

Postgraduate Assignment coversheet & feedback form

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For completion by the student:		
Student Name: Ruisi Wang		
Module code: SICH7023 Module title: Research Methodology for the Study of Sinology	Student ID number: 2000458	Educational support needs: Yes / No
Module tutor: Prof. Feng-Yuan Chen Assignment due date: 29/5/2026		
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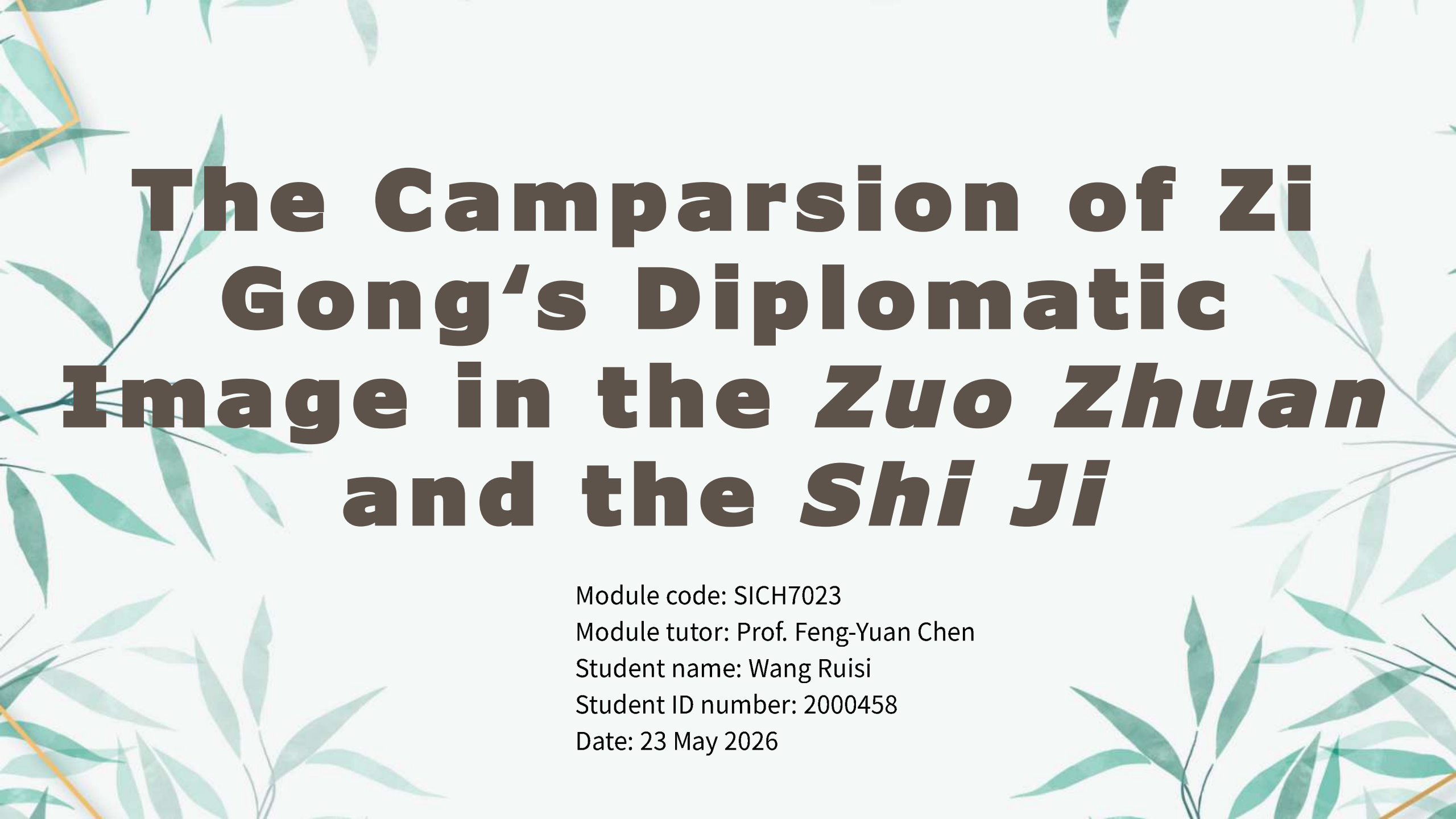
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The Camparsion of Zi Gong's Diplomatic Image in the *Zuo Zhuan* and the *Shi Ji*

