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## Killings and Assassinations in the *Spring and Autumn* as Records of Judgments

### INTRODUCTION

For over two millennia, the Confucian classic known as the *Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) was widely believed to embody the moral judgments of Confucius, and to have been edited or perhaps even composed by Confucius himself. In the twentieth century this view saw widespread rejection, and even if a few retained faith in the conservative conviction that the records concealed the judgments of the Sage, the terse, regular *Spring and Autumn* was relegated to neglect, regarded as no more than a dry and largely objective historical account.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have subscribed to the view that the *Spring and Autumn* is neither a history in the conventional sense nor

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<sup>1</sup> For the *Spring and Autumn* as a simple historical record unrelated to Confucian judgments see Qian Xuanton 錢玄同, “Lun *Chunqiu* xingzhi shu 論《春秋》性質書,” and “Lun huo lin hou xu jing ji *Chunqiu* li shu 論獲麟後續經及《春秋》例書,” orig. pub. 1925, rpt. in Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, ed., *Gushibian* 古史辨 (Taipei: Landeng wenhua, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 275–276 and 278–280. In an effort to resolve this view with the traditional attribution to Confucius, George Kennedy accepted that the *Spring and Autumn* may have been written by Confucius while arguing that the *Spring and Autumn* was an objective history; Kennedy, “Interpretation of the *Ch’un-Ch’iu*,” *JAOS* 62.1 (1942), pp. 40–48. Robert H. Gassmann has likewise maintained that while the records reflect Spring and Autumn-period political power balance, the text was still likely edited by Confucius in accord with the Confucian principle of “rectification of names;” *Cheng ming, Richtigstellung der Bezeichnungen: Zu den Quellen eines Philosophens im antiken China. Ein Beitrag zur Konfuzius-Forschung* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 157–302. The traditional view of the *Spring and Autumn* as written by Confucius to convey moral judgments has been maintained by On Cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: U. of Hawai’i P., 2005), pp. 25–26, and Zhao Shengqun 趙生群 *Chunqiu jing zhuan yanjiu* <春秋>經傳研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2000), pp. 7–26.

the work of Confucius, but a product of Spring and Autumn-period ritual practices.<sup>2</sup> The evidence set forth in this study suggests that elements of truth may be found in each of these views, despite their apparent mutual incompatibility, and that *Spring and Autumn* records registered events and conveyed judgments (albeit not those of Confucius) and may at the same time have been an artifact of ritual practices.

The *Spring and Autumn* covers the period from 722 BCE–481 BCE, and is now widely recognized to have been an official record of the ancient Chinese state of Lu 魯, even if the nature of such official records is not yet fully understood.<sup>3</sup> It records various categories of events, including military actions, interstate meetings and covenants, diplomatic missions, flights into exile, irregular astronomical and meteorological events and ritual services, accessions to the throne and marriages of Lu rulers, deaths and funerals in and outside Lu, and killings of rulers, heirs apparent, and noblemen. The present study focuses on records in the last groups, that is, records of killings and assassinations, and explores the question of the original function of the *Spring and Autumn* records. In a departure from the traditional approach of reading the records through later commentarial explanations and glosses, this study instead examines a single coherent group of records, first seeking to identify and analyze formal patterns of recording in the *Spring and Autumn* itself, and then comparing the records to corresponding narrative accounts in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, with particular attention to passages that describe the process of recording or documenting events.

<sup>2</sup> Several scholars have suggested connections between the *Spring and Autumn* records and ritual practices. The most detailed proposals to date have appeared in the work of Yuri Pines; see in particular “Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period: The Reliability of the Speeches in the *Zuo zhuan* as Sources of Chunqiu Intellectual History,” *Early China* 22 (1997), p. 83, and “Chinese History Writing between the Sacred and the Secular,” in John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, eds., *Early Chinese Religion: Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), vol. 1, pp. 318–321. Earlier proposals include Piet van der Loon, “The Ancient Chinese Chronicles and the Growth of Historical Ideals,” in W. G. Beasley and Edwin G. Pulleyblank, eds., *Historians of China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1961) p. 25; Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. J. R. Foster (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U.P., 1982), orig. pub., *Le monde chinois* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), p. 84; Sarah Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, According to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1996), pp. 166–67; Michael Loewe, “The Heritage Left to the Empires,” in Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999), p. 971; Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: SUNY U.P., 1999), pp. 130–132.

<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarship indicates that the association of the *Spring and Autumn* with Confucius was secondary and late; see Liang Cai, “Who Said, ‘Confucius Composed the *Chunqiu*?—The Genealogy of the ‘*Chunqiu*’ Canon in the Pre-Han and Han Periods,” *Frontiers of History in China* 5.3 (2010), pp. 365–371.

The first part of this study focuses on the records themselves, endeavoring to extract significance from the regular form of killing and assassination records. The second part examines the records in light of narratives concerning the same events in the *Zuo zhuan*, since these accounts offer insight into the circumstances surrounding the killings and the motives underlying them. A few *Zuo zhuan* accounts discuss the practices involved in recording events such as killings, and the third part of this study examines these passages, and in particular, the proposed link between reports and records, and considers the possibility that both reports and records may have served to publicize and register judgments within Lu and among the ancient Chinese states. This study concludes that *Spring and Autumn* records of killings were not merely logs of events, and although they did not express Confucian moral judgments, they nevertheless registered judgments on the recorded events, and indeed, this early function may have been the seed of what later developed into the traditional reading of the *Spring and Autumn* as a work that conveyed the judgments of Confucius.

#### *SPRING AND AUTUMN* RECORDS OF KILLINGS: A FORMAL DESCRIPTION

The *Spring and Autumn* records register killings of individuals of the noble class, including rulers, heirs or heirs apparent, and noblemen from states other than Lu. Killings of Lu noblemen are included only rarely, and assassinations of Lu rulers are not recorded as such. Records of killings adhere to a fixed format, which is contingent on the rank of the victim. Apart from details such as date and the identity of the victim, only two elements varied, namely, whether the killer could be named, and which verb was used for “kill.” For each of these variables, the primary determining factor was the victim’s rank. This is illustrated by examples below.

##### *Killings of Non-Lu Noblemen, Rulers, and Heirs*

The *Spring and Autumn* contains fifty-four records of killings of foreign noblemen, that is, noblemen from states other than Lu.<sup>4</sup> These records do not name a killer and use the plain, unmarked verb for “kill,” *sha* 殺.<sup>5</sup> Such records take one of two forms:

<sup>4</sup> Here and elsewhere I use “foreign” to denote “non-Lu” or “from a different state”. This is an important contrast in the *Spring and Autumn*, and indeed, similar language appears in the *Gongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentarial traditions, which contrast “domestic” (*nei* 內) and “foreign” (*wai* 外). “Foreign” as I use it does not mean “non-Chinese”.

<sup>5</sup> In referring to the verb as “unmarked” I draw on theory of markedness, developed by

Someone from Chen killed their nobleman, Gongzi Guo. 陳人殺其大夫公子過 · 6

Chu killed their nobleman, Dechen. 楚殺其大夫得臣 · 7

Killings may be attributed to an unnamed person (*ren* 人), as in the first record above, or may be ascribed to the state, as in the second.<sup>8</sup> The victim is typically referred to as “their nobleman” (*qi daifu* 其大夫), indicating that he was from the same state as his killer(s).<sup>9</sup> Victims are named in all but three cases.<sup>10</sup> The critical information conveyed by such records is the identity of the victim and the fact that he was killed. The identity of the killer was not recorded, and presumably this omission indicates that his identity was not deemed important.

Records of killings of rulers are less common than those of killings of noblemen – only twenty-five such records appear in the *Spring and Autumn* – and they differ in form. The main verb is *shi* 弑, a marked term frequently rendered “to assassinate,” or more accurately, “to commit regicide.”<sup>11</sup> The victim is referred to as “his ruler” (*qi jun* 其君), that

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Prague School linguist Roman Jakobson. For a brief introduction to markedness theory, see Edwin L. Battistella, *Markedness: The Evaluative Superstructure of Language* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 1–6. Put simply, an unmarked form, linguistic or otherwise, is the plain or default form, while a marked form is special and formally different from the default, and it encodes additional information or significance. I am grateful to the late Jerry Norman for introducing me to this theory, whose application I extend to non-linguistic material; see Newell Ann Van Auken, “Could ‘Subtle Words’ Have Conveyed ‘Praise and Blame’? The Implications of Formal Regularity and Variation in *Spring and Autumn* (*Chūn qiū*) Records,” *Early China* 31 (2007, pub. 2010), pp. 76–81. See too Jessica Rawson, “Ancient Chinese Ritual as Seen in the Material Record,” in Joseph P. McDermott, ed., *State and Court Ritual in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 43. Although Rawson does not explicitly invoke the term “markedness,” this approach to understanding the evidence seems to underlie her discussion of “specialness” in reference to the items found in Fu Hao’s tomb, and more broadly to her discussion of ways of marking hierarchical distinctions in ancient China.

<sup>6</sup> *Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu*) Zhao 昭 8.7, p. 1299. References to individual *Spring and Autumn* records are keyed to Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (1981; rpt. Taipei: Fuwen, 1991). They are marked CQ and designated by ruler, year and entry number as per Yang Bojun’s numbering scheme, plus the corresponding page number. References to *Zuo zhuan* passages from this work are marked ZZ, and designated by ruler and year plus page number.

<sup>7</sup> CQ Xi 僖 28.6, p. 449.

<sup>8</sup> The term *ren* apparently referred to a single person. It was not a device for indicating that multiple killers were involved; see Newell Ann Van Auken, “Who Is a *Rén* 人? The Use of *Rén* in *Spring and Autumn* Records and Its Interpretation in the *Zuǒ, Gōngyáng* and *Gūliáng* Commentaries,” *JAS* 131.4 (2011), pp. 559–570.

<sup>9</sup> Records that omit the phrase “their noblemen” may have indicated that killer and victim were not from the same state; see discussion below.

<sup>10</sup> Records that identify victims only as “their nobleman” are CQ Wen 文 7.5, p. 554; Zhuang 莊 26.3, p. 233; and Xi 25.4, p. 429.

<sup>11</sup> Carine Defoort renders *shi* with the phrase “to commit regicide on” in “Can Words Produce Order?” *Cultural Dynamics* 12.1 (2000), pp. 91–93. Strictly speaking this is more ac-

is, the killer's ruler, and unlike records of noblemen's killings, about two-thirds (16 of 25 records) name the killer.

