

The Lǔ 魯 Lore Tradition

A Taeko Brooks 白妙子
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
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Abstract. I here define an information transmission mode, distinct from both the orally transmitted and the written text, and demonstrate its variability over time.

“Confucius” in *Analects* (LY) 5:15-24 comments on several figures from his own and earlier times. I see these figures as part of an 05c Lǔ elite lore tradition. By “lore tradition” I mean a body of information having *no fixed textual form*, either written or oral, propagated by contact within a group. I will study the stability of this tradition by considering it at three points: (1) the Chūn/Chyōu 春秋 (CC) chronicle (0721-0479), (2) the LY 5 comments (c0470), and (3) anecdotes in the Dzwǒ Jwàn 左傳 (DJ, 04c).¹

Data are the five individuals who appear in all three of these sources. They are: Níng Wǔdǔ 寧武子 and Kǔng Wǐndǔ 孔文子 of Wèi, Dzàng Wǐn-jùng 藏文仲 and Jì Wǐndǔ 季文子 of Lǔ, and Dǔ-wǐn 子文 of Chǔ. In date, they range from the early Dzàng Wǐn-jùng (who appears in CC entries for 0666-0617) to Kǔng Wǐndǔ (0506).

1. The CC Entries (07c-06c) suggest that these men served their rulers *in both diplomatic and military capacities*. The CC attests their importance by mentioning them, but it does not judge their character or actions, or invite the reader to do so.²

2. The LY 5 Comments (05c) imply, and oppose, a tradition which knew these men *in a civil but not also a military role*. That tradition found Níng Wǔdǔ’s inexpedient loyalty foolish, and Kǔng Wǐndǔ’s reputation for elegance undeserved. It attributed taste to Dzàng Wǐn-jùng, who had “carved rafters” in his house, and circumspection to Jì Wǐndǔ, who “thought three times” before carrying out an idea. It admired the serenity with which Dǔ-wǐn endured repeated dismissal. These virtues seem to reflect early Warring States developments: (1) flexibility (missed in Níng Wǔdǔ, praised in Dǔ-wǐn) was functional for bureaucrats liable to reassignment; (2) elegance (missed in Kǔng Wǐndǔ, admired in Dzàng Wǐn-jùng) bespeaks elite wealth, seen in the tomb of an 05c Jàu minister;³ and (3) circumspection makes sense in terms of bureaucratic accountability. It seems that the target of the LY 5 comments was a Lǔ tradition which saw earlier figures *in terms of the values of its own time*.

¹For the 04c date and affinities of the DJ, see now Brooks **Heaven**.

²The traditional theory that moral judgements were coded into the wording of the CC was refuted by Kennedy **Interpretation**; for some details, see further Brooks **Historical**, Defoort **Words**, and Brooks **Distancing**.

³Either Jàu Jyēndǔ 趙簡子 or his son; it is dated to 0475-0450 in Táu **Tài-ywán** 379. For the architectural modesty of most Spring and Autumn elite dwellings, see von Falkenhausen **Waning** 455. For the date of LY 5, see Brooks **Re-Dating**; Brooks **Analects** 211 and 21.

The LY 5 “Confucius” actually *disapproves* of these developments, finding both Dzàng Wǎn-jǜng’s opulence and Jì Wǎndǐ’s caution excessive. “He” clearly prefers an older style of more frugal living and more decisive leadership. From our viewpoint, “his” disapproval turns out to be directed not at the Spring and Autumn personages themselves, but rather at the *reconfigured images of them* which the Lǚ lore tradition of the time contained. “He” seems to deplore such bureaucratic changes as eroding the old warrior ideal, which emphasized austerity and unquestioning loyalty under duress.

3. The Dzwǒ Jwàn (04c) treats these figures both within its stories and in evaluations by a Confucius persona (Jǜng-ní or Kǜngdǐ, or, for many passages set in years before the lifetime of Confucius, a “gentleman,” jyǎndǐ 君子). I will here ignore the evaluations, and discuss only the narrative portrayals. Those show new traits not implied in the 05c tradition. A new attitude toward an *old* trait is present with Níng Wǔdǐ. LY 5 had attacked an 05th century view of him as foolishly loyal, and defended his loyalty. DJ, perhaps influenced by that LY 5:21 criticism, regards Níng Wǔdǐ as a praiseworthy *paragon* of loyalty.