Module code: SICH7023

Module tutor: Prof. Feng-Yuan Chen

Student name: Wang Ruisi

Student ID number: 2000458

Date: 23 May 2026

Step 1: Introduction



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Step 1: Introduction

三、战国秦汉文献中的子贡形象

三、战国秦汉文献中的子贡形象

(一) 战国秦汉的子贡故事

陈少明在《孔门三杰的思想史形象》中总结子贡的历史形象演变并与颜回比较，认为战国秦汉时期子贡的形象与《论语》中的子贡形象基本一致，并且解释道：“说从战国到秦汉，子贡的形象同《论语》基本一致，是指好学博识善言的性格被保持下来，但故事在数量与情节的生动性上均超过颜回，这意味着子贡的形象更吸引这个时代的想象力。”^①确实如此，战国秦汉文献中的子贡仍然保持着《论语》中的一些基本特征，它们大多只是根据《论语》中的子贡形象来创作新的故事以表达一定的思想内容，使原有形象更加夸张突出，而鲜少对子贡的形象进行进一步的改造。故而这一时期，很多这样的子贡故事被创作出来，这里简要举三个例子：“子贡出使”故事的演变；“陈蔡之厄”中的子贡；《论语》原宪故事的移花接木。

1. “子贡出使”故事的演变

Step 1: Introduction

Research Questions:

- ◆ What image of Zigong as a diplomat does the *Shi Ji* present?
- ◆ What image does the *Zuo Zhuan* present?
- ◆ Why are they so different?

Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Tian Chang wanted to start a rebellion in Qi. He was afraid of other ministers, so he planned to attack Lu to distract attention.

Confucius asked his disciples to find a way to save Lu. Zigong asked to go.



Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Zigong went to Qi and convinced Tian Chang not to attack Lu, but to attack Wu instead. He said: “When your trouble is inside the state, you should attack a strong enemy.”



Tian Chang agreed, but worried that his army was already marching toward Lu. Zigong said he would ask Wu to save Lu, and then Tian Chang could fight Wu.



Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Zigong went to Wu and convinced the King of Wu to save Lu and attack Qi. This would make Wu the leader of all states. The king worried about Yue taking revenge.



Zigong said he would go to Yue and ask the King of Yue to send his army to follow Wu – in fact, to use up Yue's strength.



Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Zigong went to Yue and convinced King Goujian to send troops to follow Wu, wait for Wu to lose, and then destroy Wu.

The King of Yue agreed. Zigong reported to the King of Wu that Yue was afraid and would not rebel.

The King of Yue sent his minister with troops and gifts. The King of Wu was pleased. Zigong advised him not to let the King of Yue join the war in person.



Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Zigong then went to Jin and told the Duke of Jin to prepare for war.

Wu attacked Qi and won a great victory. Then Wu turned to attack Jin, but Jin defeated Wu. Yue attacked Wu from behind and finally destroyed Wu.

Conclusion: Zigong, with one mission, changed the fate of five states.



Step 2: Zi Gong in *Shi Ji*

Points:

- ◆ 故子貢一出，存魯，亂齊，破吳，彊晉而霸越。子貢一使，使勢相破，十年之中，五國各有變。
- ◆ One person, one mission, five states changed in ten years
- ◆ Image: a master strategist, a hero who reshaped the balance of power

Step 3: Zi Gong in *Zuo Zhuan*

Very different

Only in a few brief passages in the *Zuo Zhuan*



Step 3: Zi Gong in *Zuo Zhuan*

The seventh year of Duke Ai' s reign

「.....太宰嚭召季康子，康子使子貢辭。」

King Fuchai of Wu held a summit with Duke Ai of Lu in the territory of Zhen, demanding that Lu present one hundred head each of cattle, sheep and pigs ('a hundred Lao'). Zi Fu Jingbo, a minister of Lu, attempted to persuade the Wu delegation by invoking the rites, stating, 'The King of Zhou established the rites, stipulating that no more than twelve items of the highest grade should be offered,' but the Wu delegation would not listen. The Grand Steward Boi summoned Ji Kangzi, but Ji Kangzi did not attend; instead, he sent Zi Gong in his stead to offer "apologies" to the Wu delegation.

