Zhouyi Interpretation from Accounts in the Zuozhuan

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The Zuozhuan contains two dozen references to the Zhouyi 周易 or stalkcasting divination (shi 筮) in accounts dated 672 to 485 B.C.¹ About two-thirds of these describe efforts to interpret the hexagrams and line statements of the Yi. Even at that time, we may be gratified to learn, the Yi was not easy to understand. I take these attempts to grapple with a difficult text as my object of study. First I will examine ten of these cases in detail. Then I will draw some general conclusions regarding the nature of the Zhouyi and the usefulness of the Zuozhuan to its investigation.

I would like to acknowledge my gratefulness for the careful readings and useful suggestions of Alison Black, Barry B. Blakeley, David Keightley, Sarah McMahon, John Major, Edward Shaughnessy, and especially the encouragement and vision of Steve Tobias. My thanks as well to the Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, for support during initial stages of research.

¹ See Appendix for a complete listing of these references in table format. For the text of the Zuozhuan I have used James Legge, The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen (The Chinese Classics, Vol. 5, Hong Kong, 1872 [Taiwan reprint, n.d.]). A citation “Min 1, Legge 124/125” indicates “the first year of Duke Min, Chinese text page 124, English translation page 125.” I have also referred to Takezoe Shin'ichirō 竹添進一郎, Saden kaisen 左傳會箋 (Taipei: Fenghuang chubanshe, 1961 photo reprint of 1912 Tokyo edition) and Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: 1983).

For the Yiing I have used the Harvard-Yenching variorum edition, A Concordance to Yi Ching (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 10, Taiwan photo reprint, 1973).
These accounts speak to a host of topics—the techniques of *Zhouyi* divination, of course, but also how people balanced ritual, personal and rational considerations in their decision-making, the relationship of morality to augury, how diviners responded to political pressures imposed by their patrons, and how the *Zhouyi* changed and thus survived. Particularly revealing are accounts in which interpreters fought over the "correct" meaning of the *Yi*. These indicate the fault-lines of interpretive practice, where old ideas were breaking down and people argued over what would take their place. By the end of the Spring and Autumn the *Yi* had assumed a variety of new meanings.

Several factors complicate this investigation. To begin with, the two dozen citations of the *Yi* suggest general developments but are too few to support a detailed history of the text. Even among these few accounts, interpretive practices vary considerably. While I will posit a basic framework within which interpretation took place, the ways that accounts stretch these norms are often their most significant aspect. As well, our evidence consists of stories contained in the *Zuo zhuan*, a text whose sources, author and precise date of composition are unknown. Its commitment to a moral-retributive view of history, however, is famous, and this molds the *Zhouyi* stories in ways that we must take into consideration.

These factors suggest that we examine three aspects of the accounts: the technical methods of *Zhouyi* divination, the literary nature of the *Zuo zhuan* records, and the place of these in the larger context of Spring and Autumn history. The technical methods are primarily a matter of how the *Yi* hexagrams and texts were interpreted. For example, did the diviners make reference to the component trigrams? If so, what images did they associate with each? Are certain terms used only in certain periods? I will devote much of Cases 1 and 2 to this sort of question.² Second, the *Zuo zhuan* itself

² Several previous studies have investigated these issues. See Gao Heng 高亨, "Zuo zhuan, Guoyu di Zhouyi shuo tongjie" 周易語的周易說通解 in *Zhouyi zalun* 周易雜論 (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 1979 [1962]), pp. 70-110; Gao Heng, "Zhouyi shifa xinkao" 周易筮法新考 in *Zhouyi gujing tongshuo* 周易古經通說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983 [1958]), pp. 112-130; Honda Wataru 本田渙, "Saden ni mieru Eki" 周易に見える易 in *Eki gaku* 易學 (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1960), pp. 52-71; Imai Usaburō 今井宇三郎, "Saden, Kokugo zeisen kō" 周易語緯考, *Kokubungaku kanbungaku ronsō* 14 (1969): 51-97; Li Jingchi 李鏡池, "Zuo zhuan zhong Yishih zhi yanjiu" 周易中易筮之研究 in *Zhouyi tanyuan* 周易探源 (Bei-
ZHOUYI INTERPRETATION consists of stories. As such, it must meet certain narrative criteria, such as consistency and the need to appear attractive to its readers. These values, of course, may conflict with other criteria, such as historical accuracy. Third, as historians, we will want to know how the Zhouyi—an obscure and increasingly archaic text—interacted with its changing cultural context.

This article consists of two kinds of analysis. One addresses ten Zuozhuan accounts of the Yi. I take up six cases of Zhouyi divination first, three from the mid-seventh century and three from the mid-sixth. The two groups are distinguished by the disputes over interpretation that mark the second three cases. Then I address four cases that may be called “rhetorical” in that the Yi is cited as a part of someone’s argument without divination having been performed. The second kind of analysis draws some general conclusions from these researches. First I address the nature of Zhouyi divination and assesses our knowledge of its techniques. Second I examine the uncertainty that is implicit in all divination. Third I evaluate the Zuozhuan as a historical source for these investigations. Finally I look at how concepts of politics, morality and fate interacted with Zhouyi divination in several Spring and Autumn accounts.

Case 1. The ruler’s son (i)—Min 2, 660 B.C.³

When Chengji was about to be born, Duke Huan [of Lu, his father] had Crackmaker Chuqiu’s father make cracks about it.⁴

[The crackmaker] said, ‘‘A male.
His name is You 友, [rhyme A]
At the duke’s right hand. [rhyme A]
Between the two altars,
Assisting the ducal house. [rhyme A]
When Ji’s family dies, [rhyme B]
Then [the state of] Lu won’t flourish.’’ [rhyme B]

[The crackmaker ?] also cast stalks about it and met with Dayou’s Qian 大有之乾. He said,
‘‘He shall be the same again as his father [rhyme C]
And be respected as if in the ruler’s place.’’ [rhyme C]

When [Chengji] was born, there was a graph on his hand that said you 友, which he was accordingly named.⁵

On the surface this case is a model of simplicity. Chuqiu’s father predicts that the state of Lu will flourish as long as the present ducal family remains in power. (Later history bears him out on this.) Duke Huan’s son also receives an auspicious, if somewhat vague, augury. Nevertheless, certain aspects of this story require examination. First I will inquire why this account might have satisfied its audience and suggest why it might not satisfy us as modern readers. Then I will raise two specifically textual questions.

What is convincing about this prognostication? To begin with, the Duke hears what we may assume he wants to hear: ‘‘Your son will do all right.’’ Furthermore, the child’s name is You; he sits on the duke’s right (you); and the diviner obtains the hexagram Dayou. All three you’s are Karlgren’s *giug.⁶ Thus the turtle and stalks coincide remarkably, creating a striking coherence.

A seventh-century ducal court might find this convincing, but we should be uneasy with certain aspects of the narrative. Here I

³ But this is a flashback of about forty years to the son’s actual birth ca. 700 B.C.
⁴ That is, to divine using a turtle shell or ox plasteron.
⁶ Grammata Serica Recensa, MBFEA 29 (1957) #995, where all three are also said to be loans for each other.
will merely anticipate questions that will form the subject-matter of a later section, ‘‘Using the Zuozhuan Evidence.’’ Who is the narrator of this and other accounts? How does his perspective—his needs and objectives—shape its telling? Who is his audience? Is this story preserved because its paronomastic coincidence and/or foreknowledge were so compelling? That is, how do the demands of the narrative medium affect this account?

Is this whole story a fraud? If it is, might not its fabrication paradoxically strengthen it as evidence of Zhouyi interpretation techniques in the Spring and Autumn? That is, might not forgery make it especially reliable in this regard? I suggest this because a forger can only tamper with certain details—he must incorporate enough genuine material to make his story as a whole ring true. An account of divination, it seems to me, is more likely to falsify a prognostication than the details of its interpretive method, which a forger would have every motive to describe accurately. Thus, whether the present account is real or false, it should reflect its author’s best knowledge of the methods by which the Zhouyi was interpreted in the Spring and Autumn.

There are also two technical questions to address. The first is the use of the word zhi 之 in the phrase Dayou zhi Qian. From at least the Western Han, this use of zhi has been taken verbally as ‘‘to go, to change into.’’ In that usage Dayou zhi Qian would be read as ‘‘the Dayou hexagram, which went to (changed into) the Qian hexagram [as the fifth, broken, line transformed into a solid line].’’ Indeed in later times the term zhigua is simply the standard way of referring to that second hexagram.

If we follow the usage that we discover in Cases 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 of this study, however, then Dayou zhi Qian is a possessive, ‘‘Dayou’s Qian.’’ It means ‘‘the fifth line and line statement of the Dayou hexagram.’’ For example, in Case 3 the diviner, ‘‘meeting with Guan’s Pi 观□之否□, ’’ quotes the fourth line statement of Guan as it exists in today’s Yijing. ‘‘Guan’s Pi’’ here indicates the one line of the Guan hexagram that differentiates it from the Pi hexagram. More convincing examples occur in Case 10, where two men are discussing the several line statements of the first hexagram, Qian 乾. To indicate the first line statement, one says Qian zhi Gou 乾之□姤; to indicate the second he says qi Tongren 其同人□; the fifth,
qi Dayou 其大有筭; etc. This qi cannot be a contraction of the verbal usage of zhi. Thus we have conclusive evidence that in Spring and Autumn usage zhi indicated the possessive.\(^7\)

But there is a further complication. In Case 3 the diviner speaks as if he had two hexagrams to interpret—both Guan and Pi. We know this because he refers us to "heaven," the primary symbolic association of the Qian trigram; that trigram is found only in the Pi hexagram. And this is true of five other cases as well, or sixty percent of all examples.\(^8\) If we assume that originally divination led to a single line statement,\(^9\) it appears that the phrase indicating that line statement evolved into a way of identifying two hexagrams, both of which might profitably be interpreted. Eventually this practice came to obscure the original usage of zhi, which by backformation became a verb.

