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A Brief Exploration of Duke Yin of Lu Accession and Tragic End

摘要

《春秋》作為五經之一在儒家學者眼裡有著其特殊的地位。《春秋》何以始於魯隱公也變成學界十分關注的課題，而要深究該課題，就免不了必須窺探隱公的一生，以及其富有爭議性、且最終導致他逝世的「讓國」舉動。春秋三傳關於皆肯定隱公有「讓國於桓」的志願，就《春秋》不書公「即位」，《穀梁》在認同隱公即位的合法性中，否定隱公讓位的行為，因顯父之不義；《公羊》以嫡長子貴只原則，釋隱公之立唯圖返政與桓公；《左傳》則以「攝」來詮釋，且從敘事中處處體現隱公居攝的形象。然隱公讓國未遂而卒，成為《春秋》時期的悲劇之一。淺析奸臣何以能遂其離間這一對同父異母兄弟，不外隱公名不正，不應居公位而攝政；晚年外交及軍事行動頻繁，以及不及時外宣歸政的信息，使得桓公在諸多不確定因素地下起了不少疑心，使得羽父可以乘虛而入。

1. Introduction

Chunqiu 春秋 is the record of the State of Lu in ancient China that chronicles more than two centuries from the first year of Duke Yin of Lu 魯隱公 (722 BCE) to the fourteenth year of Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公 (481 BCE). Having been regarded as an important compilation work of Confucius by pre-Qin scholars, especially Mencius, it was then viewed as one of the Five Classics of the Confucian tradition. Unlike other official chronicles, it is said that *Chunqiu* subtly passed moral judgement on the recorded events through its unique writing styles and vocabularies, which is widely known as *chunqiu bifa* 春秋筆法. Aside from hermeneutically interpreting the meaning behind the writing, another intriguing point that initiates ongoing discussion, with no consensus to date, is the chronicled period of *Chunqiu*. Instead of commencing the record from the foundation of the state of Lu (c. 11th century BCE), the documentation began during the reign of its fourteenth ruler. Du Yu 杜預 said that Duke Yin

隱公 was a virtuous ruler who abdicated his throne¹, suggesting that the commencement of the record from Duke Yin promotes and values the idea of yielding. On the contrary, Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 argued that ever since the period of Duke Yin, society's order was disrupted and historical records lost their significance, which made Confucius worried and took it upon himself to rectify the situation.² Chen Li 陳澧 referenced *Guliangzhuan* 穀梁傳 and further introduced the idea of Confucius condemning Duke Yin's assassination and punishing Duke Huan using the King's law.³ These arguments predominantly related to Duke Yin, rendering the exploration of the rationale behind his noble yet unsuccessful abdication, which resulted in his tragic demise, a subject worthy of discussion. Therefore, this paper commences by consolidating insights from *Chunqiu Sanzhuan* 春秋三傳 concerning Duke Yin's succession. Subsequently, it further discusses the potential factors that resulted in his unsuccessful abdication and ultimately tragic end.

2. Duke Yin Accession Across *Chunqiu Sanzhuan*

In the preface to their translation of *Zuozhuan* 左傳, Stephen Durrant and others stated: 'Zuozhuan begins with a problematic succession, the first of many such episodes that point to the danger so often accompanying moments of political transition.'⁴ The author of *Chunqiu* hints at a legitimacy issue of Duke Yin's succession by omitting the term *jiwei* 即位 in the first year of Duke Yin's annals. Among the twelve documents of the rulers of the state of Lu, there are four, including Duke Yin, lack the term *jiwei*. However, it is noticeable that the other three records have relatively shorter explanations in all *Chunqiu Sanzhuan*, in contrast to Duke Yin's comprehensive exegesis. Although all three of *Chunqiu*'s commentaries acknowledge Duke Yin's intention of passing on his throne, each commentary has its own way of interpretation regarding Duke Yin's succession.

