

Evidence For a Usurpation in Sùng 宋

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This paper offers an extreme illustration of the difficulties facing anyone who hopes to use Warring States historical anecdotes as sources for history.

In Shwō Ywàn 說苑 1:46m, Dž-hǎn 子罕, an Overseer of Works in Sùng, says to a Sùng ruler, “Rewards and gifts are what people love – let your Lordship carry these out. Executions and punishments are what people hate – I beg leave to take charge of these myself.” The ruler is delighted and accepts the proposal. By this means, Dž-hǎn gains control of the government and one year later drives the ruler from his state. This anecdote appears also in Hán Fēidž (HFZ 35:6b), Hwái-nándž (HNZ 12:20), and Hán Shī Wài-jwàn (HSWJ 7:10). There are two big problems with this anecdote:

(1) The protagonist has the same name, and holds the same court position, as a notably wise, eloquent, loyal, unrebelling personage mentioned in Dzwō Jwàn (DJ): Dž-hǎn of Sùng. This Dž-hǎn flourished in the reign of Sùng Píng-gūng (0575-0532). He shows up in the Tán-gūng section of Lǐ Jì and in Jàn-gwó Tsù (JGT) as well as DJ, and is never shown in these sources to be anything but a dedicated servant of Sùng.

(2) Even if we assume that the Dž-hǎn in this anecdote is some other figure, and that the event occurred later, the usurpation remains difficult to pin down. The earliest passages that refer to a usurpation in Sùng occur in HFZ and Lǚ-shè Chūn/Chyōu (LSCC), which did not begin to take form until forty years after the 0286 destruction of Sùng by Chí and its allies. The Sùng ruler who was ousted from his throne is never named in these references, being referred to always as Sùng jywn 宋君, the Sùng ruler.

There is no mention of a usurpation in the Shǐ Jì chapter on Sùng (SJ 38). However, in SJ 87 (李斯) Chín Shǐ Hwángdì’s minister Lǐ Sǐ refers to a Sùng usurpation. And in SJ 46 (田完), the gist of the Sùng usurpation story – the appropriation of the right to administer punishments – is attributed to the Chí usurper Tyén Cháng 田常 (called Chín Hǎng 陳恆 in DJ). This conflation of the Sùng and Chí usurpation stories is found only in the Shǐ Jì.

The text that refers most frequently to the Sùng usurpation is the HFZ, where we find seven references to it. Some include a narrative summary of what occurred; others are merely glancing allusions. In all seven, the usurpation story is used in tight conjunction with a reference to the usurpation of Chí by the house of Tyén.

It is of course essential to the rhetorical method of the HFZ that allusions come in pairs. How, after all, can you establish the universality of a principle with just one allusion? You can’t. You need to have two allusions. HFZ regularly uses the paired names of the Sùng usurper and the Chí usurper as bywords for rebellion, assuming familiarity with the stories among its audience. Thus:

If a ruler does thus and so . . . then even should there be ministers such as Tyén Cháng or Dž-hǎn, how could they dare to be insubordinate? (49:11)

And elsewhere:

Dž-hǎn was like a pig darting into a ditch; Tyén Hýng was like a garden with streams – both phenomena [the pig and the streams] will cause even the best trained horses to veer from their paths. (35:1)

This constant pairing of the Chí and Sùng stories in HFZ marks a great change from the habits of previous polemicists. In the late 04th century, when DJ was taking shape, the Chí usurpation story was also regularly paired with another story, but it was not the Sùng story; rather, it was the usurpation of authority in Lǔ by the Jìsūn, Shúsūn, and Mǔngsūn clans. Nobody in those days knew anything about a Sùng usurpation. Within fifty years after the extinction of Sùng, everybody knew about a Sùng usurpation, and everybody thought it comparable to the Chí usurpation.

Are there any other stray bits of data about this newly famous usurpation? Yes, a few. In LSCC 23E (壅塞, “Blocking Up the Channels of Loyal Remonstrance”), we are given a fanciful account of the fall of Sùng in 0286. That account concludes with this sentence: “And this is how the House of Dài met its end 此戴氏之所以絕也.”