My second question addresses the provenance of the text quoted in stalkcasting. We should begin by distinguishing between the terms Zhouyi (The Yi of the Zhou) and Yijing (The Yi classic, The classic of change). By the former I wish to refer exclusively to the Yi as it was in the early Zhou and Spring and Autumn periods; in this narrow definition, the Zhouyi has not existed for nearly 2500 years. By the latter I mean the Yi and those commentaries canonized in 136 B.C. as we have them today. If Dayou zhi Qian normally refers in the Zuozhuan to the fifth line statement of the Dayou hexagram, today’s Yi Jing would yield jue fu jiao ru wei ru ji 厥孚交如威如吉, which of course is not the text that Chuqiu’s father cites. A tentative translation of what that line statement might have meant in the Spring and Autumn is: “Their prisoners. How handsome, how awesome. Auspicious.”\(^10\) If indeed fu meant “prisoner” (the modern fu 俘), rather than the Confucianized “confidence” or

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\(^7\) For Edward Shaughnessy’s arguments, which independently arrive at the same conclusions, see The Composition of the Zhouyi, pp. 84–92.

\(^8\) I.e., also in Case 4; in Min 1, Legge 124/125; in Xi 15, Legge 165/169; in Xi 25, Legge 194/195; and in Zhao 5, Legge 600/604; though not in Cases 6, 7 or 8.


\(^10\) Compare the line statement’s meaning around the beginning of the first millennium B.C., as reconstructed by Richard Kunst: “Their captives are tied up crosswise, and look terrified. Auspicious” (The Original Yi Jing [Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1985], p. 267). Both in vocabulary and syntax this text belongs to the early Zhou; it must have seemed already somewhat archaic by the Spring and Autumn.
“trustworthy,” then there is good reason why Chuqiu's father might have preferred not to recite this text when he foretold the career of a Duke's son.

But what is the source of the rhymed couplet that he does recite? Does it come from another of the mythical "Three Yi," as Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) believed? Is it the Zhouyi, but in a recension later discredited, lost or revised? Does it come from an independent folk tradition mixed on this occasion with Yi divination? I believe that all these explanations are incorrect; I will attempt to prove this after we have investigated similar examples in Case 2. Whatever the case, the difference between this text and today's Yijing does not indicate that the texts of today's Dayou were unknown in the Spring and Autumn. Indeed Dayou's third line statement is referred to in Xi 25 (Legge 194/195), where the text quoted is identical with that of the Yijing.

Case 2. Qin's attack on Jin—Xi 15, 645 b.c.

During the famine of 646, Qin offers its enemy Jin relief grain, in accord with traditional interstate propriety. Jin does not respond appropriately, and the next year Qin mounts a punitive expedition. In the following passage the Earl of Qin has ordered a divination about his imminent attack on Jin.

Crackmaker Dufu cast stalks about it. "Auspicious. Ford the [Yellow] River, the Marquis [of Jin's] chariots will be defeated."

[The Earl] examined him.
He replied: "It's indeed greatly auspicious. After three defeats you will certainly capture the ruler of Jin. The hexagram met with is Gu 碣. It says:

A thousand chariots thrice dispelled;
Of what remains of three dispellings,
[You will] capture the male fox. [All rhyme]

"Now, the fox-Gu must be their lord. The lower trigram of Gu is wind, its upper mountain. We are now in the autumn of the year. We bring down their fruit [i.e., our 'wind' sweeps over their 'mountain' and shakes down the crop] and take their possessions. [This is] how we will conquer.

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11 See his Rizhifu 日知錄, (Yuanchaoben Rizhifu, Taipei, 1974), 1 [juan 1]. The "Three Yi" are the Zhouyi, the Lianshan and the Guizang mentioned in the Taibu section of the Zhouli, (Sibu jiyao), 24.6a.
12 This view is argued by Hellmut Wilhelm, p. 276 and Sargent, p. 5 et passim.
13 Xi 13, Legge 160/161.
"The fruit fallen, possessions gone. If this isn’t ‘defeat,’ what are you waiting for?"

After three defeats of Jin, the troops of Qin reached Han. . . .

Interpretive practices of the imperial period have led us to expect the presence of two items that are absent here: an interpretation of the hexagram name, and the citation of a hexagram or line statement. The gu graph is a picture of insects in a dish and was said to imply rotting food. This in itself might be good reason not to mention it to the Earl of Qin. But in fact there seems to be a more fundamental cause for its absence: nowhere in the Zuozhuan records does someone invoke a hexagram name in order to interpret Zhouyi divination. Edward Shaughnessy suggests that this is because in early Zhou the hexagram itself provided only an initial prognostication; the line statement was the source of the final prognostication. Here in Case 2 the diviner seems to be stopping after the first half of this procedure.

We might also expect to find the diviner quoting the hexagram text from today’s Yijing. Instead he cites a rhymed tercet of unknown origin. Where is that tercet from? In Case 1 I raised possibilities of an independent folk tradition, of the “three Yis,” and of an early or corrupt recension of the Zhouyi. The great Zuozhuan commentator Du Yu suggests that because Dufu is a crackmaker, not a stalkcaster, he is merely incompetent in the latter enterprise.

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14 Legge, 164/167; Takezoe, 5.74; Yang, 352.
15 See the discussions in Case 9 and in the Shuowen, juan 13b.
16 The Composition of the Zhouyi, p. 102, summarizing the discussions on pp. 74–101. Thus the common Yijing phrase lizhen 利貞 would mean “It is profitable to perform [the second] divination.”
17 Two or three other examples in the Zuo parallel this use. See Case 5; Cheng 16, Legge 391/397; and perhaps Zhao 7, Legge 615/619.
18 The Yijing text of the Gu hexagram reads: yuanheng, li se dachuan, xianjia san ri, houjia sanri 元亨利涉大川先甲三日後甲三日. A possible reading of this text in the Spring and Autumn would be:
  Primally successful: profitable to ford the big river,
  Three days before the jia-day
  Or three days after the jia-day.
There are no foxes or chariots in any of the line statements of Gu, which instead speak of attending to one’s mother, father and so on.
19 See Takezoe 5.74.
I believe that none of these explanations is correct. Instead, I would maintain, Dufu is acting properly, the way a crackmaker ought: he inspects his "text"—in normal circumstances, the cracks in a turtle shell, here, the Zhouyi—and delivers his prognostication in extemporaneous rhymed verse. These verses are similar in diction to many other turtle prognostications recorded in the Zuo (see, for example, the sestet in Case 1). The present case also has much in common with another account found in Cheng 16 (Legge 391/397). All three contain texts different from, rather than merely variations of, today's Yijing. And that text is in every case a verse in mid-Zhou Chinese—as opposed to the archaism of the Zhouyi.\(^{20}\) I suspect that Dufu, taking his inspiration from the Gu hexagram statement "It is profitable to ford the big river" (li se dachuan), tells his lord "Ford the [Yellow] River" (se He). The "three" of his tercet's "thrice dispelled" may also come from the hexagram statement.

The account of interpretation is as complete as any we will see in the Zuo. We should distinguish two stages in the divination process. In the first a question is posed, the diviner consulted, stalkcasting performed and a prognostication obtained. (In Case 1 the story ends at this point.) Stage two begins with the patron's request for elucidation. In response Dufu explains why the prognostication is "indeed greatly auspicious," drawing on the component trigrams of the Gu hexagram and the rhymed tercet in his explanations. (Such analyses of trigrams and text are by far the two most common interpretive techniques recorded in the Zuozhuan.)

Referring to the symbolic associations of Gu's component trigrams, Dufu states: "The lower trigram of Gu is wind, its upper mountain."\(^{21}\) He then proceeds to assign the lower trigram, "wind," to Qin and the upper, "mountain," to the enemy Jin.

\(^{20}\) In two of the three the following conditions also apply: the divination verse rhymes with the hexagram name, divination is performed by a crackmaker, only one hexagram is invoked, the phrases "If this isn't defeat, what are you waiting for?" and qi gua ya 其卦遇 ("the hexagram encountered was") occur. Some of this information can be obtained in table form from Sargent, pp. 38–40. The only two examples from the Zuo of texts that clearly are slight variants of an Yi text are both contained in Xi 15, Legge 165/169.

\(^{21}\) The terms he uses for lower and upper trigrams are zhen 貞 and hui 悔. These terms appear nowhere else in the Zuo, though the Hongfan section of the Shujing also uses them to refer to the lower and upper trigrams. See Bernard Karlgren, "The Book of Documents," BMFEA (1950):33.
Because it is harvest time, he imagines Jin's mountain covered with crops; the wind of Qin causes their downfall. Can't we just as well imagine an interpretation whereby the enemy's "mountain" remains unshaken, even after the fiercest "winds" have exhausted themselves? Equally ambiguous is the first line of the tercet—"A thousand chariots thrice dispelled." To whose chariots does it refer, those of Jin or those of Qin? It is necessarily the former only if we assume that one of the diviner's functions is to offer a politically correct prognostication, in this case building the morale of the Qin troops with a foreordained victory.

Finally, a point regarding the spread of competence in interpreting divination. The Earl requests his diviner to elucidate the prognostication. He seems to hold himself qualified to review Zhouyi interpretation in at least some limited fashion. One result of his request is that Dufu is forced to be explicit about his hermeneutics. Though their general outlines were perhaps already familiar to the Earl and his circle, their telling and retelling as this account somehow made its way toward incorporation in the Zuozhuan certainly ensured that they would become ever more public knowledge. Thus we see evidence of increasing access to the Yi, as that knowledge spread from the Zhou court to feudal courts to the literate class. Broad knowledge of the Yi is of course a prerequisite to the rhetorical usage we will examine as Cases 7 through 10.

Case 3. The ruler's son (ii), Zhuang 22, 672 B.C.

[Marquis Li of Chen] begat Jingzhong. When [the latter] was young, it happened that the Zhou Registrar came to see the marquis of Chen with the Zhouyi. The marquis of Chen ordered him to divine about the boy. He met with Guan's Pi and said, "This says, Beholding the light of the state.

It is beneficial to be the king's guest. [rhyme]"

The trigram associations "wind" and "mountain" are standard in the Ten Wings, notably the Shuogua, Wing Seven, and the Xiangzhuan, Wings Three and Four. The latter says of the Gu hexagram, "Below the mountain there is wind" (shaxia you feng). Though the Wings are late Warring States and early Han texts, clearly some of the trigram associations they record existed in the Spring and Autumn. For a discussion of trigram names used in the Zuozhuan, see Hellmut Wilhelm, passim and Qu Wanli, pp. 56-59.

22 This is the same text found in today's Yiijing, as the fourth line statement of the Guan hexagram, no. 20.
Will he dominate Chen and possess the state? If not in this [state], it will be in a different state. If it is not he himself, it will be among his descendants.

The ‘light’ [of the Yi text] is distant and shines [reflected] from something else. Kun [the lower trigram of the Guan and Pi hexagrams] is earth. Sun [the upper trigram of Guan] is wind. Qian [the upper trigram of Pi] is heaven. Wind becoming heaven above the earth [means] mountain. If the treasures of the mountain are illuminated by the light of heaven, then he will occupy the earth. Therefore it says, ‘Beholding the light of the state.’

