

The Wú 吳 and Yuè 越 Chapters in Guóyǔ

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AAS (Washington DC, 6 April 2002)

Abstract. I here consider the directionality of two instances of extended contact between Guóyǔ or Discourses of the States, most of which seems to date from the early 03rd century, and Guǎnzǐ, the huge omnibus text that professes to unfold the doctrines of Guǎn Zhòng 管仲, the prime minister of Lord Huán of Qí 齊桓公, the contents of which cover a vast span of time, from mid Warring States to Hàn.

GZ 20. The first of these is between the eight-item Qíyǔ or Discourses of Qí, which is Book Six in Guóyǔ, and the chapter Xiǎo Kuāng 小匡, which is Item 20 in Guǎnzǐ. These texts consist of portrayals of Guǎn Zhòng giving advice to Lord Huán.

GZ 42. The second instance is between the eight-item Yuèyǔ Xià or Discourses of Yuè Part Two, which is the twenty-first or last book in Guóyǔ, and the chapter Shì 勢 or Force of Circumstance, which is Item 42 in Guǎnzǐ. The Yuèyǔ Xià items all show officer Fàn Lí 范蠡 giving advice to Gōu Jiàn 句踐, the king of Yuè. In the corresponding Guǎnzǐ chapter, however, Fàn Lí and Gōu Jiàn do not appear; the theories and much of the phraseology ascribed to him in Yuèyǔ Xià instead appear in disembodied form, in what amounts to a prose essay. But it would of course have been inappropriate for Fàn Lí to appear as an expounder of doctrine in a text that posits Guǎn Zhòng as the source of all its theories.

Preliminary Comparison. Restricting ourselves at first just to the two stretches of text in Guóyǔ, we notice at once that Qíyǔ and Yuèyǔ Xià, though worlds apart in thought and language, have a number of formal resemblances to each other. Each text consists of a series of conversations between a famous ruler and a famous advisor. Each begins with a long introductory section in which a stirring and dramatic legend provides a narrative setting for all that follows. In the introductory section of each text, an officer responds to the offer of a position by reciting a list of attributes with regard to which he fails to measure up to another named officer and accordingly recommends that officer for the position instead. In each text, the introductory section is followed by seven much shorter sections consisting mostly of argumentation, but with a resumption of narrative in the last two sections. In each text, the ruler in question is anxious to begin using his military might to gain political dominance over his neighbors, but is repeatedly restrained from doing so by the advisor, who insists that the time is not yet ripe for such a move and who gives advice with regard to what to do in the meantime. In each text the officer / advisor is not just a tactician, but a person with a developed theory of statecraft. Each text ends by showing the huge benefits that accrued to the ruler as a result of heeding his advisor's cautionary advice. All this suggests the possibility that the creator of Yuèyǔ Xià may have had Qíyǔ in mind as a sort of template for his creation.

I say that Yuèyǔ Xià may reflect the formal influence of Qíyǔ rather than the other way around, because it seems to me that there can be little doubt that Yuèyǔ Xià is the later of the two compositions. Together with the two books that precede it, Wúyǔ and Yuèyǔ Shàng, it comprises the Wú and Yuè sections of Guóyǔ, Books 19 through 21. These three books differ in style and ideology from all the other sections of Guóyǔ. Among the objective markers of stylistic difference are the following: (1) the term bǎixìng 百姓, which in all other parts of Guóyǔ means “the many clan chiefs,” means “the common people” in these chapters; (2) no references to Shī Jīng poems occur in the Wú and Yuè chapters, as compared with 28 such references elsewhere in the text; (3) the expression jūnwáng 君王 appears uniquely in these chapters as a term of address in speeches directed to the king of Juè; and (4) the strategies outlined by Fàn Lǐ in Yuèyǔ Xià are all based on a theory unique to that section, according to which heavenly, human, and earthly affairs must be in correct alignment before military action against another state can be undertaken. This style of thinking accords well both with Hàn notions of correlative cosmology and with Hàn notions of the regular alternation of yīn and yáng forces in nature, but is quite alien to concepts of statecraft current in the mid Warring States period.