Step 3: Zi Gong in *Zuo Zhuan*

The twelfth year of Duke Ai' s reign

「.....子貢對曰盟，所以周信也，故心以制之，玉帛以奉之，言以結之，明神以要之。寡君以為苟有盟焉，弗可改也已，若猶可改，曰盟何益.....」

King Fuchai of Wu sent his Grand Chancellor, Boi, to request a renewal of the alliance. Duke Ai of Lu was initially reluctant to agree, but Zi Gong spoke on behalf of his sovereign, saying, ‘An alliance is the foundation of trust. Once an alliance has been formed, it cannot be altered. If it could be changed at will, what would be the point of forming alliances day after day?’ In the end, the people of Wu did not press for a renewal of the alliance.

Step 3: Zi Gong in *Zuo Zhuan*

The twelfth year of Duke Ai' s reign

「……吳人藩衛侯之舍。子服景伯謂子貢曰，……子盍見大宰？……子貢曰：「衛君之來，必謀於其眾……墮黨崇讎，而懼諸侯，或者難以霸乎……」

The people of Wu had taken the Marquis of Wei captive. Zi Fu Jingbo asked Zi Gong, ‘Why do you not go and see the Grand Chancellor of Wu?’ Zi Gong took some brocade with him. He said to the Grand Chancellor Pi, ‘The reason the Marquis of Wei is late is that his men are divided in their opinions—some wish to come, and some do not. Those who wish to come are your allies; those who do not are your enemies. If you capture the Prince of Wei, you will be striking at your allies and aiding your enemies. How can you hope to be a hegemonic ruler in such a way?’ The Grand Chancellor Pi was persuaded and released the Prince of Wei.

Step 3: Zi Gong in *Zuo Zhuan*

The fifteenth year of Duke Ai' s reign

「.....冬，及齊平。子服景伯如齊，子贛為介.....」

介：传宾主之言的人。古时主有傧相迎宾，宾有随从通传叫介。

A person who conveys messages between host and guest. In ancient times, the host had attendants to welcome the guest, which called Bin. Whilst the guest also had attendants called Jie.

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

Core Differences

	Shi Ji	Zuo Zhuan
Role	Protagonist	Supporter
Scope	Five states	Three states
Impact	Changed history	Participated in events
Narrative	Dramatic, legendary	Plain, matter-of-fact

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

What This Study Does (Yang Yunquan, *A Study of Zi Gong*)

1. Corrects previous scholars' mistakes

Liang Yusheng counted from the wrong war (8th year instead of 11th year of Ai Gong) → timeline mismatch.

Su Zhe criticized the wrong event (8th year war, not the 11th year war).

The author clarifies which war the Shiji actually describes.

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

What This Study Does (Yang Yunquan, *A Study of Zi Gong*)

2. Points out Sima Qian' s factual errors

Zuo Zhuan: "100 lao" incident → Zifu Jingbo acted, not Zi Gong.

Shi Ji mistakenly gives credit to Zi Gong.

Sima Qian misread his sources.

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

What This Study Does (Yang Yunquan, *A Study of Zi Gong*)

3. Traces the evolution of the Zigong story
Early shorter versions (before Shiji):

Hanfeizi: Zigong fails; Lu loses territory.

Mozi (Anti-Confucian chapter): Zigong is sent to cause chaos.

ShuoYuan: Zigong only unites Wu against Qi; no five-state drama.

→ These were later expanded into the Shiji legend.

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

What This Study Does (Yang Yunquan, *A Study of Zi Gong*)

**4. Recovers the real Zi Gong from the *Zuo Zhuan*
Never acted as an envoy.**

Only mentioned role: assistant (“wei jie” 為介) to Zifu Jingbo.