*Guisi*. Xia Zhengshu of Chen assassinated his ruler, Pingguo.  
癸巳·陳夏徵舒弑其君平國·<sup>12</sup>

Winter. The eleventh month. Someone from Song assassinated his ruler, Chujiu. 冬·十有一月·宋人弑其君杵臼·<sup>13</sup>

In other words, it was permissible but not required for records of rulers' killings to identify the killer. This is a critical difference from records of noblemen's killings, which never name the killer, and apparently were prohibited from doing so.<sup>14</sup>

A third, much smaller set of records concerns the killings of victims who ranked above regular nobility but below regional rulers, including Heirs (Zi 子) and Heirs Apparent (*Shizi* 世子) who were in line for the throne.<sup>15</sup> These seven records use the verb *sha*, like records of noblemen's killings, yet the killer is often named, as in cases when the victim was a ruler.<sup>16</sup>

Spring. The Hou of Jin killed his Heir Apparent Shensheng.  
春·晉侯殺其世子申生·<sup>17</sup>

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curate than "assassinate," which is not necessarily restricted to rulers, but subsumes all politically-motivated killings of leaders, but this study uses "assassinate" as it is more idiomatic. Discussions of regicide and the distinction between *shi* and *sha* abound in the traditional literature; for a brief overview focused on *Spring and Autumn* usage, see Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu*, p. 325.

<sup>12</sup> *CQ*Xuan 宣 10.9, p. 704.

<sup>13</sup> *CQ*Wen 文 16.7, p. 616.

<sup>14</sup> For a similar discussion of rules governing level of detail in date notations, see Van Auken, "Subtle words," pp. 64–76. I show that inclusion or exclusion of information or degree of detail was regular and rules-governed, and apparently determined by factors such as the category of event recorded or the rank of individuals involved. A clear example is found in the contrast between records of meetings (*hui* 會) and covenants (*meng* 盟). These two types of record were formally similar, but records of meetings never specify the day in the date notation, whereas covenant records often include this information; I thus conclude that recording conventions allowed precise dating in covenant records but prohibited inclusion of this detail in meeting records.

<sup>15</sup> "Heirs Apparent" were designated successors of living rulers, and the title "Heir" was used during the interim period after the preceding ruler's death but prior to his official accession (a use of Zi 子 distinct from its use as an official title of a regional ruler); see *ZZ* Xi 9, p. 325, and Yang Bojun's accompanying discussion.

<sup>16</sup> Seven of the ten records using *sha* that name the killer concern victims of elevated status. Four record killings of an Heir Apparent or Heir: *CQ*Xi 5.1, p. 300; Xi 9.6, p. 335; Xiang 襄 26.6, p. 1110; and Zhao 8.1, p. 1299. One victim was a contender for the Zhou throne, *CQ*Xiang 30.2, p. 1169; and another (Gongzi Bi) was a contender for the Chu throne; *CQ*Zhao 13.3, p. 1342. One records the killing of two Zhou noblemen; *CQ*Xuan 15.5, p. 758. The remaining instances that record killings of rulers outside their home states are *CQ*Zhao 11.3, p. 1321; Zhao 16.2, p. 1375; Ding 4.3, p. 1533; see discussion in the next section.

<sup>17</sup> *CQ*Xi 5.1, p. 300.

Winter. Li Ke of Jin killed the heir of his ruler, Xiqi. 冬·晉里克殺其君之子奚齊·<sup>18</sup>

These records concern victims of intermediate status and combine features of the two other forms.

On occasion *Spring and Autumn* records apparently used these variables prescriptively to convey Lu's view of the deceased's proper status. For example, Gongzi Bi, de facto ruler of Chu, was killed soon after coming to power. The *Zuo zhuan* account does not clearly indicate whether Gongzi Bi was ever recognized as ruler, and his position as officially-designated successor was tenuous at best.<sup>19</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* uses the verb *sha* and names his killer as though he were an heir or heir apparent, yet does not employ any special title in referring to Gongzi Bi:

Gongzi Qiji of Chu killed Gongzi Bi. 楚公子棄疾殺公子比·<sup>20</sup>

By neither referring to the victim by a title nor employing the marked verb *shi*, the record refrains from acknowledging Gongzi Bi's short-lived status as ruler of Chu, yet at the same time, in naming his killer it elevates him above other noblemen.<sup>21</sup> Formal features thus may have been open to manipulation, and in ambiguous cases such as this one, choice of a particular form could reduce a ruler to the status of heir, or perhaps even a nobleman.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *CQ* Xi 9.6, p. 325.

<sup>19</sup> *ZZ* Zhao 13, pp. 1346–1348.

<sup>20</sup> *CQ* Zhao 13.3, p. 1342. The *Gongyang* version of the record has *shi*, but like the *Zuo* version, does not give a title; see He Xiu 何休 (129–182) comm., *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan He shi jiegou* 春秋公羊傳何氏解詁 (*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 ed., Taipei: Zhonghua) (hereafter cited as *Gongyang*), Zhao 13, 23:1b.

<sup>21</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* contains two similar cases of killings of men who were briefly installed as rulers of their respective states, but whose killings are not recorded with titles, employ *sha* instead of *shi*, and leave the killer unnamed, thereby treating them like noblemen rather than rulers. See *CQ* Yin 4.6, p. 35, and cf. the related account in *ZZ* Yin 4, pp. 37–38, and also the record and account in *CQ* Zhuang 9.1, p. 177 and *ZZ* Zhuang 9, pp. 177 and 179. Carine Defoort has proposed that that choice of *sha* versus *shi* in the first case may have conveyed moral judgment, a proposal in line with the traditional moralizing reading of the *Spring and Autumn*. She notes a pair of records (*CQ* Yin 4.2, p. 34 and Yin 4.6, p. 35) in which an assassin, Zhouyu of Wei 衛州吁, took the throne after killing his predecessor and then was subsequently killed. Even though both cases involved killings of rulers, only the first was recorded with *shi*. She proposes that this indicates an ethical judgment against Zhouyu. See Carine Defoort, "The Rhetorical Power of Naming: The Case of Regicide," *Asian Philosophy* 8.2 (1998), pp. 111–118. This reading is based on the assumption that Zhouyu was not deemed legitimate because of his moral failings and misconduct – namely, his assassination of his ruler – yet the notion that legitimacy was contingent on moral standing may be a later idea. These events took place in 719 BCE. It is also quite possible and perhaps more likely that Zhouyu was not treated as a legitimate ruler because he did not retain power long enough to complete the ascension rituals necessary to be officially established.

<sup>22</sup> A fascinating but at this point unanswerable question is to what extent this manipulation

In short, most *Spring and Autumn* records of killings employ a combination of two features to indicate a three-way distinction among killings of regional rulers, of heirs and heirs apparent (and possibly Zhou 周 nobility), and of noblemen who were not in line for the throne. This is summarized in the table below.

*Table: Records of Killings: Rank of Victim and Formal Features of Records*

| VICTIM'S RANK         | NO. OF RECORDS | MAIN VERB    | KILLER COULD BE NAMED |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Regional ruler        | 25             | <i>shi</i> 弑 | YES                   |
| Heir or Heir apparent | 11             | <i>sha</i> 殺 | YES                   |
| Nobleman              | 10             | <i>sha</i> 殺 | NO                    |

Together these patterns suggest two significant points. First, Lu record-keeping practice required killings of rulers to be distinguished from other killings, a distinction made by use of the special, marked verb *shi*. Second, the identity of individuals who killed rulers and those in line for the throne was considered significant and thus these killers were often identified; yet at the same time, although it was apparently necessary to record cases in which noblemen were killed, the identity of their killers was unimportant and did not warrant recording.

*Variations: Foreign Killers and Killings on Foreign Territory*

The *Spring and Autumn* includes a few cases in which the victim was killed while he was abroad, or in which the killer was from a different state, and these records depart from the regular form. When a ruler was killed by someone from another state, the record uses *sha* instead of *shi*; the *Spring and Autumn* contains four such cases.<sup>23</sup> This is not surprising, as *shi* refers to the killing of a ruler by his own subject.<sup>24</sup>

was conscious and deliberate. The answer to this question is contingent on how much latitude the record-keepers had in how they recorded events. If records strictly reflected reports, as claimed in many *Zuo zhuan* passages (discussed below), then record-keeping was rules-governed, and any variation must have originated in the records on which the reports were based. Yet at the same time, we must consider that these reports came from outside Lu, and we might expect the *Spring and Autumn* to reflect the Lu perspective on the legitimacy of a particular ruler, which may not have always been reflected in the report.

<sup>23</sup> See CQZhao 11.3, p. 1321; Zhao 16.2, p. 1375; Ding 定 4.3, p. 1533; and Ai 哀 4.1, p. 1624. The last of these records omits the location, but the *Zuo zhuan* indicates he was abroad; see ZZ Ai 14, p. 1625.

<sup>24</sup> The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 defines *shi* as “a vassal killing his lord” (臣殺君也); Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 55–c. 149), comp., *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (hereafter, *SWJZ*) (1807; rpt. Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1991), 3b:28b (p. 121).

One record states that a foreign state seized a ruler and used him as a sacrificial victim (*yong zhi* 用之), and another ascribes the same fate to an heir apparent.<sup>25</sup> Still another uses the verb “annihilate” (*mie* 滅) for the battlefield killing of two rulers.<sup>26</sup> These seven unusual records – four with *sha*, two with *yong*, and one with *mie* – concern killings that occurred while the victim was abroad. Another, which employs the verb “slay” (*qiang* 戕), records an instance in which a regional ruler was killed by a foreign assassin while in his home state.<sup>27</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* thus appears to distinguish cases in which rulers or heirs were killed at home or abroad, and also sets apart cases in which the killer was not from the same state as his victim. A similar distinction applies to cases in which a nobleman was killed by someone from another state, but it is expressed directly by omitting the phrase “their nobleman” (*qi daifu* 其大夫), rather than by using a different verb.<sup>28</sup> These records are insufficient in quantity to permit conclusions about the precise import of such formal variations, but it is nevertheless certain that the relationship between killer and victim, and specifically, whether or not they were compatriots, was deemed significant and affected the form of the record.