¹ Du Yu 杜預, Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 32. Original text: '曰：然則何始於魯隱公？答曰：周平王，東周之始王也。隱公，讓國之賢君也。'

² Gu Wanyu 顧炎武, *Rizhilu* 日知錄, (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Press, 2006), p. 179. Original text: '自隱公以下，世道衰微，史失其官，于是孔子惧而修之。'

³ Chen Li 陳澧, *Dongshu Dushuji* 東塾讀書記, (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Press, 2012), pp. 171-172. Original text: '桓元年傳云：「桓弟弑兄，臣弑君，天子不能定，諸侯不能救，百姓不能去。以為無王之道，遂可以至焉爾。元年有王，所以治桓也。」然則《春秋》始於隱、桓，為惡桓弑隱，而孔子以王法治之，大義昭然矣。'

⁴ Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), p. 3.

2.1 *Guliangzhuan*

Guliangzhuan recognises the legitimacy of Duke Yin's accession to power but considers the act of relinquishing the position as an incorrect course of action. Guliang's commentary in the beginning episode of Duke Yin reads:

Why does the Text not state that the duke succeeded to the title? In order to give full expression to the duke's determination. In what way does the Text give full expression to his determination? In stating that the lord did not choose to become duke. What is meant by this statement? [Duke Yin] intended to resign the title and hand it over to [Duke] Huan 桓. Was it correct to resign the title and hand it over to [Duke] Huan? The answer is that it was not correct.⁵

Despite being considered incorrect, Guliang's commentary perceives the absence of the term *jiwei* in the Text (*jing* 經) as a subtle form of judgement, condemning the transgressions of the Duke Huan 桓公. Standing on the ethical point of view in interpreting the Text, Guliang's commentary continues to explain the impropriety of Duke Yin's intention because he helped fulfil his father's malicious intent. Guliang's commentary suggests that Duke Hui 惠公, Duke Yin's father, initial intention was against the norm and out of his bias towards his younger child. He then changed his mind and appointed Duke Yin as his successor⁶ which made the accession of Duke Yin legit. Furthermore, Guliang's commentary provides no information concerning Duke Yin's parentage, particularly his biological mother. Instead, it identifies Zhong Zi 仲子 as Duke Hui's mother and Duke Xiao's 孝公 concubine (*Guliangzhuan* Yin 1.4), in contrast to the viewpoints presented in the other two commentaries. Since Duke Hui also succeeded the throne as a child of a concubine rather than a consort, it also solidifies the notion that Guliang's tradition does not consider the nobility of aristocrats in assessing the legitimacy of Duke Yin's succession.

2.2 *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳

Gongyangzhuan also adopted the same interrogative method in interpreting the Text, but Gongyang's view on Duke Yin's succession is slightly different from Guliang's. The commentary for Duke Yin 1.1 reads:

Why does the Text not state that the duke succeeded to the title? In order to give full expression to the duke's intention. Why so? The duke intended to pacify the

⁵ Göran Malmqvist, *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin 43: Studies on the Gongyang and Guuliang Commentaries I*, (Gothenburg: Elanders Boktryckeri AB, 1971), p. 69, with modification.

⁶ Göran Malmqvist, *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin 43: Studies on the Gongyang and Guuliang Commentaries I*, p. 69. Original text: '孝子揚父之美，不揚父之惡。先君之欲與桓，非正也，邪也。雖然，既勝其邪心以與隱矣，已探先君之邪志而遂以與桓，則是成父之惡也。'

state and [eventually] restore it to [Duke] Huan.⁷

In line with Guliang's tradition, Gongyang's tradition similarly interprets the absence of the term *jiwei* as an expression of Duke Yin's intention. However, Gongyang's commentaries offer deeper insight into this intention by specifying that the duke aimed to restore the order of the state before ultimately passing it on to Duke Huan. It is noticeable that Gongyang uses the term "restore" (*fan* 反), compared to "resign" (*rang* 讓) in Guliang's commentary. It helps to explain Gongyang's stance on this complicated succession of power. In contrast to Guliang's tradition, Gongyang's tradition emphasises more on the nobility of the succession line. According to *Shiji* 史記, being a child of a concubine, Duke Yin has a less noble parentage than Duke Huan, whose mother was later elevated to the position of consort.⁸ Therefore, in Gongyang's perspective, Duke Huan was the rightful successor, but certain circumstances hindered the proper transfer of power from occurring. The commentary continues:

