Preface

The Jōu Dynasty fell in 0771. Its former subject states were free. With their memories of the Jōu hegemonic system, the larger states eventually sought to revive that system, with themselves as hegemon. That effort did finally succeed, but not without major preliminary changes. This book is about those changes.

The states' tools were inadequate for that task. The chariot force, effective in set-piece battles, was unable to conquer and rule. A large infantry army, which could occupy as well as raid, was created to replace it. And to support that army, the palace states were transformed into resource bureaucracies. In the process, there emerged a concept of the state as something apart from its ruler, raising questions of interest for theories of state formation or re-formation. These changes define the transition from the Spring and Autumn (08c-06c) to the Warring States (05c-03c) periods. That transition is our subject.

We focus on the first of those periods, relying on a contemporary witness. From 0722, the state of Lŭ began to adjust its own calendar, and to record omens and military events. The resulting Chūn/Chyōu 春秋 (CC) chronicle provides a first-hand, month-by-month, account of what was going on.

The CC covers the reigns of twelve Lŭ rulers. The last four include the lifetime of Confucius (0549-0479), and make it possible to see the background for Confucius' own contribution to these military and administrative problems. We will read that record in full (§17-20).

The Lŭ chronicle itself is not read in our time. Modern ideas of Spring and Autumn derive from the 04c Dzwŏ Jwàn 左傳 (DJ) or "Commentary of Dzwŏ," which gives a conflicting account of the period, and features a moralizing Confucius. DJ is a witness to 04c theories, and a treasury of 04c fiction, but is misleading for earlier times. We will note some DJ suggestions as we go along, and take up the DJ itself in a final section (§22-25), showing how it gradually arrived at its own view of Spring and Autumn, and of history in general.

Whence the Dzwŏ Jwàn? Confucius' ancestors were Kŭng refugees from Sùng. The Kŭngs had only scant success as warriors in Lŭ; instead, they came to serve the state as ritual experts. In that capacity, around the year 0400, they found the Lŭ chronicle, corrected what they saw as its ritual errors, and went on to create a revisionist history of the Spring and Autumn centuries.

The widely held modern view is that Confucius wrote the CC as coded and esoteric "praise and blame" of individuals, but gave the plain to a disciple who wrote them down in the DJ. Yè Mèng-dý 葉夢得 (1077-1148) was so annoyed by that view that he attempted to refute it. Through him, we learn of a book by Sūn Fù 孫復 (992-1057), 春秋尊王發微, which discarded that theory.

These early efforts did not succeed in dislodging the DJ in popular esteem.

A new beginning was made in 1934 by George A Kennedy, who saw that lack of information, not implied moral disapproval, would account for some seeming omissions in the CC. We here follow Kennedy in pushing past the moralizing theory to see what was really going on in the text, and in the period.

In appreciation of Kennedy's example, this book is dedicated to him.

Conventions. For convenience, we call "Spring and Autumn" everything after the fall of Jōu in 0771, and begin "Warring States with the death of Confucius in 0479. "0479" is "479 BC, the preposed zero being a universal convention that works also in French and German, as the well-intentioned "BCE" does not. "04th century" is often abbreviated as "04c," and so on.

Chinese words are spelled in the Common Alphabetic system, which respects the familiar guideline "consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian," plus these conventions for vowels not in Italian: æ as in "cat," v [compare the linguist's inverted ʌ] as in "gut," z as in "adz," and yw (after l or n, simply w) for the "umlaut u" sound. Pronunciations are modern, but the ancient initial ng- is restored to distinguish Wèı 衛 and Ngwèı 魏, both now pronounced "Wèı." An equivalence table for CA and two other systems is available at page 154.

This book complements Legge's full translation of 1872; by preference, the Hong Kong reprint of 1994, with useful extra material. For all his acceptance of the "praise and blame"theory, Legge notes the contrast between CC and DJ, providing readers the wherewithal for making their own judgements.

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This book is the fruit of a long collaboration in the study of the Chinese classical period. Differences between us have been worked out in consultation, and we offer the result as a consistent account. Some of it has been published under one or another of the authors' names. For those papers, sometimes abbreviated here, see the Works Cited section, beginning at p150.

The authors join in the hope that readers will find this book useful in coming to terms with a vital, but largely unknown, segment of Chinese history – the lost prerequisite for fully understanding the more familiar Warring States, and perhaps also for seeing both periods in a larger perspective.

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