



RIISING ASIA
JOURNAL



RIISING ASIA
FOUNDATION

Special Issue
Tales From The Principalities
Ancient Chinese Short Stories

ALL STORIES ARE TRANSLATED BY ERIC HENRY

CHAPTER SIX TALES FROM JÌN – 2 PRINCE CHÓNG'ĚR



The military strategist Sun Bin Not directing troops to victory in the 4th century BCE. The element “Bin” in his name indicates that his knee caps had at some point been removed as a punishment for some offense. Ink painting in the Zibo Chinese Ceramics Museum, Zibo City, Shandong Province, Summer 2007. Artist unknown. Image edited by David Henry.

The nine stories in this section all pertain in various ways to the career of Prince Chóng'ěr, who, as a Ruler of Jìn (reigned 635–628) is known as “Lord Wén.” He was the third of the five hegemon. According to legend, he possessed certain physiognomic traits that marked him out as one destined to be a ruler of men. Rulers, for example, were supposed to have large, pendulous ears, and the name of this figure, “Chóng'ěr,” meaning “Double Ears,” pointed to the impressiveness of that feature of his anatomy. It was also said that his thorax, instead of being enclosed by a ribcage, was enclosed by solid bony plates, indicative of some sort of invulnerability. Chóng'ěr wandered in exile for nineteen years before coming to the Throne of Jìn and, during that period, was entertained as a suppliant in the Courts of many States, some of which treated him well, and some of which were deficient in courtesy. Chóng'ěr exemplifies all the traits attributed in legend to a hegemon. He was supremely gifted in the performance of showy, public acts of virtue, and so often created an excellent impression. Like the other hegemon, however, he also harbored unseemly ambitions that he was not always able to conceal. Chóng'ěr was remembered in particular for following through on all his promises and threats, and for never forgetting favors and insults. ~ Eric Henry.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

37. Strategies of a Prince in Exile

Summary: After twelve years in which Chóng'ěr and his followers have dwelt among Dí tribesmen, Hú Yǎn persuades them that the time has come to travel on to Qí. Living with the Dí was never intended to be anything but a temporary expedient, and Qí is a major power desiring closer relations with Jìn.

Upon passing through Wǔ Lù, a settlement in Wèi, they beg for food from some rustics, who offer a clod of earth in response. Initially, Chóng'ěr regards this as insolence and is about to whip them, when Hú Yǎn persuades him that the gesture is a portent of the future submission of the Territorial Lords to his authority. They accept the clod with deferential kowtows and transport it with them to Qí. This is Item 1 in “Tales from Jìn” (Book 4). See also *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng, 23, 6b. ~ Eric Henry.

After Chóng'ěr had dwelt among the Dí for twelve years, Hú Yǎn¹ said, “When we came here formerly, it was not because we felt it would be pleasant to associate with the Dí, but because we could thereby accomplish our aims. I said, ‘Though we may flee, it will be easy to attain our goals; though hedged about with difficulties, we will be able to amass provisions. By taking rest and choosing what will be of benefit, we can catch our breaths.’ We have now grown sluggish. When one settles in a place for a long time, one ends up staying there for good; and if we stay here for good, who will launch our enterprise? We must depart at once! That we did not go to Qí and Chǔ was because we shrunk from journeying such long distances. We have been husbanding our strength for a whole cycle of years, so we are now in a position to travel far. The Marquis of Qí is the Foremost of the Lords,² and wishes to cultivate a relationship with Jìn. Guǎn Zhòng is dead, so there are many flattering intriguers at the Qí Ruler’s side. Lost in schemes that go awry, his thoughts will return to the

¹ Hú Yǎn 狐偃, also known as Zǐfàn and as Jiù Fàn, was Chóng'ěr's maternal uncle. He was his loyal adherent and advisor throughout his years of exile.

² “Foremost of the Lords” (齊侯長矣): Taskin plausibly interprets this as “advanced in years,” with the implication that Lord Huán is now in his dotage.

early years of his rule. He is surely hearkening back to former speeches,³ using them to end his career with good deeds. He wants to nourish those near to him and cultivate those at a distance;⁴ therefore, he would not take it amiss if one were to come from a distant land with humble offers of service. Since the end of his reign is drawing near, this can be done; we can draw him close to us.” Everyone thought these proposals were good.