Hmm – the house of Dài. Why doesn’t it say the house of Dž 子? If it was indeed the house of Dài, rather than that of Dž, that was terminated by Sùng’s extinction, then it appears that a Sùng usurpation might indeed have occurred. One of the seven HFZ passages also mentions this clan-name:

And in this way, the house of Tyén supplanted the clan of Lǔ in Chí, and the house of Dài supplanted the house of Dž in Sùng. (51)

It has been surmised by commentators that the clan of the usurping Dž-hǎn was called Dài because it was descended from Sùng Dài-gūng, who reigned very early: 0799-0766. Among all the references to this usurpation, are there any hints as to when it might have occurred? Yes, there is one ever-so-fragile hint. In SJ 83, the long prison letter to the Prince of Lyáng attributed to Dzōu Yáng, the writer says:

In former times, Lǔ believed the words of Jìsūn and drove Kǔngdž from the state; Sùng was taken in by the scheme of Dž-hǎn and threw Mwò Dí into prison.

Note that this allusion, like nearly all the others we have been discussing, is driven by rhetorical necessity. The writer needs to find something to pair with the idea of Kǔngdž being driven from Lǔ due to the slander of the Jìsūn clan chief.

If, based on this reference in Dzōu Yáng’s letter, we entertain the possibility that the usurping Dž-hǎn was a contemporary of Mwòdž, that might place his activities within the long reign (0452-0405) of the second Sùng Jāu-gūng. This would mean that this Sùng Jāu-gūng was the ruler overthrown, and that Dž-hǎn is none other than the next figure in the list of Sùng rulers: Sùng Dàu-gūng (0404-0396). Or, since Jāu-gūng means “the illustrious lord” and Dàu-gūng means “the pitiable lord,” perhaps it was Dàu-gūng who, after a brief eight-year hold on the throne, was driven out and deposed – which would mean that his successor Sùng Syōu-gūng, “the abolishing lord,” is the ruler who should be identified with the usurping Dž-hǎn.

But if the house of Sùng was overthrown in 0405, or in 0396, why didn't the DJ compilers, active around 0320, have a wise man of the Chūn/Chyōu era predict that it would happen?

A last bit of evidence is provided by another Shwō Ywèn anecdote concerning a Dž-hǎn (SY 8:30), the content of which shows clearly that the Dž-hǎn intended is the ruler of a state, not a court officer, even though he is called an Overseer of Works:

Dž-hǎn, the Sùng Overseer of Works, valued Dž-wéi 子韋 so greatly that he shared meals with him when entering the palace, and shared clothing with him in going out from the palace.

When Dž-hǎn the Overseer went into exile, Dž-wéi did not follow him, but when Dž-hǎn returned, he again summoned Dž-wéi to his side and treated him with honor. Members of his retinue said, "Why do you value Dž-wéi like this? When your Lordship went into exile, he did not follow you, but now on your return, you again give him honor – could your Lordship be unique in feeling no sense of compunction in the presence of loyal ministers?"

Dž-hǎn said, "It was because I was unable to make use of Dž-wéi's services that I was forced into exile. That I was able to succeed in coming back was still due to the lingering influence of Dž-wéi's virtue and instruction. That is why I honor him. And when I went into exile, of what use to me were the strenuous efforts of those who followed me?"

In his chart of the rulers of Sùng, James Legge observes, on which authority I do not know, that "from the time of Sùng Dàu-gūng on, Sùng was under the sway of Chí." Was Chí somehow involved in helping the refugee from the house of Dài overthrow the house of Dž in Sùng? I need to get in touch with James Legge about this; I believe that only he can help me.