‘It is beneficial to be the king’s guest.’ [When a feudal lord pays a visit to the king’s court, the king] spreads out a hundred gifts, offering gems and silks, the lovely things of heaven and earth. Thus it says, ‘It is beneficial to be the king’s guest.’

Still, there is [the word] ‘behold’ in it. Thus I said that it might be in a later [generation]. The wind in motion appears upon the earth. Thus I said that it might be in a different state. If it is in a different state, it must be [one where the ruling house is] surnamed Jiang. The Jiang are the descendants of the Taiyu [great peak]. The mountain peak corresponds with heaven. No two things can be [equally] great. [Though the state of] Chen decay, his [descendants] will prosper.

When Chen first began to perish, Chen Huanzi was beginning to be great in [the state of] Qi. When afterwards [Chen] perished, Chengzi had obtained [control of the state’s] government.

This prognostication is both complex and imprecise. Instead of decoding it extensively, let us ask how these factors are not allowed to impede its effectiveness.

The Zhou Registrar, like most Zhouyi interpreters recorded in the Zuo, addresses two distinct kinds of information from the Yi: trigrams and a short text. Following common practice, he associates the Qian trigram with heaven, the Kun trigram with earth, etc. Thus his determination of the symbolic association of each trigram is relatively straightforward, even objective, and this reduces the

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23 An anonymous reader has suggested that bin may not have originally meant “guest” but rather indicated the bin sacrifice mentioned in the oracle bone inscriptions. The line would then read: “It is beneficial to perform the bin sacrifice for the king.” If this is indeed the case, then this seventh-century Zhou Registrar is no longer able to read the original Zhouyi.

24 That is, Jingzhong’s descendants had indeed encroached on the Jiangs, who were the rulers of Qi. Legge 102/103; Takezoe, 3.63; Yang, 222.

25 As Hellmut Wilhelm has pointed out, the “earth” that the Registrar associates with Kun is tu, not the di that both the Shuogua and the Xiangzhuan associate with that trigram (p. 280). Wilhelm and Qu Wanli have also identified in the Zuo a moderate number of symbolic correlates of other trigrams that, like tu, are not found in the Ten Wings. See Wilhelm, passim, and Qu, pp. 42–45. Since the Shuogua lists easily a dozen associations for each trigram, this overall discrepancy is small.
number of initial interpretive choices the Registrar must make. But of itself this determination does not provide him with a prognostication.

The same issues are at play in the interpretation of the fourth line statement of the Guan hexagram, "Beholding the light of the state./ It is beneficial to be the king's guest." By what process does the Registrar make this statement intelligible? That is, how does he transform a text into a prognostication? Essentially he constructs a scenario by connecting elements suggested in the text. He can justify some of these connections to the marquis, and to us. Others, however, are simply personal, subjective associations. Furthermore, not only is the logic of the Registrar's prognostication partially mysterious, he can provide only imprecise information regarding the Marquis's son Jingzhong.

It is essential, I believe, not to regard these phenomena as "flaws" in the divination process. They merely mark the boundaries between what the Zhouyi and the Registrar can and cannot tell us. After all, the Registrar has done a masterful job creating a coherent account from a large amount of information, including bits that are now invisible to us, e.g., the Marquis of Chen's peculiar predispositions. Instead of being overwhelmed by these difficulties, he seems to have made strategic use of them, phrasing his prognostication with just enough precision to satisfy the Marquis and still protect both himself and the Yi against unforeseen developments. Nowhere in this account is the implication that this prognostication is somehow "not clear enough." Marquis Li of Chen would no doubt prefer a more precise prognostication. But he seems to understand that the Zhouyi is not that sort of instrument.

The passage in the Zuo that immediately precedes this uses crackmaking to make essentially the same prediction about the state of Chen, with even greater precision of date. Thus these accounts can be used to show that the Zuo was put together sometime after 478 B.C., when the state of Chen was extinguished. The implication is that the accounts must have been altered to conform to later historical developments. (A similar implication might be drawn from the prophecy in Case 1 regarding the eventual decline of the Dukes of Lu.) Couldn't we just as well argue that these accounts are preserved in the Zuo precisely because their accuracy in foretelling
events was so uncanny? After all, if a final editing of the Zuo was
done by a follower of Confucius, he would surely feel that a prediction
of the decline of Lu was worth calling to our attention.

Case 4. Cui Wuzi's proposed marriage—Xiang 25, 548 B.C.

The wife of the Commandant of Tang in [the state of] Qi was the elder sister of
Dongguo Yan. Dongguo Yan was a minister of Cui Wuzi. The Commandant of
Tang died. Yan drove Wuzi [to her house] to offer condolences about it. [Wuzi]
saw Tang Jiang [the widow] and, finding her beautiful, ordered Yan to marry her
to him.

Yan said, "Man and woman [should be of] different patriclans. Now, my lord
[Because we are both of the Jiang patriclan,] it is not possible."

Wuzi cast stalks about it and met with Kun's Daguo 困謨之大過謨. The
Registrars all said "Auspicious." He showed it to Chen Wenzi. Wenzi said, "The
man follows wind. The wind brings down the wife. She cannot be married.

"Moreover its oracle-text says, 'Difficulties in rocks. Holding to caltrop.' He
enters his palace and does not see his wife. Inauspicious.' 'Difficulties in rocks'—he
proceeds but does not get across. 'Holding to caltrop'—that which he relies on
wounds. 'He enters his palace and does not see his wife. Inauspicious.'—there is
nothing to go home to."

Cuizi said, "A widow, what harm? Her previous husband matched it (dan~zhi 當之)
[i.e., the prognostication applied to him, not Cui]. Thereupon he married
her."

This is our first case from the late Spring and Autumn, and all its
issues center around morality. To begin with, Chen Wenzi makes
several appearances in the Zuo. He is in every case a model of the
upright minister, offering counsel based in ethical considerations.
He is often prescient as well. In one instance he predicts a rebellion
(Xiang 23, Legge 498/502), in another the imminent overthrow of a
ruling family (Xiang 28, Legge 538/541). Two years prior to this ac-
count he has a similar run-in with Cui Wuzi, which leads him to
remark that Cui will not die of natural causes. In each case his
prediction is based on knowledge of someone's particular moral

26 For the identification of jili 疾藜 with caltrop, a plant with sharp, spiny seeds, see
Microfilms, 1982), p. 244.
27 This is the same text that is found in the Yi Jing at hexagram no. 47 Kun, line three.
28 Legge 510/514; Takezoe, 17.31; Yang, 1095.
violations. The present story combines all three roles—political advisor, moralist and seer—into a single function.

This coadunation of roles is fully consistent with the outlook of the *Zuo zhuan*, which, as we know, presents a moral-retributive view of the world. Its accounts consistently describe the triumph of the good and downfall of the iniquitous, sometimes at the expense of historical accuracy. The present story of Cui Wuzi is clearly such a cautionary tale. Here Cui is the perpetrator of a host of improper (and therefore foolish) acts: incest, marrying a woman during her period of mourning, and rejecting his counsellor’s sage advice. Quite naturally each of Chen Wenzi’s prophecies comes true in hideous detail.

The vindication of Chen’s prophecies seems to bolster, among other things, the institution of *Zhouyi* divination. Presumably attitudes like Cui’s needed to be discouraged, even more in the fourth or third century B.C., when the *Zuo zhuan* was put together, than in the sixth. But this account is not an argument for the possibility of foreknowledge as much as for the certainty of moral retribution. Both Chen and the *Zuo* author, convinced of the latter, seek to warn contemporary Cuis of their destructive folly. Divination merely clarifies what must be already plain to a practitioner of applied ethics such as Chen Wenzi.

Given Cui Wuzi’s approach, the *Yi* is totally vulnerable to subversion. His task is simple. He need not reject either Chen Wenzi’s interpretive method, nor the text obtained, nor even the judgment that his intended bride is inauspicious. It is sufficient that he assume the authority to determine to whom the prognostication applies. If the prognostication matches her dead husband instead of him, then it meets his needs well enough.

Finally, we might wonder why Cui Wuzi consults the *Zhouyi* in the first place, since he is so easy about turning aside an unwanted prognostication. He clearly risks an inauspicious augury, unless his Registrars are wholly owned. Presumably he feels that the auspicious message he might obtain would undermine the general conviction that his marriage is improper. He may even believe that

30 These questions are addressed at some length below in the section entitled “Using the *Zuo zhuan* Evidence.”
31 For the dramatic conclusions, see Xiang 27, Legge 531/535.
ZHOUYI INTERPRETATION

an auspicious prognostication will determine his fate for him, over-
ruling any lack of propriety. But Cui is wrong if he thinks Chen
Wenzi will go along with this sense of things. Believing in the
moral-retributive nature of reality, Chen cannot separate fate from
ethics. Thus the Yi, functioning within such a world, becomes a tex-
tual equivalent of Chen’s own role as advisor, moralist and seer.

The views I am attributing to both Cui and Chen are more clearly
articulated by actors in Cases 5 and 6; let us turn now to those ac-
counts.

Case 5. Mu Jiang under house arrest—Xiang 9, 564 B.C.

Mu Jiang died in the Eastern Palace. When she first went there, she cast stalks
about it and met with Gen’s eight. The Registrar said, ‘‘This means Gen’s Sui 良
Sui is ‘getting out.’ You will certainly get out quickly.’’

She said, ‘‘No. On this the Zhouyi says, ‘Sui: primal, successful, beneficent,
pure. Without fault.’ ‘Primal’ is the eminence of the person; ‘successful’ the
bringing together of excellences; ‘beneficent’ the harmonizing of righteousness;
‘pure’ the trunk of all affairs.

‘Personifying benevolence (ren) is sufficient to make one eminent; making virtue
excellent is sufficient to bring the rites together; benefiting creatures is sufficient to
harmonize righteousness; being pure and firm is sufficient to be the trunk of things.

‘But it cannot be an empty claim. Now, even though it is ‘Sui, without fault,’ I
am a woman who is associated with disorder, definitely in low position. Moreover,
often not benevolent, I cannot be called ‘primal.’ Not quieting the state, I cannot
be called ‘successful.’ Acting so as to harm myself, I cannot be called ‘beneficent.’
Abandoning my position for intrigue, I cannot be called ‘pure.’ Those who possess
the four virtues are ‘Sui’ and ‘without fault.’ I am without any of them—how am I
Sui? Since I chose evil, how can I be without fault? I will certainly die here. I will
get out.’’