But does Qiyǔ, embedded as it is in the first eighteen books of Guóyǔ, conform to the stylistic traits that we have posited as reflecting earliness? Not entirely, for unlike Zhōuyǔ, Lǚyǔ, Jìnyǔ, and so on, it does not have Shī Jīng allusions, perhaps due to the nature of the discourses. In other respects, however, it conforms well to the criteria. Five instances of bǎixìng occur in Qíyǔ, and the way the term is used there shows that, as in the rest of Guóyǔ excluding the Wú and Yuè chapters, there is a distinction in the author’s mind between bǎixìng, clans or clan chiefs, and mín, the unurnamed masses.

In Qíyǔ Item 1, for example, Bào Shú Yá says (1) that he does not come up to Guǎn Zhòng in showing benevolence to the people, mín 民, (2) that he does not come up to Guǎn Zhòng in exemplifying the trustworthiness through which the confidence of the bǎixìng 百姓 may be gained, and (3) that he does not come up to Guǎn Zhòng in standing at the head of troops, inciting the bǎixìng to redoubled courage. This seems to indicate that mín and bǎixìng were different in the services they rendered to the realm; the mín need to be kept compliant through kindness, but the confidence of the bǎixìng has to be secured through trustworthiness; otherwise they may not be reliable on the battlefield.

This impression of social difference is strengthened later in the same section when Guǎn Zhòng says “You must make the people (mín) prosperous . . . and show respect to the clan chiefs (bǎixìng); then the state will be at peace.” The distinction between mín and bǎixìng observed here occurs with equal strength in many other sections of Guóyǔ, excluding the Wú and Yuè chapters. Mín are associated with agricultural production, bǎixìng with military preparedness.

Qíyǔ and Xiǎo Kuāng

A comparison of the Qíyǔ passages cited above with their corresponding versions in the Xiǎo Kuāng chapter of Guǎnzǐ shows that the Xiǎo Kuāng author was less sensitive to the distinction between mín and bǎixìng than was the Qíyǔ author.

Where the Qíyǔ author has Bào Shù Yá say that he does not come up to Guǎn Zhòng in exemplifying the trustworthiness through which the confidence of the bǎixìng is gained, the Xiǎo Kuāng author substitutes zhūhóu 諸侯, the territorial lords, for bǎixìng, as if he could not imagine the bǎixìng to be important enough to be wooed through trustworthiness. He retains the word bǎixìng when Bào Shù Yá says that he does not compare with Guǎn Zhòng in inciting the bǎixìng to redoubled courage, but it seems likely, in view of the preceding substitution of zhūhóu for bǎixìng, that the latter term was largely equivalent to mín in the mind of the Xiǎo Kuāng author.

Further on, the section where Guǎn Zhòng says that the mín must be made prosperous and the bǎixìng be shown respect, the Xiǎo Kuāng author retains the terms mín and bǎixìng, but immediately vitiates the implied distinction between the two terms by adding a phrase with mìn that does not occur in the Qíyǔ version. Instead of concluding the thought with “then the state will be at peace (則國安矣),” he has Guǎn Zhòng say, “then the state will be prosperous and the mín will be at peace (則國富而民安矣). Again there is an assumed equivalence between mín and bǎixìng.

A bit further on in the text, in a passage that has no Qíyǔ analogue, the Xiǎo Kuāng author has Guǎn Zhòng say, “and you should make use of field hunts, and distribute rewards according to the results; that way the bǎixìng will grow skilled in military procedures.” In most of Guóyǔ, the bǎixìng do not have to be given practice in military matters; rather, one must gain and maintain their allegiance precisely because they are already practiced in such matters.

This tendency to confuse mín with bǎixìng, together with the much greater length and elaboration of Xiǎo Kuāng, is a strong indication that Xiǎo Kuāng is of later provenance than Qíyǔ. Given this later provenance, there are two scenarios that could have given rise to the many shared passages in the two texts. The first is that the Xiǎo Kuāng author directly adapted the Qíyǔ text, possibly making use of material from other sources. The other is that the Qíyǔ author and the Xiǎo Kuāng author both based their work on a non-extant source text. If that was the case, the Xiǎo Kuāng author did his work at a further remove in time from the source than the Qíyǔ author. We can at least be confident that the Qíyǔ author did not create his text by revising Xiǎo Kuāng. Any revising that occurred was in the other direction.

