumns of Mr. Yu) in eight chapters. Lü Buwei 呂不韋, the prime minister of King Zhuangxiang of Qin (秦莊襄王, r. 249-247 B.C.), also looked back to remote antiquity, selected [material from] the *Chunqiu*, collected the affairs of the six states,³⁷ and made eight surveys, six discussions, and twelve records, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* (呂氏春秋, Springs and Autumns of Mr. Lü). Others, like the disciples of Xun Qing 荀卿 (Xunzi 荀子), Mengzi 孟子, Gongsun Gu 公孫固 and Hanfeizi 韓非子 frequently excerpted passages from the *Chunqiu* in

³⁶ For detailed discussion of changes in the meaning of political and ethical terms in the *Zuo*, see Pines 1997a for the synchronic differences among the *Zuo* protagonists see Pines 1997b and Onozawa Seiichi 1974.

³⁷ That is Zhao, Han, Wei, Qi, Chu and Yan 燕.

writing their books; there are more [of these books] than can be mentioned.³⁸

The *Chunqiu* mentioned here evidently refers either to the *Zuo* or to similar historical writings.³⁹ This is, however, a minor point. Important for our discussion is that the historical writings discussed above were produced not for academic reasons of interest in the remote past, but to provide contemporary politicians with ready lessons on “success and failure”. The authors of the new *Chunqiu* were not scribes, but prominent statesmen and disciples of the leading philosophers. Their intention “to use the past to serve the present” had important implications for the reliability of their writings.

King Wei of Chu was not the only person who might have been tired of reading a lengthy historical narrative, the message of which was stated in a subtle way and was to be discerned by long contemplation. He and his colleagues wanted ready and succinct historical lessons that taught about “success and failure”. As we noticed, speeches scattered throughout *Chunqiu* historical writings and later incorporated into the *Zuozhuan* were instrumental in allowing the audience to draw a proper lesson from the event under discussion. Now, as the demands for such lessons increased, the importance of the speeches of the wise statesmen of the past increased accordingly.

This phenomenon may explain the emergence of a new historical genre, *yu* (語, speeches).⁴⁰ This genre, the best representative of which is the *Guoyu*, differs in several important ways from the earlier historical writings, traces of which are discernible in the *Zuozhuan*. Using the traditional Chinese terminology, we may define this genre as being primarily concerned with “recording speeches” (*ji yan* 記言) instead of earlier focus on “recording events” (*ji shi* 記事). Thus, authors of the *yu* supplied only a minor factual setting for the events,

³⁸ See *Shiji* 14: 510. I modify Schaberg’s translation, see Schaberg 1996a: 17.

³⁹ The *Chunqiu* here certainly does not refer to the laconic official annals of Lu: it is difficult to imagine that the king of Chu could not read the whole of this short text. The *Zuo* was generally named *Chunqiu* from the Zhanguo to early Han, see Lin Zhen’ai 1981.

⁴⁰ “Speeches” might have existed as a separate historical genre already in the *Chunqiu* period. The *Guoyu* mentions, for instance, the existence of this genre in a speech allegedly pronounced in the early sixth century B.C. (“Chu Yu” 楚語 1, 17.1: 528), and the *Zuo* contains at least one example of citing a *yu* (Zhao 20: 1415-16, citing a speech which appears in Xiang 27: 1133). For more about the genre of speeches, see Petersen 1995 and Taniguchi Nada 1998. Another example of *yu* structured similarly to the *Guoyu* pieces is cited in the *Xunzi*, see *Xunzi Jijie* 荀子集解, “Yao Wen” 堯問 31: 551-52.

and focused entirely on a speech by a wise statesman or spectator, whose sagacity was instrumental in drawing proper historical lessons, or, again in traditional terminology, “clarifying virtue” (*ming de* 明德).⁴¹ As we shall see, this shift from narrative history to a didactic extract eventually undermined the original tendency to preserve the basic content of the speech intact.