I will first discuss Mu Jiang’s history and the implications of her
interpretation. Then I will consider some textual problems, for I am
sure Mu Jiang said very little of what is attributed to her here.

Mu Jiang (?–564 B.C.) was an intelligent, capable and strong-
willed woman. She was the wife of Duke Xuan of Lu, mother of
Duke Cheng and grandmother of Duke Xiang, who give their names
to three books of the Chunqiu/Zuozhuan, and she outlived the first
two. Earlier accounts in the Zuo indicate her education (she can
quote an appropriate verse from the Shi to acknowledge a minister

32 This is equally the hexagram statement of no. 17 Sui in today’s Yiijing.
33 Legge 437/439; Takezoe, 14.57; Yang, 964.
of state); her concern for her own status (she refuses to allow her husband's brother to marry his own son's mother, thereby raising a concubine to the station of full sister-in-law with Mu Jiang); and her independence and treachery (after her husband's death she had an affair with a rebellious officer of Lu and attempted to subvert the government of her son, Duke Cheng). Because of the last she was confined to the Eastern Palace. The story I have translated as Case 5, which begins with her death-notice, is thus a flashback to the time of her incarceration, about ten years before. Characteristically, Mu Jiang's reading of the Yi involves a challenge to male authority. In this instance she is successful—though had her arguments not served to condemn her own lack of virtue, they might not be so prominently displayed in the Zuo.

Heretofore we have seen interpreters of Zhouyi divination making up their own rhymed texts (Cases 1 and 2) and blending trigram associations and line statements (Cases 3 and 4). Mu Jiang's technique is different. The Sui hexagram statement reads: Yuanheng lizhen wujiu 元亨利貞無咎. The original meaning of this text when the Yi came together in late Shang or early Zhou may well have been "Initial receipt: profitable to divine. Without fault." Mu Jiang, however, reads each of its first four graphs as a discrete term—"primal, successful, beneficent, pure"—and proceeds to analyze each in turn.

But Mu Jiang's speech makes another, more radical innovation in how the Yi is read. We will best appreciate this if we first review

34 Cheng 9, Legge 369/371.
35 Cheng 11, Legge 375/376. For further details see also Xuan 17, Legge 332/333.
36 Cheng 16, Legge 393/398.
37 Following the flight of her lover Shusun Qiaoru after his rebellion fails. See both the Chunqiu and Zuozhuan entries for Cheng 16, Legge 390/395 and 394/399.
38 Following Edward Shaughnessy's reading in The Composition of the Zhouyi, pp. 124–133.
39 Compare the example in Zhao 7 (Legge 615/619), about thirty years later, where the expression yuanheng is taken to mean "Yuan [the younger son's name] will be successful."

As Song Zuoyin points out, the case of Mu Jiang is the first record we have of a Zhouyi text being read this way, graph by graph (Song, p. 63). However, the Zuo contains a multitude of similar cases in which a speaker such as Mu Jiang lists several terms and provides her or his own definition of each. See, for example, Cheng 9, Legge 369/371, where someone redefines the well-known virtues de, xin, zhong and zhi. This is a common Spring and Autumn device for introducing new interpretations of traditional concepts. Cf. the discussion in Ren Jiuyu 任繼愈, ed., Zhongguo zhuxue fazhan shi (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983), vol. 1, p. 152.
the interpretation the Registrar gives her. He maintains that if the *Yi* predicts something, it will come true: since “Sui is ‘getting out,’ you will certainly get out quickly.” Mu Jiang sees the *Yi* differently. Although she agrees with the Registrar that “Sui is ‘getting out,’ ” she claims that this prognostication means that she will get out only if she already possesses the four virtues mentioned in its hexagram statement. Since she has none of them, she will not. She does not reject the divination; on the contrary, it is a clear indication to her that she will remain under house arrest for the rest of her life. And history proves her right.

I have no doubts that “Mu Jiang died in the Eastern Palace. When she first went there, she cast stalks about it. . . .” But there are various reasons to doubt that Mu Jiang said much of what is recorded here. Her speech is uncharacteristically self-deprecatory. As well, her disquisition on *yuan*, *heng*, *li* and *zhen* is replicated almost verbatim in the *Wenyan*, the sixth of the Ten Wings, canonized with the *Zhouyi* as the *Yijing* in 136 B.C. It is difficult to imagine any of Mu Jiang’s sentiments containing sufficient piety to merit such treatment.

Four slightly peculiar technical matters also cast doubt on her story. By itself, none of these is extraordinary, but the concatenation of all four is unusual. The first is the troubling phrase *Gen zhi ba*, “Gen’s eight.” No one today knows quite what this phrase means, and it appears in no later texts. Second, in contrast to other complex divinations (especially those that are disputed), the Registrar never explains how *Gen zhi ba* means “Sui.” Third, the fact that Mu Jiang cites the Sui hexagram statement is unusual in the *Zuo*, where, as we have seen, diviners almost always address line statements instead. It is, however, the norm in imperial times. Finally, the hexagrams *Gen* and *Sui* have only one line in common, the opposite to every other case we are examining here.

If Mu Jiang never spoke as she is reported to have here, what

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40 For an extended review of several unlikely explanations, see Liu Dajun, *Zhouyi gailun* (Jinan: QiLu shushe, 1986), pp. 127–33. The phrase appears nowhere else in the *Zuo*, though two of the three examples of *Zhouyi* divination in the *Guoyu* employ it (Sibu beiyao ed., 10.10a and 10.11b). In the present study I have deliberately omitted references to the *Guoyu* records of *Zhouyi* divination. They comprise a much smaller sample with a separate set of problems, and it is not at all evident how they relate to the *Zuo* records.
historical value can we give her text? Certainly, someone put this speech together to be a convincing moral document, and a convincing interpretation of the Zhouyi as well. At the very least, it shows how later scholars viewed the moral potential of the Yi. I will address this question below, when we examine in detail the reliability of the Zuo text as a record of Zhouyi use.

Case 6. Nankuai's revolt—Zhao 12, 530 B.C.

Nankuai, a minister of the state of Lu, feels badly treated and plans a revolt against his lord.

Nankuai cast stalks about it and met with Kun's Bi 坤 Nodo, which said, "Yellow skirt, primally auspicious," which he took to be greatly auspicious. He showed this to Zifu Huibo, saying "There is a matter I am about to undertake. How will it be?"

Huibo said, "I have studied this. If it is a matter of loyalty and fidelity (zhongxin), then it is possible. If not, it will certainly be defeated. The outer strong, the inner mild—this is loyalty. Harmonious in order to lead forth the pure—this is fidelity.

"Thus it says, 'Yellow skirt, primally auspicious.' 'Yellow' is the color of the center. 'Skirt' is the ornament of the inferior [part of the body]. 'Primal' is the increase of goodness. If the center is not loyal, it will not obtain its color. If the inferior is not respectful, he will not obtain his ornament. If the matter is not good, it will not obtain its ultimate development.

"The outer and inner [respectively] leading and harmonizing—this is loyalty. Using fidelity to direct matters—this is respectfulness. Nourishing the three virtues—this is goodness. If it is not these three, then it doesn’t match (dang 當)."

"Moreover, the Yi cannot be used to divine about [morally] dangerous things. What matter will you undertake that is so ornamented? If the center is good, it can be 'yellow.' If the superior part is good, it is 'primal.' If the inferior part is good, then it is a 'skirt.' If the three are realized, you can cast stalks. If there is still some deficiency, although the stalkcasting says 'auspicious,' it is not.'"

Nankuai, however, disregards Huibo’s counsel and proceeds with his revolt. Within a year he is dead.

As a youth Zifu Huibo became convinced that heaven (tian) regularly rewards good and punishes evil. He was therefore tem-
porarily confused by a corrupt man whose wealth continuously increased. An elder, however, explained that heaven was merely setting up the fellow’s downfall. Of course this view was born out, for so sure is heaven’s moral calculus that one can indeed count upon it.

By now Huibo’s philosophical understanding has caught up with his intuitions, as his elegant and effective inversion of Nankuai’s prognostication shows. It rests on four assumptions regarding the line statement “Yellow skirt, primally auspicious.” First, that this statement divides into two sections, “yellow, skirt, primal” and “auspicious”; second, that the former describes some situation and the latter constitutes a prognostication; third, that the relationship between the two sections is “if (situation) then (prognostication)”; and fourth, that the situation it describes has an essential moral aspect. I would like to set out the stages through which Huibo develops these assumptions into an argument. The details of that argument are unimportant, but its structure will demonstrate the complex coherence of Huibo’s world. This coherence is the basis for his overturning of Nankuai’s interpretation of the same Zhouyi text.

Huibo opens by stating his conclusion, that this passage of the Yi pertains specifically to matters of loyalty and fidelity. He illustrates these two terms and then begins his five-staged demonstration. The text provides the three terms

yellow, skirt, primal, (stage 1)

which he identifies with
central, inferior, goodness, (stage 2)

which he sees in reference to
loyalty, respect, goodness. (stage 3)

If these three sets are in order, each element will then respectively obtain (de)
its [true] color, its [proper] ornament, its complete [development]. (stage 4)

These things obtaining, we have the following results:
outer and inner in harmony, directing in fidelity, nourishing the three virtues. (stage 5)

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Kan’eki kenkyū 漢易研究 (Meitoku, 1963), p. 15, for this identification.

45 Xiang 28, Legge 538/542.
The three terms of this final stage embody the "three virtues" of stage 3 (loyalty, respectfulness, goodness). But, cautions Huibo, "If it is not these three, it doesn't match (fudang弗當)." In other words, if one lacks the three virtues, then one's situation does not match the prognostication, which cannot come true. We have encountered the term dang ("match") in Case 4, where Cui Wuzi attempts to deflect the widow's inauspiciousness from himself by declaring that "her previous husband matched it." In both these cases dang indicates the applicability of the prognostication to one party or another. Here Huibo has gone to great lengths to establish the conditions of this applicability. "If there is still some deficiency" in meeting these conditions, says Huibo, "although the stalkcasting says 'auspicious,' it is not."