No evidence of manipulating five states.

Step 4: Comparisons, Developments and Causes

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No evidence of manipulating five states.

Step 5: My Supplement: A Long Tradition of Questioning

Tang dynasty: Sima Zhen, Shiji Suoyin — acknowledged the complexity

Song dynasty: Su Zhe, Gushi — first to publicly question

Song dynasty: Zhang Ruyu, Qunshu Kaosuo — criticized Sima Qian for believing fabricated stories

Qing dynasty: Liang Yusheng, Shiji Zhiyi — the most thorough critique

Japanese sinology: Takigawa Kametarō, Shiki Kaishu Kōshō (1934) — collected these critiques

Step 5: My Supplement: A Long Tradition of Questioning

自哀八年齊伐魯，至二十二年越滅吳，首尾十五歲，何雲十年？
傾人之邦以存宗國，何以為孔子？縱橫捭闔，不顧義理，何以為
子貢？即其所言了無一實，而津津言之。

——Liang Yusheng(梁玉繩), *Shiji Zhiyi* 《史記志疑》

〔五〕〔索隱〕按：

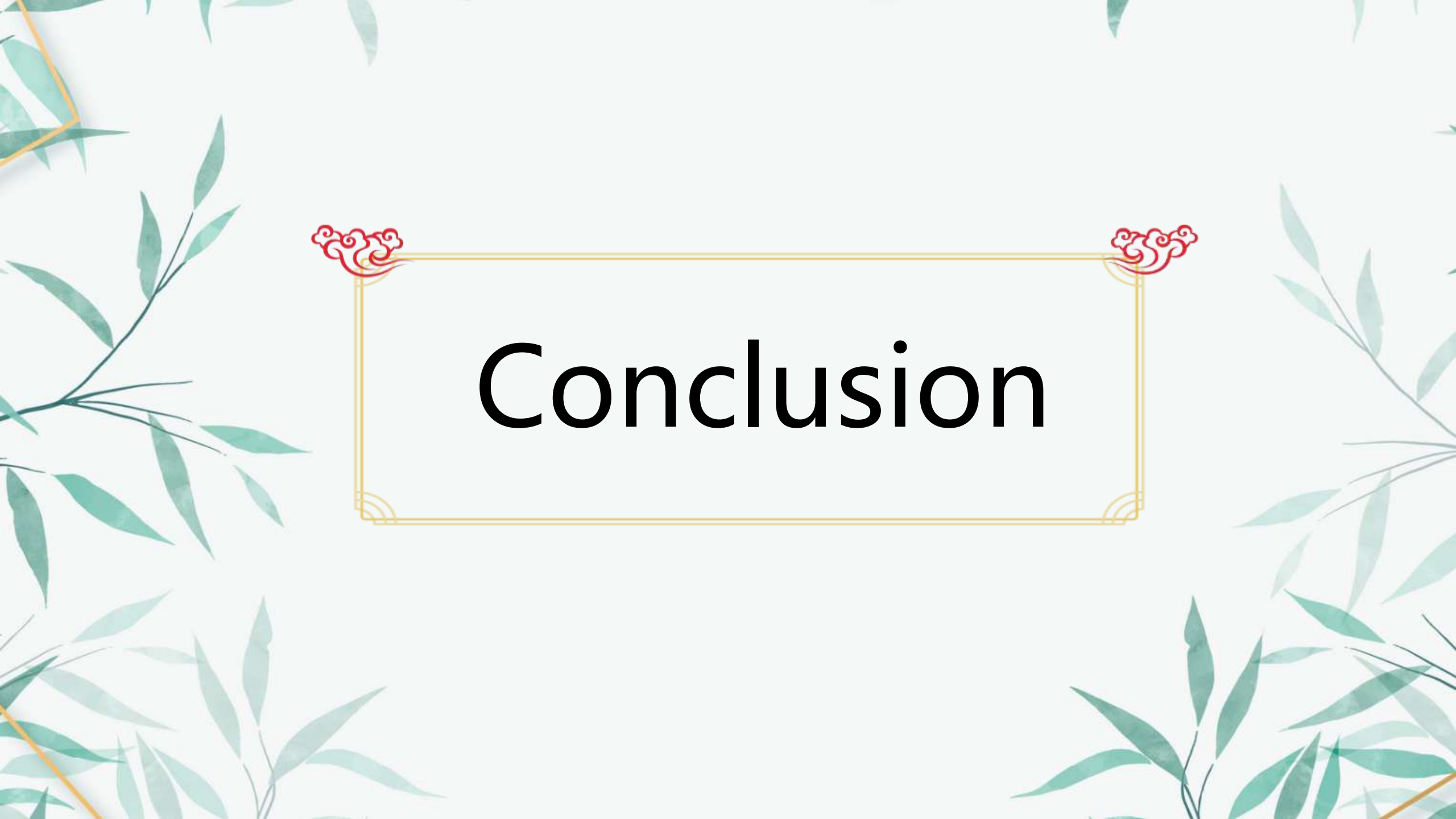
左傳越滅吳在哀二十二年，則事並懸隔數年。

蓋此文欲終說其事，故其辭相連

Step 5: My Supplement: A Long Tradition of Questioning

群書考索綱目	
六經	凡一十條
諸子	凡三條
諸經	凡七條
聖翰	凡二條
文章	凡五條
禮器	凡二百七十五條
律呂	凡一十八條
樂	凡九十五條
禮	凡一百二十七條
書目	凡二條
諸史	凡二十六條
百家	凡二條

嘗讀司馬氏史孔子弟子傳，乃以爲齊將伐魯，而孔子私于父母之國，使子貢游說於外者凡十年。存魯，亂齊，亡吳，伯越而強晉，子貢一出，而五國皆有變。細觀其所以說之辭，則殊淺陋闊誕，又非有策畫可以動五國。嗚呼，聖賢而肯爲耶？遷有史才而不入於道，又其著書，多采戰國策、楚漢春秋，以博其辭。意其六國、楚漢之間，有僻士者，戲弄文墨，附著之孔子，子貢以爲小說而耀世，迹其所從，則童子可以不惑，而司馬氏輒爲之信尚而收採之歟？五國之變亂，其事皆載於左氏傳，未聞孔子。子貢之爲之也，孔子雖欲苟全丘墓之國，使數國之民皆死於兵乎，李清臣汝水釣翁文。



