

## *Zuo zhuan* reading group 《春秋左氏傳》研讀

With Yuri Pines 尤銳, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Proposed to Renmin University 人大, March, 2021

*Zuo zhuan* stood at the center of multiple controversies ever since the attempt by Liu Xin 劉歆 to establish it as an official commentary on the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals*. Most previous discussions revolved around questions such as the text's authorship, the dates of its composition, and its relations to the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals*. Recent advances in textual studies, coupled with the impact of paleographic revolution, allow us to pose new questions and seek new understandings of *Zuo zhuan*. In our class we shall read selected passages from *Zuo zhuan* and try to address in particular the following issues: What were the primary sources utilized by *Zuo zhuan* compiler(s)? Who made (or invented, or modified) records of the past and for which audience? What were the goals of composers, compilers, transmitters, and editors of historical texts in the Eastern Zhou period? And how did they achieve these goals? How can we discern (if at all) different geographic, temporal, and stylistic layers in *Zuo zhuan*? How is *Zuo zhuan* related (if at all) to the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals*? And how is it related to a variety of unearthed and transmitted texts from the Eastern Zhou period?

The secondary goal of the class is to introduce the students to recent advancements in studies of *Zuo zhuan* in the West. We shall read a sample of publications by leading Western scholars of the text and discuss them parallel to our reading of *Zuo zhuan*, mostly in the second part of the reading group.

Basic editions recommended:

*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注. 1990. Annotated by Yang Bojun 楊伯峻.

Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, rev. ed.

Durrant, Stephen W., Li Wai-ye, and David Schaberg. 2016. *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals."* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Below is the preliminary plan of our meetings. This plan may be modified according to the students' demands and the level of familiarity with the text.

## **1. Introduction. *Zuo zhuan* and controversies around it. Different approaches in China, Japan, and the West.**

In the opening discussion we shall see how the parameters of the debates about *Zuo zhuan* in China, Japan, and the West, had shifted in the aftermath of Kang Youwei's 康有為 iconoclastic assault amplified by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 and his fellow "doubters of antiquity" 疑古派 and how it evolved in the twenty first century. We shall examine current advances in *Zuo zhuan* studies in different countries and the problems faced by researchers.

**Reading:** Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, "Introduction", especially pp. XVI-XXIII and XXXVIII-LIX. (Students are welcome in addition to acquaint themselves with one or more of Chinese studies):

- Hu Nianyi 胡念貽. 1987. "Zuo zhuan de zhenwei he xiezuo shidai kaobian" 《左傳》的真偽和寫作時代考辨. In idem, *Zhongguo gudai wenxue lungao* 中國古代文學論稿, 21-76. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Wang He 王和 1993. "Zuo zhuan cailiao lai yuan kao" 左傳材料來源, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 2: 16-25.
- Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, "Qian yan" 前言, in idem, annot., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注.
- Zhao Guangxian 趙光賢. 1982. "Zuo zhuan bianzhuan kao" 左傳編撰考, *Zhongguo lishi wenxian yanjiu jikan* 中國歷史文獻研究季刊 1: 135-153 and 2: 45-58.

## **2. Textual segments in *Zuo zhuan*. *Zuo zhuan* and *Chunqiu***

In this class we shall acquaint ourselves with the heterogeneity of *Zuo zhuan*. We shall compare brief annalistic records with lengthy sophisticated narratives (with a specific focus on the story of the 公叔段 rebellion in Zheng). What

were the possible sources for these early records? What is the impact of this heterogeneity of sources on the records' historical reliability? How do the authors of the 公叔段 story present their judgment of historical personalities?

**Reading** 隱公, years 1-3

For the 公叔段 story, read chapter 1, “Competing Lessons” in Li, Wai-yee. 2007. *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, focus on pp. 59-84.

**3-4. Becoming a hegemon: The story of Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公**

The figure of Lord Wen of Jin is one of the most fascinating in *Zuo zhuan* not only because of the literary appeal of his rags-to-riches story but also because it reflects the immense complexity of *Zuo zhuan*, multiplicity of its sources and perspectives, and the tensions among them. Newly unearthed materials allow us to assess the reliability of some of the narrated stories. In addition, further appropriations of 晉文公-related stories in Warring States-period lore exemplify the evolution of the art of didactic anecdotes in early China.