We are now in a position to appreciate how Huibo inverts Nankuai's interpretation. Nankuai meets with the line statement "Yellow skirt, primally auspicious," which, says the Zuo, "he took to be greatly auspicious." Underlying this assumption is what Huibo would consider Nankuai's naive expectation, that the Yi would reveal the future to him—it would provide a simple message of "auspicious" or "inauspicious," or even bring about that which it had predicted, as if by magic. Nankuai, in other words, expects something with the logical structure of "You will get rich." Huibo, however, sees messages like "The rich get richer." Where Nankuai sees the Yi's messages as true, Huibo sees them as truths. As such they are also problems in deduction, because the truth must be applied to the specific circumstances under consideration.

Huibo's world is interrelated in such a complex manner that Nankuai's simple conception of divination is no longer adequate to it. For Huibo divination must take account of the fact that future events are determined essentially by present action, that the lines of their determination can be traced out, and that their nature is moral. The Yi cannot in any way supercede this reality, for example by proclaiming an immoral act "auspicious." Thus Huibo claims that "the Yi cannot be used to divine about [morally] dangerous things."

To summarize his approach, we could say that the interpreter's first task is to determine the situation implied by the Zhouyi text. Once this is achieved—and Huibo's complex analysis shows that it
requires expert skills—one must then examine whether one's particular circumstances "match" that situation or not. If they do, the matter of "auspicious" or "inauspicious" is obvious. In the present instance Nankuai's prognostication of "auspicious" means that a matter of loyalty and fidelity will have success. (Presumably the Yi's role is to tell us which of several morally proper alternatives is best—for example, withdrawal might be preferable to action, and so on.) Thus despite the general truth of every statement of the Yi, its value in prognostication depends on the interpreter's analytical ability.

All six cases we have considered here stress the importance of determining the Yi's message and then applying it to the situation at hand. Rhetorical usage of the Yi depends on the same skills, but its two elements are reversed—first one examines the situation at hand and then determines which Yi text speaks to it. We turn now to an examination of that approach.

FOUR CASES OF RHETORICAL USAGE

Rhetorical usage of the Yi generally takes the form of someone quoting a short passage to bolster an argument. The Zuozhuan's earliest rhetorical reference to the Zhouyi does not occur until 603 B.C. (Xuan 6, Legge 299/299), about a generation before Mu Jiang and Nankuai. However, there are records of people using the Shijing rhetorically one hundred years earlier and also throughout the Spring and Autumn period—more than fifty cases in all. Here is the earliest:

Before the Duke had married [Wen Jiang, the daughter of the Marquis of] Qi, the Marquis of Qi had wanted to marry her to Hu, the Heir Apparent of Zheng. Hu declined. Someone asked his reason. The Heir Apparent said: "Each person has his mate. Qi is great. It's not my mate. The Shi says, 'He seeks much fortune for himself.'46 What would I do with a large state?"47

This is a typical way of using the Shi to illustrate and so strengthen one's point. It also exhibits a becoming modesty—the Earl is unwilling to overstep his position in the feudal hierarchy and

46 Mao no. 235, stanza 6, line 4.
47 Huan 6, Legge 47/49, 706 B.C.
marry into so great a state as Qi. But the example is also typical in that Hu interprets the line to suit his own needs, taking it to mean ‘he seeks too much fortune for himself.’ In its original context, however, the line seems to encourage fortune-seeking. In Karlgren’s translation, the first half of the stanza reads:

Should you not think of your ancestors,  
and so cultivate their virtues?  
For ever be worthy of [Heaven’s] appointment,  
and seek for yourself much felicity.48

We might be inclined to call Hu’s reading a ‘‘distortion,’’ but it raises no eyebrows in the Zuozhuan. Indeed, the Shi texts rarely seem to have carried their original context with them when pressed into rhetorical usage.

We also find the Shi quoted in moral arguments proposing the attack of an iniquitous enemy, defending the appropriateness of lenient punishment, opposing improper revenge, and so on.49 In 510 someone quotes both the Shi and the Yi to demonstrate that the rise and fall of the earth are as natural as the rise and fall of ruling houses.50 Rhetorical use of the Shi can also assist in another of the politician’s roles—the ability to imagine the future from evidence at hand. In 510 someone in Wei asserts that an associate’s impropitious behavior will ‘‘surely [result in] great calamity’’; the substance of his argument is illustrated with a stanza from the Shi (Zhao 32, Legge 739/740). A comet was sighted in 516, provoking some to consider divination regarding its inauspiciousness; instead an official quotes the Shi to suggest that divination is unnecessary, since the ruler’s indisputable virtue guarantees an auspicious future (Zhao 26, Legge 715/718). Finally, in 493 the troops of Jin perform crackmaking as they consider the appropriateness of ambushing the enemy (Ai 2, Legge 797/799). The turtle, however, merely scorched, rather than cracking, and thus could not be read. In-

48 Karlgren, The Book of Odes, (Stockholm: Museum of Far East Antiquities, 1950), p. 186. This is a famous poem, containing the lines ‘‘but the actions of High Heaven/have no sound, no smell.’’

49 Respectively Min 1, Legge 123/124; Xiang 26, Legge 521/526; Ding 4, Legge 752/757. Note that the Shujing is often used in the same way.

50 Zhao 32, Legge 739/741.
stead of taking this as an evil omen, someone quotes a similar, auspicious scorching from the *Shi*.

Thus throughout the Spring and Autumn the *Shi* was readily quoted in suasion.51 Like the *Yi*, it mixed freely with a variety of other cultural tools, sometimes substituting for them, sometimes operating in conjunction. Following are four examples of such rhetorical usage of the *Zhouyi*.

Case 7. Too great an ambition—Xuan 6, 603 B.C.

Gongzi Manman of Zheng spoke with the [Zhou] king’s son Boliao about his desire to be a minister. Boliao said to someone, “Covetous and without virtue—it’s in the *Zhouyi*, at Feng’s Li 豐誼之離誼. He will not get beyond that.”

After a year the people of Zheng killed him.52

The text of Feng’s Li in today’s *Yijing* reads, in Richard Kunst’s translation, “Full is the canopy. It screens his home. He peeks through the door. Desolate it is, with no one there. He is not seen for three years. Ominous.”53 Presumably it is this text that Boliao is thinking of. Boliao’s remark is meaningless unless his listener (and the Zuo readership) can bring to mind this line statement. This has led Sargent to infer correctly that the *Yi* text must have been widely known at this time.54

An accurate prognostication is made here without reference to an act of stalkcasting. To what extent does this constitute divination with the *Yi*? This is a major issue of rhetorical usage, to which we will return in Case 10.

Case 8. The army in peril—Xuan 12, 597 B.C.

The co-leaders of the armies of Jin are debating whether they should attack the army of Chu. This is an important battle, and the eventual Chu victory will propel Duke Zhuang of Chu to claim the overlordship that had resided in Jin. A rebellious Jin officer named

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51 Jeffrey Riegel, in private communication, has suggested that many *Shi* songs may have been composed explicitly for such use.

52 Legge 298/299; Takezoe 10.33; Yang, 689. For another example of rhetorical usage that follows the same form, see Xiang 28, Legge 537/541.


54 Sargent, p. 3.
Zhizi leads his portion of the army across the river to attack without waiting for orders. In response, one of his colleagues remarks:

This army [of Zhizi] is in great danger! The Zhouyi contains it in Shi's Lin 師臨, which says, "The army sets out according to regulations. If it does not preserve them, it will be inauspicious."\(^{55}\)

Holding to the matter and completing it without hindrance—this is "preserve." Rebelliousness is "does not." The scattering of the group is "weakness" [the quality of Kun, the upper trigram of both hexagrams]. A river obstructed is "marsh" [the quality of Dui, the lower trigram of Lin]. We have "regulations," but each taking them as he [would like]. Thus it says, "The regulations are not preserved."

Moreover, the regulations are dried up. They were overflowing, and they drained them. They are stopped up and out of order. Lin means "not doing it." Having a leader and not following him, what is more Lin than this? This is what it's saying.

If as a consequence we encounter [the enemy], we will certainly be defeated. Zhizi has set it up. Even if he escapes and returns home, there will certainly be a great fault.\(^{56}\)

Nothing in the manner of interpretation alerts us to the fact that no stalkcasting was performed. As in the usual procedure, a problem is posed, a Zhouyi text produced, the text read in terms of trigrams and line statement, its interpretation applied to the current situation, and a prognostication made. Yet this is obviously different from normal divination. The following two cases will highlight that difference and allow us to distinguish more precisely between these two ways of using the Yi.

Case 9. The marquis' illness—Zhao 1, 541 B.C.

The Marquis of Jin sought a doctor from Qin. The Earl of Qin sent Doctor He to see him. [The doctor] said: "The illness cannot be cured. This is called,

- Being close to women [rhyme A]
- Produces a disease like gu 鬼. [rhyme A]
- It's not ghosts, it's not food; [rhyme B]
- Sexual excess is causing his derangement. [rhyme B]

... [The Marquis' minister] Zhao Meng said, "What does gu mean?"

He replied, "That which is produced when one sinks into delusion through debauch. In terms of the graph, a vessel (min 瓶) and insects (chong 鳖) make up gu. The flying away of grain is also gu [i.e., the insects that appear as if spontaneously

\(^{55}\) This is the text of the first line statement of hexagram no. 7 Shi in the Yijing.

\(^{56}\) Legge 312/317; Takezoe, 11.1; Yang, 718.
Gu is the focus of this passage, not the Yi. Doctor He explains it in four ways. The first is etiological: it is a disease caused by sexual excess. The second is graph analysis: gu means "insects in a dish." The third comes from an observation of decay in the natural world. The fourth cites the Yi, not in reference to its texts, which are all auspicious, but through the associations of its component trigrams. Apparently the doctor has in mind two sets of associations that are also found in today’s Shuogua: “younger man” and “older woman” are one, “mountain” and “wind” are the other. Here his analysis imputes “delude” and “blow down” to the two relationships. And, he concludes, “These are all [examples of] the same thing.” Thus the Yi functions as one of several resources to articulate the physician’s diagnosis, just as in divination examples it has sometimes shared its mantic authority with the turtle.

Divination and a doctor’s medical analysis are somewhat similar acts, and both English and Chinese have a way to capture the shading over from one to the other. In English it is in the two terms “prognostication” and “prognosis.” In Chinese it is the word zhen 診, used both for the interpretation of a dream (zhenmeng) and for medical diagnosis.

Case 10. The prevalence of dragons—Zhao 29, 513 B.C.