Yuèyǔ Xià

Turning now to Yuèyǔ Xià, the last chapter in Guóyǔ, we encounter a totally different style of thought and argumentation. Here, success in statecraft does not depend upon organizational reform or upon the satisfaction of the divergent aspirations of the mín and the bǎixìng. It depends rather upon making one’s actions conform to cosmological patterns. “Dealing with matters of state,” says Fàn Lí to the King of Wú,

consists in maintaining what is full, settling what is unsteady, and ordering affairs . . . Maintaining what is full is to act in accord with the nature of Heaven; settling what is unsteady is to act in accord with the nature of Men, and ordering affairs is to act in accord with the nature of Earth.

And so on.

The chapter Shì 勢 or “Force of Circumstance” in Guǎnzǐ (GZ 42) expounds the same theories of statecraft, mixing passages that are verbally connected with Yuèyǔ Xià with others of a generally Daoist nature that do not occur in Yuèyǔ Xià. The passages with shared phraseology follow no particular order; some near the beginning of Shì correspond with passages in the middle or end of Yuèyǔ Xià, and so on.

I now propose to examine the main instances of shared phraseology one by one, so as to observe more closely the relationship between the two texts. In the Guǎnzǐ text Shì, not far from the beginning, we have:

When opposition to integrity has just begun to sprout, and before Heaven and Earth have begun to manifest their signs, whoever launches a premature attack will be unsuccessful in his undertakings and unceasingly suffer injury (逆節萌生，天地未形，先爲之政，其事乃不成，繆受其刑).

The corresponding passage in Yuèyǔ Xià 4 goes:

The omen of opposition to integrity has begun to sprout, but at act before Heaven and Earth have manifested their response will cause the enterprise to fail and we will indiscriminately suffer injury. Let Your Highness bide his time for now (逆節萌生，天地未形，而先爲之政，其事是以不成，雜受其刑。王姑待之).

The Yuèyǔ Xià passage represents Fàn Lí’s response when Gōu Jiàn tells him that Fū Chāi of Wú has just had Wǔ Zǐ Xū killed, and asks if this is a sufficient indication that the time to attack Wú has arrived. The phrase nì jǐé “opposition to integrity” in Fàn Lí’s response thus refers to Fū Chāi’s opposition to the advice of Wǔ Zǐ Xū, an officer of integrity who offered loyal remonstrances to his ruler. This phrase, perfectly comprehensible in its Yuèyǔ Xià context, becomes inexplicable in Shì, where the detail of Fū Chāi’s rejection of Wǔ Zǐ Xū’s loyal advice does not occur. Allyn Rickett, the translator of Guǎnzǐ, in fact chooses not to deal with the word jíé “integrity” at all, rendering the line as “When opposition has begun to develop.” The anomalousness of the word jíé in this instance is a pretty clear indication that the author of Shì took this line from a piece with a narrative context such as we encounter in Yuèyǔ Xià, but then neglected to adapt the line to its new surroundings. Details like these can help us to perceive the direction of transmission from one text to another.

A second Shì passage, which directly follows the preceding, has a verbal analogue near the beginning of Yuèyǔ Xià. The Shì passage goes:

Heaven relies on men and the Sage relies on Heaven. Before the seasons of Heaven have produced their signs, do not become an aggressor. Before manmade indications have arisen, do not take the initiative (天因人，聖人因天。天時不作，勿爲客。人事不起，勿爲始).

The corresponding passage in Yuèyǔ Xià 1 is part of Fàn Lí’s initial exposition to the King of Yuè. It goes as follows:

Now the Sage acts according to the seasons; this is called “keeping the seasons.” If the seasons of Heaven have not produced their signs, he does not become an aggressor; if manmade indications have not yet appeared, he does not take the initiative (夫聖人隨時以行，是爲守時。天時不作，弗爲人客。任事不起，弗爲之始).

Here, the Yuèyǔ Xià passages speaks of “following the seasons” rather than “relying on Heaven,” but the passage follows a long exposition of the attributes of Heaven (it is full without overflowing, resplendent without being proud, and industrious without being boastful, etc) and the seasons are seen as part of the operations of Heaven. Elsewhere in the Yuèyǔ Xià passages, we have the vigorous negative fú 弗 instead of the negative imperative wù 勿 and two phrases that are one syllable longer than the ones in GZ 15: 弗爲人客 rather than 勿爲客 and 弗爲之始 rather than 勿爲始.