And so, they set out. On passing through Five Deer (Wǔ Lù 五鹿), they requested food from some people in the fields. At this, the locals scooped up a clod of earth and offered it to the travelers. Offended, Chóng’ěr was on the point of laying into them with his whip, when Zǐfàn 子犯 said, “This is Heaven’s gift. The people are using the earth to tender their submission to you. What more is there to seek? Heaven always issues signs of its future actions. In twelve more years, you will assuredly gain this territory. Let all you gentlemen take note of this. When Jupiter is in the Longevity constellation and enters the Magpie’s Tail,⁵ we will take possession of this land! Heaven has used these people to deliver its decree. Then when Jupiter circles back again to the Longevity constellation, we will gain hegemony over all the lords. A cycle of Heaven is beginning with this. We will surely obtain this land on the day designated wù shēn 戊申.⁶ That is why the lands have been made extensive (shēn 申).

³ The reference here is to the policy speeches of Guǎn Zhòng.

⁴ The language here echoes a proverb, róu yuǎn néng ěr 柔遠能邇, that appears thrice in the *Documents*, a fact pointed out to me by Dr. Michael Nylan.

⁵ The Longevity constellation, or Shòu 壽, was a group of stars composed of portions of Virgo and Chún Wěi 鶉尾 (“magpie’s tail”), a group of stars in the tail of Chún Niǎo, the Red Bird. I am grateful to Christopher Gait for this information.

⁶ Day forty-five in the sixty-day cycle. CG notes that the characters for wù shēn 戊申 may denote “earth” and “expansion,” thus encouraging the interpretation of

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

38. Repose or Ambition?

This is one of a long series of items detailing the adventures of Prince Chóng'ěr (“Double-ears”) who, after enduring years of exile returns to Jìn, assumes the throne, and wins a decisive victory over Chǔ, Jìn’s rival to the south. Here, as in many other items from “Tales,” a female is made to appear notably wise and prescient. The person in question is Qí Jiāng, the daughter of Lord Huán, the Ruler of Qí, who bestowed her as a Consort on Chóng'ěr along with twenty horse-drawn carriages when he came to Qí as an exiled suppliant. In this story, Chóng'ěr, having found his existence in Qí to be much to his taste, has resolved to relinquish his ambition to return to Jìn as a claimant to the throne. He wants to spend the rest of his days in Qí.

But Lord Huan, at length, dies and the position of Qí declines. Hú Yǎn meets with other followers of Chóng'ěr beneath a mulberry tree and schemes to get Chóng'ěr out of Qí. This is Item 2 in “Tales from Jìn” (Book 4). A parallel account appears in *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng 23, 6b. ~ Eric Henry.

The Lord of Qí gave Prince Chóng'ěr a wife who treated him with great solicitude, and twenty horse-drawn carriages. Chóng'ěr decided to end his days in Qí, saying, “People live for repose and happiness. Who knows of anything else?”

Lord Huán died and was succeeded by Lord Xiào,⁷ whereupon the Vassal Lords no longer recognized the leadership of Qí. Hú Yǎn knew that Qí could not revive, and knew of Chóng'ěr’s wish to settle in Qí for the rest of his life. He wanted to go elsewhere, but worried about obtaining

lands becoming extensive.

⁷ This occurred in 642, one year after Chóng'ěr’s arrival in Qí.

Chóng'ěr's consent. He met with the other followers beneath a mulberry tree to devise schemes. Unknown to them, there was a woman picking mulberry leaves in the branches of the tree. She reported what she had heard to Qí Jiāng, the Consort of Chóng'ěr. Qí Jiāng killed the lady and spoke to Chóng'ěr, saying, "Your followers are about to remove you from Qí. I have already gotten rid of the one who overheard them. You must do as they advise and not be of two minds. If you hesitate, you will not live out your days. As the ode says,

The Lord on high looks down on you;
Do not be of two minds.⁸

"The former Kings clearly realized this. Do you think that indecision will be of any use? You arrived here after having left the troubles of Jìn. Since the time you set out, Jìn has never had a peaceful year, and the people have never had a successful ruler. Heaven has not yet destroyed Jìn and there exist no other Princes to succeed to the throne. Who but you can take possession of Jìn? Exert yourself! The Lord on high looks down on you. If you waver, you will surely regret it."

"I will not stir," said Chóng'ěr. "I will surely end my days here."

"Not so," replied Qí Jiāng. As is said in the Odes of Zhōu:

Numerous are the runners,
Each afraid of lagging.⁹

"This means that even if you should journey day and night without tarrying, you still might not attain your goal. What, then, can you expect

⁸ Odes 236, "Dà Míng" 大明, seventh stanza. It refers to the moments before the battle on the Plain of Mù between King Wǔ's forces and those of Shāng.

