

THE *CHUNQIU FANLU* 春秋繁露:
RESEARCH ON THE TEXT AND ITS FIRST COMPLETE
WESTERN (ENGLISH) TRANSLATION

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Although the *Chunqiu fanlu* traditionally ascribed to Han dynasty scholar Dong Zhongshu (c. 195 – 115 BCE) is considered to be an extremely important book for the development of Chinese ethical and philosophical thought, it has been long neglected and has lacked proper non-Chinese scholarly attention. Up to the 2016 translation by Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, only partial translations of the *Chunqiu fanlu* had been published in English. Part of the reason for the neglect of the study of the *Chunqiu fanlu* and consequently its late translation lies in the complexity of the text, connected to a number of obscurities about its origin, authorship and nature. Sarah Queen and John Major have made an important step forward in redressing this neglect. They produced a complete English translation and study of the *Chunqiu fanlu*. Besides focusing on the first complete English translation of the *Chunqiu fanlu*, this article reviews central questions and problems regarding that text and attempts to summarize the current state of research on it.

Keywords: *Chunqiu fanlu*, Dong Zhongshu, Han dynasty, Confucian thought

1. A Review of Translation Work and Research on the *Chunqiu fanlu*

Although the pre-modern Chinese philosophical work *CQFL* is considered to be extremely important for the development of Chinese ethical and philosophical thought, this political treatise has long been neglected, and has not been paid

proper non-Chinese scholarly attention.¹ Despite the importance of *CQFL* in the Chinese tradition, until the 2016 translation by Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, only partial translations of the *CQFL* had been published in English (Sarah A. Queen, Mark Csikszentmihaly, Michael Loewe, Benjamin A. Elman, Wing-Tsit Chan (Chen Rongjie 陳榮捷) (1901 – 1994), Derk Bodde (1909 – 2003), Ivana Buljan), French (Anne Cheng, Woo Kang, Song Nianxu 頌年徐 (1902 – 1981), Marianne Bujard), German (Otto Franke (1863 – 1946), Robert H. Gassmann, Joachim Gentz), Russian (V. V. Sokolov [ed.], Yan Khinshun), and Japanese (Hihara Toshikuni 日原利国). *Baihua* translations have also been provided by Lai Yanyuan 賴炎元, Zhou Guidian 周桂鈿, and Yan Li 閻麗. Sarah A. Queen's and John S. Major's *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn: Attributed to Dong Zhongshu* is the first complete English translation of the *CQFL* with commentary.

As regards the study of *CQFL*, several important studies have recently been published in Western languages: Anne Cheng, *Étude sur le confucianisme Han : l'élaboration d'une tradition exégétique sur les classiques*; Gary Arbuckle, "Restoring Dong Zhongshu: An Experiment in Historical and Philosophical Reconstruction" (unpublished dissertation); Sarah A. Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, According to Tung Chung-shu*; Joachim Gentz, *Das Gongyang zhuan. Auslegung und Kanonisierung der Frühlings- und Herbstannalen (Chunqiu)*; Michael Loewe, *Dong Zhongshu, a "Confucian" Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu*.

The translation and study by Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major is a huge step forward in filling this gap and serves as a platform for further study on this text and its themes. As the translators state, they hope that their work "will serve as a springboard for a revival of scholarly attention to this fascinating and difficult collection of *Luxuriant Gems*".²

¹ I am grateful to Professor Bart Dessein from Ghent University and Professor Goran Kardaš from the University of Zagreb for their comments on an earlier version of this article. Also, I am indebted to Stephanie Staffen for her valuable comments during the process of proofreading my article. Finally, I am grateful to Martina Herbst from the journal *Asian and African Studies* for her editorial work.

² QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 36. Queen and Major provide not only a complete translation of *CQFL*, but also a detailed study of its content, dating, and authorship. As the translators state, the book is based on and developed out of the arguments presented in Sarah A. Queen's *From Chronicle to Canon* (1996, based on Sarah Queen's Harvard University doctoral dissertation). The book consists of a 36-page introduction, 578 pages of translated text with descriptions of individual chapters and discussions of their dating and authorship (37–615), and 31

2. The Problematic Nature of the Text of the *Chunqiu fanlu*

Part of the reason for the limited research on *CQFL* and, consequently, its late translation lies in the complexity of the text; due to a number of obscurities about its origin and nature, *CQFL* is considered one of the most problematic texts in early medieval Chinese history.³ Firstly, its authorship is debated; secondly, its dating is problematic; thirdly, the text includes materials that postdate its supposed author; and finally, the collection is rather poor in quality, with many fragmentary chapters. Traditional scholarship attributes the text to the Former Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, (195 – 115 BCE per Arbuckle, Queen and Major, 198 – ca. 107 BCE per Loewe). Dong Zhongshu was an exegete of the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (Gongyang traditions), a dominant early Han commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) that was intended to explain its meaning. Tradition credits him with playing a tremendous role in the supposed establishment of Han Confucianism during the reign of Emperor Wu Di 武帝 (156 – 87 BCE). Three memorials he presented to Emperor Wu were supposed to have played a decisive part in the promotion of Confucianism.⁴ However, an evaluation of sources that contain information about Dong Zhongshu raises doubts as to his role in and contributions to the establishment of Confucianism. The earliest source on Dong's career and life is no more than a terse biographical note on Dong in the official Han history *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*), written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 – 90 BCE) and his father Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE).⁵ It does not mention Dong's memorials, which are claimed to have played a decisive part in the establishment of Confucianism. On the other

pages of appendices (617–648). In the introduction to every group of chapters, the translators describe the content and the structure of every chapter and examine its dating and authorship.

³ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 13.

⁴ Queen and Major offer highly useful appendices at the end of their book, including a full translation of Dong Zhongshu's memorials. QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 617–648.

⁵ For the detailed examination of Dong's career and reputation, see LOEWE, M. *Dong Zhongshu, a "Confucian" Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu*, pp. 43–83. Queen and Major also provide an account of Dong's life and career, drawing on two Han official histories, the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. However, this is mostly a repetition of information contained in Professor Queen's previous book. At the end of their book Queen and Major attach a full translation of Dong Zhongshu's biographies in the two aforementioned historical texts.

hand, *Shiji* devotes more space to Dong's contemporary *Gongyang* scholar Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (ca. 200 –121 BCE) and the memorials he submitted to Emperor Wu. Paradoxically, “the Biography of Dong Zhongshu” in the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Dynastic History of the Han*) 56, written by Ban Gu 班固 (32 – 92) a century and a half after Dong's lifetime, contains Dong's three memorials to Emperor Wu and portrays him as an architect of Han Confucianism. This may indicate that Dong's reputation as a master of Han Confucianism was constructed during the period between these the two historical sources.

In addition, it is also rather problematic that, although *CQFL* is attributed to Han scholar Dong Zhongshu, no references are made to any book by an author with this name during the Han dynasty. Han sources attribute three works to Dong Zhongshu; *CQFL* is not one of them. The *Hanshu* lists a book entitled *Dong Zhongshu* 董仲舒 with 123 chapters (*pian*) and one entitled *Gongyang Dong Zhongshu zhi yi* 公羊董仲舒治獄 (*The Gongyang (scholar) Dong Zhongshu Judges Cases*) with 16 chapters, while the *Shiji* mentions a *Zai yi zhi ji* 災異之記 (*Records of Disasters and Anomalies*) attributed to an author with this name.⁶ It is noteworthy that these three works gradually disappeared from the historical record after the Han. The text under the title *Chunqiu fanlu* first began to appear during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502 – 557). Since then, its content has not changed significantly. The Song dynasty's *Chongwen Zongmu* 崇文總目, edited by Wang Yaochen 王堯臣 et al. between 1034 – 1045, raises the first doubts that the book was authored by Dong Zhongshu.⁷ From this time onward, Chinese scholars have questioned its authorship.