Approximately in the middle of GZ 15, we have a passage that goes as follows:

Of the ways to achieve success, expanding and contracting is most precious. Never forget the limits established by Heaven. Stop when you have exhausted all the possibilities (成功之道，贏縮爲寶。毋亡天極，究數而止).

The corresponding passage in Yuèyǔ Xià 6 goes:

Your servant has heard that in ancient times those who were skilled in using troops regarded expansion and contraction as regularly occurring phenomena, and regulated their strategies according to the four seasons. They did not pass beyond the limits established by Heaven and stopped when they had exhausted all the possibilities (臣聞古之善用兵者，贏縮以爲常，四時以爲紀。無過天極，究數而止).

Here again the Yuèyǔ Xià passage is a little easier to understand than the Shì passage because it occurs in conjunction with a discussion of something specific, in this case military strategy. An awareness of the limitations imposed on his operations by the waxing and waning of forces of nature will help a commander achieve success on the battlefield. The “waxing and waning” referred to in both passages is in fact a reference to yīn/yáng theory though the terms are not introduced here. These terms are introduced, however, in another passage that appears in both texts.

Shì has the following:

Thus it is said, Act in accordance with what the yīn and the yáng send forth, and follow Heaven and Earth’s constant standards. As things expand and contract, rely on these fluctuations to do what is proper (故曰，修陰陽之從，而道天地之常。贏贏縮縮，因而爲當).

The corresponding passage in Yuèyǔ Xià 1 goes:

With regard to matters beyond our borders, such as dealing with enemy states, making spur-of-the-moment decisions, acting in accordance with the laws of yīn and yáng, being compliant with the constant nature of Heaven and Earth (四封之外，敵國之制，立斷之事，因陰陽之恆，順天地之常) . . .

In the Yuèyǔ passage, Fàn Lí is saying that he is better at the activities mentioned than is Wén Zhǒng 文種, another Yuè court officer, and hence ought to be put in charge of external affairs in preference to that officer. The spectacle of a Spring and Autumn period officer, even one from Yuè living at the end of the era, speaking in terms of yīn and yáng theory is of course a striking anachronism of a sort that does not occur elsewhere in Guóyǔ. The anachronism becomes still more violent when, in Shì, the idea of acting in accordance with yīn and yáng is supposed to represent the thought of the early Spring and Autumn statesman Guǎn Zhòng.

The Shì passage goes on to say:

When deciding matters of life and death, rely on the signs of Heaven and Earth. Once Heaven and Earth have manifested their signs, the sage brings matters to completion (死死生生，因天地之形，天地之形，聖人成之).

The corresponding Yuèyǔ Xià passage continues the categories of activity wherein Fàn Lí is superior to Wén Zhǒng:

In relying upon the signs of Heaven, in deciding matters of life or death, in allowing Heaven to rely on men and sages to rely on Heaven, in allowing men to create things and Heaven to image them forth so that sages may bring them to completion (死生因天地之形，天因人，聖人因天，人自生之，天地形之，聖人因而成之) . . .

Finally, two phrases, “not offending against the seasons of Heaven nor disrupting the accomplishments of the people” (不犯天時，不亂民功), which occur not far from the end of Shì, appear in reverse order near the beginning of Yuèyǔ Xià 1, “not disrupting the accomplishments of the people nor acting against the seasons” (不亂民功，不逆天時), with nì “acting against” replacing fàn “offending.”

Shì ends anomalously with two sentences that refer, maladroitly, to the career of the ruler whom Guǎn Zhòng advised: “After three great civil conferences, everyone paid homage to righteousness and magnanimity; after three great military conferences, everyone abandoned military action and the use of force (大文三會，而貴義與仁，大武三會，而偃武與力). This seems to represent a desperate attempt on the part of someone, either the Shì author himself or a subsequent editor, to relate all the preceding cosmologically-based material to the actions and thought of the Qí statesman after whom the Guǎnzǐ as a whole is named.