#### *Suppression of Killings of Lu Rulers and Nobility and Avoidance of Lu Humiliation*

Deaths of Lu rulers are recorded as natural deaths, without exception. Although historical narratives tell us that three Lu rulers, Lords Yin 隱, Huan 桓, and Min 閔, were assassinated, the *Spring and Autumn* gives no obvious indication that their deaths were in any way unusual.<sup>29</sup> Rather, the *Spring and Autumn* seems to have observed a hard and fast rule prohibiting Lu rulers from being identified as victims of killings.

<sup>25</sup> CQXi 19.3, p. 380 and Zhao 11.10, p. 1322.

<sup>26</sup> CQZhao 23.7, p. 1440. *Zuo zhuan* commentator Du Yu 杜預 (222–284) states that *mie* is used when the ruler is killed, even if the state survives; see his commentary together with the notes of Takezoe Shin'ichirō 竹添進一郎, in *Saden kaisen* 左傳會箋 (hereafter cited as *Saden*) (1911, rpt. Taipei: Tiangong, 1986), Zhao 23, vol. 2, p. 1665. Cf. the similar explanation in *Gongyang Zhao* 23, 24.2a.

<sup>27</sup> ZZ Xuan 18, p. 777 states that *qiang* is used when the killer comes from abroad; cf. the similar explanation in *SWJZ* 12b:39b (p. 637), “When a vassal from another state comes and assassinates the lord, it is called *qiang*,” (他國臣來弑君曰戕).

<sup>28</sup> Examples include CQHuan 6.4, p. 109; Xuan 11.5, p. 710; Zhao 4.4, p. 1245; Zhao 8.4, p. 1299; Zhao 8.9, p. 1300. Curiously, the *Zuo zhuan* states that this form was also used when a nobleman fled his home state, but later returned and was killed. See ZZ Xiang 23, p. 1084, commenting on CQXiang 23.12, p. 1072 (cf. *Gongyang*, Xiang 23, 20:11b); and ZZ Xiang 30, p. 1177, commenting on CQXiang 30.7, p. 1169.

<sup>29</sup> *Gongyang* and *Guliang* assert that the *Spring and Autumn* indicated that a Lu ruler had been assassinated by omitting his death location and funeral record. This is true for Lords Yin and Min, but not Huan; see CQYin 11.4, p. 71; Min 2.3, p. 261; and Huan 18.2 and 18.5, p. 151. Concerning Lord Yin's death, see *Gongyang Yin* 11, 3:12b and *Guliang Yin* 11, 2:12a;

Whereas assassinations of Lu rulers were not recorded as such, on two rare occasions, the *Spring and Autumn* includes killings of Lu noblemen. Both records use the verb “stab, murder” (*ci* 刺), said to refer to the killing of a nobleman by his ruler.<sup>30</sup> That only two Lu noblemen were killed in the nearly two and a half centuries covered by the *Spring and Autumn* is unlikely in the extreme. By comparison, the *Spring and Autumn* includes killings of a dozen Jin 晉 noblemen, thirteen Chu 楚 noblemen, six from Chen 陳, four each from the states of Cai 蔡, Wei 衛, and Zheng 鄭, and three from Qi 齊. Suspicion that the *Spring and Autumn* may have failed to record some killings of Lu noblemen is confirmed by the *Zuo zhuan*, which tells us that some of the Lu noblemen whose deaths are recorded in the *Spring and Autumn*, ostensibly as natural deaths, were in fact killed.<sup>31</sup> We may thus surmise that killings of Lu noblemen were recorded only under exceptional circumstances, and by default these killings were omitted or recorded as natural deaths.

The *Spring and Autumn* exhibits a well-known tendency to call attention to the elevated position of Lu above all other states, and to exclude events in which Lu had been humiliated or was (or even appeared to be) in a subordinate position, a tendency that also resulted in the exclusion of battlefield defeats or tribute missions to other states.<sup>32</sup> Assassinations of rulers, like defeats in battle, entailed Lu humiliation, and were thus not recorded. The regular omission of killings of Lu noblemen likewise was almost certainly based on the same principle as that which prohibited the *Spring and Autumn* from explicitly recording assassinations of Lu rulers.<sup>33</sup> As I argue below, killings of noblemen

for Lord Min see *Gongyang Min* 2, 9:10b and *Guliang Min* 2, 5:17b; and for Lord Huan, see *Gongyang Huan* 18, 5:14b–15a and *Guliang Huan* 18, 4:11a, 11b. References to *Guliang* cite Fan Ning 范甯 (339–401) comm., *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan Fan shi jijie* 春秋穀梁傳范氏集解 (*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要, Taipei: Zhonghua).

<sup>30</sup> *CQ* Cheng 成 16.16, p. 879 and Xi 28.2, p. 448. The *SWJZ* defines *ci* as the killing of a nobleman by the ruler (君殺大夫曰刺); *SWJZ* 4b:50b, p. 184. *Gongyang Xi* 28, 12.7a observes accurately that *ci* is used instead of *sha* for killings of Lu noblemen, and cf. *Gongyang, Zhuang* 32, 9.5b, concerning a record that unexpectedly does not use *ci*.

<sup>31</sup> See for example *CQ* Zhuang 32.3, p. 250 and Zhuang 32.5, p. 251 together with the corresponding account in *ZZ* Zhuang 32, p. 254, concerning the killings of Lu princes Gongzi Ya 公子牙 and Zi Ban 子般, both recorded as natural deaths.

<sup>32</sup> Regarding exclusion of tribute missions, see Van Auken, “Subtle words,” pp. 90–93. The conception of avoidance as linked to the Lu’s flaws appears in the *Zuo zhuan*, which proposes that some events were omitted in order to “avoid the state’s faults” (*hui guo e* 諱國惡) and elsewhere, to “avoid the ruler’s faults” (*hui jun e* 諱君惡) (*ZZ* Xi 1, p. 277 and Wen 15, pp. 613–14). A broader interpretation linking “faults” and “avoidance” appears in *Gongyang Yin* 10, 3.11a.

<sup>33</sup> Qing scholar Gu Donggao 顧棟高 (1679–1759) noted that domestic killings (*sha*) were avoided (*hui* 諱) (sometimes translated “taboo”); see discussion in Gu Donggao, *Chunqiu dashi-biao* 春秋大事表 (1873; rpt. Taipei: Guangxue, 1975), 13:9a–10a (vol. 4, pp. 1783–85).

were understood to entail humiliation and subjugation, and it was likely for this reason that killings of Lu noblemen tended to be omitted from the *Spring and Autumn*.

SPRING AND AUTUMN RECORDS IN LIGHT OF  
ZUO ZHUAN ACCOUNTS: RECORDS AS JUDGMENTS

Although formal features of records encode information about such variables as rank of victim and killer or whether they were from the same state, the *Spring and Autumn* is silent on the motivations for the killings it documents. Certain patterns are suggestive, such as the fact that four assassination records are closely followed by records in which the assassin in turn becomes a killing victim. This may signal that these killings were punitive responses, but the records themselves provide us no additional information.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to *Spring and Autumn* records, *Zuo zhuan* accounts narrate sequences of events and elaborate on the circumstances leading up to killings, thereby illuminating individual motivations and relationships among the people involved. These passages are thus an important source of information about events recorded in the *Spring and Autumn*. The *Zuo zhuan* contains narrative material for the majority of killings recorded in the *Spring and Autumn*. Comparison of this material with the *Spring and Autumn* records reveals interesting and in some instances surprising evidence concerning the events recorded, and allows us to draw new conclusions about the nature and function of the records.

*Killing as Punishment: Killings of Noblemen*

*Zuo zhuan* accounts reveal that most killings of noblemen recorded in the *Spring and Autumn* were responses to misconduct, real or perceived.<sup>35</sup> Comparison of individual records with corresponding *Zuo zhuan* accounts indicates that noblemen whose killings were recorded had committed a variety of offenses, including rebellion, regicide, and

<sup>34</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* contains four such pairs of records, cited here with the corresponding *Zuo zhuan* narrative accounts: *CQ* Yin 4.2, p. 34 and 4.6, p. 35; and see the corresponding account in *ZZ* Yin 4, pp. 37–38; second, Zhuang 8.5, 173 and 9.1, p. 177; and see *ZZ* Zhuang 8, p. 176; third, Xi 10.3 and 10.5, p. 332; and see *ZZ* Xi 10, p. 332; fourth, Zhao 13.2 and 13.3, p. 1342; and see *ZZ* Zhao 13, pp. 1345–1348. See also fn. 21 above and accompanying discussion.

<sup>35</sup> Tellingly, in his tabulation of *Spring and Autumn* events, Gu Donggao places killings (*sha*) in the section on “Punishments and Rewards” (刑賞 *xingshang*). He does not include assassinations in this section, recognizing that despite the fact that both entailed the ending of a human life, they were categorically different types of events. Gu Donggao, *Chunqiu dashibiao*, 13:1a–10a (vol. 4, pp. 1767–85).

misconduct resulting in battlefield defeat.<sup>36</sup> Although some *Zuo zhuan* narratives portray the killed nobleman as worthy, the killing itself is still understood as punishment. Thus in the case of a nobleman who was killed after admonishing his ruler for engaging in lewd activity, although his admonition may have been morally correct, his conduct offended his ruler, and he was killed because of this offense.<sup>37</sup> The evidence points to a highly consistent correlation between *Zuo zhuan* narratives that detail misconduct on the part of a nobleman and *Spring and Autumn* records that name the same nobleman as a killing victim. This correlation indicates that killings of noblemen typically were not lawless murders, but sanctioned punitive acts.<sup>38</sup>

The *Zuo zhuan* account of the circumstances surrounding the killing of one Kong Da of Wei is particularly interesting, as it not only narrates the misconduct that led to the killing, but also describes the formal proceedings that preceded his death. As we shall see, the *Zuo zhuan* account and the *Spring and Autumn* record diverge conspicuously on several points.