⁹ Odes 163, "Huáng Huáng Zhě Huá" 皇皇者華, first verse.

to accomplish if you indulge your desire for repose? If people do not seek to attain their aims, can they attain them? The sun and the moon do not linger in their courses; who among mortals can obtain repose? A writing of the western lands¹⁰ says, ‘Longing only for personal repose is a sure way to spoil great enterprises.’ As is said in the Odes of Zhèng:

You, Zhōng, are worth desiring,
But the gossip of people
Is also worth fearing.¹¹

“I, your lowly maidservant, have heard a saying of Guǎn Zhòng of former times that goes, ‘Those who fear authority as they fear illness are the better sort of people; those who follow their desires like flowing water are the lower sort of people; and those who think of authority when they see what they desire are the middle sort of people. Those who fear authority as they fear illness are able to make the people hold them in awe. When authority is established above and the people do not hold it in awe, then there are punishments. Those who follow their desires like flowing water cast authority far from them, so I say that they are the lower sort. I follow a moderate view on what deeds are to be punished, so I shall do as the *Odes of Zhèng* say.’ This is how the Court Officer Guǎn Zhòng brought order to the State of Qí, acting to support the practices of former Rulers until the Ruler of that State became supreme among the Lords. If you throw these aims away, will you not be in difficulties? The government of Qí is in disarray, and misrule in Jìn has been of long duration. Your followers are loyal in their plans, the day is drawing near,

¹⁰ This refers to Zhōu during the period when the capital was still in the west. *Odes* 38 and 149 both have lines with some resemblance to the saying recalled here.

¹¹ *Odes* 76, “Jiāng Zhòngzǐ” 將仲子, last verse.

and you are very close. You must save the Hundred Clans; if you put all this aside, then you are no true man. You cannot remain in defeat, you cannot lose your timely opportunity, you cannot cast aside those loyal to you, and you cannot follow your merely personal desires; you must rather act at once.

“I have heard that when Jìn was first given out as a fief, Jupiter was in the Great Fire,¹² the star of É Bó,¹³ and thus it was the star of Shāng. The Shāng enjoyed their State through thirty-one reigns. The *Records of the Blind Diviner*¹⁴ say, ‘The generations of Táng Shú¹⁵ will be as numerous as those of Shāng.’ As of now, the halfway mark has not yet been reached. Disorder cannot last more than a generation. You are the only possible Prince. You will certainly come to have Jìn. Why tarry?”

Chóng’ěr paid no heed to this.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

39. Insubordination as Service

Summary: Chóng’ěr is outraged to find that Hú Yǎn has smuggled him out of Qí in his sleep, chases him with his dagger-ax, and threatens to devour his flesh if his scheme comes to nothing. This is Item 3 in “Tales from Jìn” (Book 4). This anecdote, though very typical, in its grim, colorful humor of *Zuǒ Tradition*, does not appear there. ~ Eric Henry.

¹² Libra and the tail of Scorpio.

¹³ É Bó 閼伯: son of the emperor Dì Kù, he was an astrologer and, after his death, assumed his place in the Great Fire star as protector of his region, an area that eventually became Shāng territory. (CG)

¹⁴ The translation here should perhaps be: “Recorders of the Blind Admonition Reciter.” Diviners were not ordinarily blind. Admonition declaimers were.

¹⁵ The founder of the State of Jìn.

Having plotted together, Qí Jiāng and Hú Yǎn got Chóng'ěr drunk, put him in a carriage, and had him taken away. Upon waking up, Chóng'ěr took up his lance and chased after Hú Yǎn, saying, "If this venture is not successful, I will eat your flesh. I will eat it till I am satisfied!"

Hú Yǎn, running, retorted, "If this plan doesn't succeed, I have no idea what place I will die in—I will be competing with wolves in the wild for food, and losing. If the plan succeeds, you will eat the tastiest delicacies of Jìn, a fine repast! And as for eating my flesh, it is rank and foul—you will have no use for it!"

They moved on into Wèi.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

40. A Case of Politically Inexpedient Incivility

This is a case in which the exiled, suppliant Chóng'ěr is treated with scant civility in a host State. As is often the case in this work, the one who perceives the danger inherent in this behavior is a woman, the wife of a Court Officer.

Summary: Lord Gòng of Cáo peers at Chóng'ěr's unusual plate-like ribs as he is bathing in his hostel. The wife of Xī Fù Jī, a Cáo minister, advises her husband to offer his allegiance in secret to Chóng'ěr so as to escape injury should Chóng'ěr come to the Throne of Jìn and attack Cáo in punishment for Lord Gòng's incivility. Xī Fù Jī brings offerings of food and jade to Chóng'ěr, who accepts the food but returns the jade. Xī Fù Jī then lectures Lord Gòng on the need to be civil to the guest from Jìn, stressing the close family relationship of the Rulers of Jìn and Cáo. In the end, this story reveals how Lord Gòng responds. This is Item 5 in "Tales from Jìn" (Book 4). See also *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng, 23, 6b). ~ Eric Henry.