**Reading:** The following items of *Zuo zhuan* (but read also 春秋經 for each of the relevant years; ditto for later assignments): 僖公, 23.6-24.1; Xi 24.5, 25.2, 25.3, 25.4, 25.6, 26.1-26.4, 26.6, 27 to 28.

Alternative versions in unearthed sources:

Zifan-bianzhong 子犯編鐘 (multiple publications available); *Xinian* 《清華簡·繫年》第 6、第 7 章

For some of the anecdotes: to the story of Xi 25.4 (“晉侯圍原”), compare to 晉侯圍原 anecdote in: 《國語·晉語》4.17; 《呂氏春秋·為欲》; 《新序·雜事四》

For the story of Xi 28.3 (about 魏犢、顛頡): compare to 《商君書·賞刑》第三章 (“晉文公將欲明刑以親百姓”)

Secondary studies: Li Wai-yee, *The Readability*, pp. 254-275.

For the anecdotes:

- Schaberg, David. 2011. “Chinese History and Philosophy.” In: *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. I: *Beginnings to AD 600*, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy, 394-414. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Els, Paul. 2017. “Old Stories No Longer Told: The End of the Anecdotes Tradition of Early China.” In: *Between Philosophy and History: Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in Early China*, ed. Paul van Els and Sarah Queen, 331-356. Albany: State University of New York Press.

## 5. Explaining the coup d'état: The story of Lord Xian of Wei 衛獻公

*Zuo zhuan* abounds with stories of coups, counter-coups, domestic struggles, and the like. One of the major goals of these narratives is to caution future rulers to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors. Historical lessons are commonly conveyed through remonstrance 諫言 of a prescient minister or another member of the ruler's entourage, or presented by a later observer. Some of these speeches focus on concrete problems, whereas others analyze more abstract political principles. By analyzing the story of the overthrow of Lord Xian of Wei and the speeches scattered throughout it, we shall analyze the role of the speech on the one hand and the tensions between speech and narrative details on the other. We shall also observe the problematique of the *Chunqiu* records as presented in *Zuo zhuan*.

**Reading:** 襄公 14.4 and 14.6; 20.7, 25.15, 26.2, 27.3

Schaberg, David. “Remonstrance in Eastern Zhou Historiography.” *Early China* 22 (1997): 133-79.

## 6-8. The mature *Zuo zhuan*: Lord Zhao 魯昭公 years

Lord Zhao's section is by far the most detailed in *Zuo zhuan*; richest both in terms of narrative details and in terms of didactic speeches. Careful analysis of different geographic segments in this narrative allows us to distinguish between different habits of narrating events employed by scribes in such states as Chu,

Lu, Song, Zheng, and the Zhou royal domain. By focusing on three of these segments we shall advance into understanding similarities and differences among historiographic traditions of the late sixth century BCE. We shall also further address political sensitivities of narrating the stories of rebellion, especially when this rebellion occurs either in the Zhou royal domain or in Lu.

## 6. The boring rebellion? The story of Prince Zhao 王子朝

The rebellion of Prince Zhao had shaken the Zhou royal domain reverberating for five years (with repercussions felt for twelve more years). Despite its role in the further weakening of the royal power, it was rarely noticed by later historians, probably because of the uncharacteristically boring form of its narration in *Zuo zhuan*. This narration is extraordinarily detailed, but the details overshadow all other means of conveying meaning, such as predictions, analytical speeches, and the like. We shall try to understand the reasons for this peculiar narrative and for its preservation in *Zuo zhuan*.

**Reading:** 昭公 22.3, 22.5, 23.1, 23.6, 24.1, 24.3, 24.5, 24.6, 24.8, 25.7, 26.5, 26.7, 26.9

Durrant, Stephen W. Forthcoming. “The Problem of ‘Other Annals’ Embedded in *Zuozhuan*.”

## 7. Intrigues and tragedies: Chu narratives of Lord Zhao period

In marked contrast to the boring nature of the Zhou narratives, those from the state of Chu in Lord Zhao’s section belong to literary masterpieces in *Zuo zhuan*. Reading a sample of these stories (particularly those concerned with King Ling of Chu 楚靈王, Wu Zixu 伍子胥, and the malicious plotter Fei Wuji 費無極) we shall explore the reasons behind the divergence between Chu and Zhou royal domain’s historiography and also briefly address the impact of the Chu historiography on the proliferation of oral accounts of the past in that state.

