

of pacifying the Rong people, through which Jin gained both internal stability and also the Rong land and population.⁴² With this, Dao Gong was recognized as *Ba*.

A MULTISTATE SYSTEM

By the sixth century B.C., ancient China had gradually developed a multi-state system. The four major powers, Jin, Chu, Qi, and Qin, had each acquired a sphere of domination, while the status of the Zhou royal house had become even further reduced. Both Jin and Chu realized that they had to coexist with the other powers, especially Qi and Qin in the east and west, respectively. Thus, the claim of dependence on a *Ba* to hold the Zhou states together was no longer meaningful. Even the cultural identity claimed by the Zhou against the non-Zhou was no longer convincing, since the process of assimilation had blurred such distinctions; each of the contending states had incorporated among its population various ethnic and cultural groups; for example, Jin had expanded to include Rong and Di lands, while Chu gained several satellites that were former Zhou states, such as Cai and Sui.

A Balance of Power

These developments had a profound impact on the last century of the Spring and Autumn period. Once again it was the states of Zheng and Song in the Central Plain that initiated a new type of interstate alignment. The ministers of these two states lamented that their locations made them vulnerable, caught in the midst of the seesaw struggles between Jin and Chu. Zheng especially suffered from the repeated wars.⁴³

Song Xu 宋戌, a minister of Song, persuaded the prime ministers of Jin and Chu to hold an interstate peace conference. With their consent, Song Xu invited them, as well as ministers of Qi, Qin, and other states, to meet at Shangqiu 商丘 in 546 B.C. The peace agreement they reached provided that the various satellite states of Jin and Chu should pay court visits to these two powers; Qi and Qin were not to be held to this obligation because they were independent powers. In fact, Qi and Qin each claimed a few neighboring states as being within their own spheres of influence. For each of these major powers, there was to be a limit on the number of their war chariots.

⁴² *Zuo zhuan*, 28 (Cheng 17), 23b-26b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 404-406); 29 (Xiang 3), 29.12a-14b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 420).

⁴³ *Zuo zhuan*, 22 (Xuan 11), 115b-16b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 310); 30 (Xiang 9), 28a-33a (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 440-1).

The satellite states were clearly informed of the extent of the contributions they were to present to the major powers.⁴⁴

For forty years thereafter there was no military conflict between Jin and Chu. Nevertheless, while the states in the north were temporarily spared the calamity of frequent wars, a new round of struggles began in the south. Among the lands in the lower reaches of the Yangzi valley, Wu 吳 and Yue 越 arose to challenge Chu, and also engaged in struggles for supremacy in their own regions.

The Rise of Wu and Yue

The state of Wu had allegedly been established by an uncle of King Wen of Zhou (r. 1099–1050 B.C.). But even if its ruling house was in fact related to Zhou, which seems doubtful, the population of Wu was still made up of native peoples of the southern region. Wu had not been at all active in the first part of the Spring and Autumn period, but by 583 B.C., when Jin and Chu were engaged in a series of wars, a former Chu minister who had sought refuge in Jin suggested that Jin should send aid to Wu in order to have an ally to the south of Chu. This strategy seems to have been very effective; after exchanges with Jin advisors, Wu annexed the land of several of Chu's former subordinates and began to take part in the interstate meetings in the north.⁴⁵ Wu's strategy was to maintain pressure on Chu by periodically sending one-third of its standing army to attack different areas of Chu. Chu had to keep fully alert at all times, while Wu only needed to use a portion of its capacity. Chu therefore became exhausted. In 506 B.C., Wu launched a full-scale invasion of Chu, defeating it in five consecutive battles and bringing it to the edge of total collapse.⁴⁶

Chu had now lost its unchallenged leadership of the south. Wu's position, however, was by no means unchallenged, since Yue, another southern power located next to it, also claimed to be related to another of the Three Dynasties in the north, in this case Xia. Like Wu's claim to have been related to the Zhou royal house, this claim is also doubtful. Indeed, Yue never concealed the fact that its cultural background was that of coastal dwellers, a background shared by numerous subgroups of people referred to as the various Yue (Bai Yue 百越). The early history of this state is by no means clear. It seems that Wu and Yue were recognized in literary sources as appear-

⁴⁴ *Zuo zhuan*, 38 (Xiang 27), 6a–8b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 533–5); 39 (Xiang 29), 7b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 549); 46 (Zhao 13), 16b–18b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 651–3).