3. The Composite Nature of the Text of the *Chunqiu fanlu*

Most contemporary scholars (Keimatsu, Mitsuo 慶松光雄; Dai Junren 戴君仁; Tanaka, Masami 田中麻紗己; Fukui, Shigemasa 福井重雅; Arbuckle, Gary; Queen, Sarah; Gentz, Joachim; Nylan, Mychal; Cheng, Anne; Loewe, Michael; Buljan, Ivana) believe that ascribing the text to the historical Dong is questionable. They hold the view that *CQFL* consists of highly heterogeneous material. Some of the chapters may have been authored by Dong Zhongshu, yet some of its writings certainly originate from different sources. It is a collection

⁶ *Hanshu* 漢書, juan 30, p. 1714. *Shiji*, juan 121, p. 3128.

⁷ *Chongwen zong mu* 1.29b. For more about the *Chongwen zongmu*, see in LOEWE, M. *Dong Zhongshu, a “Confucian” Heritage and the Chunqiu Fanlu*, p. 210.

of material from early Han and even post-Han scholarly work. The content of individual chapters may have been authored by more than one author. It is a post-Han composite work assembled by an anonymous compiler. According to Queen and Major the *CQFL* is “a collection of very disparate materials, composed by several people over a period spanning several generations”. They acknowledge that some of its content refers to the *Chunqiu*. However, the remainder of the text lacks any reference to the *Chunqiu*.⁸ Some parts of the text may be attributed to Dong, whereas other parts originated from various sources. The text was most probably assembled by “an anonymous compiler between the fourth and sixth century C. E. who brought together a number of writings associated with Dong Zhongshu and other masters and disciples of Gongyang learning”.⁹

Queen and Major claim that the text was assembled for the purpose of collecting and preserving miscellaneous texts related to the *Gongyang* school of *Chunqiu* interpretation. It documents the transmission, development, and intellectual influence of Gongyang learning. Thus, it is a “record of a living and thriving tradition of exegesis, based on the *Gongyang* Commentary to the *Spring and Autumn* that addresses some of the most pressing concerns of the Han era”.¹⁰ Michael Loewe rightly criticized this position, warning that treating the *textus receptus* within the context of China’s literary and intellectual development as a whole means dismissing the issues of its authenticity and dating. He argues that “the recognition that it includes material from different sources dated at various times throws doubt on how far the book should be taken as representing a single mode of thought, or as the conclusions reached by a group of scholars in agreement.” As Loewe suggested, “A statement or analysis of how *Gongyang* 公羊 learning differed from that of other groups of scholars would be of great help to readers.”¹¹

4. The *Chunqiu fanlu* and “Han Confucianism”

The pervading assumption regarding the intellectual history of the Western Han dynasty was that Confucianism is its dominant system of thought. For instance,

⁸ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 1–2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹ LOEWE, M. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*. Attributed to Dong Zhongshu. Edited and translated by Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major (ed. and trans.). In *Journal of Chinese Studies* (中國文化研究所學報), 2017, Vol. 64, p. 321.

in his article “The Victory of Han Confucianism” published in 1983 in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Homer H. Dubs remarked: “It was during the Former Han period that Confucianism developed from being the teaching of a few pedants in semi-retirement, at the end of the Chou period, to become the official philosophy of the government, which had to be adopted by anyone who hoped to enter public life. This victory set Confucianism on its way to become the dominating feature of Chinese culture and to affect profoundly a large portion of humanity.”¹² This assumption was recently called into question by several scholars. Robert Eno, Michael Nylan, and Michael Loewe persuasively argued that describing and characterising ideas/writings/practices/system of thought as “Confucian” in Han China is problematic. These scholars have avoided using the term “Confucianism”, pointing out that it is “an abstraction and a generalization”,¹³ and burdened “with ambiguities and irrelevant traditional associations”.¹⁴ Instead of using the term “Confucian”/“Confucianism”, they suggested the term “Ruism”/“Ruists”, or “orthodox”, “official”, “classicists” and “literati”. The English term “Confucian” and “Confucianism” was coined by interpreters of China to translate the Chinese term *Rujia* 儒家. The term *ru* 儒, originally meaning “softness“, “yielding”, until the twentieth century did not refer to a coherent set of ideas, but it referred to a social category; a cultured person and certain scholars. As Michael Nylan stressed, “The original term *Rujia* (classicists) indicated not a precise moral orientation or body of doctrines, but a professional training with the general goal of state service. Not all Ru, in short, were devotees of the Confucian Way identified with the Ancients.”¹⁵ “Han Confucianism” is not a coherent system of thought and practice; rather, it contains different and even contradictory approaches to social, political and cosmic issues. As Nylan pointed out, “beginning in Han state-sponsored classical learning – often dubbed “Confucian” when “orthodox” or “official” would be more appropriate – drew freely on the teachings of many non-Confucian thinkers, the better to cope with the complexities (many unforeseen by Confucius) of ruling an empire.”¹⁶ Queen and Major agree with the scholars who argued that characterising ideas/writings/practices as “Confucian” in Han China is problematic. Following the aforementioned