A comparison between the *Guoyu* and the *Zuozhuan* is a useful means of clarifying the shift in the tradition of citing speeches in historical records. The Chunqiu historians whose texts were incorporated into the *Zuo* considered the speech an important, but subordinate part of the narrative. Their astute reader was supposed to draw proper lessons primarily from the sequence of the events, while speeches that illuminated these lessons were only infrequently added to the narrative. This may explain why, certain embellishments notwithstanding, Chunqiu historians generally transmitted the speeches of their protagonists without major departures from the original content. By the Zhanguo period, however, this situation had changed. Now, in an age of increasing contention between rival thinkers and their schools, the precise ideological content of the speech was valued more than before, and the genre of *yu* might have become increasingly popular. Since a Zhanguo editor focused on the didactic value of a speech rather than on its place in a general narrative, it was tempting for him to modify the original content, thereby enhancing the ideological value of the cited speech. This preoccupation with ideological purity at the expense of historical accuracy is one of the major characteristics of the *Guoyu*.

The *Guoyu* is a heterogeneous compilation of two hundred-odd speeches and political discussions attributed to Chunqiu (and several Western Zhou) personalities. While controversies continue regarding the authorship and dating of some of its “books”, the majority view holds that major parts of the *Guoyu* (books of Zhou, Lu, Jin and Chu) were compiled by the late fourth century or early third century B.C. In all likelihood, the compilers had at their disposal earlier materials from several Chunqiu states, similar or identical to those used by the compiler of the *Zuo*; in many cases both texts evidently cite the

⁴¹ For the identification of *yu* as devices aimed at “clarifying virtue”, see *Guoyu*, “Chu Yu” I, 17.1: 528.

common third source.⁴² Yet despite obvious similarities and the common temporary framework of both texts, there is an observable difference in the content of the speeches cited in the two. In the following brief citations of the speeches which appear in both the *Zuo* and the *Guoyu*, I shall try to clarify how the editors of the *Guoyu* modified the content of the speeches in accordance with their didactic and ideological needs.

Let us take for instance, the following story. In 636 B.C., the fugitive Prince Chonger of Jin, posthumously known as Duke Wen (晉文公, r. 636-628 B.C.), returned to his state and ascended the throne. Eunuch Pi 披, the former adversary of Chonger, learned about a plot to assassinate Duke Wen, and hastened to inform him. Duke Wen, however, mindful of previous offences, refused to listen to Pi. Pi then convinced the Duke that he should not be blamed for his faithful service to Duke Wen's predecessors and adversaries, and that his duty was to serve loyally whoever occupied the throne of Jin. Pi's speech is cited both in the *Zuo* and the *Guoyu*. In the *Zuo* the speech runs as follows:

...The ruler's order allows no duplicity, these are the ancient regulations. In eradicating the ruler's adversaries, one should concentrate only on [exerting maximum] force. Why should men of Pu or Di matter to me?⁴³ Now, as you have established yourself—have not you [enemies like] Pu and Di of your own? Guan Zhong shot a buckle at the sash of Duke Huan of Qi, but Duke Huan made him a chief minister.⁴⁴ If you intend acting differently, I should not offend you waiting for your orders. [But in this case] you will be left by many more, not only by a criminal servant [like me].⁴⁵

⁴² See a detailed discussion in Pines 2002: 39-45. For the dating of the core books of the *Guoyu*, see Yoshimoto Michimasa 1989. The relationship between the *Guoyu* and the *Zuo* remains highly controversial. Scholars starting with Ye Shi (葉適, 1150-1223) argued that either the *Guoyu* served as a primary source of the *Zuo*, or, conversely, that it relied on the *Zuo* narrative. A careful analysis, however, suggests that both texts shared common sources; see Liu Jie 1958; Vasil'ev 1968: 81-85; Hart 1973: 237-253 and especially Boltz 1990.

⁴³ Pu 蒲 was Chonger's fief, becoming the base of his rebellion and being attacked by Pi. Chonger spent eleven of his nineteen years in exile among the Di 狄 tribesmen; while staying there he was again attacked by Jin forces led by Pi.

⁴⁴ During the succession struggle in the state of Qi in 685 B.C., Guan Zhong 管仲 sided with Prince Jiu 公子糾, an adversary of Prince Xiaobai 公子小白, the future Duke Huan (齊桓公, r. 685-643 B.C.); in the battle he hit Duke Huan with an arrow. Nevertheless, when Duke Huan ascended the throne he forgave Guan Zhong and appointed him to a high ministerial position, putting aside former personal enmity.

