

Zuo Tradition *Zuozhuan. Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*. Translated and Introduced by Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016. Vol. 1, 697 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-99917-3, Vol. 2, 1293 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-99916-6, Vol. 3, 2147 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-99946-3.

This is one of the greatest translations of the Chinese classical works into English. As far as I know it took quite a few years to complete. If I remember exactly, according to Professor Andrew H. Plaks, one of the editors of this trilogy in the Series Classics of Chinese Thought, the book should have been published in 2010, but it took at least more 6 years. When later meeting Professor Stephen Durrant at Taiwan State University he told me that it was caused by the sedulous and concentrated work by Professor David Schaberg on the Place Name Index and Personal Name Index, pp. 2017–2147, which is really worthy of admiration.

Since the book is of a mammoth dimension I have decided to devote my attention to the passages from Lord Xi 23 (637 BCE), or more specifically, to the odyssey of Chong'er, a son of Lord Xian of Jin, who had been attacked by father's people at the Pu fortress, and his wanderings in the neighboring countries for nineteen years. His people wanted to fight, but Chong'er (Double Ears) refused and said: "Keeping to the command of my ruler and father, I have enjoyed a living allowance from him and have by this means gained followers. There would be no greater crime, now that I have followers, than to resist my father. I should flee!" Thus he fled to the Di (Vol. 1, p. 365). The citation in the inverted commas by Burton Watson (1925 – 2017) in his well-known translation *The Tso chuan. Selection from the China's Oldest Narrative History*, New York: Columbia University Press 1989, p. 40 is as follows: "Through the kind command of my father the ruler I have received a stipend to insure my living, and in this way have gathered these men around me. If, having acquired followers, I should use them to resist my father, I could be guilty of no greater crime! I had far better flee!" In my library there is a copy of young student Alan Imber entitled *Tso, Ch'iu-ming, A History of Duke Wen of Chin. Excerpts from the Tso Chuan*, Stockholm 1970, where the words of Chong'er are rendered as: "I have trusted to my lord father's orders and have received his blessing /i.e. the town of P'u" he said. "Thus it was that I have received you people, and if I used you to oppose my father, there could be no greater crime than this – I had better fly" (a first example of the honorable intentions of Ch'ung-Erh) (p. 30). In the *Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals (Selections)*, trans. by Hu Zhihui and Zheng Aifang, Jinan: Shandong Friendship Press 2007, p. 105 we read with one misprint and one comment: "Through (sic!) the kind command of my father (Duke Xian, the ruler of Jin), I have received a stipend to insure my living, and in this way have gathered these men around me. If, having acquired followers, I should use them to resist my father, I could be guilty of no greater crime! I had far better flee!" In this, as shall be shown presently, the Chinese translators follows Watson's version. Otherwise, as the reviewed *Zuo Tradition*, this is a Chinese-English Bilingual Edition.

The first station of Chong'er on his circular journey was the territory of Di barbarians. The men of Di presented him two daughters of the ruling family. He married

Ji Wei, resided among them for twelve years, and when he was about to go to Qi, he said to her: "Wait twenty-five years for me, and remarry only if I have not come back by then." She responded, "I am twenty-five years old. If as many years as that pass again and I remarry, I will have taken to the wood of my coffin. Let me wait for you" (Vol. 1, p. 365). In Watson's translation Ji Wei replies: "I am twenty-five now. If I am to wait that long before remarrying, I'll be laid in my grave! With your permission, I'll just wait" (p. 41). In Imber's translation she responds: "I am already twenty-five and if I do as you say won't I be nearing the grave? I would request that I wait for you" (p. 31). In Hu and Zheng is this response as follows: "I am 25 years old now. If I am to wait that long before remarrying, I will be laid in my grave! With your permission, I will just wait." (p. 107).

In Qi, Lord Huan gave him a daughter, Lady Jiang, as his wife, and Chong'er wanted to remain there, but his followers were against it. Lady Jiang was of the same conviction as they. She said to him: "Go! Affection and contentment are the very things that destroy reputations!" (Vol. 1, p. 367). In Watson Lady Jiang admonishes Chong'er: "Just go! Too much concern for comfort and the ties of affection will undo your fame!" (p. 41). After he expressed his wish not to leave, Imber translated her words in this way: "Begone!" cried Chiang. "Your love for this settled life will really ruin your reputation!" (p. 31). Hu and Zheng only slightly change Watson's words: "Just go! Too much concern for comfort and the ties of affection will undo your fame!" (p. 109).