**Reading:** 昭公 12.11+13.2 (靈王) (consult also 4.4, 5.4, 7.2), 19.2+19.6+20.2 (伍子胥), 21.7+27.3+27.6 (費無極), 襄公 22.6 (觀起), 昭公 23.7 (司馬蕩越)

《清華簡·繫年》第 15 章

Li Wai-ye, *The Readability*, pp. 307-312.

## 8. Dealing with sensitive topics: the overthrow of Lord Zhao of Lu 魯昭公

The overthrow of Lord Zhao of Lu in 517 BCE was a doubly sensitive event. First, it brought about the unprecedented situation in which an important state was ruled for seven years by a coalition of powerful ministerial lineages without even a puppet monarch on the throne. Second, this event occurred in the state of Lu during Confucius's life time, exemplifying the aggravating crisis of the ritual-based social order that Confucius advocated. How can one explain this? We shall see how *Zuo zhuan* and its source materials' authors carefully navigated among multiple sensitivities. We shall also address the political stance of *Zuo zhuan* in the context of ongoing ruler-minister struggles in the Springs-and-Autumns period world.

**Reading:** Zhao 25.2, 25.4, 25.6, 25.8, 25.9, 25.10, 26.3, 26.4, 27.4, 27.5, 27.7, 28.1, 29.1, 29.3, 30.1, 31.1, 31.2, 32.1, 32.4

## Major Western studies of *Zuo zhuan*

The first major breakthrough in *Zuo zhuan* studies in the West was achieved a century ago by a Swedish scholar Bernhard Karlgren in his “On the Authenticity and Nature of the *Tso Chuan*”, *Göteborgs Hörscholas Årsskrift* 32 (1926): 1-65. The article by now is outdated, but its pioneering role in utilizing linguistic parameters for determining the text’s dating and authenticity is still very much admirable. Then came a very long lull in publications followed by a few studies that focused on literary qualities of *Zuo zhuan* narrative and were inevitably limited to just a few segments of the text:

- Egan, Ronald G. 1977. “Narratives in the *Tso Chuan*”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37. 2: 323-352.
- Johnson, David. 1981. “Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-Hsu.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 40.2: 255-271.
- Wang, John C.Y. (Wang Jingyu 王靖宇). 1977. “Early Chinese Narrative: The *Tso Chuan* as Example.” In *Chinese Narrative*, ed. Andrew H. Plaks, 3-20. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Watson, Burton. 1989, “Introduction.” In idem, *The Tso Chuan: Selections from China’s Oldest Narrative History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

In the very end of the twentieth century, *Zuo zhuan* was rediscovered by Western scholars. Two almost simultaneously finished dissertations by David Schaberg and Yuri Pines resulted in two monographs, which were followed by another major study, by Li Wai-ye (李惠儀). The three scholars present different angles of discussion and disagree on several points, but their studies should be read as complementary:

- Schaberg, David. 2001. *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

- Pines, Yuri. 2002. *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Li, Wai-ye. 2007. *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

The new breakthrough in Western studies of *Zuo zhuan* came with the superb study cum translation by Durrant, Li, and Schaberg. This publication is valuable not only due to its excellent introduction, translation cum annotation, but also because of highly important introductory comments to most items in the text which allow their better contextualization within the general framework of *Zuo zhuan*. This publication is highly recommended even to those who do not need English translation as such. And it is expected to bolster studies of *Zuo zhuan* among Western scholars in general.

- Durrant, Stephen W., Li Wai-ye, and David Schaberg. 2016. *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals."* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Durrant, Li, Pines, and Schaberg continue to study *Zuo zhuan* and published many articles dealing with various aspects of this text. Their new insights—along with those by other scholars—will appear in the forthcoming volume about *Zuo zhuan* and early Chinese historiography, co-edited by Martin Kern, Nino Luraghi, and Yuri Pines. Aside from these scholars, there are several notable studies that deal with selected aspects of *Zuo zhuan*. Eric Henry's "'Junzi yue' and 'Zhongni yue' in *Zuozhuan*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59.1 (1999): 125-161 is a very engaging study of differences between *junzi* and Confucius's comments scattered along *Zuo zhuan*. Newell Ann van Auken is the only Western scholar who focuses on the *Chunqiu* Annals. Her findings are presented in Van Auken, Newell Ann. 2016. *The Commentarial Transformation of the Spring and Autumn.* Albany: State University of New York Press.