The *Spring and Autumn* record of Kong Da's death is entirely regular: Spring. Wei killed their nobleman, Kong Da. 春·衛殺其大夫孔達·<sup>39</sup>

The *Zuo zhuan* states that Wei reported this killing to other states as follows:

Subsequently [Wei] reported it to the regional rulers, saying, "Our ruler had a bad vassal Da. He set our humble city at odds with the great states. He has now been prostrated because of his crime. We dare report it." 遂告于諸侯曰：「寡君有不令之臣達，構我敝邑于大國，既伏其罪矣·敢告·」<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Instances of killings linked to rebellious actions include the following pairs of records and corresponding *Zuo zhuan* material: *CQ Wen* 9.4 and 9.6, p. 570 and *ZZ Wen* 9, pp. 568 and 572; *CQ Wen* 8.3, p. 905 and *ZZ Cheng* 18, p. 907; *CQ Xiang* 23.12, p. 1072 and *ZZ Xiang* 23, p. 1084; *CQ Xiang* 30.7, p. 1169 and *ZZ Xiang* 30, pp. 1175-77; and *CQ Ai* 4.5, p. 1625 and *ZZ Ai* 4, p. 1626. Instances of killings for misconduct associated with battlefield defeat include *CQ Xi* 28.6, p. 449 and *ZZ Xi* 28, p. 466; *CQ Xuan* 13.4, p. 751 and *ZZ Xuan* 13, p. 752; and *CQ Xiang* 19.11, p. 1044 and *ZZ Xiang* 19, p. 1050. Killings were also linked to various other misconduct; see *CQ Wen* 10.3, p. 575 and *ZZ Wen* 10, p. 576-577; *CQ Xiang* 2.10, p. 919 and *ZZ Xiang* 2, p. 923; *CQ Xiang* 5.6, p. 941 and *ZZ Xiang* 5, p. 943; *CQ Xiang* 19.10, p. 1044 and *ZZ Xiang* 19, p. 1049; and *CQ Xiang* 20.5, p. 1052 and *ZZ Xiang* 20, p. 1053. These are representative examples, and not an exhaustive list.

<sup>37</sup> *CQ Xuan* 9.14, p. 700 and *ZZ Xuan* 9, p. 702.

<sup>38</sup> Rare exceptions may be found; see *CQ Wen* 7.5, p. 554 and *ZZ Wen* 7, p. 558 for the killings of Song 宋 noblemen who died fighting off an attempted rebellion, and *CQ Wen* 8.8, p. 565 and *ZZ Wen* 8, p. 567, concerning a Song nobleman who died protecting the ruling house. Both irregular records leave the victims unnamed, and traditional commentaries suggest that their names were omitted because they were not at fault. Curiously, both pertain to Song.

<sup>39</sup> *CQ Xuan* 14.1, p. 753.

<sup>40</sup> *ZZ Xuan* 14, p. 753.

The report describes Kong Da as *bu ling*, “disobedient” or perhaps just “bad,” and identifies the alleged offense that led to his killing, thereby confirming that it was not viewed as a murder, but as punishment warranted by misconduct.

In the report, the killing itself is referred to with the verb *fu* 伏, which like English “prostrate” not only denotes a face-down posture of submission, but which also means being subdued, overthrown, or defeated.<sup>41</sup> Thus the report did not simply refer to a nobleman as having been “killed” in the sense of experiencing an execution that ended his life, but implied that he had been subjugated, overcome, or put down. The phrase “was prostrated because of his crime” occurs in another report concerning a punitive killing, and nearly identical language appears elsewhere in reference to sanctioned killings of noblemen.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that the language used in the report concerning Kong Da may have been standard, prescribed wording employed in official reports of killings of noblemen. Interestingly, similar phrasing is applied to rulers who suffered defeat at the hands of enemy states.<sup>43</sup> Reports of noblemen’s killings thus did not present these killings as the simple meting out of just punishment in response to misconduct, but spoke of them of using phrasing that was also applied to overthrow by one’s enemies, that is, the language of dominance and subjugation.

Although the official report portrays Kong Da as a disobedient vassal who was killed because of his crime, the remainder of the *Zuo zhuan* account paints a starkly different picture. The report is preceded by the following narrative:

Jin was going to retaliate against Wei for rescuing Chen, [in violation of] the covenant at Qingqiu. The [Jin] messenger would not leave. He said, “If the crime is not assigned to someone, then we will escalate pressure and use troops.” Kong Da said, “If it will benefit the altars of earth and grain, then I request that you use me as an excuse: the offense came from me. It is I who hold charge of the government, and if we oppose the retaliation of the great state [Jin], who will bear responsibility? It is I who will die for this.”

<sup>41</sup> The term “prostrate” is a particularly apt translation for *fu* 伏. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “prostrate” is derived from Latin *prōstrātus*, meaning “lying flat, laid low, defeated” and means not only to lie face-down, but to be or cause to be “cut down; levelled to the ground, overthrown.” Classical Chinese *fu* likewise refers to lying in a prone position and to being overcome or defeated, and by extension, to being killed.

<sup>42</sup> A report similar to that translated above, also with the phrase *fu qi zui* 伏其罪, appears in *ZZ Ding* 14, p. 1595. This phrase (or a slight variation thereof) also occurs in *ZZ Zhuang* 14, p. 197 in reference to a punitive killing.

<sup>43</sup> *ZZ Yin* 11, p. 74 and *Xi* 28, p. 459 use *fu* 伏 in reference to defeated rulers.

In the fourteenth year, spring, Kong Da strangled himself and died. The people of Wei used this as an explanation to Jin, and were spared. 清丘之盟，晉以衛之救陳也，討焉·使人弗去·曰：「罪無所歸，將加而師。」孔達曰：「苟利社稷，請以我說·罪我之由·我則爲政，而充大國之討將以誰任？我則死之。」十四年·春·孔達縊而死·衛人以說于晉而免。<sup>44</sup>

From this account, we learn that Kong Da was actually a loyal and upright vassal who willingly assumed guilt and its consequences in order to appease Jin on behalf of his home state. Furthermore, he was not put to death, but willingly committed suicide. Perhaps most interesting, the state of Jin demanded that responsibility for the crime of violating the covenant be assigned, and the death of one man, Kong Da, seems to have fully satisfied this demand.

After the official report of Kong Da's death, the *Zuo zhuan* narrative continues by noting that Wei regarded Kong Da as having meritorious accomplishments, and restored household and position to his kin. Presumably, this treatment was noteworthy because it was unusual. Curiously, the narrative does not mention the measures taken against Kong Da's family, noting only their subsequent reversal. From this we may surmise that it was standard practice to take such actions against surviving kin. Elsewhere, the *Zuo zhuan* recounts another case in which a nobleman was killed, and afterward his household was divided up, and this too suggests that dividing a household after a punitive killing was standard practice, but its later restoration was not.<sup>45</sup>

One cannot fail to notice the glaring discrepancy between the official report, which portrays Kong Da as a disgraced offender who deserved death, and the treatment he received from his home state, which regarded him as upright and honorable. Even if after his death he was honored at home, the report was disseminated abroad and seems to have functioned as an official verdict that publicized the reason for Kong Da's killing and formally marked him a "bad vassal." This report, sent to all the regional rulers, would have been received by Lu, and as discussed below, the information in this report may have served as the basis for the *Spring and Autumn* record of his killing.

This narrative also reveals an important factual discrepancy between the *Spring and Autumn* record and the *Zuo zhuan* narrative. The

<sup>44</sup> ZZ Xuan 13-14, pp. 752 and 753. The account continues over two years and was probably originally one continuous narrative, but in the current version of the *Zuo zhuan* it is interrupted by *Spring and Autumn* entries for Xuan 14.

<sup>45</sup> ZZ Xiang 19, p. 1050 refers to "dividing [the offender's] household" (分其室).

record tells us that Kong Da was killed, but according to the *Zuo zhuan*, he ended his own life. Indeed, although the *Spring and Autumn* never explicitly records deaths as suicides, the *Zuo zhuan* indicates that many of the deaths recorded as “killings” were actually suicides.<sup>46</sup> For example, Chu nobleman Dechen 得臣 suffered a major battlefield defeat, and after being warned that the ruler intended to kill him, he took his own life.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Chu nobleman Gongzi Ce 公子側 led an army to defeat, and committed suicide after being encouraged to follow Dechen’s example.<sup>48</sup> Gongsun Hei 公孫黑 of Zheng committed a series of actions said to warrant execution, and was told to kill himself quickly, or the Minister of Punishments would soon arrive. He killed himself and his corpse was displayed, as though he had been executed.<sup>49</sup> In all three cases, the deceased was informed that he would be killed for his misconduct, and the only choice left to him was whether to take his own life or to die at the hands of another. Significantly, the *Spring and Autumn* represents these and similar cases not as suicides but as killings, and attributes them to the state.<sup>50</sup>

This brings us back to the question of why killings of noblemen were recorded in the *Spring and Autumn* at all. Natural deaths of noblemen from outside Lu do not appear in the *Spring and Autumn*, and thus the record of a killing was not merely intended to mark the end of a life. Yet at the same time, these records were entirely unconcerned with the identity of the killer, and it was likewise deemed unnecessary to distinguish cases of suicide. Apparently what mattered was the fact that the nobleman had been forced to submit to death, regardless of the agent.

<sup>46</sup> Kristina Lindell discusses several such cases, which she terms “self-execution.” See her “Stories of Suicide in Ancient China,” *AO* 35 (1973), pp. 192–194. She suggests that in ancient China, as in ancient Rome, those who were sentenced to be executed were able to protect the “rights and possessions of his kin” by committing suicide, but her speculation is not borne out by *Zuo zhuan* narratives; for example, Kong Da’s kin did initially have their property confiscated. For a brief discussion of suicide in the *Zuo zhuan* followed by translations into Spanish of twenty-five *Zuo zhuan* accounts of suicide, see John Page and María Isabel García Hidalgo, “Los suicidios en el *Zuozhuan*,” *Estudios de Asia y Africa* 38.3 (2003), pp. 657–675.

<sup>47</sup> *CQ* Xi 28.6, p. 449 and *ZZ* Xi 28, p. 466.

<sup>48</sup> *CQ* Cheng 16.7, p. 878 and *ZZ* Cheng 16, p. 890.

<sup>49</sup> *CQ* Zhao 2.3, p. 1226 and *ZZ* Zhao 2, pp. 1229–1230.

<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, the *Zuo zhuan* narrates that a nobleman committed suicide because of slander that would have led to his execution, yet this was recorded as a killing; *CQ* Zhao 27.4, p. 1481 and *ZZ* Zhao 27, p. 1485. In an unusual case, a nobleman failed to stop the ruler’s plot to kill his father, and the *Zuo zhuan* account indicates that he killed himself not because of imminent execution but because of torn loyalties. This appears to be a rare exception to the standard convention that noblemen who were killed were viewed as offenders, but it is also possible that the sympathetic perspective conveyed in the *Zuo zhuan* account was not universally held, and specifically, was not shared by those who made the *Spring and Autumn* record. See *CQ* Xiang 22.6, p. 1064 and *ZZ* Xiang 22, p. 1069.