At the end Chong'er left the state Qi and arrived in Cao. "Lord Gong of Cao had heard that Chong'er had fused ribs and wanted to see him naked. While the noble son was bathing, he watched him from behind a curtain." (Vol. 1, p. 367). In Watson we read: "...Duke Kung of Ts'ao, having heard that the prince's ribs were all grown together, wanted to catch a glimpse of him naked. When the prince took a bath, therefore, he peered in through the curtain." (p. 42). In Imber, with plentiful information, we read: "Duke Kung of this state had heard that Ch'ung Erh's ribs had grown together... so when Ch'ung Erh was washing himself, the duke slunk up and stole a look..." (p. 32). Hu and Zheng repeat verbatim Watson's translation: "...Duke Gong of Cao, having heard that the prince's ribs were all grown together, wanted to catch a glimpse of him naked. When the prince took a bath, Duke Gong peered in through the curtain." (p. 109).

A wife of Xi Fuji, a grand officer of Cao, was more seer than others when she said: "I have observed that the followers of the noble son of Jin are all worthy to act as counselors to the domain. If he uses them as counselors, that fine man is certain to return to his domain. And when he returns, he is certain to achieve his ambitions among the princes. After he has fulfilled his ambitions among the princes, he will punish those who have violated ritual propriety, and Cao will be at the top of this list!" (Vol. 1, p. 367). Watson renders this citation in the following manner: "I have observed the followers of the prince of Chin, and all are worthy to serve as chief minister of a state. If they continue to assist to him, he is bound in time to return to his own state. Once he returns to his state, he will be able to do as he pleases with the other feudal lords, and when he can do as he pleases, he will surely punish those who failed to show him the proper courtesy. And Ts'ao will be the first to feel it!" (p. 42). According to Imber Xi Fuji's wife expressed his opinion as follows: "I see that each one of the followers of this

Duke's son is quite capable of being a minister of state. And if this price has their aid, he must surely return to his state; and once he is back there, he will certainly realize his ambition of becoming a lord. When he has reached that position, he will punish all those who have lacked in respect to him – and Ts'ao will be first on the list." (p. 32). As already shown presently, Hu and Zheng almost verbatim repeat Watson's translation: "I have observed the followers of the Jin prince, and all are worthy to serve as chief minister of a state. If they continue to assist him, he is bound in time to return to his own state. Once he returns to his state, he will be able to do as he pleases with the other lords. When he can do as he pleases he will surely punish those who failed to show him proper courtesy. And the State of Cao will be the first to feel it." (pp. 109 and 111).

From the above quotations it is clear that the most problematic is the "translation" by Hu and Zheng. In my view, it is a fake translation that consists only of a small change to Watson's better rendition.

When Chong'er passed through the state Song, Lord Xiang sent him off with a gift of eighty horses.

When he reached the state Zheng, Lord Wen did not treat him in accordance with ritual propriety. Shuzhan, one of the high officers, remonstrated: "I have heard that others cannot match up to the man for whom Heaven has opened a way... You ought to treat with ritual propriety any son or younger brother of Jin who is passing through our domain. How much more so one for whom Heaven is opening a way!" The ruler did not heed his advice. (Vol. 1, p. 369). Watson translated these passages as follows: "I have heard that when Heaven is opening up the way for a man, others cannot touch him!... If even a younger son of the Chin ruling house were passing through, you should surely treat him courteously, to say nothing of one for whom Heaven is opening the way!" The duke ignored this advice. (pp. 42–43). In Imber we read: "Your servant has heard that other people may not aspire to him for whom Heaven has made the way clear... and when their princes and men pass through our state we should certainly be courteous to them – and how much more should we be attentive to one for whom Heaven is preparing the way!" (p. 33). Hu and Zheng follow once again Watson verbatim: "I have heard that when Heaven is opening up the way for a man, others cannot touch him!... If even a younger son of the Jin ruling house were passing through, you should surely treat him courteously, to say nothing of one for whom Heaven is opening the way!" Only in the last sentence "The duke" is changed for "The ruler of Zheng" (pp. 111–113).