What can be surmised about the provenance of Shì and Yuèyǔ Xià? Allyn Rickett is certain, on the basis of the appearance in Shì of a passage from Bái Xīn 白心 “Purifying the Mind,” GZ 38, a Chǔ chapter), and the duplication in Shì of passages found in the Shí Dà Jīng and Chēng texts prefixed to the Lǎozǐ B silk manuscript found at the Mǎwángduī site situated in the old area of Chǔ, that Shì itself originated in Chǔ and feels that it could be late enough to be the work of someone living at the court of Huánán before the death of its King, Líú Ān, in 0122. In further support of Rickett’s surmise, I would point out that there are strong ideological and textual connections between Shì and the concluding section of Chīmǐ 侈靡 or “Extravagance in Spending” (GZ 35), which Rickett on the basis of the presence in it of Chǔ rhyme categories also locates in the court of Huánán during the early Hàn. The following excerpt from the Chīmǐ epilogue is one of several passages that exemplify this connection: “When setting a plan in motion, you must understand the waxing and waning of Heaven and Earth’s vital forces, whether they are coming into balance or growing apart, and whether spring, autumn, winter, or summer is in the ascendancy.”

Finally, I would suggest that Yuèyǔ Xià, and very possibly all three books dealing with Wú and Yuè in Guóyǔ, were originally not part of Guóyǔ, but formed part of the cluster of Daoist and Huáng Lǎo writings produced at the Huánán court, some of which found their way into Guǎnzǐ and some of which now form the text known as Huánánzǐ.

Wú and Yuè material, given the geographical and historical proximity of those states to Chǔ, would have possessed particular topical relevance to this group, and both the peripherality and the southernness of the stories would have made them more amenable to Daoist reinterpretation than the well-defined and well-established tales of the states of the Central Plains. That this Wú/Yuè material later came to form the last three books of Guóyǔ seems to me to be the result of some Hàn editor's attempt to remedy an omission in that text and at the same time reduce the clutter in his library.

Comment

E Bruce and A Taeko Brooks, 2011

To these productive suggestions, we would like to add three alternatives.

The Mǎwángdwēi texts (tomb date 0168) and their latest source texts probably existed by 0170. How the writers of some sources were accommodated at the court of Lyóu Ān (r 0164-0122) is unclear to us. We appreciate Allyn Rickett's work on the Gwǎndž, and would not wish it to be judged on its Jì-syà and Hwánán enthusiasts. The Gwǎndž group needed no home at Jì-syà or Hwánán; it had its own continuity; so much so that later chapters were written to comment on earlier ones. The Gwǎndž was an enterprise unto itself, not demonstrably merged with any other.

As Yates' annotations show, the MWD Hwáng/Lǎu texts echo many sources, among which GY 21 (Ywè Yǔ Syà) stands highest; Dàu/Dý Jīng is next. Other late works are Hàn (not Chín) chapters of Hǔgwǎndž, Wnǔdž, Gwěigǔdž, and early chapters of Hán Fēidž. Earlier works include the Gwǎndž meditation texts GZ 49 (04c), 36-38 (03c) and many GZ statecraft chapters, Analects (04c parts), Sywǎndž (early 03c), and Jwǎngdž (03c parts). The Hwáng/Lǎu texts are thus chronologically omnivorous. They are the next to last attempt of which we know (Hwánándž is the last) to synthesize Dàuist statecraft. The use of a work by the Hwáng/Lǎu texts is thus no guide to the date of that work, other than to provide a terminus ante quem of 0168.

That the Wú and Ywè sections of Gwó Yǔ are outside the original c0300 design of GY seems to us very likely. The original plan (GZ 1-18) included Jōu (and Lǔ as preserving Jōu tradition), but otherwise only an early list of the Five Hegemons: J̀ng (nominal), Chí, Jìn, Chín, and Chǔ. Later conceptions (eg Sywǎndž 11, c0265?) extended the list of possible Hegemons to non-Sinitic Wú and Ywè; it was probably under that influence that the Gwó Yǔ added chapters giving a consecutive account of the wars of Wú and Ywè, ending in the destruction of Wú by Ywè (GY 19-20). In the military enthusiasm of early Hàn, it was likely enough that a work celebrating the military genius of Fàn Lí of Ywè would appear; it has been suggested that this work is, or stands behind, GY 21. In any case, that chapter sits uneasy after GY 19-20: its story goes back partway into GY 20 and starts over from there. We note also that the MWD Hwáng/Lǎu texts are aware only of GY 21, not of GY 19-20. For Gwó Yǔ, we would then see the sequence GY 1-18 (c0300), 19-20 (c0250?), and 21 (before 0168).

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