The *Zuo zhuan* tells us that noblemen's killings were reported to other states as consequences of misconduct, that is, as punishments, and official reports such as that of Kong Da's killing identified the crime and emphasized the nobleman's disobedient wrongdoing and consequent subjugation. Although the *Spring and Autumn* remained silent about the offense that led to a killing, by identifying a nobleman as the victim of a killing, the record nonetheless communicated that he had been judged responsible for an offense and had therefore been killed. Records of killings of noblemen may thus be understood as abbreviated judgments, devoid of detail concerning specific misconduct yet nonetheless recording for posterity the fact that certain noblemen had been assigned responsibility and forced to die for their crimes.

*Killings as Crime: Assassinations of Rulers, Heirs, and Heirs Apparent*

Whereas killings of noblemen were typically sanctioned responses to misconduct, regicide – that is, the killing of one's own ruler – was itself an act of misconduct. Records of regicide (*shi* 弑) are formally distinguished from killings of noblemen in that the killers are often identified, a feature shared by records of killings of individuals in line for the throne, including heirs and heirs apparent. Unlike killings of noblemen, in which the victim was implicitly understood to be an offender punished for a crime and the killer remained unidentified, killings of rulers, heirs, and heirs apparent were crimes, and their killers were deemed criminals. By naming the killer, the *Spring and Autumn* assigned responsibility for the offense.

Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of these records is that they could name only one killer, regardless of how many people took part in the assassination plot or the attack itself.<sup>51</sup> Naming the killer was sometimes a straightforward matter, and in such cases both the *Spring and Autumn* and *Zuo zhuan* identify the same person.<sup>52</sup> But the person who wielded the murder weapon did not always instigate the plot, and *Zuo zhuan* accounts of killings often implicate multiple parties. Even in such instances, the *Spring and Autumn* adheres to the hard and fast

<sup>51</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* convention of ascribing responsibility to a single person is not limited to assassinations. Records of military actions typically named only one leader from each state, and records of diplomatic travel identified one visitor, but did not mention members of his accompanying retinue. For discussion, see Van Auken, "Who is a *rén* 人?" pp. 559–561.

<sup>52</sup> Illustrative pairs involving regicide include *CQ* Yin 4.2, p. 34 and *ZZ* Yin 4, pp. 35–36; *CQ* Huan 2.1, p. 83 and *ZZ* Huan 2, p. 85; *CQ* Xi 10.3, p. 332 and *ZZ* Xi 9, pp. 328–330; *CQ* Wen 14.9, p. 601 and *ZZ* Wen 14, p. 606; *CQ* Xuan 10.9, p. 704 and *ZZ* Xuan 11, p. 707; *CQ* Xiang 30.2, p. 1169 and *ZZ* Xiang 30, p. 1173; for killings of heirs or heirs apparent see *CQ* Xi 9.6, p. 335 and *ZZ* Xi 9, pp. 328–330; and *CQ* Zhao 11.3, p. 1321 and *ZZ* Zhao 11, pp. 1322–1323.

rule of naming only one killer, thereby departing significantly from the *Zuo zhuan*.<sup>53</sup>

Determining what, if any, regular principles governed who would be identified as the killer is difficult if not impossible. Many records identify the killer as someone who, according to the *Zuo zhuan*, had no physical involvement in the act itself. Thus Cui Zhu 崔杼 of Qi was recorded as having assassinated his ruler, Lord Zhuang 莊, even though the *Zuo zhuan* account makes it plain that Cui Zhu was not present when the killing occurred. Lord Zhuang was killed because of his illicit relationship with Cui Zhu's wife, and Cui Zhu apparently initiated the plot against him.<sup>54</sup> In this case, then, the *Spring and Autumn* assigned the assassination to the instigator, rather than the actual killer.<sup>55</sup> Yet other records name the actual killer rather than the instigator. Acting on the command of exiled Lord Xian 獻 of Wei, nobleman Ning Xi 甯喜 attacked and killed the acting ruler of Wei, thereby allowing Lord Xian's restoration.<sup>56</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* states that Ning Xi killed his lord, ascribing the killing not to the ruler who ordered and benefited from the attack, but to the subordinate who carried it out. This pair of contrasting cases demonstrates that the *Spring and Autumn* does not follow a single, consistent rule, but ascribes some assassinations to an instigator who was not physically involved while attributing others to the actual killer.

A few *Zuo zhuan* accounts suggest that the killer named in the *Spring and Autumn* was neither physically involved nor complicit in the assassination plot. For example, the *Spring and Autumn* records that "Wu Zhi of Qi assassinated his ruler, Zhu'er," (齊無知弑其君諸兒) but the *Zuo zhuan* says that the assassination was planned and carried out by two noblemen who bore a grudge against Zhu'er. That Wu Zhi benefited from the killing – he succeeded the victim as ruler – was his only apparent connection to the killing, and may be the reason that the record named him as assassin.<sup>57</sup> In one unusual case, a killing is

<sup>53</sup> For example, *CQ Xuan* 4.3, p. 677 names one killer but *ZZ Xuan* 4, p. 678 names two. A similar case concerning the killing of an heir apparent appears in *CQ Zhao* 8.1, p. 1299 and *ZZ Zhao* 8, pp. 1300–1302.

<sup>54</sup> *CQ Xiang* 25.2, p. 1094 and *ZZ Xiang* 25, pp. 1095–99.

<sup>55</sup> Other cases in which an assassination was ascribed to a high-ranking instigator instead of the actual killer(s) include *CQ Zhuang* 8.5, p. 173 and *ZZ Zhuang* 8, p. 175; *CQ Xuan* 2.4, p. 650 and *ZZ Xuan* 2, pp. 661–63; *CQ Xiang* 25.2, p. 1094 and *ZZ Xiang* 25, pp. 1095–99; and *CQ Ai* 6.8, p. 1632 and *ZZ Ai* 6, pp. 1633–39; a similar instance involving the killing of an heir apparent is *CQ Xiang* 30.2, p. 1169 and *ZZ Xiang* 30, p. 1174.

<sup>56</sup> *CQ Xiang* 26.1, p. 1110 and *ZZ Xiang* 26, p. 1112.

<sup>57</sup> *CQ Zhuang* 8.5, p. 173 and *ZZ Zhuang* 8, p. 175; a similar pair is *CQ Xiang* 30.2, p. 1169 and *ZZ Xiang* 30, p. 1174. Takezoe suggests that the named killer was behind the plot;

ascribed to a nobleman who attempted to prevent it. After the death of the Qi ruler, nobleman Chen Qi led a successful plot to overthrow the young heir, Cha, installing an adult in his place.<sup>58</sup> Then, turning a deaf ear to Chen Qi's protests, the new ruler had the child killed. The *Spring and Autumn* nevertheless reads, "Chen Qi of Qi assassinated his ruler, Cha" (齊陳乞弑其君荼). Perhaps assignment of responsibility was based on Chen Qi's role in initiating a plot that he was powerless to stop, for he neither benefited from the death nor was he directly implicated in the killing. Blame is even assigned to a killer in a case that may have been an accident. The *Spring and Autumn* records that "The Heir Apparent of Xu, Zhi, assassinated his ruler, Mai," (許世子止弑其君買) but the *Zuo zhuan* states that the ruler fell ill, suffering fever and chills, and died after taking medicine provided by his son, Zhi, who thereupon fled.<sup>59</sup> It is uncertain whether Mai's death was caused by the medicine or his illness, nor do we know whether Zhi intended to harm his father or administered medicine in good faith. That Zhi fled after his father's death tells us only that he expected to be held responsible for the death or feared that conventions would ascribe blame to him, regardless of his intent. It is thus impossible to identify a simple principle that allows us to correlate *Zuo zhuan* accounts with *Spring and Autumn* records.

Suicides of rulers and heirs apparent, like suicides of noblemen, were sometimes recorded as killings, and were sometimes ascribed to named killers. Suicides recorded as assassinations include cases in which the victim was forced to choose between taking his own life or being killed, as well as cases in which he faced no immediate threat, and could have fled or sought aid against his enemies.<sup>60</sup> The *Spring and Autumn* ascribes the death of Heir Apparent Shensheng to his father, the Jin ruler, yet according to the *Zuo zhuan*, his father's consort plotted to slander him, and Shensheng opted to commit suicide because he believed his elderly father could not live without his consort, who would have been implicated if all were made known.<sup>61</sup> The Jin ruler was

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see *Saden Xiang* 30, vol. 2, p. 1301, but this is sheer speculation on his part and neither supported nor refuted by the *Zuo zhuan* account.

<sup>58</sup> *CQ Ai* 6.8, p. 1632 and *ZZ Ai* 6, pp. 1633–1639. Indeed, such a conspicuous discrepancy may even lead us to wonder if the *Spring and Autumn* records were based on the same understanding of events as that reflected in the *Zuo zhuan*.

<sup>59</sup> *CQ Zhao* 19.2, p. 1400 and *ZZ Zhao* 19, p. 1403.

<sup>60</sup> For an example of the former, see *CQ Wen* 1.10, p. 509 and *ZZ Wen* 文 1, p. 513; for the latter, see *CQ Zhao* 13.2, p. 1342 and *ZZ Zhao* 13, p. 1348.

<sup>61</sup> *CQ Xi* 5.1, p. 300 and *ZZ Xi* 5, pp. 299–300. For similar case, see *CQ Xiang* 26.6, p. 1110 and *ZZ Xiang* 26, p. 1117.

unaware of his consort's machinations, and his only culpability seems to have been ignoring earlier advice against making her consort. The *Spring and Autumn* never ascribes killings to women, even though according to the *Zuo zhuan* women were sometimes involved.<sup>62</sup> It is thus impossible to determine whether the Jin ruler was named as Shensheng's killer because of his failure to heed good advice, which created circumstances ripe for his son's destruction, or whether he was blamed because convention prohibited women from being assigned responsibility for killings, and the crime instigated by his consort was thus attributed to him.