On leaving Wèi and coming to Cáo, the Prince found that Lord Gòng of Cáo¹⁶ also failed to provide him with a courteous reception. Lord Gòng had heard of Chóng'ěr's plate-like ribs and wanted to see what they looked like. After settling him in a hostel, he waited till the Prince was bathing, then concealed himself behind a thin curtain to take a stealthy look.

Xī Fù Jī's wife spoke to her husband as follows: "I have observed that the Jìn Prince is a worthy man and that his followers all have the appearance of great Ministers of State. Judging from this, the Prince will surely gain the State of Jìn. When he gains the State of Jìn and punishes those who were discourteous to him, Cáo will assuredly be the first to suffer. Why don't you take steps beforehand to show that you are different from the others?"

Xī Fù Jī prepared a platter of food, and placed a jade circlet on it as well. The Prince accepted the food and declined the jade.

Speaking to the Count of Cáo, Fú Jī said, "The Jìn Prince, staying here as our guest, is equal in rank, it would seem, to Your Lordship. Should he not be treated courteously?"

The Lord of Cáo said, "Princes exiled from the various States are very numerous—who does not pass by here? I don't give the others any special signs of courtesy; why should I do things differently for this one?!"

"I have heard," said Xī Fù Jī, "that loving close relations and honoring the worthy is the key to government. Being courteous to guests and pitying those in straits is the sacred origin of ritual propriety. Ritual is used to order government; it is the main thread of a State. When this

¹⁶ Cáo Gòng-gōng 曹共公 or Lord Gòng of Cáo, also known as Cáo Bó Xiāng 伯襄, was the son and successor of Lord Zhāo of Cáo 昭公. The Rulers of Cáo were Counts (bó 伯).

unvarying rule is lost, government cannot be firmly established—this Your Lordship knows. The Ruler of a State has no personal relations; the other States are his relations. Our former Ruler Shú Zhèn was King Wén's son.¹⁷ Jìn's former Ruler Táng Shú was King Wǔ's son. It was through the accomplishments of Kings Wén and Wǔ that all the Jī-clan States were established. For this reason, the descendants of those two Kings have never, throughout the ages, forsaken their close ties. Now, however, Your Lordship is rejecting that bond—this is to fail in love for close relations. When the Prince of Jìn went into exile at the age of seventeen, he was followed by three men, each with ministerial capabilities—one can observe from this that he is worthy. But Your Lordship has shown contempt for him—this is to fail to honor the worthy.

“Considering the Jìn Prince's exile, one cannot but regard such a figure with pity. As a guest, he cannot but be treated with due courtesy. To fail in these two things¹⁸ is to fail in civility to a guest and in pity for one in difficulties. One holding a rich endowment conferred by Heaven¹⁹ must act in a way that is fitting. If such a one omits to do what is fitting, then what he possesses will suffer loss. Jade, silk, wine, and food are like manure²⁰—if you grudge the manure, thereby doing damage to the Three Foundations of the State, so that you lose your position and cut yourself off from the support of the masses, while failing to regard this as a calamity—is this not inadmissible? Let Your Lordship think this over.”

The Cáo Ruler failed to heed this advice.

¹⁷ Shú Zhèn 叔振: Xī Fú Jī is speaking of the original recipient of the fief of Cáo, i.e. Cáo's first Ruler.

¹⁸ i.e. pity and civility.

¹⁹ i.e. one who holds a State, conferred on him by Heaven 公孫固.

²⁰ i.e. they are not inordinately expensive and are a means to an end.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

41. A Promise to a Host

This is an example of the wisdom with which the exiled Chóng'ěr deals with a Head of State who may in the future turn out to be either an ally or an enemy. He is careful to make no promise that he will not be capable of fulfilling.

Summary: King Chéng of Chǔ asks Chóng'ěr what he will do in the future to repay Chǔ for his reception. Chóng'ěr replies that if he gains the Throne of Jìn, he will withdraw three stages (a “stage” or *shè* 舍 in ancient Chinese military terminology was the distance that an army could travel on foot in one day) before fighting if he should happen to meet the troops of Chǔ on the battlefield. If he does not gain Jìn, he will repay the King by serving him as an attendant.

