

= Zuo zhuan =

The Zuo zhuan ( pronounced [ tsu ? 0 ??u ? an ] ; Chinese : ?? ; Wade ? Giles : Tso chuan ) , generally translated as Zuo Tradition or Commentary of Zuo , is an ancient Chinese narrative history that is traditionally regarded as a commentary on the ancient Chinese chronicle Spring and Autumn Annals ( Chunqiu ?? ) . It comprises thirty chapters covering a period from 722 to 468 BC , and focuses mainly on political , diplomatic , and military affairs from that era . The Zuo zhuan is famous for its " relentlessly realistic " style , and recounts many tense and dramatic episodes , such as battles and fights , royal assassinations and murder of concubines , deception and intrigue , excesses , citizens ' oppression and insurgences , and appearances of ghosts and cosmic portents .

The Zuo zhuan was , for many centuries , the primary text through which the Chinese gained an understanding of their ancient history . Unlike the other two surviving Annals commentaries ? the Gongyang and Guliang commentaries ? the Zuo zhuan does not simply explain the wording of the Annals , but greatly expounds upon its historical background , and contains a large number of rich and lively accounts of Spring and Autumn period history and culture . The Zuo zhuan is the source of more Chinese sayings and idioms than any other classical work , and its concise , flowing style came to be held as a paragon of elegant Classical Chinese . Its tendency toward third @-@ person narration and portraying characters through direct speech and action became hallmarks of Chinese narrative in general , and its style was imitated by historians , storytellers , and ancient style prose masters for over 2000 years of subsequent Chinese history .

Although the Zuo zhuan has long been regarded as " a masterpiece of grand historical narrative " , its early textual history is largely unknown , and the nature of its original composition and authorship have been widely debated . The " Zuo " of the title was traditionally believed to refer to one " Zuo Qiuming " ? an obscure figure of the 5th century BC described as a blind disciple of Confucius ? but there is little actual evidence to support this . Modern scholars now generally believe that the Zuo zhuan was originally an independent work composed during the latter half of the 4th century BC that was later rearranged as a commentary to the Annals .

= = History = =

Tracing the early history of the Zuo zhuan is complicated by the fact that there were originally two versions of it : one , known as the " modern script " ( jinwen ?? ) version , which circulated during the early Han dynasty ( 206 BC ? AD 220 ) ; and another , known as the " ancient script " ( guwen ?? ) version , which was discovered in the Han imperial archives by scholar Liu Xin during the reign of Emperor Ai of Han ( r . 7 ? 1 BC ) . The earliest known mention of the Zuo zhuan appears in Sima Qian 's Records of the Grand Historian ( Shiji ?? ) , the first of China 's twenty @-@ four dynastic histories , which was completed about 94 BC .

Like the other two surviving commentaries on the Spring and Autumn Annals ( Chunqiu ?? ) ? the Gongyang and Guliang traditions ? the Zuo zhuan originally existed in an independent format , with no direct references to the Annals . In the 3rd century AD , scholar Du Yu intercalated it with the Annals so that each Annals entry was followed by the corresponding narrative from the Zuo zhuan , which became the received format of the Zuo zhuan that exists today . Modern scholars now generally believe that the Zuo zhuan was originally an independent work composed during the latter half of the 4th century BC ? though probably incorporating some even older material ? that was later rearranged as a commentary to the Annals .

= = Authorship = =

The Records of the Grand Historian refers to the Zuo zhuan as " Master Zuo 's Spring and Autumn Annals " ( Zuoshi Chunqiu ???? ) and attributes it to a man named " Zuo Qiuming " ( or possibly " Zuoqiu Ming " ) , traditionally assumed to be the Zuo Qiuming who briefly appears in the Analects of Confucius ( Lunyu ?? ) when Confucius praises him for his moral judgment . Other than his brief

mention in the Analects , nothing is concretely known of Zuo Qiuming 's life or identity , nor of what connection he might have with the Zuo zhuan . This traditional assumption that the title 's " Master Zuo " refers to the Zuo Qiuming of the Analects is not based on any specific evidence , and was challenged by scholars as early as the 8th century during the Tang dynasty . Even if he is the " Zuo " referenced in the Zuo zhuan 's title , this attribution is questionable because the Zuo zhuan describes events from the late Spring and Autumn period that the Zuo Qiuming of the Analects could not have known . Alternatively , some scholars have suggested that the Zuo zhuan was actually the product of one Wu Qi ( ?? ; d . 381 or 378 BC ) , a military leader who served in the State of Wei and who , according to the Han Feizi , was from a place called " Zuoshi " .