¹² Dubs, H. H. The Victory of Han Confucianism. In *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1938, Vol. 58, No 3, p. 435.

¹³ NYLAN, M. *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, p. 3.

¹⁴ ENO, R. *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*, p. 7.

¹⁵ NYLAN, M. *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

scholars, Queen and Major emphasize that the idea “that Dong Zhongshu presided over a triumph of “Confucianism” during the reign of Emperor Wu was illusory”.¹⁷ Despite their critique, Queen and Major opted for a conventional translation of the term *ru* “Confucian” and referred to Dong Zhongshu as “Confucian.”

5. The Subject Matter of the *Chunqiu fanlu*

CQFL is a lengthy, exceptionally rich and comprehensive compendium. It is a collection of seventeen books (*juan* 卷) consisting of 82 chapters (*pian* 篇), of which 79 have survived. Its composite nature is apparent in the organization of the text, which contains a great diversity of subject matter and content. There are different ways of organizing its structure, proposed by scholars. Based on both its content and structure, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1902 or 1903 – 1982) has proposed that the *CQFL* consists of three major divisions: Dong’s scholarship on the *Chunqiu*, Dong’s philosophy of Heaven, and Dong’s discussion of sacrifice and court ceremony. Sarah Queen and John S. Major propose their own division of the text, which differs from the traditional organisation of the text into “books” and “parts”. Taking into account its composite nature, they propose arranging the text according to the principles that guided its anonymous compiler. They argue that the chapters are linked thematically and grouped around a common subject matter. According to them, the text embodies some conscious order in its arrangement: “the groups of chapters move in a somewhat orderly and progressive manner from the beginning to the end of the text”.¹⁸ An arrangement of the text according to a common theme has also been proposed by several other scholars, i.e. in Gary Arbuckle’s dissertation “Restoring Dong Zhongshu: An Experiment in Historical and Philosophical Reconstruction”.¹⁹ Queen and Major divide the text into eight “literary units”. These units are designated by the translators as: (1) Exegetical Principles (chapters 1–17); (2) Monarchical Principles (ch. 18–22); (3) Regulatory Principles (ch. 23–28); (4) Ethical Principles (ch. 29–42); (5) Yin-Yang Principles (ch. 43–57); (6) Five-Phase Principles (ch. 58–64); (7) Ritual Principles (ch. 65–76); (8) Heavenly Principles (ch. 77–82).

¹⁷ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁹ ARBUCKLE, G. *Restoring Dong Zhongshu (BCE 195 – 115): an Experiment in Historical and Philosophical Reconstruction*, pp. 447–496.

The first unit, “Exegetical Principles,” consists of the first seventeen chapters, which end with a postface (“Yu xu 俞序”). According to the translators, it elucidates the principles of the *Spring and Autumn* through the lens of the Gongyang commentary. These chapters reflect the scholarly interpretation of the *Chunqiu* based on the *Gongyang*. The translators divide this group into two subgroups (chapters 1–5 and 6–17), which do differ in their literary form and exegetical approach. They note that “these first five chapters represent instructional sessions between a Gongyang master and his disciples”, whereas chapters 6–17 elucidate the principles of the Spring and Autumn “by means of prose essays in which the voice of a *Gongyang* master (or the voices of several masters) sets out the foundational claim concerning the *Spring and Autumn*”.²⁰ Like Queen and Major, Joachim Gentz observed different exegetical approaches in this unit. Gentz divide this unit into three parts based on their exegetical language, methodology and topics. The exegesis in the first nine chapters “tries to supplement shortcomings of the Gongyang commentary and tries to solve contradictions in it by differentiating certain exegetical rules and by adding one”.²¹ In contrast to the first nine chapters, chapters 10 through 12 focus on defining the principles of the *Chunqiu*. Chapters 13–16 form a compilation which contain heterogeneous material without exegetical innovations.