⁴⁵ *Zuo zhuan*, 26 (Cheng 7), 16a–17b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 363–4).

⁴⁶ *Zuo zhuan*, 53 (Zhao 30), 15b–17a (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 734–5); 54 (Ding 4), 22a–27b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 755–7).

ing almost simultaneously as a "contending pair" in the south. Beginning in 510 B.C., when Wu invaded Yue, they battled with each other constantly to control the fertile rice-growing land of the Yangzi delta.

In 496 B.C., the king of Wu died of wounds suffered in an invasion of Yue. Three years later, King Fuchai 夫差 (r. 495-474 B.C.), avenging the death of his father, defeated Yue decisively, forcing its king, Goujian 勾踐 (r. 496-465 B.C.), to surrender to Wu.⁴⁷ After his victory, an over-confident King Fuchai had ambitions to become *Ba*. In 486 B.C., Wu began to dig a canal to link the Central Plain with the south. This was to be the first of several such efforts, which did not finally succeed until the completion of the Grand Canal more than a thousand years later during the Sui dynasty (A.D. 589-618). In the next year, Wu defeated Qi. Extending the canal westward as far as present-day Henan, Wu challenged Jin for the status as *Ba*. Confronted with the best army of the time, Jin yielded, allowing Wu to preside at an interstate conference held at Huangchi 黃池 in 482 B.C. This marked the zenith of Wu's leadership.⁴⁸

King Fuchai's moment of glory did not last long. King Goujian of Yue was anxious for revenge. With the remnants of his army consisting of only 5,000 men, he attempted in every way possible to increase Yue's manpower and to store up food and wealth. He vowed that he would devote one decade to the task of regaining Yue's strength and another decade to training his people. Taking advantage of King Fuchai's maneuvers in the north, with the main body of the Wu army away, King Goujian attacked Wu. Wu's capital, named Wu, fell and Fuchai's heir apparent was killed. Fuchai rushed back from Huangchi to negotiate a temporary peace with Yue, but Goujian refused to give Fuchai the sort of opportunity to regain strength of which he had availed himself earlier. Instead, Yue launched another full-scale invasion in 473 B.C. Besieged for three years, Wu finally fell and Fuchai hanged himself. These events took place just two decades after Yue had fallen to Wu, thus fulfilling the previously humiliated Goujian's timetable for revenge.⁴⁹

Yue temporarily became the strongest power of the time. Even before Wu had been completely defeated, the northern states had already looked to Yue as a potential *Ba*. For instance, Lu Ai Gong 魯哀公 sought Yue's intervention in a power struggle in Lu.⁵⁰ After Wu fell, Goujian led his triumphant army to a conference of rulers and delegates of the northern states at Xuzhou

⁴⁷ *Zuo zhuan*, 53 (Zhao 32), 22b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 740); 56 (Ding 14), 16b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 788); 57 (Ai 1), 2b-5a (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 794).

⁴⁸ *Zuo zhuan*, 59 (Ai 13), 7a-10b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 832-3).

⁴⁹ *Zuo zhuan*, 60 (Ai 20), 15a-16a (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 853-4).

⁵⁰ *Zuo zhuan*, 60 (Ai 24), 19b (Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 855).