⁴⁵ *Zuo*, Xi 24: 414.

The *Guoyu* version is somewhat different:

... He who serves the ruler without duplicity is called a servant; he who does not alter his likes and dislikes is called a ruler. A ruler [should behave as] a ruler, a servant [should behave as] a servant, this is called ‘bright lessons’. He who is able to bring ‘bright lessons’ to completion is the master of the people. When the two previous rulers were alive, why should men of Pu or Di matter to me? In eradicating the ruler’s adversaries, one should exert his strength to the utmost—how dare one be duplicitous? Now, as you have established yourself—have not you [enemies like] Pu and Di of your own? Yi Yin deposed Tai Jia, but finally thereby Tai Jia became the enlightened king;⁴⁶ Guan Zhong behaved criminally toward Duke Huan [of Qi], but finally thereby [Duke Huan] became the leader of the overlords... Now, as your *de* is great, why do not you behave with magnanimity? He who detests those who favor him cannot hold for long. You really are unable to deliver ‘bright lessons’ and are abandoning [the way] of the people’s master...⁴⁷

Both texts evidently derive from a common source, which might have been slightly abridged by the laconic *Zuo* author. What matters for our discussion, however, are the initial and the final sentences of the *Guoyu* version that are absent from the *Zuo*. The *Guoyu* version begins by establishing a theoretical framework for the responsibilities of a ruler and a minister, reiterating the need of each to follow the proper mode of behavior in accordance with his position. The phrase “a ruler [should behave as] a ruler, a servant [should behave as] a servant” (*jun jun chen chen* 君君臣臣) resembles—not incidentally—a famous passage from the *Lunyu* 論語,⁴⁸ and it unmistakably belongs to the Zhanguo discussions about “rectification of names” (*zheng ming* 正名) rather than to the Chunqiu intellectual milieu. Furthermore, the importance of the “bright lessons” (*ming xun* 明訓), mentioned at the beginning and at the end of the *Guoyu* passage, is again peculiar to the *Guoyu*, which abounds in discussions on the importance of historical lessons, and on “teaching [historical] lessons” (*jiao xun* 教訓).⁴⁹ These discussions, which are scattered throughout the entire text,

⁴⁶ Yi Yin 伊尹, a legendary wise minister at the beginning of the Shang dynasty, deposed the second Shang king, Tai Jia 太甲. After three years, as Tai Jia improved his behavior, Yi Yin reportedly restored him to the Shang throne.

⁴⁷ *Guoyu*, “Jin Yu” 晉語 4, 10.13: 368.

⁴⁸ See *Lunyu Yizhu*, “Yan Yuan” 顏淵 12.11: 128.

⁴⁹ See *Guoyu*, “Zhou Yu” 周語 1.1: 4-7, 1.8: 23, 3.3: 108, “Jin Yu” 10.7: 350, 10.13: 368, 11.4: 397, 14.1: 448, 14.13: 469, “Zheng Yu” 鄭語 16: 516, “Chu Yu” 17.1: 527-8, 17.3: 533, 18.7: 580.

are absent in the *Zuo*; hence it is again questionable whether they belong to the Chunqiu intellectual milieu. Perhaps the compilers of the *Guoyu* voiced their views on learning from history through the speeches of their protagonists. The book, therefore, identifies itself as primarily a didactic device.

Being a didactic device, the *Guoyu* is not characterized by great historical accuracy, and its compilers often edit the speeches to enhance their ideological clarity. These editorial efforts sometimes result in awkward slips and anachronistic concepts placed in the speeches and the narrative.⁵⁰ The *Guoyu* frequently imbues putative Chunqiu speeches with unmistakable Zhanguo flavor, as may be illustrated by the following case. In 635 B.C., King Xiang of Zhou (周襄王, r. 651-619 B.C.) was ousted from his capital; Duke Wen of Jin and many other overlords were considering intervention on the king's behalf. Duke Wen's chief aide, Zi Fan 子犯, strongly urged him to support the king. The *Zuo* cites him thus:

Hu Yan 狐偃 (Zi Fan) said to the duke of Jin: To attain the overlords, the best is to act for the king's sake. The overlords trust him, and, moreover, this is greatly righteous/proper (*yi* 義). You should continue the enterprise of [Marquis] Wen [of Jin, 晉文侯, r. 780-746 B.C., a supporter of the Zhou house during the disastrous flight to the East in 771 B.C.], and manifest your good trust toward the overlords—today [this course] is possible.⁵¹

The *Guoyu* again expands the *Zuo* version:

Zi Fan said: The people feel attached [to you], but know nothing of propriety/ righteousness (*yi*); perhaps you should reestablish the king to teach [the people] propriety. If you do not establish him, and let Qin 秦 do so, you would lose Zhou [support]; how would you be able to attain the overlords? He who is unable to rectify himself, and moreover unable to respect others, how would the others rely on him? Continuing the enterprise of [Marquis] Wen, stabilizing the achievements of Duke Wu (晉武公, r. 676-675 B.C., reunified the state of Jin), opening [new] lands, pacifying the borders—[all of these] depend on this [action]. Please devote yourself to this [reestablishing the king].⁵²

Again, both versions are fairly similar, indicating a resort to the common third source, but the *Guoyu* adds two additional dimensions.

⁵⁰ For the lack of historical accuracy in the *Guoyu* and resultant anachronisms, see a detailed discussion in Pines 2002: 42-44.

⁵¹ *Zuo*, Xi 25: 431.

⁵² *Guoyu*, "Jin Yu" 4, 10.15: 373.

While according to the *Zuo* version, Zi Fan concentrated entirely on the 'inter-state' advantages of intervention on the king's behalf, the *Guoyu* adds a broader dimension of "teaching the people propriety." This sentence may be a part of the original text, abridged by the *Zuo* compiler, but it may also reflect the preoccupation of the *Guoyu* authors with the importance of the people for the proper functioning of the state.⁵³ Another *Guoyu* addition is more problematic. The sentence "he who is unable to rectify himself, and moreover unable to respect others, how would the others rely on him?" seems completely out of order in the cited passage. The issue of Duke Wen's self-rectification was irrelevant to the proposed support of the king; besides, the notion of self-rectification in general remained alien to Chunqiu discourse, and it never appears in the *Zuo*. It is highly likely, therefore, that the *Guoyu* authors introduced this Zhanguo concept into a Chunqiu political discussion in order to emphasize the priority of self-rectification for proper rule. Clearly, ideological needs here outweighed the need for historical accuracy.

These examples suffice to clarify the complicated nature of the *Guoyu*. Although its compilers generally resorted to the same source materials which served the *Zuozhan*, their treatment of these materials was different. The leading specialist on the *Guoyu*, Zhang Yiren, summarized: "the *Zuo*... provides historical explanations to the [*Chunqiu*] classic ... while the *Guoyu* is oriented towards 'clarifying virtue.'" ⁵⁴ Indeed, unlike the *Zuo*, the *Guoyu* is not a narrative history but a textbook of political wisdom, the major target of which is drawing lessons from history for the purpose of upholding certain political norms. Hence, its authors imbued old texts with modern terms and approaches, to the extent that it prevents us from considering most of the *Guoyu* speeches an authentic source for Chunqiu history and thought. As we shall see below, this sacrifice of historical accuracy for the sake of ideological purity was further embraced by the writers of the "hundred schools".

⁵³ The ideological premises of the *Guoyu* authors are best discussed by Taskin 1987.

⁵⁴ Aside from Zhang Yiren (1990: 106), this peculiarity of the *Guoyu* is also discussed by Xu Beiwen 1981: 103-104; Yin Heng 1982; Shen Changyun 1987: 134-135; Taniguchi Nada 1998. Egan aptly states that unlike the *Zuo*, which is "moralistic and rhetorical history ... [the *Guoyu*] is philosophy and rhetoric in a historical setting", Egan 1997: 351.