Perhaps the best known instance in which the *Spring and Autumn* and *Zuo zhuan* name different killers is the case of Zhao Dun 趙盾 of Jin. The Jin scribe recorded that that Zhao Dun assassinated his ruler, Lord Ling, and this statement also appears in the *Spring and Autumn*.<sup>63</sup> Yet the *Zuo zhuan* tells us that the actual killer was his younger relative, and when the Jin scribe displayed the record in court, Zhao Dun strenuously objected. The account concludes with a brief commentary attributed to Confucius, who laments that Zhao Dun had not managed to avoid charges of wickedness, yet praises the Jin scribe's "recording rules" (*shufa* 書法) and Zhao Dun's ultimate willingness to accept the scribe's record and the negative judgment it entailed. It is hardly unusual for the *Spring and Autumn* to name as killer someone other than the person who was physically responsible for the deed. What sets Zhao Dun's case apart from others is that the *Zuo zhuan* makes explicit reference to the discrepancy, suggesting that determinations of who would be named as killer may have been controversial even when they were initially made.<sup>64</sup>

In short, if a *Spring and Autumn* record identified someone as killer, this was not tantamount to asserting that he had been physically involved in the crime, but rather, it indicated that he had been assigned responsibility for the killing. Responsibility could be assigned to the man who wielded the weapon, but could also be ascribed to the most senior person involved, the person who succeeded the murdered ruler, or perhaps others, such as the husband of the instigator or an individual who benefited from the death in some other way. Unfortunately,

<sup>62</sup> See *CQ Wen* 16.7, p. 616 and *ZZ Wen* 16, pp. 620–622 for another killing of a ruler instigated by a woman but not so attributed.

<sup>63</sup> *CQ Xuan* 2.4, p. 650 and *ZZ Xuan* 2, p. 663.

<sup>64</sup> Presumably the reports sent to other states reflected the determination made in the state in which the killing occurred. As I note above, it is uncertain how much latitude scribes in other states who received those reports had to deviate from what was contained in the reports.

comparison of *Spring and Autumn* records with *Zuo zhuan* accounts does not permit us to deduce regular principles. As we have seen, for every possible suggestion, one or more counter-examples can be found, and we might speculate endlessly on possible explanations for various apparent contradictions. Determinations of responsibility did not garner universal acceptance among contemporaries, and they certainly did not always correspond to later notions of guilt. Records may have been regulated by rules for assigning responsibility under different conditions, or recording practices may have allowed leeway for subjective judgment, and it is possible too that conventions varied from state to state. We can conclude only that killers were named only if a killing was considered an offense – that is, if the victim was a ruler, heir, or heir apparent – and that regardless of how many people were involved and no matter what roles they played, records that identified a killer could name one and only one responsible party.

Returning to the killing of Kong Da, a conspicuous element of that account was Jin's threat to use military force if the offense was not assigned (literally, "if the offense lacks one to whom it is assigned," 罪無所歸 *zui wu suo gui*). Kong Da accepted responsibility with the expectation that his death – the death of one man – would be sufficient to meet Jin's demands, and that Jin would not insist that all involved parties be identified and punished. Jin did indeed withdraw after the announcement that Kong Da had been "prostrated because of his crime," thus confirming the accuracy of this expectation. The *Spring and Autumn* convention of ascribing killings of rulers, heirs, and heirs apparent to a single person is almost certainly related to similar conventions manifested in the account of Kong Da's death, namely, the practice of assigning an offense to one man and reporting the judgment. Identifying one person as a killer in the *Spring and Autumn* (and perhaps also in a report to the rulers of the central states) entailed making a determination of blame, and when multiple people were involved in a crime, the decision to single out one of those people above all others as the responsible party must have rested on accepted norms, even if the full considerations underlying those decisions are lost to us today. The records were not intended to identify the person whose hand wielded the murder weapon, but to place responsibility for an offense on one man. No matter how the decision to assign responsibility was made, such a decision was in fact a judgment, and writing in the *Spring and Autumn* that a nobleman had killed his ruler marked him among his contemporaries as being responsible for a crime, and also recorded this verdict for perpetuity.

*The Stigma of Being a Killer*

Various *Zuo zhuan* passages demonstrate that individuals who were identified as killers felt the stigma keenly, and some went to great lengths to avoid being assigned responsibility for acts of regicide. Both Zhao Dun's protests and Confucius's lament confirm that being named as an assassin was undesirable, and to be avoided if possible. The label of offender affected individuals at home and abroad. Thus, when Jin Heir Apparent Shensheng was slandered by his father's consort, who made it appear that Shensheng had attempted to kill him, Shensheng was advised to flee. He responded by asking, "If I go out cloaked in this reputation, who will take me in?" and in the end, he chose to die rather than to live with the undeserved reputation of a would-be assassin.<sup>65</sup>

In Qi, a nobleman less honorable than Zhao Dun was said to have killed not one but two scribes for recording that he assassinated his ruler.<sup>66</sup> Recent discussions of the *Zuo zhuan* narrative have centered on the scribes' devotion to seeing that events were properly recorded, even risking their lives to do so.<sup>67</sup> Yet equally significant is the fact that Cui Zhu regarded being named as an assassin as so repugnant that he killed two court scribes in an attempt to prevent the record ascribing the deed to him from being made. That he was willing to go to such lengths suggests that the ramifications of being identified in the records as an offender must have been quite serious.

Other narratives tell us that the negative consequences of such records reached not only the named offender, but extended to his family, and even generations later reverberated among his descendants. This is illustrated by a *Zuo zhuan* narrative concerning the visit to Lu of Song nobleman Hua Sun.

The [Lu] lord was going to have a banquet with him. He declined, saying, "Your former vassal, Du, committed a crime against Lord Shang of Song. His name is in the slips of the regional rulers. I continue his ancestral sacrifices. How would I dare disgrace you, lord? I request to receive my orders from lower officials." 公與之宴·辭曰：「君之先臣督得罪於宋殤公，名在諸侯之策·臣承其祀，其敢辱君？請承命於亞旅。」<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> ZZ Xi 5, pp. 299-300.

<sup>66</sup> CQ Xiang 25.2, pp. 1094 and ZZ Xiang 25, pp. 1099.

<sup>67</sup> Li Wai-ye, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), p. 322; Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, p. 1; David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), pp. 261-262.

<sup>68</sup> ZZ Wen 15, p. 608.

In declining to join the Lu ruler at a feast, Hua Sun cited the fact that his ancestor had committed a crime, and that his name was recorded on “the slips of the regional rulers” (諸侯之策). The term “slips of the regional rulers” seems to refer to state records of the same type as the *Spring and Autumn*, and indeed, the *Spring and Autumn* does record that Du 督 of Song – Hua Sun’s ancestor – assassinated his ruler, Yuyi 與夷.<sup>69</sup> Hua Sun’s visit to Lu took place nearly a century after his ancestor’s crime (the assassination took place in 710 BCE and the visit occurred in 612 BCE) and his refusal to join the Lu ruler reveals that even being the descendant of someone recorded as having committed regicide was a mark of shame, and rendered him unfit to dine with rulers of other states. In another account of an offense recorded in the slips of the regional rulers, the offender made a deathbed request to his son to find a way to remove his name from the slips, threatening that if his son did not comply, he would not return to enjoy ancestral sacrifices. In short, even though a record may have assigned responsibility to only one man, this assignment affected many others, including later generations of kin, and extended even to their interactions during visits to other states.<sup>70</sup>

Evidence suggests that taking punitive action against an offender’s family was regular practice. As noted above, after Kong Da’s death, Wei also took action against his kin, and families of other offenders suffered similar consequences. The *Zuo zhuan* also recounts a case in which blame associated with a military defeat was assigned (*gui* 歸) to one person, and as a consequence, he was killed and his family exterminated.

They assigned the crime to Xian Hu and killed him, and completely wiped out his clan. 歸罪於先穀而殺之，盡滅其族。<sup>71</sup>

The *Zuo zhuan* also documents other, similar cases in which kin of offenders were killed.<sup>72</sup> Thus, a criminal’s living kin could lose position and property, and possibly also suffer loss of life.

Other early texts too refer to exterminating the kin of offenders, and this practice has been linked to the concept of collective responsibility and collective punishment, such as that documented in Qin and Han legal codes several centuries later.<sup>73</sup> Yet these notions cannot ad-

<sup>69</sup> *CQ* Huan 2.1, p. 83.

<sup>70</sup> *ZZ* Xiang 20, p. 1055.

<sup>71</sup> *ZZ* Xuan 13, p. 752.

<sup>72</sup> *ZZ* Zhao 4, p. 1253 and Zhao 27, p. 1488.

<sup>73</sup> See Susan Roosevelt Weld, “Covenant in Jin’s Walled Cities: The Discoveries at Hou-

equately account for the practices documented in *Zuo zhuan* narratives and *Spring and Autumn* records, and in particular, the *Spring and Autumn* convention of attributing an offense to one and only one named offender, even when multiple people were involved in a crime. This instead seems to indicate a juridical system in which the notion of shared culpability was weak or absent. Noteworthy too is the fact that group punishment typically applied to the unnamed kin of an identified offender, and not to others implicated in the offense. That is, punishment was aimed at a single, named offender, and the ultimate goal of wiping out a kinship group was probably not to hold individuals in a lineage collectively responsible for the misconduct of one of its members, but to punish the offender by destroying those associated with him. By causing an offender to have no posterity, his ancestral sacrifices and even his very memory would be extinguished. It seems likely that this consideration, rather than any nascent conception of shared culpability, may have been what motivated punitive actions against the kin of offenders during the Spring and Autumn period. This proposal offers a satisfactory explanation for the practice of exterminating an offender's kin, and is at the same time consistent with the *Spring and Autumn* convention of identifying only a single, primary offender.<sup>74</sup>

*Killing as Subjugation: The Stigma of Being Assassinated*

If a nobleman was identified as a killing victim, he was conventionally understood to have been an offender who had been punished, and his killer was not named. Heavy stigma seems to have been attached to being recorded as a killing victim. We might then wonder if any stigma was attached to being identified as a ruler who had been killed, particularly in cases in which the assassin was left unnamed. Both the *Zuo zhuan* and the *Spring and Autumn* give subtle hints that even for rulers, being identified as the victim of a killing may indeed have been a mark of humiliation.

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ma and Wenxian," Doctoral dissertation (Harvard University, 1990), pp. 423-424; see also Crispin Williams, "Early References to Collective Punishment in an Excavated Chinese Text: Analysis and Discussion of an Imprecation from the Wenxian Covenant Texts," *BSOAS* 74.3 (2011), pp. 437-462.