徐州。From there, Yue sent tribute to the Zhou royal court, a gesture signifying its status as *Ba*. This conference was the last at which a *Ba* was recognized. The end of the struggle between Wu and Yue probably marks the end of the *ba* system. Indeed, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 B.C.), the grand historian of the Han dynasty, assigned the first year of his Table of the Six States (*Liu guo nianbiao* 六國年表) to 475 B.C.; this symbolized the beginning of a new era.⁵¹

The Transformation of the Ba System

To sum up the development of the *ba* system, it was initiated by Qi; fully realized by Jin, which held it continuously for more than eighty years; and ended with the short periods during which Wu and Yue claimed that status. In the meantime, however, Qin had gained control of the western region, establishing itself as a regional power. Chu, once the target of campaigns to expel it, not only evolved into another regional power, but once shared joint *ba* status with Jin. Indeed, the entire history of the *ba* system was a process of realigning states, both Zhou and non-Zhou, for the sake of establishing a new multistate order. The purpose of this system was originally supposed to be to restore royal authority; however, rather than restoring it, the *ba* replaced it.

In conventional Chinese historiography, the *Ba* was supposed to be the protector of the Hua Xia states in the Central Plain; that is, the defender of Chinese culture against foreign or barbarian cultural influence. In reality, ever since the state of Zheng faded out of the struggle for leadership, all of the states that held the *ba* status arose outside of the Central Plain. Several of them (i.e., Chu, Wu, and Yue) were decidedly of non-Hua Xia ethnic and cultural origin. Even Qi and Jin, though being old Zhou states, had also absorbed numerous non-Zhou (Yi, Rong, and Di) elements, thus becoming ethnically and culturally mixed entities themselves. Despite the bias that views the Yellow River valley as the heartland of Chinese civilization, the archaeological sources discussed in the preceding chapter have made abundantly clear that these peripheral areas around the Central Plain were not at all underdeveloped by comparison with the Zhou states.

The history of the Spring and Autumn period not only witnessed an expansion of the Zhou world toward its peripheries; it perhaps also testifies to an aggregation of several independently developed regional ethnic and cultural clusters into a large, multistate, multicultural system setting the stage for the further interaction and integration that took place in the subsequent

⁵¹ *Shi ji*, 15, p. 687.

Warring States period. Though ostensibly an effort to preserve the Zhou cultural and political order, the *ba* system actually served to transform this order, laying the foundation for the eventual empire of the Qin and Han periods. This transformation was not just political in nature, but also extended into social, economic, and intellectual spheres. The tremendous changes in these spheres will be outlined in the following sections.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

During the heyday of Zhou feudalism, there were hundreds of small states. The feudal structure depended on the relationship between the lord and these vassal states, and on a kinship system known as *zongfa* 宗法. The supreme lord was the Zhou king, upon whom the Mandate of Heaven or rule was considered to have been bestowed on a hereditary basis. As the Son of Heaven, the king enfeoffed relatives to be rulers of vassal states. Since the king and these rulers were members of the same royal house, their descendants were also related (though, it should be added, there were also rulers of vassal states who were not Zhou kinsmen but were related to the Zhou royal house by matrimonial ties). In the respective states, the rulers were served by ministers (*qing* 卿) and high officers (*dafu* 大夫) who were again kinsmen. Each of these kinsmen had his own household, fief, and domain. The lowest ranking Zhou aristocrats were the *shi* 士, also related to their lords by blood or by marriage. The *shi* was a class of men similar to the *samurai* of medieval Japan. Originally serving as soldiers, often itinerant, by the end of the Spring and Autumn period they would develop into a distinct social and cultural elite.

Kinship Structure

In theory, the *zongfa* system provided for the succession of the Zhou kings and the rulers of the various states by primogeniture. In each generation, the eldest son took his place in the "principal lineage" (*da zong* 大宗). Within the various states, the feudal lineages were the principal lineages of all Zhou nobles, though these were of lesser status than the royal lineage, while the lineages of *qing* or *dafu* were similarly of still lesser status. In short, the Zhou feudal network was organized along patriarchal lines and in hierarchical order; political authority depended on hierarchy within the kinship group.

Any idealized framework exists only in theory. So too was the Zhou *zongfa* system little more than a principle of organization. In the Western Zhou period, the system was sustained by the maintenance of mutual relations