An entirely new trait in the DJ portrayals is populist sympathy. In its Confucian version, populism holds that the people are the foundation of the state, and that government should empathize with their hardships and act to secure their welfare. Populism is reflected, and is treated *as a novelty*, in the early layers of the Gwǎndǐ (04c) and the core interviews of Mencius (from 0320). From those texts, it is clear that populism is a new idea in the 04c. That new idea figures also in the DJ portrayals of persons; thus Dzàng Wǎn-jǜng predicts prosperity for Sǜng based on its ruler’s concern for its people during a flood disaster (3/11:2). Like the 04c Gwǎndǐ, he favors frugality in state spending. Jì Wǎndǐ is concerned for the sufferings of others (8/7:1). Dǐ-wǎn of Chǔ uses his private wealth to alleviate the difficulties of the state (3/30:2). Not only are these concerns not implied in the CC (08c-05c), they lack precedents in the lore tradition that seems to lie behind LY 5 (early 05c). But such concerns *do* occur in mid and late 04c texts, and the figures in the DJ portraits thus seem to have been contemporized. The action of Dǐ-wǎn in turning over discipline of the soldiers to a harsher overseer is criticized in populist terms: cruel methods can produce temporary “order,” but not guarantee victory. “What cause for congratulation is there in a recommendation which will bring defeat to the state?” (5/27:4).

There are also issues of propriety. Níng Wǔdǐ is praised in DJ for not responding to the singing of a Shǐ poem which would have been proper only for someone of higher rank (6/4:6). Dzàng Wǎn-jǜng is faulted for allowing improper sacrifices (6/2:6). Jì Wǎndǐ kills the Lǚ heir (7/18:5) and takes the coffin of the Lǚ ruler’s wife to bury his own wife (9/2:3). That propriety was a major concern in the 04c is attested in the middle Analects (in which lǐ 禮 is the central value for the Lǚ Confucians).⁴ That value is further developed in the later Mencian and Syǎndzian writings (03c). By contrast, it is scarcely mentioned in the early (05c) Analects chapters. Though protocol had its place in Spring and Autumn times, one feels that these Spring and Autumn personages would hardly have recognized themselves in this later Confucian garb.

⁴See Brooks *Analects* 59.

The Dzwǒ Jwàn portraits of these men do not simply continue the 05c tradition; they contain new elements. Their focus on ritual and on political populism suggests the 04c; the latter is especially unlikely to be a concern present but unreported in earlier centuries. Finally, both new *and* old elements are narratively elaborated in DJ. It follows that these cannot be distinguished solely by their literary treatment in DJ.

Lǚ and Other Lore Traditions

These three stages together show shifts in the concept of the ministerial role, from (1) mixed civil and military to (2) civil to (3) statesmanship function, the last with a strongly populist content. These shifts are surely the result of changing times: past ministers are being continually reconceptualized in terms of present needs. This result agrees with what is known of other early lore traditions.⁵ Although extreme distortion, merger, or invention of past personalities do not occur in this sample, they are attested in comparable traditions elsewhere.⁶ Even the modest degree of change and invention which we find in the Lǚ sample should discourage the assumption that lore traditions consist of accurately reported past fact. They are just as likely to have been adjusted to the unconscious assumptions and expectations of a later age.

Methodological Comment. Orally fixed texts are supported by memory over time. With stories, narrative conventions may give some continuity to successive retellings. The Lǚ lore tradition is not a written text, nor is it an orally fixed text, nor is it a story; if asked about Jì Wíndž, an 04c Lǚ courtier could have *recited* nothing in response. It is a mere-information tradition, and as such, it is exceptionally liable to vary with, and thus to reflect, changing times and tastes.

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⁵“The fourth-century traditions confirm our impressions gained from the fifth-century ones. They are also still developing under the pressure of fourth-century preoccupations, and the relation between the oral family traditions and the polis traditions of oratory becomes clearer” (Thomas **Oral** 251; my emphasis).

⁶For example, the prominent general Miltiades (06c) and his son Cimon (05c) as referred to in 04c Athens: the father-son relationship is sometimes inverted so that Cimon becomes the father, or their deeds are merged (Thomas **Oral** 203f).