In the domain of Chu we shall devote our attention only to the question concerning Chong'er and his destiny in relation to Heaven. After Cheng Dechen, high officer of the state, requested that for his possible activities in relation to Chu, he should be put to death, the ruler of Chu did not agree and said: "The noble son of Jin is ambitious but temperate, cultured, and possessed of ritual propriety. His followers are respectful and generous, loyal and capable of exertion... If Heaven is going to make him flourish, who can cast him aside? (*Tian jiang xing zhi, shui neng fei zhi?*) Those who go contrary to Heaven are certain to incur great blame." (Vol. 1, p. 371). According to Watson: "This prince of Chin is broad-visioned and disciplined, refined and courteous, and his followers are respectful and generous, loyal and of great strength and ability... When Heaven is about to raise a man up, who can put him down? To oppose Heaven can only lead to grave consequences!" (p. 43). According to Imber: "The son of the Duke of Chin

has wide ambitions... and yet he is modern and retiring. He is polished and yet courteous. As for his followers, they are respectable and forgiving, loyal and yet extremely capable... Heaven is about to raise him up, who can cast this power aside? He who opposes the will of Heaven will surely meet with disaster!” (p. 34). Hu and Zheng stick again to Watson: “This prince of Jin is broad-visioned and disciplined, refined and courteous. Moreover, his followers are respectful and generous, loyal and of great strength and ability... When Heaven is about to raise a man up who can drag him down? To oppose Heaven can only lead to grave consequences!” (p. 115).

The last station of Chong'er's *odyssey* was the state Qin where the Chu ruler sent him off. The Lord of Qin “presented him with five of his daughters, and Huai Ying was among them. She held a basin for him to wash his hands. When he had finished, he shook off the water on her. She was angry and said, ‘Qin and Jin are equals. How can you demean me?’” (Vol. 1, p. 371). According to Watson, the ruler of Ch'in “assigned five of his daughters to wait on him, among them the wife of Yü. She waited on him with a washbasin while he washed his hands. When he had finished, he flicked the water off his hands and splattered her. The daughter of the Ch'in ruler, angered at this, said, “Ch'in and Chin are equals – why do you treat me so rudely!” (p. 44). According to Imber “the earl presented him with five women... among whom was Huai Ying... She held up a vessel for him to wash his hands, and when he washed them/to get them dry, splashing her clothes”. Angrily she said: “Ch'in and Chin are equal status – why do you humble me in this way?” (p. 34). Hu and Zheng proceed as always: “Duke Mu, the ruler of that state assigned five of his daughters to wait on him, among the wife of Prince Yu (the son of Chong'er's younger brother Yiwu). She waited on him with a wash basin while he washed his hands. When he had finished, he flicked the water off his hands and splattered her. The daughter of the Qin ruler, angered at this, said, “Qin and Jin are equals – why do you treat me so rudely!” (pp. 115 and 117).

At the beginning of Lord Xi 24 (636 BCE) Chong'er's *odyssey* ended the ruler of Qin with the help of his army and “installed Chong'er in power in Jin.” (Vol. 1, p. 373). Posthumously he was known as Lord Jin Wengong (Lord Wen of Jin). For more about this *odyssey* in comparison with King David, see in my essay “King David (ca. 1037 – 967 B.C.) and Duke Wen of Jin (ca. 697 – 628 B.C.): Two Paradigmatic Rulers from the Hebrew Deuteronomistic and Early Chinese Confucian Historiography.” In *Asian and African Studies*, 2010, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 1–25.

From that what has been said so far, I would assert that according to my opinion the best and most accurate translation is that by the “trinity” of the *Zuo Tradition*. The rendition by Burton Watson is best readable, Alan Imber's for those who are interested for his remarks important for proper understanding of the text, and the selection by Hu Zhihui and Zheng Aifang should be criticized as a fake translation, impossible without Watson's book and presenting itself without a word acknowledging this debt! The translators of the *Zuo Tradition* modestly acknowledge the merits of James Legge's (1815 – 1897) and other translators of this great work of Confucian classics, and pointing out to the experience from other specimens, they claim: “One of the advantages to having so many different translations of Homer or the Bible is that the person who does not read the original languages can move from translation to translation, gaining new insights and perspectives from each. We hope that the reader will find what we

have produced here to be fresh and clear. And should our work encourage other translations of this rich and wonderful text, translations with styles and features that set them apart from ours, so much the better!” (Vol. 1, p. XXXVIII).