Comment

E Bruce Brooks (2006)

Might there be a hint about the identity of the usurper, if not those who aided him, in the duplication of sacrificial names on Legge's list of Sùng rulers? Duplication of sacrificial names within one lineage ought to lead to confusion in the other world, thus violating the basis of the custom itself. Where duplications occur in the ruler lists for Jìn and Chí, they follow a usurpation; the usurpers are Wǔ-gūng 武公 of Jìn in 0678, from a collateral line whose seat was at Chyw-wò 曲沃 (SJ 39 4/1640; he was not given a duplicate sacrificial name); and the second Hwán-gūng 桓公 of Chí in 0375, the first of the Tyén 田 rulers (SJ 46 4/1886f). The appearance of a second Jāu-gūng in Sùng thus probably means that a usurpation had taken place, and that the usurper was either the second Jāu-gūng himself (in 0452) or a predecessor. Legge notes, "There is much difficulty in fixing the number of years that dukes King and the second Ch'ao ruled." Such confusion is not unlikely in a usurpation situation. SJ 38 (4/1631) remarks that the second Jāu-gūng killed the Heir and ruled in his stead; it notes his descent from an earlier Sùng ruler. This does not preclude, but rather suggests, that he had a different clan name (the usurping line in Jìn had earlier branched off from the ruling line; compare the all but usurping Jisūn of Lǔ, who were descendants of Lǔ Hwán-gūng, but were not the main or ruling line).

Shǐ Jì. There is no possible verification from the Chūn/Chyōu, since this event was outside the chronological range for which the Chūn/Chyōu has been preserved. If we turn to the Shǐ Jì, we find an interesting situation. Here is the latter part of Legge’s table of the rulers of Sùng, with one typographical error corrected, and with all dates adjusted to “historical” rather than Legge’s “astronomical” years:

Aī-gūng	哀	0800	(01 yrs)
Dài-gūng	戴	0799-0766	(34)
Wǔ-gūng	武	0765-0748	(18)
Sywān-gūng	宣	0747-0729	(19)
Mù-gūng	穆	0728-0720	(09)
Shāng-gūng	殤	0719-0710	(10)
Jwāng-gūng	莊	0709-0692	(18)
Mín-gūng	閔	0691-0682	(10)
Hwán-gūng	桓	0681-0651	(31)
Syāng-gūng	襄	0650-0637	(14)
Chóng-gūng	成	0636-0620	(17)
Jāu-gūng	昭	0619-0611	(09)
Wén-gūng	文	0610-0589	(22)
Gùng-gūng	共	0588-0576	(13)
Píng-gūng	平	0575-0532	(44)
Ywān-gūng	元	0531-0517	(15)
Jǐng-gūng	景	0516-0453	(64)
Jāu-gūng	昭	0452-0405	(48), usurpation
Dào-gūng	悼	0404-0396	(09)
Syōu-gūng	休	0395-0373	(23)
Bì-gūng	辟	0372-0370	(03)
Tì-chóng-gūng	剔成	0369-0329	(41)
Yěn-gūng	偃	0328-0319	(10)
Yěn-wáng	偃	0318-0286	(33), Kingship

• *Sùng Rulers and Reigns (after Legge)* •

For the years where verification from the CC is possible (0722-0464), this list and the Sùng row of the chronological *table* SJ 14 agree. The corresponding Shǐ-jyā *chapter*, SJ 38, differs at several points. The natural inference is that the table was a preliminary study, and that SJ 38 was written later, and was then subject to anecdotal or other interference. One possible source of such interference is well known: the SJ errors in Chì and Ngwèi reign dates are due to assimilation to the partly fictional Jàn-gwó Tsù. The notes to SJ 38 in the Nienhauser translation show the author as sometimes diverging from other sources, or copying them incorrectly. The latter trait is evident in the handling of the SJ 67 Confucius Disciple List (Brooks **Analects** 274f). The implied picture of an author who is sometimes impressionable and sometimes careless might well affect Sinological confidence in data for which SJ is our only extant source.

Works Cited

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 William J Nienhauser Jr et al. *The Grand Scribe’s Records V.1: The Hereditary Houses of Pre-Han China, Part 1*. Indiana 2006