In the autumn of 513 B.C. a dragon was sighted outside the town of Jiang, leading two old friends into discussion. One, an eminent historian, remarks that these days “dragons are not captured alive.” In previous times, however, men had such skill in dragon-culture that intimate observations of dragon behavior were possible. As proof of this, he declares:

The Zhouyi has it in Qian’s Gou 乾之姤, which says, “Hidden dragon, do not act.”

Its Tongren 同人 says, “See the dragon in the field.”
Its Dayou 大有 says, “Flying dragon in the heavens.”
Its Guai 夫 says, “Dragon in a gully—there is remorse.”

57 Gu ䷜ is hexagram no. 18 in the Yijing.
58 Legge 573/580; Takezoe, 20.34; Yang, 1221.
Its Kun 坤 says, "See a flock of headless dragons. Auspicious."
Kun’s Bo 薄 says, "Dragons fighting in the wilds."
If they did not appear morning and evening, who could have described them?59

Here the Yi functions as a book of natural history. It is valued not for its knowledge of the future but for its knowledge of the past. Whereas Cases 1 through 9 depended in some measure on a figurative use of language, in this instance the Yi no longer points beyond itself: its dragons are merely dragons.

Returning to the question first posed in Case 7, we find that some clear distinctions can be made between divination and rhetorical usage of the Yi. In divination, one consults the Yi and applies its message to one’s situation; in rhetorical usage, one begins by analyzing one’s situation and then finds an appropriate text from the Yi. In divination, an Yi text is selected by a process of stalkcasting we would describe as mechanical and random. In rhetorical usage, the text is actively chosen by the interpreter. Whereas in both cases the Yi is used in a decision-making process, rhetorical usage is primarily a means to bolster the speaker’s pre-existing argument. In divination, however, the Yi text determines the substance and direction of that argument in significant and unpredictable ways.

What difference do these differences make? Potentially much, as in this example. Or nearly none at all, as in Case 8. In that instance not only are traditional methods of interpretation maintained, the atmosphere also recalls Cases 1 through 3. There the distinctions between divination and rhetorical usage are nearly invisible. Indeed, if one knew the Yi very well, as the interpreter in Case 8 apparently does, one might claim that the text’s magic causes Shi’s Lin to come to mind by the same power that it causes the stalks to produce a hexagram.60

Rhetorical usage, however, offers the reader greater conscious control of the text. Perhaps for this reason, all nineteen citations of the Yi preserved from the Warring States period are rhetorical. Even Hsun Tzu is able to apply the Yi in this fashion, taking short

59 Legge 729/731; Takezoe, 26.25; Yang, 1500. For the line on “its Guai,” I have followed Richard Kunst’s reading (The Original Yijing, p. 241). These texts are all in today’s Yijing.
60 This was suggested to me by an amateur of the Yijing when I discussed this material at the University of Iowa in the fall of 1982.
phrases from it to advance arguments that have nothing to do with augury.\textsuperscript{61}

**ZHOUYI HERMENEUTICS**

Nothing definite is known of the actual practice of Zhouyi divination prior to the Spring and Autumn. Scholars suppose that it was originally a royal prerogative, employing hereditary diviners, and fully integrated with the sacred traditions of the Zhou royal estate. It may therefore also have involved complicated invocations of or references to the ancestors, gods or other forces, or been imbedded in the private ceremonials of the Zhou house. The silence of the Zuozhuan suggests, however, that by the Spring and Autumn such concerns were no longer significant. (Unfortunately we have no record of divination performed for the Zhou king.)

Fourteen accounts from the Zuozhuan allow us to piece together the broad outlines of Zhouyi divination practices at this time. The most complete of these accounts include the following elements: a topic is proposed, a diviner is consulted, the Zhouyi is addressed by casting stalks, stalkcasting indicates a line statement from the Yi, and an expert (who may or may not be the diviner) interprets the results. In two-thirds of the Zuo records most of these elements are present.

In only about half the Zuozhuan accounts does a professional diviner, or registrar (shi 史), perform the divination. Crackmakers sometimes assume the stalkcasting role, as in Cases 1 and 2. Otherwise the diviners or interpreters are generally, as Sargent has shown, "political advisors and office-holders."\textsuperscript{62} These are amateurs who move freely between turtle and stalks; their primary function is still political analysis rather than divination. Thus while the stalkcaster once presumably held a distinct role in the Zhou hierarchy, by the Spring and Autumn his functions are routinely shared throughout the court. In Case 5 we even saw a woman interpreting the Yi. This is further indication of the distance of late Spring and Autumn readers from early Zhou models, and the liber-

\textsuperscript{61} For the list of Warring States citations, see Qu Wanli, XianQin Han Wei Yili shuping, pp. 66-71.
\textsuperscript{62} Sargent, p. 21.
ty with which they appropriated the text. It also reminds us of the
difficulty of using the Zuo zhuan to reconstruct those earlier practices.

There are four ways in which early and late techniques of inter-
pretation differ. First, in all but one of the seven earliest examples,
if a hexagram is cited, the interpreter also makes reference to the
trigrams; only a third of the later examples use this method. (See
the table in the Appendix for these and other statistics.) Second,
none of the seven earliest accounts are rhetorical, whereas nearly
half the later ones are. Apparently the Yi was becoming both more
familiar and more secular, finding new applications like medicine
and natural history outside its traditional compass. This indicates a
spread of knowledge of the Yi from the Zhou house to educated peo-
ple generally. Rhetorical usage testifies to this—it makes no sense to
allude to a text (as in Case 7) if your listener cannot supply it mental-
ly. Third, paralleling this, in the early Spring and Autumn regis-
trars or crackmakers are involved in Zhouyi interpretation twice as
often as anyone else. In the later period, a registrar is mentioned
only once in ten cases, and crackmakers not at all.

Fourth, in the seven earliest examples of stalkcasting, the nar-
rator never once mentions the name of the text that is being used.
Since in this period divination still tended be the act of a specialist,
it may have been taken for granted by the original seventh-century
audience of these tales that the Zhouyi is the book in question. In the
middle set of seven cases, if a text is mentioned it is always called the
Zhouyi (four out of seven times); it is as if more people were becom-
ing exposed to divination, some of whom needed to be told what
text was being used. In the final eight cases, the text is with one ex-
ception always named, but as well as being called the Zhouyi it is also
referred to as the Yi, or reference is made to the Yixiang or to an
Yigua. This suggests a greater familiarity with the text and the
divorce from its Zhou origins.

These developments are significant not only in their own right,
but also because they establish a pattern no Warring States or Han
forger could have built into the Zuo. They are therefore strong

63 Zhao 12, Legge 637/640.
64 Zhao 2, Legge 582/583.
65 Zhao 32, Legge 739/741.
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evidence that—on the whole and from the perspective of interpretive method—the Zuozhuan records of the Yi are highly accurate and reliable. Of course this does not guarantee that any individual record is genuine. But if I am interpreting the fourth point correctly, the absence of the name "Zhouyi" in all the early accounts suggests that the original seventh-century stories were eventually incorporated into the Zuo with extraordinary devotion to detail.  

Zuozhuan evidence suggests that the Yi text was stable throughout the Spring and Autumn. Sargent, following Wilhelm, proposes that the odd texts we saw in Cases 1 and 2 indicate that only after about 600 B.C. did a settled, written text exist. As I argued in Case 2, it makes better sense to consider these odd texts not as variants but as three- and four-word verses improvised on the spot, usually by crackmakers. Because the two genuine variants that the Zuo contains are only slight rearrangements of phrases, I would suggest that today’s Yijing hardly differs from the text used in the Spring and Autumn period as the Zhouyi.

We have seen that methods of Zhouyi interpretation in the early and late Spring and Autumn differ from each other in only a few points. In fact, most of the techniques described in the Zuo can also be seen in records from the imperial period. The use of the Yi, however, changed much more rapidly. In the early Spring and Autumn, Zhouyi divination was used to foresee the outcome of battles, marriages, sons and other difficult matters. By the end of the period the Yi was also used in medical prognosis, as a source of dragon-lore, in suasion, and to pass judgment on an ambitious minister, as well as in debates on morality. Such cases represent new relationships of reader to text, with the interpreter shaping not only the meaning of a single line statement, but in some instances the very structure through which any meaning could emerge.

Twentieth-century scholars have hoped to learn much more than this about specific Spring and Autumn techniques for interpreting

66 A. C. Graham has come tentatively to the same conclusion regarding the reliability of the Zuozhuan records of wuxing, or Five Phases. See his Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking (Singapore: The National University of Singapore, The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), p. 74n52.

67 Sargent, p. 7.

68 Xi 15, Legge 165/169.
The Zhouyi. They have been largely unsuccessful. One difficulty is that diviners never explicitly discuss their methods. As well, fewer than ten accounts are long enough to provide substantial amounts of data. Most significantly, however, the Zuo records indicate that interpretation of the Yi was a rather ad hoc affair; as we have seen, interpretive practices were multiple and often contradictory. This is epitomized by the disputes over interpretation from the late Spring and Autumn.

These inconsistencies have important consequences for the present study. Because of them, it makes little sense to postulate simple and regular methods of Zhouyi interpretation, especially in the late Spring and Autumn. Insofar as this has been a goal of previous scholars, it has led them to overlook other aspects of the Zuo accounts. For however poor these accounts are in consistent method, they are rich in other kinds of historical data: they reveal the particular hazards and opportunities of interpreting a difficult text, the nature of the arguments between proponents of competing views of the Yi, and those moments when new ideas may successfully challenge traditional readings.

What is more, the true nature of Zhouyi divination is obscured by the impulse to rationalize it. Not only is the attempted resolution inconsistent with the evidence of how the text was actually being used, the attempt itself subtly misrepresents the role that the Yi has played in Chinese tradition. For the difficulties of the Yi are fundamental to its function, whether as a book of divination or of philosophy. Its force and wide application have derived in part from the unexpected possibilities of so simple a statement as "It is profitable to ford the big river." Thus it is important that the Spring and Autumn diviners did not succeed in ending the disputes over Zhouyi interpretation and so reduce the Yi to an unambiguous, closed field of meaning.

UNCERTAINTIES OF DIVINATION

People in the Spring and Autumn consulted the Zhouyi to help make decisions. Yet the divination process itself was fraught with

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69 For a list of these works, see footnote 2 above.
uncertainties that must be understood in order to appreciate the Yi’s role in addressing them. Here I will discuss four types of uncertainty that characterized Zhouyi divination throughout the Spring and Autumn period. These are (1) the uncertainty of divination as such, (2) the uncertainty of Zhouyi interpretation, (3) uncertainty arising from competing methods of divination, and (4) the possibility of subverting the divination process entirely.