= = = Commentary status = = =

In the early 19th century , the Chinese scholar Liu Fenglu ( 1776 ? 1829 ) initiated a long , drawn @-@ out controversy when he proposed , by emphasizing certain discrepancies between it and the Annals , that the Zuo zhuan was not originally a commentary on the Annals . Liu 's theory was taken much further by the noted scholar and reformer Kang Youwei , who argued that Liu Xin did not really find the " ancient script " version of the Zuo zhuan in the imperial archives , as historical records describe , but actually forged it as a commentary on the Annals . Kang 's theory was that Liu Xin ? who with his father Liu Xiang , the imperial librarian , was one of the first to have access to the rare documents in the Han dynasty 's imperial archives ? took the Discourses of the States ( Guoyu ?? ) and forged it into a chronicle @-@ like work to fit the format of the Annals in an attempt to lend credibility to the policies of his master , the usurper Wang Mang .

Kang 's theory was supported by several subsequent Chinese scholars in the late 19th century , but was contradicted by a large number of 20th @-@ century studies that examined it from many different perspectives . In the early 1930s , French sinologist Henri Maspero performed a detailed textual study of the issue , concluding the Han dynasty forgery theory to be untenable . The Swedish sinologist Bernhard Karlgren , based on a series of linguistic and philological analyses he carried out in the 1920s , concluded that the Zuo zhuan is a genuine ancient text " probably to be dated between 468 and 300 BC . " While Liu 's hypothesis that the Zuo zhuan was not originally an Annals commentary has been generally accepted , Kang 's theory of Liu Xin forging the Zuo zhuan is now considered discredited .

= = = Manuscripts = = =

The oldest surviving Zuo zhuan manuscripts are six fragments that were discovered among the Dunhuang manuscripts in the early 20th century by the French sinologist Paul Pelliot and are now held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France . Four of the fragments date to the Six Dynasties period ( 3rd to 6th centuries ) , while the other two date to the early Tang dynasty ( 7th century ) . The oldest known complete Zuo zhuan manuscript is the " ancient manuscript scroll " preserved at the Kanazawa Bunko Museum in Yokohama , Japan .

= = Content = =

The Zuo zhuan recounts the major political , military , and social events of the Spring and Autumn period , and is famous " for its dramatic power and realistic details " . It contains a variety of tense and dramatic episodes : battles and fights , royal assassinations and murder of concubines , deception and intrigue , excesses , citizens ' oppression and insurgences , and appearances of ghosts and cosmic portents .

Each Zuo zhuan chapter begins with the Spring and Autumn Annals ( Chunqiu ) entry for the year , which is usually terse and brief , followed by the Zuo zhuan content for that year , which often contains long and detailed narratives . The Zuo zhuan originally contained only its core content , without any content from or references to the Spring and Autumn Annals . In the 3rd century AD , the Chinese scholar Du Yu intercalated the Annals into the Zuo zhuan , producing the received

format that exists today .

= = Themes = =

Though the Zuo zhuan was probably not originally a commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals ( Chunqiu ?? ) ? a work which was traditionally viewed as a direct creation of Confucius ? its basic philosophical outlook is also strongly Confucian in nature . Its overarching theme is that haughty , evil , and stupid individuals generally bring disaster upon themselves , while those who are good , wise , and humble are usually justly rewarded . The Confucian principle of " ritual propriety " or " ceremony " ( lǐ ? ) is seen as governing all actions , including war , and to bring bad consequences if transgressed . However , the observance of li is never shown as guaranteeing victory , and the Zuo zhuan includes many examples of the good and innocent suffering senseless violence . Much of the Zuo zhuan 's status as a literary masterpiece stems from its " relentlessly realistic portrayal of a turbulent era marked by violence , political strife , intrigues , and moral laxity " .

The narratives of the Zuo zhuan are highly didactic in nature , and are presented in such a way that they teach and illustrate moral principles . The German Sinologist Martin Kern has stated : " Instead of offering authorial judgments or catechistic hermeneutics , the Zuo zhuan lets its moral lessons unfold within the narrative itself , teaching at once history and historical judgment . " Unlike the Histories of Herodotus or the History of the Peloponnesian War of Thucydides ? with which it is roughly contemporary ? the Zuo zhuan 's narration always remains in the third person perspective , and presents as a dispassionate recorder of facts .

= = = Battles = = =

Several of the Zuo zhuan 's most famous sections are those dealing with critical historical battles , such as the Battle of Chengpu and the Battle of Bi .