I suppose that in the foreseeable future no one or a group of scholars will try to present another and better translation of this great work of historical stories or narrative histories. There are other Classics of Chinese Thought that need the new and probably more adequate translations into English as *Zhou Yi (The Book of Changes)*, *Shijing (The Book of Songs)*, *Shangshu (The Book of History)*. How it will be done after newly discovered manuscripts by the Chinese archaeologists, nobody can clearly foresee. According to Martin Kern: “Far beyond the impressive work of Qing philologists and their late Swedish successor Bernhard Karlgren, we now look at early Chinese texts as they were written before the standardization of the writing system that occurred only gradually from imperial Qin through Six Dynasty periods. The paleographic evidence in front of our eyes today was simply unimaginable even half a century ago; and the philological certainty with which Karlgren and others arrived at their conclusions on how to interpret the classics is no longer with us.” (Kern, Martin, *Chinese Antiquity and 21st century Sinology: Retrospect and Prospect*. In *Sinology in the 21st Century: Retrospect and Prospect. Conference Manual*. Peking: Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) and Renmin University of China, 2015, p. 70.) Philological certainty is a problem which should be solved in the future. Is something like philological certainty possible at all?

It is a pity that we do not know what parts of the *Zuo Tradition* were translated by whom among the three translators. We know only their contributions on the basis on 9 bibliographical items by Li Wai-ye, among them the most important being *The Readability of the Past in Chinese Historiography*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 253. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Asian Center, 2007, 3 items by Stephen Durant, of which probably the most concerned with *Zuo Tradition* is his essay “Ssu-ma Ch’ien’s Conception of *Tso chuan*.” *JAOS*, 1992, Vol. 112, No. 2, pp. 295–301 and 7 items by David Schaberg, of which the most important is *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Asian Center, 2001. Among them certainly most had been done by Professor Schaberg, who, according to the information of Professor Durrant to me in Taipei, for a few years was working diligently on more than 1000 items of Place Name Index and even more Personal Names Index, which contains more than 3000 items, beside the places in the *Zuo Tradition*, in the *Annals (Chunqiu)*, the work attributed to Confucius, which was the original basis for the *Zuo Tradition*, bring together names, clan names, counties, domains (or states), the places where their names are to be found, all life data which is possible to identify in this book, including the persons “whose change of status necessitates different designations, as in the case of Chong’er,” (Vol. 3, p. 2053), who became later Lord Wen of Jin, as we have seen above.

Vol. 3 of the *Zuo Tradition* on p. 21 contains a rich bibliography of full-text commentaries and critical editions, research aids, translations of *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan*, early and imperial Chinese sources and critical editions (listed by title) and secondary sources, especially of the authors who wrote much about the subject, as by He Leshi,

Bernhard Karlgren, Yuri Pines, Tong Shuye, and of course, the three translators of the book under review.

It was beyond the aim of the translators to show the place of the *Zuo Tradition* within the intercultural and interliterary realm. I have in mind the similarities and dissimilarities within the narrative histories that began to be written at approximate time as *Zuo Tradition*, or earlier, for instance, Hebrew Deuteronomistic histories from *Joshua* to *Kings 1, 2* (6th century BCE), Herodotus' (ca. 484 – 425 BCE) *Histories*. If Herodotus is worldwide considered as the “father of history”, then this assertion is questionable, since Deuteronomistic histories were written one century before him. *Zuo Tradition* was compiled about one century or more later, although the exact time is not known. Although the bibliography is probably more comprehensive than the bibliographies appended to this work so far, it nevertheless could be expanded in some specific respects. I have in mind the narrative methods which, as far as I claim, were not so profoundly studied as those connected with the Bible, as Pan Wanmu's *Zuozhuan xushu moshi lun* (*Narrative Pattern in Zuozhuan*), Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004 and his essay “Zuozhuan ‘duihua’ zhongde zongjixing xushu” (The Art of Narration in the ‘Dialogues’ in *Zuozhuan*). *Jingmen zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao* (*Journal of Jingmen Technical College*), 2008, No. 2, pp. 32–37.

I finished my essay “Hebrew Deuteronomistic and Early Chinese Confucian Historiography: A Comparative Approach” in *Frontiers of History in China*, Springer and Higher Education Press, 2010, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 343–362 with the words: “Deuteronomistic books became an inexhaustible treasure of topoi for world history, literature, art and religion. Much more attention should be devoted in future to the *Zuozhuan* in China and worldwide,” (p. 359). On the blurb of all three volumes it is claimed that *Zuo Tradition* is “as important to the foundation and preservation of Chinese culture as the historical books of the Hebrew Bible have been to the Jewish and Christian traditions. It has shaped notions of history, justice, and the significance of human action in the Chinese tradition perhaps more so than any comparable work of Latin or Greek historiography with respect to Western civilization”.

Marián Gálik