First, every sort of divination, Chinese or other, is inherently uncertain inasmuch as it attempts knowledge of things removed from direct perception—generally, of the future. Spring and Autumn Chinese were well aware of this difficulty. In Case 3 we saw a diviner acknowledging his uncertainty with the phrases “Thus I said that it might be in a later generation,” and “Thus I said that it might be in a different state.” The converse of this is the recognition that if the matter is certain, there is no need to divine. Thus in 701, when Chu contemplates battle, someone suggests making cracks. Another replies: “Crackmaking is to decide about the doubtful. [This battle] is not doubtful. Why make cracks?”

Divination is of course only one way to acquire knowledge of the future. More common but also uncertain alternatives are rational thought—analysis and inference—and non-rational thought—intuition or projection. Spring and Autumn Chinese made use of all these methods, in varying combinations, though they did not differentiate between them in the terms I have used here. For example, in Case 4 Cui Wuzi combines the analysis of his intended bride’s past, projection of his own desires, and Zhouyi divination in an attempt to predict (or influence) the outcome of their union. Even with the more sophisticated thinking we saw in Cases 5 and 6, Zhouyi divination is not perceived to be in conflict with rationality. Neither does it occur in isolation from other human cognitive functions, nor supplant them. It rather attempts to supplement their inadequacy.

Because the first type of uncertainty is common to all forms of divination, we can consider it pre-textual as regards the Yi. The second form of uncertainty is specifically textual: the Yi is just difficult to interpret. Part of the problem is that it does not offer pro-

70 Huan 11, Legge 55/56.
gnostications such as "On the next xinhai day you will capture five prisoners." Instead it may remark, "It is profitable to enfeoff a marquis,"71 or "One sees a band of dragons without heads. Auspicious."72 If one is not in a position to enfeoff, or if dragons are only rarely encountered (as is asserted in Case 10), such statements require an explicit act of interpretation to be transformed into prognostications. In Cases 2 and 3 we saw the elaborated steps two diviners took in order to accomplish this.

Such a process is necessarily ungovernable by any set of explicit rules. Were this not the case, the Yi texts would be nothing more than a code, and interpretation merely the indexing of that code to situations in the world. This ungovernability makes the Yi more flexible and thus more powerful a divination tool. Yet at the same time it renders it vulnerable to disputation, as we saw in Cases 4, 5 and 6. In any event, this uncertainty of interpretation is necessary to the survival of the Zhouyi as a method of divination, given the more general uncertainty of divination discussed immediately above. For if the Yi did not offer legitimate opportunities for retrospective reinterpretation of its messages, it would soon be discredited.

While the first type of uncertainty is intrinsic to divination and the second intrinsic to Zhouyi interpretation, the third type concerns instead the Yi's competitors among the methods of augury available in the Spring and Autumn. We might thus call it "contextual." The turtle is the most familiar and respected of these alternatives, but we should note that the Zuo also contains accounts of the Yi being used in combination with paronomasia,73 graph analysis74 and dream interpretation.75 Other Spring and Autumn divination methods, such as the interpretation of astronomical and meteorological phenomena, no doubt were combined with the Yi at various times, though no records of these encounters survive.

The relationship of turtle and stalks can be complementary or antagonistic. In Case 1 we saw a Duke of Lu employing first crackmaking, then stalkcasting, in an attempt to ascertain his son's future;

71 Hexagram no. 3 Zhun, et passim.
72 Hexagram no. 1 Qian, sixth line statement.
73 See Case 1.
74 Min 1, 661 B.C., Legge 124/125; see also Case 9.
75 Ai 17, 478 B.C., Legge 849/850.
here the two prognostications reinforce each other. Apparently both divinations were conducted by the same man, identified as ‘Crackmaker Chuqiu’s father.’ Thus, by the early Spring and Autumn, we see a single person practicing divination traditions that were distinct in origin, method and, presumably at one time, personnel.

Inevitably, however, there were times when stalks and turtle disagreed. In such cases scholarly opinion has tended to hold crackmaking the more reliable. Indeed the Zuo contains the story of Duke Xian of Jin, who, finding the message of the Yi more congenial, disregards this procedure and loses his life because of it. Duke Xian’s crackmaker had argued, in somewhat partisan fashion, ‘The stalks are short, the turtle is long (chang, ‘successful’ or ‘powerful’). It is better to follow the long.’

But in reality the relationship of stalks and turtle is much more complex. In a long note on this passage, Takezoe analyzes a half-dozen conflicting pre-Qin discussions of this relationship and concludes that ‘crackmaking and stalkcasting are in reality without long or short.’ That is, in certain cases pre-Qin interpreters argued that one should follow the turtle, in others the stalks. Takezoe can discern no single principle or rule in these discussions that could be consistently applied to every case. There is then no clear dominance of turtle over stalks in the Spring and Autumn. Equally significant, neither do the conflicts that arise between the methods push interpreters to develop a comprehensive framework in reference to which such disputes could be resolved. The modern equivalent to this is a small-claims court, where the judge’s decision does not set legal precedent. The conflicts are settled pragmatically, without implications for the future relationship of the two methods.

We can contrast this level of solution to a Warring States discussion found in the ‘‘Hong-fan’’ (Great plan) chapter of the Book of Documents. This attempts to resolve potential disagreements between the king, turtle, stalks, nobles and common people. The passage mentions six permutations of agreement and disagreement

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76 See, for example, Takezoe’s citations of Yang Shen 楊慎 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 in 5.20–21.
77 Xi 4, Legge 139/141.
78 Takezoe, 5.20–21.
among these five elements, including one in which the stalks oppose the proposed course of action while the turtle consents to it. In the latter case, following Karlgren, "in internal affairs it is auspicious, in external affairs [sc. outside the state] it is baleful." Such a need to derive formal, rationalized methods for integrating the two kinds of divination found no expression in the Spring and Autumn.

Beyond these three uncertainties lies a more extreme reaction in which someone ignores, manipulates or simply rejects the prognostication of the Yi. Because these possibilities subvert any reading of the Yi, we could call them "extra-textual." They point to an uncertainty of the very ground on which divination rests. The story of King Ling of Chu, self-proclaimed candidate for the role of overlord, is an extreme case of this attitude. In 529 his empire crumbles. Deserted, he kills himself. The Zuozhuan reports:

Previously King Ling had made cracks, saying, "I would attain all under heaven." It was inauspicious. He threw the turtle shell, railed at heaven and cried: "Such a tiny thing you will not serve me. I must take it myself."

In throwing the turtle shell and cursing heaven, King Ling rejects both divination and its foundation. All that remains to replace them is his own will and acumen.

We might expect such examples to be legion. After all, the Spring and Autumn Chinese are mightily contentious; in every divination situation the patron has considerable personal and political fortune at risk; and each of the three types of uncertainty provides the perfect invitation to legitimately challenge someone else's reading. Yet in fact there are remarkably few such instances. The reason seems to be the continuing authority of Zhou tradition and the Yi's position in its midst. Such disputes as do occur are thus doubly interesting. They are not merely disagreements over the interpretation of a text but are also challenges to some type of authority—the personal authority of the expert prognosticator, the authority of the Zhouyi institution, or even that of divination itself. Thus their presence and absence are both important indicators of the stability of current cultural practices.

80 See, respectively, Xi 15, Legge 165/169; Xi 28, Legge 206/212; and Case 4.
81 Zhao 13, Legge 644/649.
ZHOUYI INTERPRETATION

USING THE ZUOZHUAN EVIDENCE

Three loyalties

Throughout the Zuo we see an author struggling to reconcile three potentially conflicting goals: to record events as they actually occurred, to create a narrative that will be convincing and attractive to the reader, and to give a didactic account that will reflect his convictions that the universe operates according to the principles of morality. In modern terms we could say that these represent every historian's concern with what happened, how it can be told, and what it means.

The Zuozhuan probably takes its name from a certain Zuo Qiu-ming 左丘明 or, more likely, Zuoqiu Ming. Though we know nothing about him, nor what connection he has with the Zuozhuan, there is scholarly consensus about certain features of the text. To begin with, the body of the Zuo is not a Han dynasty forgery, as Kang Youwei had insisted, though it may contain a number of interpolations. In refuting Kang's charge, Bernard Karlgren established an additional claim for the Zuo: its stylistic consistency. Through an examination of its use of grammatical auxiliaries ("particles"), he concluded that the Zuo possesses "a grammar of its own, a constellation of grammatical phenomena which is quite unique. . . .", which "no forger could have imagined and consistently carried through." Thus it "was written either by a single person, or—if Chavannes' idea is right—by several men belonging to one and the same school and the same region." From the work of Karlgren and others it is also generally assumed that the Zuo was put together out of existing traditions around the late fourth or early third century B.C.—at least 150 years after its last entry in 481 B.C. and as much as 450 years after its first in 722.

Despite this late date, the Zuo is reliable regarding such details of public life as names, lineages and offices. We can gather this from

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83 Ibid., p. 49.
Barry Blakeley's study of Du Yu 杜預 (222–281), the Zuo's greatest commentator. Du's notes supply additional information on these matters of public record. But Blakeley has shown that in such cases Du derives information from the Zuo text itself for fewer than half his remarks. Thus Blakeley believes that a large body of material relating to Spring and Autumn history still circulated in the Han, when Du's outside sources were compiled. Because Du demonstrates extreme scruple in his treatment of historical data, his use of these Han sources is strong evidence of their reliability. From this we can surmise that the Zuozhuan records of names and offices are consistent with these Han documents, which thus offer an independent confirmation of the Zuo's historical accuracy.

Narrative concerns influence the Zuo in at least two ways. First, the author has taken various materials—the names and offices discussed above, for example—and turned them into a coherent account of the Spring and Autumn. As readers we rely on him to perform this service for us; nevertheless it is impossible for us as researchers to uncover the more raw version(s) that the author had at hand.

The second way in which narrative demands shape the Zuo relates to the need for stories to be attractive. For all its didacticism, the Zuo's subject is "violent conflict—political, military, and personal," as David Johnson has noted. The story of Cui Wuzi, part of which we examined as Case 4, is an excellent example. After marrying a widow despite strong counterindications, Cui grants her sons position and privilege that make his own sons jealous. In a complex intrigue, his sons kill their step-brothers, Cui's own sons are killed, and his wife hangs herself. When Cui arrives at his palace and views the devastation, he hangs himself as well. Truly it is as his

85 Blakeley considers Du's work "judicious, objective and therefore reliable" ("Tu Yü's Commentary," p. 210), and calls him "a sterling example of the best in Chinese exegetical scholarship" (p. 212).