The Battle of Chengpu , the first of the Zuo zhuan 's great battles , took place in the summer of 632 BC at Chengpu ( modern Juancheng County , Shandong Province ) in the State of Wei . On one side were the troops of the powerful State of Chu , from what was then far southern China , led by the Chu prime minister Cheng Dechen . They were opposed by the armies of the State of Jin , led by Chong 'er , Duke of Jin , one of the most prominent and well known figures in the Zuo zhuan . Chu suffered a disastrous defeat in the battle itself , and it resulted in Chong 'er being named Hegemon ( bà ? ) of the various states .

The narrative of the Battle of Chengpu is typical of Zuo zhuan battle narratives in that the description of the battle itself is relatively brief , with most of the narrative being focused on battle preparations , omens and prognostications regarding its outcome , the division of the spoils , and the shifts and defections of the various allied states involved in the conflict . This " official [ and ] restrained " style , which became typical of Chinese historical writing , is largely due to the ancient Chinese belief that ritual propriety and strategic preparation were more important than individual valor or bravery in determining the outcome of battles .

= = = Succession crises = = =

Several of the most notable passages in the Zuo zhuan describe succession crises , which seem to have been fairly common in China during the Spring and Autumn period . These crises often involved the " tangled affections " of the various rulers , and are described in a dramatic and vivid manner that gives insight into the life of the aristocratic elite in the China of the mid @-@ 1st millennium BC . The best known of these stories is that of Duke Zhuang of Zheng , who ruled the State of Zheng from 743 to 701 BC . Duke Zhuang was born " in a manner that startled " his mother ( probably breech birth ) , which caused her to later seek to persuade her husband to name Duke Zhuang 's younger brother as the heir apparent instead of him . The story ends with eventual reconciliation between mother and son ? exemplifying the traditional Chinese virtues of both " ritual propriety " ( lǐ ? ) and " filial piety " ( xiào ? ) ? which has made it consistently popular with readers

over the centuries .

### == Moral verdicts ==

A number of Zuo zhuan anecdotes end with brief moral comments or verdicts that are attributed to either Confucius or an unnamed junzi ( 君子 ; " gentleman " , " lordling " , or " superior man " ) .

These " moral of the story " postfaces , which were added later by Confucian scholars , are directed toward those currently in power , reminding them of " the historical precedents and inevitable consequences of their own actions . " They speak with the voices of previous ministers , advisers , " old men " , and other anonymous figures to remind rulers of historical and moral lessons , and suggest that ruler who heed their advice will succeed , while those who do not will fail .

### == Fate ==

Several sections of the Zuo zhuan demonstrate the traditional Chinese concept of " fate " or " destiny " ( mìng ? ) , referring either to an individual 's mission in life or their allotted life span , and illustrates how benevolent rulers ought to accept " fate " selflessly , as in the story of Duke Wen moving the capital of the state of Zhu in 614 BC .

### == Influence ==

The Zuo zhuan has been recognized as a masterpiece of early Chinese prose and " grand historical narrative " for many centuries , and has had an " immense influence " on Chinese literature and historiography for nearly 2000 years . It was the primary text by which historical Chinese readers gained an understanding of China 's ancient history . It enjoyed high status and esteem throughout the centuries of Chinese history because of its great literary quality , and was often read and memorized because of its role as the preeminent expansion and commentary on the Annals ( Chunqiu ) , which almost all educated Chinese readers traditionally ascribed to Confucius . The Zuo zhuan 's influence on the Chinese language , particularly on Classical Chinese , can be judged from the fact that the Zuo zhuan is the source of more Chinese literary idioms ( chengyu ?? ) than any other work , including the Analects of Confucius .

The 400 @-@ year period the Zuo zhuan covers is now known as the Spring and Autumn period , after the Spring and Autumn Annals , but the Zuo zhuan is the most important source for the period . This period was a highly significant period in Chinese history , and saw a number of developments in governmental complexity and specialization that preceded China 's imperial unification in 221 BC by the First Emperor of Qin . The latter years of this period also saw the appearance of Confucius , who later became the preeminent figure in Chinese cultural history . The Zuo zhuan is one of the only surviving written sources for the history of the Spring and Autumn period , and is extremely valuable as a rich source of information on the society that Confucius and his disciples lived in and from which the Confucian school of thought developed . It was canonized as one of the Chinese classics in the 1st century AD , and until modern times was one of the cornerstones of traditional education for men in China and the other lands of the Sinosphere such as Japan and Korea .

### == Translations ==

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