Zǐyù, the Prime Minister of Chǔ, thereupon recommends that Chóng'ěr be killed. The King declines to do so, saying that his troops need not fear Chóng'ěr, but only his own lack of virtue. Zǐyù then advises the King to hold Hú Yǎn hostage, but the King declines to do this as well. In the meantime, Lord Huái (Zǐyǔ, son of Lord Huì) escapes from Qín and returns to Jìn, whereupon the Count of Qín summons Chóng'ěr to his State. The King of Chǔ sends Chóng'ěr on his way with rich gifts. This is Item 8 in “Tales of Jìn” (Book 4). See also *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng, 23, 6e. ~ Eric Henry.

Prince Chóng'ěr then proceeded to Chǔ. There, King Chéng of Chǔ²¹ entertained him according to the rites of Zhōu, offering him wine nine times, and spreading a banquet in which innumerable items were laid out in the reception hall. The Prince wished to decline this

²¹ King Chéng of Chǔ (Chǔ Chéng-wáng, personal name Xióng Jūn 熊羆, reigned 672–626), was the grandson of King Wǔ of Chǔ (reigned 740–690).

hospitality, but Hú Yǎn said, “This is ordained by Heaven; go ahead and enjoy this. For a man in exile to be thus advanced in rank by a State, to be treated as a Ruler, though not of that rank—if this is not due to Heaven, who else would give him this idea!”

After the banquet, the King spoke to the Prince, saying, “If you succeed in returning to Jìn, how will you reward me?”

Bowing twice and touching his head to the ground, Chóng’ěr replied, “You already have young men and women to be your servants, as well as jade and silk; and your realm already supplies you with feathers, pennants, ivory, and leather; such items as turn up in Jìn would all be superfluous to Your Majesty—what could I use to make a just return for your generosity?”

“Nevertheless,” said the King, “I would like to hear what you have to say.”

“If, through the miraculous efficacy of Your Majesty,” said Chóng’ěr, “I should regain the State of Jìn, and if Jìn and Chǔ should raise armies and meet on the plain of battle, I will withdraw three stages²² before engaging your forces. And if in such a course, I do not obtain orders from your side, I will hold whip and bow in my left hand and carry quiver and arrows on my right side, so as to maneuver on the battlefield with Your Majesty.”

Chief Counselor Zǐyù said, “I beg permission to kill the Jìn Prince. If he is not killed, and returns to Jìn, he will strike fear into the troops of Chǔ.”

“That won’t do,” said the King. “If the Chǔ troops are terrified, that will be because I have failed to refine my character. If I should lack

²² A “stage” (shè 舍) was the distance that an army could travel on foot in one day. It appears that there were some old treatises on warfare that prescribed such preliminary withdrawals.

the necessary mettle, what good will killing *him* do? If Heaven should confer its blessings on Chǔ, who can cause Chǔ to be afraid? If Chǔ cannot enjoy such blessings [and should kill the Prince], will the land of Jìzhōu [Jìn]²³ be unable to produce a splendid Ruler? The Jìn Prince is, moreover, quick of mind and cultured, is in straits but not obsequious, and has three gifted men to advise him. This shows that Heaven is backing him with blessings. Who can put aside one who is favored by Heaven?”

“Then I beg permission to have Hú Yǎn detained,” said Zǐyù.

“That won’t do,” the King said. “As the passage in the ‘Songs of Cáo’ says,

Those men around him,
Their favors are not lavish.²⁴

“This refers to a fault. If one imitates a thing already faulty, let us note, the fault will be even greater. To imitate faults does not accord with ritual prescriptions.”

Just at this time Lord Huái fled back to Jìn from Qín, whereupon the Count of Qín bestowed rich gifts on the King of Chǔ so as to request him to send Prince Chóng’ěr to Qín.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

42. Tomb Corridors

This story, originally Item 2 in “Tales from Zhōu” (Book 2), is excerpted and added here to provide further detail to the portrait of Prince Chóng’ěr after he becomes Lord Wén of Jìn. As the Lord of a State, he is

²³ Jìzhōu 冀州 was one of the nine legendary divisions of the realm established by Yǔ the Great.

²⁴ Odes 151 (“Hòu Rén” 候人), Stanza 1.

the second in a set of unusually successful and influential Rulers in the first half of the Spring and Autumn Era, known collectively as the “wǔ bà 五霸, or “five hegemons.” As portrayed in legend, these figures show an unusual knack for leadership. They make awe-inspiring public displays of virtue but at the same time harbor improper ambitions that they do not always manage to conceal. In this story, Lord Wén’s request to have subterranean corridors in his tomb betrays a desire to enjoy a degree of status equal to that of the Zhōu Son of Heaven.