The “Monarchical Principles” unit consists of five chapters that address the theory of rulership, focusing on techniques for maintaining the power and authority of the ruler. The translators point out that what differentiates these chapters from the other chapters of *CQFL* is that they contain very little reference to Confucian scripture and are not based on close readings of the *Spring and Autumn*. In addition, they note that these chapters use distinctive terminology, such as spirit/spiritlike (*shen* 神), brilliant (*ming* 明), non-action (*wu wei* 無爲), quintessence/quintessential *qi* (*jing* 精/*jing qi* 精氣). Whereas Queen’s previous book affiliates this unit (together with chapters 77 and 78) with the much-debated tradition known as “Huang-Lao” 黃老, in this book the translators pay attention to the criticism of many scholars regarding the “Huang-Lao” tradition. As Michael Loewe notes, “the political ideas of the Huang-Lao school lacked formulation or precision”.²² Following the criticism regarding the “Huang-Lao” tradition, the translators avoid this term. Regarding chapters 18 to

²⁰ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 43–44.

²¹ GENTZ, J. *Das Gongyang zhuan: Auslegung und Kanonisierung der Frühlings – und Herbstannalen (Chunqiu)*, p. 57.

²² LOEWE, M. *Faith, Myth and Reason in Han China. Four Attitudes of Mind*, p. 149.

22, Queen and Major state that they preserve materials that are “best understood as an expression of the syncretic stream of political thought that enjoyed imperial patronage during the formative years of the Han”.²³ Whereas Queen’s previous book argued that these chapters are grouped on the basis of their Huang-Lao provenience, in the current book, the translators show that their shared topic is what holds these chapters together. They note that “these chapters present different perspectives on power and position, as well as different means to achieve them”.²⁴ This conclusion is in line with my own view, derived from studying the philosophical content of chapters 18 to 22 for my doctoral dissertation.²⁵

The third group, “Regulatory Principles” (chapters 23 to 28), consists of six chapters concerned with regulations the ruler should observe when governing his realm and managing his bureaucracy after receiving the Mandate of Heaven.

“Ethical Principles” (chapters 29 to 42) are devoted to ethical themes/subjects. They emphasize fundamental virtues and ideas esteemed by Confucian scholars, such as humaneness *ren* 仁, righteousness *yi* 義, wisdom *zhi* 智, virtue *de* 德, the rectification of names *zheng ming* 正名, and filial piety *xiao* 孝. They discuss these virtues in relation to the *Spring and Autumn* and the *Classic of Filial Piety*.²⁶

The “Yin-Yang Principles” group focuses on the cosmology of yin-yang and the four seasons, describing Heaven’s Way. These chapters “propose cosmic cycles and patterns to be emulated by the ruler, prescribing his emotions, actions, and policies in accordance with the yin-yang characteristics of the seasons throughout the year”, argue Queen and Major.²⁷

The “Five-Phase Principles” chapters develop the idea of governance based on Five Phase *wu xing* 五行 cosmology. Following cosmological principles, they derive political norms and policies that should be used by a ruler.

“Ritual Principles”, constituted of twelve thematically linked chapters, describes various aspects of ritual obligations and sacrifice, such as suburban sacrifices, seasonal sacrifices performed at the ancestral temple, rituals such as presenting gifts to superiors, and procedures for bringing and stopping rain.²⁸

²³ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 194.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁵ BULJAN, I. *Elements of the Syncretist Tradition in the Chunqiu Fanlu’s Chapters on the Theory of Rulership*, Ph. D. dissertation, p. 318.

²⁶ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 289.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 491.

The authors deal with these subjects from the perspective of the Gongyang commentary on the *Spring and Autumn*.