<sup>74</sup> See too the *Zuo zhuan* account concerning Xian Hu (translated above), which names only the offender. Similar instances of assigning responsibility to a single leader occur in records of achievements such as military actions and covenants; see above, fn. 43 and accompanying discussion. In this connection, it may be significant that each individual covenant tablet names only a single covenantor; Weld, "Covenant in Jin's Walled Cities," p. 325. Still unanswered, of course, is the puzzling question of why responsibility – whether for crime or achievement – was explicitly assigned to one and only one man.

The *Spring and Autumn* does not name a killer in about a third of the records of regicide, and the *Zuo zhuan* claims that such records imply that the ruler somehow deserved his fate:

In any case of an assassination, if [only] the lord is named, the lord is lawless. If the vassal is named, it is the offense of the vassal. 凡弑君稱君，君無道也。稱臣，臣之罪也。<sup>75</sup>

In other words, records that named an assassin were understood to blame the assassin, and records that left the assassin unidentified were thought to indicate that the assassinated ruler (named in all records) was at fault.<sup>76</sup> A similar remark on a record that named both assassin and victim proposed that the assassin was at fault, presumably because the assassin was named.<sup>77</sup> Together these two passages suggest that named killers of rulers were to blame, but when the killer was not identified, the ruler was at fault.

Yet comparison of *Zuo zhuan* narratives and *Spring and Autumn* assassination records does not yield a consistent correlation between records that leave the killer unidentified and instances in which the ruler might be considered blameworthy. Whereas rulers whose assassins are unnamed are sometimes portrayed in an unflattering light, this is also true of some rulers whose assassins are named, including Lord Zhuang of Qi, killed by Cui Zhu for having an affair with Cui Zhu's wife, and also Lord Ling of Jin, whose assassin was identified as Zhao Dun.<sup>78</sup> *Zuo zhuan* accounts thus fail to maintain the principle that the assassin's name was omitted when an assassinated ruler deserved his fate.

Even so, this claim may not be entirely without foundation. As comparison with *Zuo zhuan* accounts reveals, records of noblemen's killings did indeed record killings of individuals who had engaged in misconduct, and regularly omitted the killer's identity. The principle

<sup>75</sup> *ZZ Xuan* 4, p. 678.

<sup>76</sup> The first half of this passage could conceivably be interpreted to mean that any record that named an assassinated ruler indicated that he was to blame, but this reading is extremely unlikely since all records of regicide name the ruler. Furthermore, this remark is appended to a record that names only the assassinated ruler and leaves the assassin unnamed, and surely it refers to records of the same type to which it is appended.

<sup>77</sup> *ZZ Xiang* 26, p. 1113 in reference to *CQ Xiang* 26.1, p. 1110.

<sup>78</sup> Also in apparent violation of this principle is *CQ Xuan* 10.9, p. 704, which names the killer, and the corresponding account in *ZZ Xuan* 10, pp. 707–708, which portrays the ruler's behavior as provocative if not outright wrong. Yet several records leave assassins unnamed and the corresponding account indicates that the ruler was at fault. The *Zuo zhuan* comments directly on the record in *CQ Wen* 16.7, p. 616 and *ZZ Wen* 16, p. 622; and *CQ Xiang* 31.7, p. 1183 and *ZZ Xiang* 31, p. 1189; elsewhere, narratives present the assassinated rulers as wicked, in *CQ Wen* 18.3, p. 628 and *ZZ Wen* 18, p. 630; and *CQ Wen* 18.9, p. 629 and *ZZ Wen* 18, pp. 633–642.

laid out in *Zuo zhuan* Xuan 4 simply extends the convention employed by these records to formally similar records in which the killer was unidentified and the victim was a nobleman rather than a ruler. This interpretation may be correct, but it is just as probable (if not more so) that it is an over-extension of the conventional reading. Perhaps some assassins were unidentified because the Lu record-keepers did not have their names, or for other equally mundane reasons. It may also be that Lu record-keepers used form to indicate the Lu view of certain assassinations, much as they seem to have used formal features to convey whether they viewed an individual as a legitimate heir or ruler, as discussed above. We can only speculate.

Regicide was certainly regarded as a crime, and at least in the Warring States period, it was not thought to be justified by a ruler's misconduct. Instead, Warring States thinkers attempted to redefine situations in order to argue that certain killings could not be properly categorized as regicide.<sup>79</sup> It is thus unsurprising that neither *Gongyang* nor *Guliang* propose interpretations similar to the *Zuo zhuan* Xuan 4 comment concerning bad rulers who deserved their fate as victims.<sup>80</sup> Rather, it is the *Zuo zhuan* claim that should give us pause. Although this reading never achieved widespread acceptance, such an assertion implies that at some point in the interpretive history of the *Spring and Autumn*, the view that regicide of a bad ruler could be justified was present, if only in nascent form.

The *Spring and Autumn* contains another indication that even for rulers, being identified as a victim carried some level of stigma. As noted above, events that cast the state of Lu or the Lu ruler in a negative light were typically excluded. The practice of recording killings of Lu rulers as natural deaths and the tendency to suppress killings of Lu noblemen were almost certainly related.<sup>81</sup> It is unlikely that being assassinated marked a ruler as a criminal in the same way that being killed signaled that a nobleman had committed an offense, and regicide was certainly not a sanctioned response to ruler misconduct. Rulers who were assassinated had not been prostrated because of their crimes, but had been defeated at the hands of an enemy, and the *Spring and Autumn* excluded such events as it would exclude any other humiliation suf-

<sup>79</sup> Carine Defoort, "The Rhetorical Power of Naming," pp. 111–118; and Defoort, "Can Words Produce Order?" p. 86.

<sup>80</sup> Both comment on records of killings of noblemen, and *Gongyang* comments on the identification of assassins of rulers, but in no way suggests that regicide was warranted; see *Gongyang*, Wen 16, 14:11b. See also Defoort, "Can Words Produce Order?" p. 103–104.

<sup>81</sup> For an alternative view see Defoort, "Can Words Produce Order?" p. 99, who suggests that Lu regicides were suppressed because of the danger of making such accusations.

ferred by Lu. Any stigma attached to being named as an assassination victim was probably connected not to implied blame or culpability, but to the humiliation of being subjugated.

Elsewhere I have suggested that a primary aim of the *Spring and Autumn* was to assert the elevated status of Lu, a message that was in part conveyed by omitting or abbreviating records of events in which Lu, its ruler, or its noblemen, was subjugated or humiliated.<sup>82</sup> To force a human to die is certainly a type of subjugation, even if some ethical systems treat execution as administration of fair justice. The language used in reports of noblemen's killings, "prostrated because of his crime," lends support to the idea that killing was understood as a way of subjugating a bad or disobedient individual. Perhaps assassinations of rulers were understood as more akin to battlefield defeats, but such killings nonetheless entailed the humiliation of the ruler, who was overcome by an enemy, the assassin. It is thus hardly unexpected that the *Spring and Autumn* excludes records of killings (including forced suicides) of Lu noblemen and omits references to assassinations of Lu rulers.

#### REPORTS, RECORDS AND JUDGMENTS: THE SLIPS OF THE REGIONAL RULERS

The *Zuo zhuan* gives us several tantalizing hints that events of certain types, including killings and assassinations, were reported within the Central States, and that *Spring and Autumn* records may have been based on these reports. These hints include narratives such as that concerning Kong Da, whose killing was said to have been reported to the regional rulers, references to the practice of recording the names of offenders on the "slips of the regional lords," assertions that many *Spring and Autumn* records were based on reports, and references to records that were made in other states yet that also appear in the *Spring and Autumn* of Lu. Although the *Spring and Autumn* is the only work of its type to have been transmitted intact, other states too kept similar chronological records, and "slips of the regional lords" may have been the generic term for such records, which were known by different names in different states.<sup>83</sup> We may then wonder if reports and records were

<sup>82</sup> Van Auken, "Subtle Words," pp. 90–99.

<sup>83</sup> *Mencius* refers to documents of other states that resembled the *Spring and Autumn*; see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed., *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 (Peking: Zhonghua, 1960, rpt. 2000), "Lilou xia 離婁下," vol. 1, pp. 192–193 (8:21). The *Bamboo Annals* is also similar in form to the *Spring and Autumn*. *Mozi* identifies a series of anecdotes as coming from the "Chunqiu" of other states, but these texts seem to have been composed of narrative passages rather than brief records, and thus were probably a different genre from the state records of such texts

part of a larger communication network for keeping track of various types of events that may have been significant for political or religious reasons, or perhaps both, including – yet perhaps not limited to – offenses and judgments on offenders.

The *Zuo zhuan* account concerning Wei nobleman Kong Da tells us that his killing was not only reported to Jin, the state that demanded retribution, but was disseminated broadly to the regional rulers. This account is one of several indicating that judgments on offenders were both recorded in the offender's home state and communicated to other states, where they were also recorded. Thus the crime of Hua Sun's ancestor was not only recorded in his home state of Song, but also appeared in the slips of the regional rulers in other states, including the *Spring and Autumn*, and Hua Sun expected the Lu ruler to know of it. Likewise, assassinations recorded by Jin and Qi scribes also are found in the Lu *Spring and Autumn*.<sup>84</sup>

The practice of making reports was not restricted to killings, and when a Qi nobleman fled (an action often taken after committing or being accused of an offense), the *Zuo zhuan* tells us that his flight was reported, but the corresponding *Spring and Autumn* record omitted his name because the report did so as well, identifying him only by lineage.<sup>85</sup> This assertion is in line with over twenty other *Zuo zhuan* passages that comment directly on the *Spring and Autumn* records; all hold that individual records of various types were based on reports (*gao* 告) or death announcements (*fu* 赴), and that certain details such as names or dates were recorded only if they were given in the official reports.<sup>86</sup> Two of these passages explicitly equate the *Spring and Autumn* with "slips" (*ce* 策).<sup>87</sup> Together this evidence points to a system of interstate

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as the Lu *Spring and Autumn* and *Bamboo Annals*, which apparently comprise an ancient historiographical genre that did not survive into imperial times. It is widely recognized that the term *Chunqiu* was also used in a generic sense to refer to historical texts of other types, and the *Mozi* reference appears to be an example of this. See *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, comm., in *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 (Taipei: Shijie, 1991), "Ming gui 明鬼," vol. 6, pp. 141–145, and note also the comments of Liang Cai, "Who Said, 'Confucius Composed the *Chunqiu*'?" p. 365.