Summary: After Lord Wén of Jin restores King Xiāng to the throne, the King wishes to reward him with gifts of territory. Lord Wén declines and asks for the privilege of having subterranean corridors in his tomb instead. The King replies that it is impossible for him to grant this request. Such corridors are the prerogative of Kings alone. If Lord Wén had them he would, in effect, be a second Son of Heaven. Only a change in Heaven’s mandate could make such a thing possible. He cannot alter the practices of his royal ancestors simply to repay a personal favor. Lord Wén, he says, may go ahead and have such tomb corridors constructed in his own territory, but he (King Xiāng) cannot possibly bestow or sanction such a thing. Lord Wén drops his request and accepts the territory instead. Accounts parallel to this one appear in *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng 24, Item 2, and, Xīgōng 25, Item2. ~ Eric Henry.

After Lord Wén of Jin established King Xiāng on his Throne in Xiá,²⁵ the king spread a banquet for him and bestowed territory on him.²⁶ Lord Wén declined the territory and instead asked for permission to build

²⁵ Xiá 郟 was the name of a place in Luòyì 洛邑, the royal domain.

²⁶ The King rewarded his labors with tracts of land that bore the names Yángpān 陽樊, Wēn 溫, Yuán 原, and Zànyǔ 欒茅.

underground corridors in his tomb.²⁷ The King did not agree to this, saying, “In former times when my forebears became Rulers of the realm, they marked out an area of a thousand square *lǐ* to be the capital domain, so that they might perform sacrifices to the high ancestor and the gods of all the mountains and streams, to provide what was needful for the clan-chiefs and the masses, and to have a safeguard against untoward exigencies. The remaining territory was equally divided among the dukes, marquises, counts, viscounts, and barons, so that each would have a peaceful domain, and so that this order would extend to heaven and earth, causing the realm to be free of disasters.

“The former Kings sought no profit from this; their domestic positions consisted only of the Nine Overseers;²⁸ and their outer Court positions were filled by nine grades of officers only, sufficient merely to carry out sacrifices to the spirits. How could they presume to give free rein to the delights of eye and ear and fill their stomachs, throwing into confusion the restraint that governs all matters? They, moreover, used only plain clothes for the living and the dead, with small distinctions of ornament so as to draw the clan chiefs into loyal obedience and rule them, apportioning greater and lesser roles to them. And how did those Kings differ from us?

“But now, Heaven has caused disaster to descend upon the House of Zhōu, and I have only barely been able to maintain my hold upon the royal storehouses, but I am not in a position, because I have caused you, uncle, to take trouble on our behalf, to bestow upon you the great

²⁷ Suì 隨; we now have archaeological evidence for these covered ramps, apparently considered a royal prerogative. Schaberg, Lee, and Durrant render the term as “tomb tunnels.”

²⁸ The Nine Overseers were experienced concubines who instructed the other concubines in conduct and culture.

accessories of my forebears to reward the personal services you have given me. You no doubt hate me, uncle, for not granting you this, but the matter is not up to me alone; how could I have any personal reluctance about it?

“People of former times had a saying: ‘Change the jade, and the gait will change as well.’²⁹ If, uncle, you should magnify your virtue to such an extent that you change the royal surname and accoutrements of rule, so as to found a new Dynasty, effect new practices, and put new forms on display³⁰ so as to command the submission of the clan-chiefs, then I would naturally be sent into exile, and what could I have to say, wandering in the borderlands? But if you continue to bear the Jī surname, and you are still accounted as one of the Territorial Lords, whose mission it is to restore the Royal House to its position, then the great furnishings you use cannot be changed.

“If, uncle, you strive to magnify your bright virtue to the utmost, then such things as tomb corridors will come to you of their own accord. How can I presume to take it upon myself to reward you by changing the great emblems of the past, making myself ashamed before all the realm in not preserving the relations of my predecessors with the clan-chiefs? How could I then, issue orders that were legitimate? But if you do not take this to be the case, and have ground beneath which to build tomb corridors, how could I concern myself with it?”³¹

Upon hearing this, Lord Wén dared not pursue his request, but instead accepted the King’s gifts of territory and returned.

²⁹ “Jade” here refers to jade pendants that were emblems of rank.

³⁰ This is evidently a reference to the tomb corridors.

³¹ This is, perhaps, meant to suggest that through this action he would lower himself to the status of a peripheral warlord who runs his small realm as he pleases.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

43. A Town Declines To Accept New Rule

In this item, Lord Wén of Jìn makes a showy display of virtue typical of an outstanding Ruler of the Spring and Autumn Era.