*Constructing and Deconstructing: Speeches in the Texts of the
Hundred Schools*

Let us return to Sima Qian's passage cited at the beginning of the previous section. It suggests that by the Zhanguo period scribes had lost their monopoly on writing historical texts, and their task had partly been appropriated by leading statesmen and thinkers. A centuries-old tradition of "using the past to serve the present" encouraged extensive resort to the narratives from the past in polemical writings of the "hundred schools". The importance of the past in intellectual controversies may be demonstrated by Mozi's (墨子, c. 460-390 B.C.) example. To convince a skeptical audience of the applicability of the doctrine of universal love (*jian'ai* 兼愛), Mozi invoked the authority of former ages:

How do we know that the six former sage kings personally implemented it [the doctrine of universal love]?⁵⁵ Master Mozi says: 'I am not their contemporary, I neither heard their voices nor saw their faces. Yet I know [their ideas] from what they wrote on bamboo and silk, engraved on bronze and stone, carved on ritual vessels and transmitted for descendants in future generations'.⁵⁶

Mozi's interest in historical texts was not just because of curiosity, but for a more important reason: the authority of the past sages lent support to his controversial doctrines. Naturally, his interpretation of the sages' deeds and words was aimed to bolster his arguments, while the issue of the historical reliability of his presentation was at best of secondary value, if any. Many other rival thinkers similarly twisted accounts of the past to serve their immediate needs. Paradoxically, the more important the past became for the present, the less attention was paid to the accuracy of its presentation.

The changing attitude toward historical records had particularly harsh results for the authenticity of the speeches cited in Zhanguo texts. While changing accounts of the past events was a cumbersome task, modifying or inventing a speech by a former wise statesman was easy. Now, in an age of heated ideological debates, thinkers did not merely modify the extant records, as the authors of the *Guoyu* did, but

⁵⁵ The "six kings" are Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Cheng Tang 成湯, the founder of the Shang dynasty, as well as Wen 文王 and Wu 武王 of the Zhou dynasty.

⁵⁶ Mozi 1994, "Jian' Ai" 兼愛 xia 16: 178. For similar arguments see Mozi, "Shang Xian" 尚賢 xia 10: 97, "Tian Zhi" 天志 xia 28: 322.

invented them altogether. By the mid-Zhanguo period it became common to attribute one's views to the paragon rulers and ministers of antiquity, or to revered thinkers such as Confucius (孔子, 551-479 B.C.). Real or imaginary deeds of these paragons appear in collections of historical anecdotes, such as the *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋 and parts of the *Guanzi* 管子; many other are scattered throughout such compendia as the *Liji* 禮記 or the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋. The urgent need to promote one's ideals obliterated the need to preserve a semblance of historical credibility. In some cases speakers are even cited as judging the events that occurred long after their death.⁵⁷ Other manipulators of the past were shrewder and tried to present their inventions as entirely reliable records of past events. Among these forgers we may find the most respected thinkers, including the followers of Confucius, the self-proclaimed guardians of the Tradition, such as Mencius (孟子, c. 379-304 B.C.). In a famous passage the *Mengzi* says:

Of the five hegemonies, Duke Huan [of Qi] was the most prominent. During the Kuiqiu 葵丘 assembly (in 651 B.C.), the overlords only bound the sacrificial animals [but did not slay them], wrote down the alliance [oath] text, but did not smear blood [on their lips].⁵⁸ The first [oath] command said: 'Punish the unfilial; do not replace the major scion;⁵⁹ do not turn the concubine into the wife.' The second command said: 'Uphold the worthy, maintain the talented, distinguish those who possess virtue.' The third command said: 'Respect the elderly, be kind to the young, be not forgetful of strangers and travellers.' The fourth command said: 'There should be no hereditary offices for the *shi* 士, officials should not concurrently hold two [different] offices. In selecting *shi* you must get [the worthy]. No [overlord] should usurp the right to execute the nobles (*dafu* 大夫).' The fifth command said:

⁵⁷ For instance, the *Lüshi CHUNQIU* twice records Confucius' evaluations of the activities of Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子, which occurred several decades after Confucius' death, see *Lüshi CHUNQIU*, "Yi Shang" 議賞 14.4: 780 and "Shen Da" 慎大 15.1: 845. This kind of anachronistic citation became fairly widespread in the Han collections of anecdotes, such as *Hanshi Waizhuan* 韓氏外傳 or *Shuo Yuan* 說苑, for details, see Schaberg 1996b.