Why restore it to [Duke] Huan? [Duke] Huan was the younger [of the two], but of nobler birth. [Duke] Yin was the older, but of lower birth. The difference in their relative status was slight: of the people in the state none knew [whom the late duke had elected as his successor]. [Duke] Yin was grown-up and, besides, a worthy man. The great officers brought [Duke] Yin forward and established him as ruler. If [Duke] Yin under these circumstances had rejected [their decision to] establish him as ruler, then he would have had no reassurance that [Duke] Huan [at a later stage] would be certain to be established as ruler. And furthermore, supposing that [Duke] Huan were established as ruler, it might be feared that the great officers would be unable to assist so young a ruler. Therefore, that [Duke] Yin allowed himself to be established as ruler was to all intents and purposes for the sake of [Duke] Huan.⁹

Based on Gongyang's interpretation, Duke Yin's appointment as the new ruler was the result of the support and decision of the court officials. He believed that if he insisted on yielding his position, that support might not automatically go to the young ruler. Consequently, he ultimately ascended the throne on behalf of his half-brother with the intention of returning it to its rightful heir in the later day.

2.3 *Zuozhuan* 左傳

In contrast to the other two commentaries, Zuo's tradition introduces another concept for

⁷ Göran Malmqvist, *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin 43: Studies on the Gongyang and Guliang Commentaries I*, p. 68, with modification.

⁸ Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2014), p. 1848. Original Text: '初，惠公適夫人無子，公賤妾聲子生子息。息長，為娶於宋。宋女至而好，惠公奪而自妻之。生子允。登宋女為夫人，以允為太子。'

⁹ Göran Malmqvist, *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin 43: Studies on the Gongyang and Guliang Commentaries I*, p. 68, with modification.

interpreting the meaning behind the absence of the term *jiwei*. *Zuo*zhuan Yin 1.1 reads:

The first year, spring, the royal Zhou first month: the text does not record that he acceded to his position because he was acting as regent.¹⁰

In stark contrast to the previous two commentaries, which have relatively comprehensive elaboration on the Text, *Zuo*'s commentary uses the notion of "regency" to explain the absence of Duke Yin's acceding record. Adopting a different writing style from the other two, *Zuo*'s elaboration on Duke Yin's regency does not focus on Duke Yin 1.1. Before the beginning of Duke Yin's annals, there is a short preface that briefly introduces the family lineage of the two dukes that says:

Duke Hui's first wife was Meng Zi 孟子. When Meng Zi had died, he raised to her place Sheng Zi 聲子, who bore Duke Yin. Duke Wu of Song fathered Zhong Zi. When Zhong Zi was born she had a design in the palm of her hand, which resembled written characters that said, "She will be the Lady of Lu." That is why Zhong Zi came to us in marriage. Soon after she gave birth to Duke Huan, Duke Hui expired. Because of this, Duke Yin was established in power but served Duke Huan.¹¹

In line with Gongyang, *Zuo*'s commentary also identifies Zhong Zi as the biological mother of Duke Huan. In comparison, *Shiji* account reads:

Duke Hui's main wife had no son, but the duke's lowly concubine Sheng Zi gave birth to a son Xi 息 [Duke Yin]. When Xi grew up, they found a wife for him in Song. The young woman of Song arrived and was lovely, so Duke Hui appropriated her and made her his own wife. She gave birth to a son Yun 允 [Duke Huan]. He elevated the Song woman to be his main wife and took Yun as heir apparent. When Duke Hui died, because Yun was young, the Lu men were united in ordering Xi to act as regent.¹²

The lineage from both records is the same and they both regard Duke Yin as a regent. Unlike *Shiji*, there is no information about Duke Huan's assignment in *Zuo*'s preface. However, the words *taizi* 太子 (heir apparent) appear in Yin 1.9 commentary that reads:

When Duke Hui expired, there was conflict with Song troops, and the heir apparent was still young, so there were omissions in the burial protocol. It was for this reason he was reburied.¹³

¹⁰ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuo*zhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals", p. 7, with modification.