Summary: After King Xiāng's restoration to the Zhōu Throne, he rewards Lord Wén of Jìn with the city of Yáng, along with other territories. The people of Yáng are unwilling to go along with this, and Lord Wén lays siege to the city. Shouting from the city walls, a man named Cāng Gé argues that it is improper for Lord Wén to use military force against the city. People of the Central States are moved by virtue, not by military intimidation. Intimidation is properly used only against the four barbarian peoples. As for the people of Yáng, they are all near relations of the House of Zhōu—does Lord Wén intend to make captives of them? The story tells how Lord Wén will respond.

This is Item 3 in “Tales from Zhōu”(Book 2), and is moved here because it adds to the portrait of Lord Wén of Jìn. See *Zuǒ Tradition*, Xīgōng 25, Item 2, where a much briefer account appears. ~ Eric Henry.

When the King returned from Zhèng [in 635], he bestowed the lands of Yáng and Fān upon Lord Wén of Jìn.³² The people of Yáng were unwilling to submit to a new Ruler, so Lord Wén laid siege to the city.

Shouting out [from the city walls], Cāng Gé 倉葛 said, “It was because the Lord of Jìn could demonstrate virtue to all that the King rewarded him with Yáng and Fān. It is because Yáng and Fān revere the King’s virtue that they have not yet submitted to Jìn. We wonder what virtue you have displayed, that we should revere and cherish you and not

³² The words Yáng Fān 陽樊 may refer either to one or two fortified towns. In either case, the place or places referred to were within the royal domain.

harbor far-ranging ambitions.³³ But now you are going to demolish the gates of our Ancestral Temple and slaughter our commoners and people—it is right that we do not presume to submit!

“The proper victims of the Three Armies, let us note, are the Mán, the Yí, the Róng, and the Dí, who are arrogant and disrespectful—against such as these, the force of arms may be applied. This poor settlement of Yáng is not familiar with your ways of governing, so it has not yet accepted your decrees. If you would extend favor to us, then you should send an official to bring us over to your side; how could we then oppose your orders? Why trouble your divisions over such a thing? Is not this display of might rash and arbitrary?

“I have heard a saying that goes, ‘troops cannot be displayed; culture³⁴ cannot be concealed. When troops are displayed, prestige is lost; when civil culture is concealed, its glory doesn’t shine.’ It is because we of Yáng have been excluded from those offering harvests to the Zhōu Throne,³⁵ and are treated with nothing but displays of military might, that I, your subject, am fearful. Otherwise, how could we presume to be willful? And Yáng, moreover, is surely not an abode of exiled ruffians—we are all near relations of the Son of Heaven. How, then, can you mistreat us?”

When the Marquis of Jìn heard this, he said, “These are the words of a man of quality.” He thereupon granted the people of Yáng their freedom.

³³ i.e. disloyal or rebellious aims.

³⁴ “Culture” is here to be understood as “the forms of civil administration.”

³⁵ When the Zhōu King gave the land to Lord Wén of Jìn, it ceased to be part of the Zhōu royal domain, i.e. land subject to grain taxation from the Court.

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

44. Literacy

We know nothing about the degree to which Rulers and others in the Spring and Autumn Era were able to read and write. Was it a common accomplishment, or a skill limited to Court specialists? The present item fails to answer this question, but is nevertheless suggestive.

Summary: Lord Wén complains of slow progress in reading, and Jiù Jì, his teacher, urges him to have patience. This is Item 22 in “Tales from Jin” (Book 4). No item parallel to this one appears in *Zuǒ Tradition*. ~ Eric Henry.

After studying script recitation with Jiù Jì 臼季 for three days, Lord Wén said, “What I have accomplished thus far is infinitesimal, yet I have heard you say a great deal.”

Jiù Jì said, “Would it not be best, then, to hear a bit more and wait for your ability to develop?”

Author: Unknown, 4th Century BCE.

45. Approaches to Instruction

In order to function effectively in Court settings, young noblemen of the Warring States Era had to be proficient in many areas. They had to know the history of the ruling families of the various States, they had to be able to quote the famous sayings of past figures, they had to be conversant with the rules and practices of ritual, and they had to know the three hundred songs in the *Book of Odes*. Due to this, the subject of education was already of paramount importance to the pre-imperial Chinese. The present item is one of two in *Tales from the Principalities* devoted to the nature and efficacy of education. The other one is the first item in Book 1 of the “Tales from Chǔ.” It was assumed by everyone in this era that education was a one-on-one human process. There were, as yet, no

schools. A young man could receive an education only through being the disciple or tutee of a wise elder statesman.