The last unit of the text, “Heavenly Principles” (chapters 77 to 82) consists of five rather corrupted chapters. They are grouped around the idea of Heaven as the source of political and moral principles. They correlate the way of Heaven with the physical cultivation and governing the country. The translators pointed out that they have “affinities with the cosmological chapters found earlier in the *Chunqiu fanlu*”.²⁹ Su Yu provided a coherent reconstruction of these chapters.

Some of the chapters, which Queen’s previous book places in one unit, have now been relocated to another unit. For example, chapters 23–37 in her previous book belong to the “Exegetical Chapters”, while in this book they belong to the “Regular Principles” group; chapters 77 and 78 formerly belonged to the “Huang-Lao” chapters, but now belong to the “Heavenly Principles” group; chapters 41 and 79–82 were formerly designated as “Yin Yang” chapters, but now chapter 41 belongs to the “Ethical Principles” group while chapters 79–82 belong to the “Heavenly Principles” group; chapters 38 and 42 formerly belonged to the “Five Phase” group, but now belong to the “Ethical Principles” group.³⁰

6. The Authorship and Dating of the *Chunqiu fanlu*

In his insightful article on dating the *Book of Lord Shang*, Yuri Pines noted “Few issues in studies of early China arouse so much controversy as the question of the dating of major pre-imperial (i.e. pre-221 B.C.E.) texts. It is fair to conclude that on this topic the scholarly community in China, Japan, and the West agrees primarily to disagree.”³¹ Yuri pointed out that there is no commonly acceptable set of dating determinants which may be employed in investigating the dates nor is there any agreement on which factors should be given priority in determining the text’s date.³² The problem of the lack of a single commonly accepted methodology for dating texts is also apparent in studies concerning the dating of the *Chunqiu fanlu*. There are various

²⁹ Ibid., p. 555.

³⁰ QUEEN, S. A. *From Chronicle to Canon. The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, according to Tung Chung-shu*, p. 77.

³¹ PINES, Y. Dating a Pre-Imperial Text: The Case Study of the Book of Lord Shang. In *Early China*, 2016, Vol. 39, p. 145.

³² Ibid., pp. 146–147.

approaches and different results regarding that issue. Queen and Major approach the issue of dating and authorship by taking both external and internal evidence into account. They give a critical account of the analyses of other scholars, confidently arguing for their own position. They conclude that “the circumstances under which different chapters and sections of the CQFL were composed, and the audiences for which they were composed were not necessarily the same”.³³

While there is no definite answer to the question of what parts of *CQFL* can be attributed to Dong Zhongshu with certainty, the translators suggest that the first five chapters of the text contain materials associated with the historical Dong Zhongshu and are most likely Dong’s work, as well as some individual chapters dispersed throughout the text: chapter 30 (section 2) and chapter 32 in the “Ethical Principles” group as well as three chapters from the “Ritual Principles” group – chapter 71 and the chapters for bringing and stopping rain, chapters 74 (section 2) and 75. Regarding the parts of the text which are most likely Dong’s work, the translators say that “some are perhaps best understood as meant to teach students; others appear to derive from various court debates and official communications; and still others seem to offer advice to the emperor and address his concerns”.³⁴

In regard to the first five chapters, the translators give several arguments to support their view. Firstly, they use the argument from the content. As the translators say, these chapters describe and evaluate affairs chronicled in the *Spring and Autumn*. They observed that a singular voice appears in these chapters. The translators compared the content of these chapters with a description of Dong’s writings in *Han shu* and his three memorials to Emperor Wu concluding that “the ideas and arguments throughout the first five chapters of the CQFL are consistent with what we know of Dong Zhongshu and the ideas associated with him in other sources”.³⁵ The translators furthermore pointed out that the first five chapters address concerns directly relevant to the reigns of Emperor Jing 景 (188 – 141 BCE, b. 157 – 141 BCE) and Wu and “their suggested resolutions are consistent with those found in Dong’s memorials”. In addition, the absence of Five Phase concepts and influence from apochryphical texts supports an early Western Han date. Finally, Queen and Major point to the titles of two chapters of this group. Ban Gu in *Han shu* 56 describes and lists Dong’s writing. The titles of chapters 2 (“Jade Cup”) and 3 (“Bamboo Grove”) of the *textus receptus*, are listed as Dong’s works in *Han*