¹¹ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuo*zhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals", p. 5, with modification.

¹² Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuo*zhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals", p. 5 (footnote), with modification.

¹³ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuo*zhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals", p. 17, with modification.

Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 suggested that ‘heir apparent’ in this context refers to Duke Huan, and he consequently concluded that Duke Hui had already assigned Duke Huan as his successor prior to his death.¹⁴ With the passing of Duke Hui and amidst the ongoing confrontation with Song, Duke Yin eventually assumed the title of the de facto state ruler on behalf of his half-brother without more rationales regarding his accession to power. However, Zuo’s commentary explicitly portrayed his regency role, particularly through his diplomatic actions and notable absence from important rituals.

In Duke Yin 1.9 commentary, the author of *Zuozhuan* remarked: ‘In winter, in the tenth month, on the *gengshen* day (14), Duke Hui was reburied. Our lord did not attend, and that is why it is not recorded.’¹⁵ Durrant and others suggested that Duke Yin’s absence was due to his ambiguous position¹⁶, while Yang argued that the duke was absent because, in his capacity as a regent, he did not dare to assume the role of the chief mourner.¹⁷ In the same year, he also did not participate in his minister Zhong Fu 眾父 burial for the same reason.¹⁸ Moreover, when the duke’s mother passed, neither did he notice the other rulers, nor did he wail upon returning from the funeral, nor did he place her spirit tablet next to his stepmother’s (*Zuozhuan* Yin 3.2). In diplomacy, at the beginning of his regency, he built a good relationship with Zhu Yifu 邾儀父 who was yet to receive the King’s appointment (*Zuozhuan* Yin 1.2). The same year in the eighth month, he sought a truce with Song, ending the previous feud left by his father (*Zuozhuan* Yin 1.8). Those points above help to shape Zuo’s notion of Duke Yin’s ‘regency’ as well as his enthronement was intended for the future benefit of Duke Huan.

3. The Duke Yin’s Tragic Death

The three prominent *Chunqiu* commentaries affirm Duke Yin’s intention to abdicate his throne, in which some commentators draw a parallel with the motivation of the historical figures Tai Bo 泰伯 and Bo Yi 伯夷. *Zuozhuan* further introduces the notion of “regency” also aligning Duke Yin’s action with the noble act of his direct ancestor, Duke Wen of Zhou. However, the later stage of that historical event did not turn out to be what Duke Yin expected. Not only was

¹⁴ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuanzhu* 春秋左傳注, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2016), p. 19.

¹⁵ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*, p. 17, with modification.

¹⁶ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*, p. 17, with modification.

¹⁷ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuanzhu* 春秋左傳注, p. 19.

¹⁸ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuanzhu* 春秋左傳注, p. 21.

he unable to fulfil his wish, but his life also ended in a profoundly tragic manner. The record about Duke Yin's assassination in *Zuo zhuan* Yin 11.8 reads:

Yu Fu 羽父 requested that Duke Huan be put to death and aimed in this way to seek for himself the position of grand steward (*taizai* 大宰). Our lord said, "It was because of his youth that I have ruled. I am going to hand rule over to him! Let Tuqiu 莒裘 be built up and I will retire there." Frightened, Yu Fu turned around and slandered Duke Yin to Duke Huan and requested that the former be assassinated.¹⁹

Han Xichou 韓席籌 commented that Duke Yin's sincerity could be seen from his willingness to assume the role of regent and forgo the inauguration ceremony, seek truce with neighbouring states through diplomacy and abstain from important rituals. [As Confucius said] Seeking for a virtuous act and doing so, was something Duke Yin had achieved. However, yielding but ending up in misfortune, was something beyond Duke Yin's expectations.²⁰ Though the culprit of this incident was Yu Fu, the whole assassination could not have been completed without the support from Duke Huan. Nonetheless, Duke Yin's series of missteps also played a role in raising Duke Huan's uncertainty and suspicion towards his half-blood brother which ultimately strengthened his killing intention.