Summary: In this item, Lord Wén of Jìn asks Xū Chén if Yáng Chǔfù would be able to impart skill and wisdom to his son, Huān. Xū Chén replies that it depends entirely on the nature of Huān. A student cannot be made to be something he inherently is not. Teachers also have differing strengths. Thus, King Wén of Zhōu sought instruction from many directions. Students must be guided according to their natural proclivities. This is Item 24 in “Tales from Jìn” (Book 4). This item, and the one in “Tales from Chǔ” (Book 1), concerned with education, are both unique to *Tales*; no parallel accounts are to be found in *Zuǒ Tradition*. ~ Eric Henry.

Consulting Chén, Lord Wén said, “I wish to have Yáng Chǔfù³⁶ be a tutor to Huān,³⁷ so as to instruct him. Would he be good at this?”

“This depends on Huān,” was the reply. “A person afflicted with locked joints cannot be made to bend, and a hunchback cannot be made to stretch out straight. A pigmy cannot be made to raise things high, and a dwarf cannot be made to grasp things placed beyond his reach. A blind man cannot be made to see, a mute man cannot be made to speak, and an immature brat cannot be made to devise strategy. If a person’s basic capacity is good, and he has a worthy person to instruct him, then he may attain success. But if his basic capacity is poor, instruction won’t sink in, so what good will teaching do?”

³⁶ Yáng Chǔfù 陽處父 : a Jìn Court Officer, also known as Yángzǐ 陽子.

³⁷ Huān 讜 was Lord Wén’s son. He succeeded his father as Ruler of Jìn, in which role he is known by his temple name Lord Xiāng of Jìn (Jìn Xiānggōng, reigned 628–621).

“I have heard that in former days when Tài Rèn 大任 was pregnant with King Wén, her body did not change, and that when she went to the pigsty to urinate, she gave birth to him without pain. When King Wén was in his mother’s body, he caused her no inconvenience; when in the presence of teachers, he caused them no anxiety; when among troops, he caused them no trouble, and when serving the King³⁸ did not anger him. He caused the Two Guós³⁹ to be filially devoted and affectionate, and caused the Two Càis⁴⁰ to be generous and compassionate. He served as an example to Tài Sì 大姒 [his wife], and was unassuming in his dealings with younger relations. A passage in the *Odes* says,

Be a model to your wife,
Extend that to your brothers,
To govern kin and realm.⁴¹

“He then made use of the worthy and the skilled from all the regions, and upon ascending the throne consulted with the Eight Advisors (yú),⁴² and communicated with the Two Guós. He took counsel with Hóng Yāo and formed plans with Nán Gōng. He sought out the Lords of Cài and Yuán and held discussions with Xīn 辛 and Yǐn 尹. Adding to this, by consulting with the Lords of Zhōu 周, Shào 邵, Bì 畢, and Róng 榮, he

³⁸ This refers to King Wén’s father Wáng Jì 王季.

³⁹ This refers to King Wén’s two younger brothers, Guó Zhòng 虢仲 and Guó Shù 虢叔.

⁴⁰ This refers to King Wén’s two sons.

⁴¹ *Odes* 240 (“Sī Qí” 思齊), Stanza 2.

⁴² This refers to eight officers who worked in the “Yú Guān” 虞官: Bó Dá, Bó Kuò, Zhòng Tú, Zhòng Hū, Shú Yè, Shú Xià, Jì Suí, and Jì Guō.

pacified the Hundred Spirits and made the myriad people compliant. Thus, a passage in the *Odes* says, ‘Serve with filial devotion the former rulers in the temple, / So that none of the spirits may ever harbor resentment.’⁴³ So from this we may see that King Wén did not rely exclusively on instruction.”

“So then, is instruction of no value?” asked Lord Wén.

“Instruction,” said Xū Chén, “can add to a person’s basic substance. The men of former times lived to study⁴⁴—without study one cannot enter into the Way.”

“But what can be done about the Eight Defects?”⁴⁵ asked Lord Wén.

“That depends on the methods used by the instructors,” said Xū Chén. “The hunchbacks can be made to bend and strike gongs; those unable to bend can be made to stand and hold jade gongs; short people can be made to perform tricks; the blind can be made to attend to music, and the deaf can be put in charge of fire. As for the muddle-headed, the mute, and dwarves, if the instructors can find no employment for them, they may be sent to reclaim the wilds. Instruction, we may note, depends on profiting from the innate capacities of those instructed. This is like streams having sources; they only come into being after being joined by tributaries.”

⁴³ This also comes from *Odes* 240 (“Sī Qí” 思齊), Stanza 2.

⁴⁴ For the ancient Chinese, the idea of Study, xué 學, included in particular the idea of *emulation* of exemplary figures.

⁴⁵ This refers to the eight types of people mentioned earlier (those with locked joints, hunchbacks, etc.) whose defects cannot be overcome.