<sup>84</sup> See discussion of Zhao Dun of Jin and Cui Zhu of Qi above.

<sup>85</sup> *CQ* Xuan 10.6, p. 704 and *ZZ* Xuan 10, p. 706.

<sup>86</sup> Representative examples include *ZZ* Yin 1, p. 17; Wen 14, p. 602; Xiang 28, p. 1153; and Ai 1, p. 1607. These comments are probably fragments of an early commentary to the *Spring and Autumn* that is embedded in the *Zuo zhuan*; see Van Auken, "Teaching the *Spring and Autumn*: An Early Commentarial Tradition Embedded in the *Zuo zhuan*," presented to the Early China Seminar, Columbia University (New York City), November 10, 2012. For a detailed discussion of reporting and announcements in the *Spring and Autumn*, see Ji Xusheng 季旭升, "Chunqiu 'fugao' yanjiu 春秋「赴告」研究," *Kong Meng yuekan* 孔孟月刊 21.2 (1982), pp. 7–12.

<sup>87</sup> *ZZ* Yin 11, p. 78 and Huan 2, p. 91.

reporting, in which events were reported to other states, and these reports in turn served as the basis for documents known as the “slips of the regional lords,” including the *Spring and Autumn* in Lu as well as similar records in other states.

Several Western scholars have linked *Spring and Autumn* records to ritual announcements. Yuri Pines has set forth the most detailed proposal, arguing that the *Spring and Autumn* comprised records of announcements made to the ancestors of the Lu ruling house.<sup>88</sup> The assertion that some records were based on announcements or reports is substantiated by a range of material in the *Zuo zhuan*, noted above, yet support for the specific contention that these reports were directed to the ancestors is less certain. The primary direct evidence is a single *Zuo zhuan* passage, which is unique in that it refers to the activities of the Lu ruler and concerns a report made in the Lu ancestral temple.<sup>89</sup> By contrast, other records associated with reports pertain to events outside of Lu. These include not only killings and assassinations, but also deaths of rulers, flights into exile, and battlefield victories or defeats. The reports mentioned in conjunction with these records (like that of Kong Da’s killing) appear to be formal interstate communications, made not to the spirits but delivered by emissaries from other states to the regional rulers, and then recorded. It is certainly not impossible that these events were reported not only to living rulers but were also announced to the ancestors of the ruling house, but at present evidence

<sup>88</sup> Yuri Pines, “Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period,” p. 83 and “Chinese History Writing between the Sacred and the Secular,” pp. 318–321; others include Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, p. 84; Sarah A. Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon*, pp. 116–17.

<sup>89</sup> ZZ Huan 2, p. 91. Pines also cites the putative similarity between *Spring and Autumn* records and bronze inscriptions coupled with Lothar von Falkenhausen’s assertion that bronze inscriptions were based on reports to the ancestors; see Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *Early China* 18 (1993), p. 167, cited in Pines, “Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period,” pp. 83–84. In recent publications Falkenhausen has abandoned this view, as in his two articles, “The Inscribed Bronzes from Yangjiacun: New Evidence on Social Structure and Historical Consciousness in Late Western Zhou China (c. 800 BC),” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), pp. 274–277, and “The Royal Audience and Its Reflections in Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions,” in Li Feng and David Prager Branner, eds., *Writing and Literacy in Early China: Studies from the Columbia Early China Seminar* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), p. 241. Alternative proposals concerning the varied function of bronze inscriptions appear in Li Feng’s recent research, including Li Feng, *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou, 1045–771 BC* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U.P., 2006), p. 10; *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U.P., 2008), pp. 15–17; and “Literacy and the Social Contexts of Writing in the Western Zhou,” in *Writing and Literacy in Early China*, pp. 279–301. Most significant is Li Feng’s caution against reductionist explanations for bronze inscriptions, a caution that may be profitably applied to attempts to understand the *Spring and Autumn*.

of such practice is wanting.<sup>90</sup> The suggestion that reports were the basis for all *Spring and Autumn* records is similarly difficult to maintain based on available evidence, which does not support a link between reports and many categories of events commonly recorded in the *Spring and Autumn*, including military activity other than battles, interstate meetings, and meteorological events. Even so, Pines is certainly correct that at least a subset of *Spring and Autumn* records, not necessarily limited to those concerning killings of noblemen and rulers, appear to have been based on reports of some type. These reports seem to have followed prescribed rules that governed wording and content, and although their religious import is uncertain, they can at least be described as official or even ceremonial in nature.

While some records must have been based on reports, they were not verbatim transcriptions, but departed from the language of reports in significant ways, which in turn suggests a difference in function. This is best illustrated by the contrast between the report that Kong Da had been “prostrated for his crime,” and the dispassionate *Spring and Autumn* record stating simply that he had been killed, with no reference to his alleged offense. Elsewhere, the *Zuo zhuan* gives what was said to be the standard language used to report a flight into exile, language that plainly conveys that the individual who fled was by default considered to be blameworthy, yet again, corresponding *Spring and Autumn* records make no mention of any misconduct.<sup>91</sup> In short, overt references to misconduct, judgment, or punishment are conspicuously absent from the *Spring and Autumn*, which does not tell us how to view events but simply records them in ostensibly objective terms. For a record to label someone an offender, as in the report concerning Kong Da, may have been deemed unnecessary, since the audience was presumed to know that certain types of records conventionally referred to reprehensible conduct, while others, including battlefield victories and perhaps covenants, signaled merit and achievement. Surely it was obvious to Kong Da’s contemporaries that being recorded as the victim of a killing indicated that he had been judged an offender, that those identified as assassins were marked as criminals, and perhaps even that being identified as an assassination victim implied humiliating subjugation. The view

<sup>90</sup> Although there is one instance of a report made in the Lu ancestral temple, cited by Pines (*ZZ Huan* 2, p. 91), this concerns a Lu ruler’s return from abroad; by contrast, other reports mentioned in the *Zuo zhuan* do not concern Lu activities.

<sup>91</sup> *CQ Xuan* 10.6, p. 704, which records a flight into exile (*ben* 奔), and the corresponding passage in *ZZ Xuan* 10, p. 706. The *Zuo zhuan* cites the standard wording of a report for a flight into exile, which suggested that noblemen who fled were at fault, but the language of the *Spring and Autumn* record does not make this explicit.

that *Spring and Autumn* records (or at least a subset thereof) contain “encoded” judgments thus seems to have been accurate. If these judgments were not obvious to later readers, it was not because the language was deliberately obscure or concealing, but because the norms on which the records were originally based changed over time, and understanding of the older conventions was lost, even if the memory that the *Spring and Autumn* recorded judgments of some sort was retained. It may be that the notion that the records expressed “the judgments of Confucius” arose as a way of accounting for two apparently contradictory aspects of the text, the transmitted knowledge that some of its records documented judgments and were not simply factual records of events, and the obviously dispassionate and factual language of the records, which rendered the judgments opaque to those without understanding of the norms and practices on which they were based.

Although by Han times, the *Spring and Autumn* had come to be regarded as obscure and difficult to understand, its records originally recorded judgments in a straightforward fashion, by naming the person to whom responsibility was assigned. Records on occasion identified as offenders individuals who in later times and by different standards may not have been deemed guilty, and some judgments were probably controversial even when first made. The considerations underlying the judgments are no longer known, but surely Spring and Autumn-period attitudes and assumptions about killings, guilt, and responsibility differed from ours, and even from those of the Han dynasty, only a few centuries later. This discrepancy is likely one of many factors that led later scholars to regard *Spring and Autumn* judgments – or rather, the principles underlying them – as concealed or incomprehensible. Thus some truth may be found in the traditional view of the *Spring and Autumn*, which may not record Confucius’s praise and blame, but which includes records of judgments nonetheless. The records were not originally intended to serve as a blueprint for future conduct, as they later came to be used, but they may still have been aimed at posterity, for the descendants of those named in the records were certainly affected. Records of judgments may also have had a cautionary function, serving to warn off would-be wrongdoers, as *Mencius* famously suggested.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps the possibility of having one’s name recorded for posterity was in and of itself a deterrent, as much as it was a punishment for those whose names were actually written down.

<sup>92</sup> Yang Bojun, ed., *Mengzi* “Teng Wen gong xia 滕文公下,” vol. 1, pp. 117–18 (5:3), also attributes the *Spring and Autumn* to Confucius, reading “Confucius completed the *Spring and*

This study has been restricted to *Spring and Autumn* records of killings, and has proposed that one function of these records was to document a judgment against an offender by identifying him. The findings presented here account for the form of records of killings and assassinations, and also for certain aspects of the later reception of the *Spring and Autumn*, most significantly, its association with judgments and the view that its judgments were obscure or difficult to understand. Yet the *Spring and Autumn* includes events of many other types, including natural deaths and funerals, military and diplomatic activity, ritual services, accessions to the throne and marriages of Lu rulers, and astronomical and meteorological occurrences. In contrast to records of killings, most other types of records (with the possible exception of flights into exile) probably did not record judgments. Even so, we must remain alert to the likelihood that they were not merely factual accounts, and may have been more loaded than is readily apparent. The limited scope of this study does not permit conclusions about records of other types, let alone the entire *Spring and Autumn*. What was the original purpose and function of this work, and more generally of the “slips of the regional rulers”? In what ways did the later reception and use of the *Spring and Autumn* both reflect and diverge from its original function? Further comparison of categories of records with related narrative accounts in other texts, carried out along the lines of the present analysis, should assist us in arriving at fuller and more satisfying answers to these questions.

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*Autumn* and then chaos-causing vassals and crime-committing sons were afraid,” (孔子成春秋而亂臣賊子懼).

*LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS*

*CQ* *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn*)

*ZZ* *Zuo zhuan* 左傳

Above two items refer to Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注.

*Gongyang* He Xiu 何休, *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan He shi jiegou* 春秋公羊傳何氏解詁

*Guliang* Fan Ning 范甯, *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan Fan shi jijie* 春秋穀梁傳范氏集解

*Saden* Takezoe Shin'ichirō 竹添進一郎, *Saden kaisen* 左傳會箋

*SWJZ* Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注