Firstly, the duke should not assume the title of ruler if he wished to act as a regent. Gao Shiqi 高士奇 argued that after the passing of Duke Hui, should Duke Yin follow the path of Duke Wen of Zhou by establishing Duke Hui and serving under him as a regent, the corrupt ministers would not have a chance to sow discord among them.²¹ Although Lu was in the midst of conflict with Song and the entire state called for a competent leader to helm the government, Duke Yin could have emulated his ancestor by aiding Duke Huan to assume the position and supporting him in governing the state as a minister. Not only could he avoid status ambiguity, but also could he prove that was not seeking the position for himself. Furthermore, the worry he had, portrayed in *Gongyangzhuan*, was not proven as well because, during his reign, there were a lot of ministers who acted against his will. Another relatively more successful case that could be referred to is Gongzi Muyi 公子目夷 of Song, who forfeited his throne to his younger brother Duke Xiang of Song 宋襄公 and assisted him as his minister.

¹⁹ Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition / Zuo zhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*, p. 67, with modification.

²⁰ Han Xichou 韓席籌, *Zuo zhuan Fenguo Jizhu* 左傳分過集注, (Jiangsu: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1963), p. 43.

²¹ Gao Shiqi 高士奇, *Zuo zhuan Jishi Benmo* 左傳紀事本末, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2015), p. 52.

Secondly, the duke's diplomatic approaches in his later stage could be easily decoded as his political ambition. In the eighth year of his reign (*Zuozhuan* Yin 8.2), Duke Yin did not reject nor react to the notion of exchanging Beng 郕 near Mount Tai for the lands of Xu 許田 by Duke Zhuang of Zheng 鄭莊公. Instead, in the same year of his assassination, he participated in the military coalition led by Duke Zhuang of Zheng, who was considered the 'minor overlord', to attack the state of Xu 許. Those courses of action are considered unproductive and against the notion of 'pacifying the state before returning to the rightful owner' or out of the capacity as a regent. Instead, this can be viewed as an attempt to gain foreign acknowledgement, particularly from the 'minor overlord' Duke Zhuang of Zheng and the more powerful state like Qi 齊.

Lastly, the duke did not announce his abdication in time. From the commentary, we learned that the duke told Yu Fu his will but that was only known by Yu Fu himself and no official announcement has been made till the day. Even though Duke Huan held the title of *taizi*, there was no guarantee that he could succeed the position as intended given the possibility that Duke Yin might change his mind and revoke his decision since no official declaration had been made. Unlike Duke Mu of Song 宋穆公 (*Zuozhuan* Yin 3.5), who officially assumed the position, and therefore, had the right to decide his heir, Duke Yin was only left with the option of 'returning' the throne to its rightful owner. To make it apparent to Duke Huan and to the public, as well as to ease Duke Huan's uncertainty worries, an early declaration of an abdication plan could be the better option.

4. Conclusion

Duke Yin's unnatural death is undoubtedly one of the tragedies of the Spring and Autumn periods. In recording his assumption of the position as well as his unfortunate encounters, the author of *Chunqiu* passed on his subtle judgement, which is interpreted differently by the three profound commentaries. Only *Guliangzhuan* acknowledges the legitimacy of Duke Yin's successions while the other two regard the duke as assuming the position on behalf of Duke Huan. During his eleven years of reign, though he did not make many political achievements, particularly in *Zuozhuan* narration, Duke Yin sincerely performed his role as a regent in his

early years and even expressed his intention to relinquish the title and enjoy his retirement. Ironically, his plan was yet to be fulfilled as his life ended in an assassination by his half-brother. Through reviewing the course of events, the uncertainty caused by Duke Yin's ambiguous position, frequent diplomatic and military activities, and absence of an official abdication announcement contributed to Duke Huan's suspicion and thus made him easily affected by false charges. That is also why Confucius was concerned about 'name rectification' because uncertainty and suspicion may not only result in a power struggle but will also lead to potential conflict among individuals.

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