Conclusion

References

1. *Zuo Zhuan* (Spring and Autumn Annals 《左傳》)
2. *Shi Ji* (Records of the Grand Historian 《史記》), Sima Qian 司馬遷
3. *Qunshu Kaosuo* (《群書考索》), Zhang Ruyu 章如愚
4. *Xinjiao Shiji Sanjia Zhu* (《新校史記三家注》)
5. *Shiji Huizhu Kaozheng* (Collated Annotations and Textual Research on the Shiji 《史記會註考證》)
6. Wang Weiping 王衛平. “A Critical Examination of Zigong’s Lobbying and Its Consequences 〈子貢遊說及其後果考辨〉”, *Confucius Studies* 《孔子研究》, No.2, 1993, P41-47
7. Yang Yunquan 楊雲荃. “A Study of Zigong 〈子貢考論〉” (Master’s thesis), Qufu Normal University
8. Liu Lingdi 劉玲娣. “The Remolding of Zigong’s Image and Sima Qian’s Moral Pursuit” 〈子貢形象的重塑與司馬遷的道德追求〉, *Hebei Academic Journal* 《河北學刊》, Vol.22, No.4, 2002.7, P101-103
9. Chinese Text Project 中國哲學書電子化計劃, (ctext.org)
10. Shidian Guji 識典古籍, (Classical Text Digital Library)
11. Han Dian 漢典

The background features a light mint green color with delicate, stylized green leaves and branches scattered across it. A thin, double-lined gold rectangular frame is centered on the page. At the top-left and top-right corners of this frame, there are red, stylized cloud-like or floral ornaments.

Thank you for listening!