

## *Preface*

If one had to summarize the history of China in two words, what would the two words be? Our answer is: “It changes.”

China’s classical period has two phases. Following the 0771 collapse of Jōu, the former feudatories of Jōu, now merely a collection of palace states, fought each other during the three centuries traditionally called “Spring and Autumn.”<sup>1</sup> In the following “Warring States” period, the 05c to the late 03c, the larger of them remade themselves into bureaucratic resource states, shifted from elite chariot forces to mass infantry armies, and at last fought their war to a finish.<sup>2</sup> The result, achieved in 0221, was a unified state under the rule of ruthless Chín. This state, or Empire, we may for the first time properly call “China.”<sup>3</sup>

This Warring States transition is one of the major events in world history. It is little known outside Sinology, and it is misrepresented *within* Sinology by the legends which were being woven around it even as it happened – new tracts put out as ancient texts, new wisdom attributed to ancient sages – all to confer an ancient pedigree on the new ideas which the effort of the time required.

It has been suggested that our studies of the date and nature of the classical texts could be drawn on to make the Warring States transition more available to modern readers. The present book is the result. Ancient China is much less amply documented than, say, ancient Greece. From that modest material, only a small sample can be included here. We offer the book nevertheless, as a set of readings that is philosophically more diverse than usual, with a commentary giving our best sense of their context and importance. For the historically minded reader, we have sometimes hinted at wider perspectives by noticing parallel situations in ancient and modern times.

The current world is not our subject, but worlds are best understood in terms of the past out of which they come. There may thus be contemporary relevance in a book like this one, which aims to present classical China in its own voice: as nearly as possible, within the limits of present knowledge and present space, “as it really was.”

<sup>1</sup>The name derives from the Chūn/Chyōu 春秋, the court chronicle of Confucius’s state of Lǔ. As preserved, it covers the years from 0722 to an uncanny event in 0481.

<sup>2</sup>Specialists disagree on where “Warring States” begins. We find 0479 (the death of Confucius) convenient, but elements of the Warring States transition are already visible decades earlier: Confucius himself was a key transitional figure. Our chapters are subdivided by BC centuries, which match the realities moderately well. For the lack of a comparable transformation in classical Greece, see Brooks and Lombardi **Peace**.

<sup>3</sup>We use the term “Sinitic” for the Chinese peoples before the Empire. It will appear in the following pages that non-Sinitic states and peoples also made a contribution.

**Conventions.** Keyword citations are expanded in the Works Cited section at the end of the book. “0312” is “312 BC,” a universal convention that works also in French and German, as the well-intentioned “BCE” does not; “04th century” may be abbreviated as “04c” and so on. “Circa” dates (such as c0348) are best-guess positions within a system of relative dates. Chinese words are spelled in the Common Alphabetic system, which has been designed to be less misleading for beginners than other systems; it has the further advantage that it is compatible with the universally used Hepburn system for Japanese. It follows the formula “consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian,” plus these conventions for vowels with no fixed English spelling: -æ as in “cat,” -v [compare the linguist’s inverted  $\Lambda$ ] as in “gut,” -r as in “fur,” -z as in “adz,” -yw (after l or n, simply -w) for “umlaut u.” Tones are hīgh, rísing, lǒw, fàlling. A table comparing CA and two other systems is given at p239. Pronunciations are modern standard Chinese, but initial ng- has been restored to distinguish the states Wèi 衛 and Ngwèi 魏, both now pronounced “Wèi.” Note also the early *state* of Hán 韓 (rising tone, as in a question) and the later Hàn 漢 *Dynasty* (falling tone, as in an exclamation).

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**Dedication.** For all its obvious differences, several of our consultants did pick up a certain resemblance between this book and F W Mote’s standard *Intellectual Foundations of China*. Fritz knew we meant to write a book like this, and he approved. He thought well of our researches on the classical texts, and felt that one day our work, such as it might prove to be, would replace his. He was a very generous man. This book is dedicated to him.

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