⁵⁸ Concluding an alliance prescribed a complicated ceremony: a cow was to be sacrificed (or its ear cut off), its blood smeared on the participants' lips and then the oath was written down. The blood oath invoked the deities' authority as guardians of the alliance, cf. Lewis 1990: 43-50; Kudô Motoo 1994: 2-3. That Duke Huan avoided this ceremony during the Kuiqiu assembly meant, according to Mencius, that he trusted the overlords and did not need to impose a blood oath on them.

⁵⁹ I.e. the elder scion from the major wife.

‘There should be no crooked embankment,⁶⁰ nor restrictions on the sale of grain, no undeclared enfeoffments.’ [Finally], it said: ‘Every participant in this alliance should henceforth reestablish friendly ties.’⁶¹

Can the *Mengzi* narrative be trusted? The first impression is that the text is completely reliable: it looks like a direct quotation from the alliance document. However, a close scrutiny of the passage leads to serious doubts regarding its reliability. First, let us compare the *Mengzi* account of the Kuiqiu assembly with that of the *Zuo* and the *Guliang Zhuan* 穀梁傳. The *Zuo* puts it very briefly: “Autumn, the lord of Qi concluded an alliance with the overlords at Kuiqiu. [It] said: Every participant in this alliance should henceforth reestablish friendly ties.”⁶²

The *Guliang Zhuan* says:

Kuiqiu assembly. The sacrificial animals were bound but not slain. [The alliance document] was read from above the sacrificial animals’ heads, to clarify the uniqueness of the restrictions of the Son of Heaven.⁶³ [It said]: ‘Do not block the springs, nor restrict sale of grain. Do not replace the major scion. Do not turn a concubine into the wife. Do not let [the ruler’s] wives interfere in the state affairs.’⁶⁴

Obviously, Mencius made use of both the *Zuo* and the *Guliang Zhuan* or their original source(s); hence, his depiction of the Kuiqiu alliance combines the narrative of both. But how reliable is the *Guliang Zhuan*? Though the text of the alliance oath quoted in the *Guliang* does not seem implausible, it raises several questions. The procedure of concluding an alliance without smearing sacrificial blood was at odds with the established pattern of alliances, as expressed in the *Zuo* and in the Houma 侯馬 texts.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the reference to domestic

⁶⁰ Yang Bojun explains that the overlords used the “crooked embankments” to maximize water supply to their fields during a drought, and to divert flood water to the neighbouring states. According to the *Guliang Zhuan*, the oath prescribed “not to block the springs”, see *Mengzi Yizhu*, “Gaozi” 告子 xia 12.7: 287-288.

⁶¹ See *Mengzi Yizhu*, “Gaozi” 告子 xia 12.7: 287-288.

⁶² See *Zuo*, Xi 9: 327.

⁶³ This mode of reading probably reflected the reverence to Zai Kong 宰孔 the envoy of King Xiang of Zhou, who participated in the assembly.

⁶⁴ See *Chunqiu Guliang Zhuan Zhushu*, Xi 9, 8: 2396.

⁶⁵ See Lewis 1990: 45-46; Weld 1997: 154-160. In 541 B.C., the Chu envoys demanded to renew the 546 B.C. alliance without smearing sacrificial blood; this alliance was therefore not recognized by the *Chunqiu* as a proper alliance and it reported only on the “assembly” (*hui* 會) but not on an “alliance” (*meng* 盟) see *Zuo*, “Zhao” 1: 1197-1202. The Kuiqiu meeting, however, is reported in the *Chunqiu* as an “alliance”, which indicates that a complete ceremony was performed.

problems of the overlords is suspect. None of the alliance texts quoted in the *Zuo* contains any evidence of such interference in the domestic matters of the lords' families.⁶⁶ Thus, although the *Guliang* story cannot be entirely dismissed, it also cannot be completely trusted.

