

The Ruler and the Families: Consolidation

The conflict between the ruler and the families for control of state policy, around which this book is arranged, had three phases. In the first, though there was ample fighting between the states, there was also a concern of the states to rationalize their sometimes patchy land holdings, to come to terms with the non-Sinitic peoples among whom they existed, to define and defend their boundaries. There were also attempts to define themselves externally, by experimenting with different alliances – all of them temporary; there were no permanent covenants in this period or later.

This first phase includes the first three reigns, ending with that of Syī-gūng, later esteemed the greatest of them all, at the end of whose reign Lǚ had to confront the reality of the dominant but distant state of Jìn. It was no longer sufficient for Lǚ to conduct itself solely as one of the eastern group of states.

Easily the most dramatic moment in this phase was the accession and death of the child ruler Mǐn-gūng, and the personalities behind the scenes (including Chǔng Fǔng, the native wife of Jwāng-gūng), who played a decisive part in the outcome – or more precisely, both outcomes, since Mǐn-gūng was soon killed, and another candidate set up to reign in his stead.

As a break from reading the straight chronicle, which can sometimes pall due to the continual reports of battles, we sometimes pause to extract from the record the career of some individual of note. CC includes no speeches, but these records of achievement have a drama of their own. They are indicated by insets in the basic chapter list.

§9. Yīn-gūng 隱公 (0722-0712), The Invasion Route, 00	35
§10. Hwán-gūng 桓公 (0711-0692) Jwāng-gūng 莊公 of Sùng, 00	00
§11. Jwāng-gūng 莊公 (0693-0662) Defining Boundaries 鄙, 00	00
§12. Mǐn-gūng 閔公 (0661-0662) Chǔng Fǔng 成風 of Jwān-yǔ, 00	00
§13. Syī-gūng 僖公 (0659-0627) Chí Hwán-gūng 齊桓公 invades Chǔ, 00 Gūngdǔ Swèi 公子遂 of Lǚ (1), 00 The Battle of Chǔng-pú 城濮, 00	00