86 For a thoroughgoing investigation of what form these sources might have taken, see David Johnson, "Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-hsu," JAS 40.2 (1981): 255–271. Johnson argues for the existence of "large narrative structures" (p. 268) or epics at the time such works as the Zuozhuan came together. I am unconvinced that such stories existed in epic form, largely because Johnson's assiduous research has produced no direct evidence of their existence.

87 Ibid., p. 269.
nemesis Chen Wenzi had foretold. This story, I would claim, suggests a conflict between the author and his own narrative voice. The author intends Cui as an example of how moral retribution ever falls upon the perpetrator. The narrator, however, sets out Cui’s destruction in such dramatic detail that his evil becomes fascinating, and thus attractive. The popularity of the Zuo throughout Chinese history has no doubt depended on the presence of both qualities.

Yet the Zuo’s author clearly wished to make positive morality more compelling than Cui’s evil—and the Zuozhuan’s later orthodoxy rests on a consensus that the didactic interpretation takes precedence over any other. This interpretation organizes the stories so that they reveal their truths; thus the account of a degraded man like Cui Wuzi can attain the status of History. Ronald Egan has described the author’s historiographical principle:

Put in simplest terms, the abiding lesson of Tso chuan, a lesson that is illustrated by hundreds of its narratives, is that rulers who are wise and who are dedicated to their people’s welfare prosper, while those who are evil or foolish come to a bad end.88

But the world is not always like this, which from time to time has created difficulties for the author. To make history conform to his “underlying assumption that good and bad fortune are linked to conduct and are not random,”89 he must occasionally reconstruct crucial aspects of his narratives. He does not seem to have altered public matters such as office-holding, marriage, military victory or execution. But he was determined to address the moral stature of his actors, upon which, in his view, the result of their actions ultimately depends. Into the battlefield account of a dissolute but successful general, the author inserts an anecdote that displays the man’s fun-

88 “Narratives in Tso Chuan,” HJAS 37.2 (1977): 323–52. This lesson is also attested by several other modern commentators. John Wang for example states: “Put very simply, the pattern is this: just as the evil, the stupid, and the haughty will usually bring disaster upon themselves, the good, the wise, and the humble tend to meet their just rewards” (“Early Chinese Narrative: the Tso-chuan as Example,” in Chinese Narrative, ed. Andrew Plaks, [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], p. 14). Or Burton Watson: “[It is] firmly dedicated to the proposition . . . that good deeds insure success and evil deeds failure. On the basis of this axiom the Tso orders its material, an endless series of variations on the theme. . . .” (Early Chinese Literature [New York: Columbia University Press, 1962], p. 44).
89 Egan, p. 331.
ivement cowardice, arguing silently that the final victory occurred
despite rather than because of the general’s leadership. Of that
anecdote Egan remarks: “It is probably the author’s creation, from
beginning to end.”

Such creativity violates the standards of most modern historiog-
raphies. But it is not in conflict with the author’s evident intent to
record the past accurately. Given his understanding of what history
is and how it works, the victory of a corrupt general would be un-
believable, not to say inconceivable. I think we can fairly say that
from the author’s point of view, letting the record show some-
one at once evil and successful would have been an even greater
offense against reality, which, after all, is moral.

Effects on the Zhouyi records

In light of these three loyalties, the usefulness of the Zuozhuan ac-
counts depends very much on the questions we ask of them. On the
one hand we have seen good reasons to trust their public aspect.
Hsu Cho-yun has relied considerably on this kind of evidence to
differentiate period and place within the Spring and Autumn. Barry Blakeley has demonstrated in his comparison of the political
systems of several major states that the Zuo can sustain even finer
local distinctions. On the other hand, as Egan’s work has shown,
anecdotes whose primary purpose is to illustrate character or make
didactic points are open to doubt. Thus we need to be suspicious of
stories that conform too well to the author’s moral expectations,
such as the “confession” of Lady Mu Jiang.

The reliability of technical matters of Zhouyi divination is also at-
tested by a variety of evidence. First of all, as we saw earlier, the
Zuozhuan records demonstrate patterns that no forger could create.
In particular, details in the divination accounts support a convinc-
ing division into early and late periods. I suspect as well that some
of the divination stories, especially the prophecies on the ruling
houses of Lu and Chen (Cases 1 and 3), were already well known to

90 Ibid., p. 338. The general in question is maligned in Cheng 2, Legge 339/345.
92 “Functional Disparities in the Socio-Political Traditions of Spring and Autumn
the Zuo audience, who might be expected to recognize both the prognostication and, perhaps, the terms of its interpretation. These, then, would not be subject to significant tampering. Finally, independent corroboration of the divination records comes from a text buried in 296 B.C., excavated in A.D. 281 with the Zhushu jinian 竹書記年, and subsequently lost. Du Yu says of it:

As well there is another text in one juan. It exclusively collects and annotates the crackmaking and stalkcasting matters of the Zuozhuan. From start to finish, in regard to the meaning (i) of the texts, it is completely the same as the Zuozhuan. This text was buried about the same time that scholars believe the Zuozhuan was composed. Du’s evaluation of it therefore suggests that the Zuo material was wholly consistent with fourth- and third-century views of what the Yi had been in the Spring and Autumn period.

In many ways the Zuozhuan is a remarkably precise record of the Yi. Even its conversations, so subject to our suspicion, create a Cui Wuzi who is bad in very specific ways. Yet, after all, the Zuo is a work of history—a thorough mixture of fact, narration, didacticism, entertainment, etc. Thus, at the very least, we have a superb Warring States understanding of how the Yi “must have been.” Mu Jiang’s queer speech fits in here too: even if she never spoke those words, the account still shows us how influential people imagined the role of the Zhouyi in the transition from Spring and Autumn to Warring States morality.

POLITICS, MORALITY AND FATE

Interpretation of the Yi is extremely sensitive to forces in its social environment. To conclude I will examine four ways in which conceptions of politics, morality and fate interacted with Zhouyi divination. The role each element assumes differs in each scenario, not merely by whim of the individual interpreter, but also reflecting the social forces of its times.

The early Spring and Autumn continued to be shaped by the Zhou world-view even as the political basis for its assumptions were

93 See Qu Wanli, XianQin HanWei Yili shuping, p. 66.
94 “Postface,” in Takezoe, 30.66.
increasingly eroded. In this world, politics, ritual propriety (li), and fate all derive their force and nature from tian, or heaven. These categories are so thoroughly integrated that politics and ritual propriety are nearly coterminous. Using the Yi in divination is thus presumably a ritual invocation of the same supra-human powers that are used to sanction current social values. In such a world it is nonsense to divine about something that is ritually incorrect.

This world looks extraordinarily restricted and naive from the perspective of someone like King Ling of Chu, who threw the turtle shell and cursed heaven when it would not grant him the overlordship. To King Ling, everything is politics, but politics is reducible to gain and loss. Morality, fate and texts have importance only in reference to that single value. King Ling’s crackmaking seeks to turn others’ belief systems to his own advantage, impressing the gullible with an auspicious divination. In the same way, Cui Wuzi of Case 4 believes that the Zhouyi might lend a certain lustre of legitimacy to his impending marriage. In neither case is divination used “to resolve doubts.”

In a similar example from the year 491, the Viscount of the Man tribe takes refuge from the Chu armies with an official of Jin. The Jin official calls the Rong tribe together, ostensibly
to set aside land to give to the Viscount of the Man to build a walled city. He was also to make cracks about it. When the Viscount of the Man was listening to the crackmaking, [the Jin official] seized him and his five chief officers and handed them over to the Chu army at Sanhu.

In this instance divination is used only because someone else might take it seriously and thus endanger himself. It is silly, these accounts seem to argue, to place faith in any power beyond human ken. Nonetheless it is still possible to know the future. Indeed, King Ling might claim that he is successful because he can accurately imagine what people may do next. Thus, when he learns of the death of his sons, he is made to remark: “I have killed the sons of many others. How could it not come to this!?”

Surely this is the Zuo author preaching moral retribution by putting words in the king’s mouth.

95 As divination is defined in Huan 11, Legge 55/56.
96 Ai 4, Legge 803/805.
But we might reinterpret such words from the king’s own point of view to mean, “What I have done to others, others will necessarily want to do to me.” For the king and the Zuo author would surely agree that it is men who make their own history.

To moralists like Huibo and the Zuo author, the king has an extremely shallow understanding of the world. (It is therefore also extremely dangerous.) Just as the king subsumes everything to loss and gain, in Huibo’s world morality is the only determinant of fate. Political acts produce results based simply upon their moral status. Wise men can make predictions because of their knowledge of morality. The Yi, we may presume, is an aid for those whose moral education is still somewhat defective. Thus the practice of politics and the Yi text are both integrated within a moral calculus, recalling their integration in the early Spring and Autumn. But then one’s only moral choice had been to follow or reject a role-specific propriety. Now moral choices are overwhelming, as ancient proprieties and hierarchies are increasingly ridiculed and cast aside.

Cases 9 and 10 present a fourth view, at least as far as the Yi is concerned. Here the Yi’s authority derives not from the access it provides to uncanny cosmic forces, but from its being a repository of the human cultural tradition. As such, it explains things such as the disease gu or the erstwhile prevalence of dragons. It does not compel anyone to action, nor does it seem to take any necessary stance on morality or politics.

Cases 4 through 10 show how bold users of the Zhouyi transform that text to meet their current needs. If we consider this evolution from the perspective of the Warring States and Han, its most important aspect is the development of the Yi into a text capable of attracting philosophical discourse. Even troublemakers like Cui Wuzi contribute to this evolution by posing issues that Chen Wenzi and his ilk are forced to address. The Ten Wings are of course the first great fruit of that transformation, and the creation of an Yi Jing in 136 B.C. its most famous political moment. We can see as well a foreshadowing of later discussions in the tension between two possible sources of the Yi’s authority: its special access to cosmic forces and its part in the manmade cultural tradition.

By its very complexity, the use of the Yi shows us specific ways in which Spring and Autumn society is complex. Using the Yi in
divination requires the engagement of a difficult text, a skilled diviner, and resourceful interpreters; it invokes hidden political motives, bends to social pressures, and is liable to various kinds of disruption. The instability of the Yi makes it especially vulnerable to these forces. This vulnerability in turn enhances the text’s usefulness as a historical object of study.

Appendix


Key to symbols

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