Now, what about Mencius? He quotes several additional items of the Kuiqiu alliance that seem not to belong to the original alliance text. First, he claims that the Kuiqiu oath urged the overlords to punish unfilial sons, respect elders and be kind to the young. All these are perfectly in accord with Mencius' view of filial piety and upholding family ties as pivotal ethical principles. However, Chunqiu politics lacked such a notion. A close reading of the *Zuo* suggests that in the Chunqiu period filial piety was of little significance in political discourse; certainly it was never mentioned in international treaties.⁶⁷ Second, Mencius' presentation of the administrative items in the Kuiqiu oath is anachronistic. *Shi* 士 played no role in early Chunqiu administration, and certainly would not be mentioned in the overlords' alliance. Furthermore, Chunqiu rulers strictly adhered to hereditary offices, and no opposition to this principle was ever voiced until the end of the Chunqiu period. Besides, complicated administrative issues, such as the concurrent holding of two offices by the same official, were of no concern to the early Chunqiu leaders, whose administration remained vague and unsophisticated. Finally, the opposition to the execution of nobles, cited by Mencius, may well be in accord with his idea of "benevolent rule" (*ren zheng* 仁政), but is incompatible with the established practices of the Chunqiu period. All of this allows us to suggest that Mencius simply invented more than half of the items of the Kuiqiu alliance!⁶⁸

This example sheds light on the profound change in the authenticity of recorded speeches from the Chunqiu to the Zhanguo period. As ideological needs obliterated the need for accurate presentation of the

⁶⁶ This issue might have been added to the Kuiqiu oath by the *Guliang* compiler to show Duke Huan's treatment of contemporaneous succession crises in several major Chunqiu states. Duke Huan did indeed intervene in the succession struggles in Lu and Jin in 660 and 651 B.C. on behalf of the "legitimate" heirs. However, the rule "to uphold the elder scion" could hardly be pursued by Duke Huan, who himself was only a minor scion and a *de jure* usurper.

⁶⁷ About the role of filial piety in the Chunqiu period, see Pines 2002: 187-199.

⁶⁸ This supports Creel's observation that "Mencius cannot be absolved of suspicion of having attributed to the past what he wished to be done in the future", see Creel 1960: 75. Perhaps Mencius was more sincere when he stated that "the disciples of Zhongni (Confucius) do not discuss the affairs of [Dukes] Huan [of Qi] and Wen [of Jin]", *Mengzi*, "Liang Hui Wang" 梁惠王 shang 1.7: 14.

past, even those speeches and documents that have been cited from an early source could have been distorted to an extent unthinkable earlier. Not surprisingly, the Zhanguo period may be considered the lowest ebb of the Chinese historiographic tradition.

Widespread manipulations and forgery of historical records by the rival “disputers of the *Dao*” eventually generated a negative reaction. Among certain Zhanguo thinkers we may discern a critical and ironical attitude toward those who believed that intellectual polemics might be resolved through resort to the authority of the past. Hanfeizi (韓非子, d. 233 B.C.), arguably the most astute of Zhanguo political analysts, ridiculed those who claimed knowledge of the legacy of the past:

[Followers] of Confucius and Mozi all speak about Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, but they differ in what they accept and what they reject; yet each of them claims himself to be a real follower of Yao and Shun. But Yao and Shun cannot come back to life, so who would settle who is right: Confucians or Mohists? Seven hundred years have passed since Yin 殷 [Shang] and Zhou, two thousand odd years have passed since Yu 虞 [Shun] and Xia 夏, and it is impossible to verify the truth of Confucians and Mohists. Now, if we are to examine the three thousand years old way of Yao and Shun, we understand that it is impossible to fix it with certainty. He who claims certain knowledge without examining the issue, is a fool; he who relies on things which are impossible to ascertain, is an impostor. It is therefore clear that those who rely on former kings, and claim they can fix with certainty [what was the way of] Yao and Shun, should be either fools or impostors.⁶⁹

Hanfeizi did not confine himself to merely ridiculing his opponents as fools and impostors. He painstakingly tried to show that historical lessons are prone to multiple interpretations and hence cannot serve as guidelines for the present. In several chapters of his treatise, Hanfeizi cites anecdotes about past events, which contain the post factum evaluation of the event by a former wise statesman or thinker, or an ideologically important speech by a revered personality. After citing verbatim the anecdote and the evaluation by a former wise person, Hanfeizi refutes this evaluation, suggesting instead his personal analysis, which is usually at odds with the common wisdom.⁷⁰ This exercise in historical criticism is not performed merely for the sake of restating Hanfeizi’s doctrine, but primarily as a means to undermine

⁶⁹ See *Hanfeizi Jijie*, “Xian Xue” 顯學 50: 457.

⁷⁰ See *Hanfeizi Jijie*, “Nan” 難 chapters 36-39: 347-387.

the authority of the past. A sensitive critic of history, Hanfeizi demonstrates the futility of historical arguments, which can be twisted to serve whatever ideological needs. Tired of the elusive past, Hanfeizi joins the chorus of those who ask to find solutions to current problems in the present.⁷¹

Hanfeizi's sober criticism was only one of the possible reactions to the devaluation of historical records during the Zhanguo period. Another eminent Zhanguo thinker, Zhuangzi (莊子, died c. 280 B.C.) became eagerly involved in deconstructing the past altogether. By putting in the mouth of his protagonists speeches which ran contrary to their known views, by "citing" dialogues between persons separated by centuries, by inventing absurd historical personages, Zhuangzi consciously blurred the difference between history and fiction. His ironical attitude toward historical records may be demonstrated by the opening sentence of the chapter "Robber Zhi" 盜跖: "Confucius was a friend of Liuxia Ji 柳下季; Liuxia Ji had a younger brother named Robber Zhi."⁷²

This short sentence contains numerous intentional absurdities. First, Confucius could not have been a friend of Liuxia Ji, who died more than sixty years before Confucius' birth. Second, it was even more ridiculous to turn Liuxia Ji, "the most harmonious of the sages"⁷³ into the brother of a notorious villain, a cannibal who rebelled against all human norms, Robber Zhi. But Zhuangzi's irony becomes ever more clear when we consider that the "Ji" of Liuxia Ji was not his name, but just a seniority designation (*hang ci* 行辭), meaning "the youngest brother". Thus, by definition, Liuxia Ji could have no younger brother at all! By placing three absurdities into a single sentence, Zhuangzi makes fun of the entire history writing of his age.

Zhuangzi's ridicule of historical records is symptomatic of the Zhanguo intellectual atmosphere. Two major developments undermined the reliability of recorded speeches in Zhanguo texts. First,

⁷¹ The idea of "investigating the present" instead of "learning from the past" was endorsed by many mid- to late Zhanguo critical thinkers. See, for instance *Shangjun Shu Zhuizhi*, "Geng Fa" 更法 1: 1-5; *Lüshi Chunqiu*, "Cha Jin" 察今 15.8: 934-936.

⁷² See *Zhuangzi Jinzhu Jinyi*, "Dao Zhi" 盜跖 29: 776. The "Robber Zhi" chapter might have existed in the late Zhanguo, early Han period as an independent essay, which was later incorporated in the *Zhuangzi*, see Liao Mingchun 1998. For the present discussion, however, the precise authorship of this essay is not important, as its attitude toward history is consistent with other portions of the *Zhuangzi*.

⁷³ See *Mengzi*, "Wan Zhang" 萬章 xia 10.1: 233.

from literary devices aimed at the development of the narrative, speeches turned into extracts of political wisdom, which enticed the editors of historical documents to modify their content, thereby enhancing their didactic value. Second, as “disputers of the *Dao*” appropriated the scribes’ function as historians, the traditional emphasis on historical accuracy gave place to overt manipulations of the past in order to serve the present. The resultant widespread distortion of historical texts, and particularly of the speeches by the former wise statesmen, resulted in a deep decline in the authenticity of the speeches, which often lost even superficial connection with the putative speakers. As a result, in the eyes of critical thinkers the wisdom of the past partly lost its appeal as a means of dealing with the challenges of the present.

This discussion is concerned exclusively with pre-imperial historiography, and it is not my intention here to deal with the resurrection of historiographic tradition under the unified empire. It should only be mentioned briefly, that as the ideological cleavages of the *Zhanguo* period declined, and the imperial bureaucrats reestablished partial control over history writing, Chinese historiography regained its original accuracy and concern with credibility.

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