³³ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 503.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

shu. And their content “are absolutely consistent with Ban Gu’s description”. Su Yu suggests that chapter one, titled as “Luxuriant Gems” was later attached to the compendium as a whole.³⁶

Whereas Queen and Major consider the first five chapters to form “a book within a book” which appears “to be the records of doctrinal expositions of the Gongyang Commentary”, Gary Arbuckle offers a different viewpoint. As for the first five chapters of the *CQFL*, he argues that they are unlikely to be the work of Dong. Comparing the content of these five chapters with Han descriptions of his thought, he shows that there are many similarities. However, there are also many features and points that do not coincide with what we know about Dong’s teachings from Han sources. These inconsistencies raise doubts which Arbuckle uses as evidence that these chapters cannot be ascribed to Dong Zhongshu. While admitting, in a footnote, that they agree with the analysis of Gary Arbuckle, the translators draw a different conclusion, stating that they “do not believe that identifying a handful of inconsistencies between the first five chapters of the *Chunqiu fanlu* and Dong’s memorials provides sufficient evidence to question the traditional attribution of this text”.³⁷ Holding the view that the first group of chapters contain the materials most closely associated with the historical Dong Zhongshu, in order to deal issues of dating and authorship, the translators occasionally compare the content of other chapters with the content in the first group of *CQFL* chapters.

As for the chapters 30 and 32 Queen and Major point to the *Hanshu* 56 and historical context as evidence that they are the work of Dong. Chapters 30.2 and 32 are almost identical to the passages from Dong’s original memorial to Emperor Wu preserved in *Han shu* 56.³⁸ They are quoted in Ban Gu’s biography of Dong Zhongshu in *Hanshu* 56, which attests to their early provenance and the reliability of its attribution to Dong. The translators point out that Chapter 30.2 which deals with omenology in its argument and style closely resemble passages in Dong’s first memorial to Emperor Wu in *Han shu* where he grounds his omenology in the *Spring and Autumn* and in Confucius’ authorial intentions. As for chapter 32, it is a record of an “official communication” between King Yi of Jiangdu (江都易王 Jiangdu Yi Wang) (died 128 BCE) and Dong Zhongshu.

Similar to chapter 32, chapters 71 and 75 relate to incidents in which Dong participated. Ban Gu’s biography provides the background notes for these

³⁶ SU, YU, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* [Verification of the Meanings in the Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn], pp. 1–31.

³⁷ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 64.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

incidents. Chapter 71, “An official Response Regarding the Suburban Practice” presents itself as a formal report of an interview between an emissary of Emperor Wu Zhang Tang and Dong Zhongshu that happened around 123 B.C. In this interview Dong Zhongshu gives an official response to Emperor Wu’s questions emphasizing the suburban sacrifice to Heaven as the emperor’s most important rite of veneration. As for chapters 74 (section 2) and 75, they deal with rites for inducing rain and stopping rain based on yin-yang cosmological views. Chapter 75 bears a note that may show that Dong was personally concerned. The translators quote the *Shiji* which records that Dong Zhongshu, after being appointed the administrator to Jiangdu, developed procedures for seeking and stopping rain based on the cosmological theory of yin-yang outlined in the *Spring and Autumn*. According to the translators, these two chapters “are best understood as representing Dong’s efforts to develop the Rain-Seeking Sacrifice (*yu* 雩) found in the *Spring and Autumn* in a manner compatible with the ideas of yin-yang resonance that informed his cosmological views”.³⁹

The translators show that several other chapters apart from the already mentioned ones may also reasonably be ascribed to Dong or his disciples because they are highly consistent with what we know about Dong’s teachings from Han sources. Nevertheless, as they lack direct evidence of the authorship, Queen and Major carefully ascribe them to the category of “maybe written by Dong or his disciples.” For example, a discussion of human nature in chapters 35 and 36 is consistent with Dong’s theory in his memorials preserved in *Han shu* 56 but this is still not enough strong evidence for confirming authorship.

The rest of the text, according to Queen and Major, may be ascribed to Western Han writers not directly associated with Dong Zhongshu, Eastern Han writers, and post-Eastern Han writers. In line with most scholars, in addition to chapters explaining the *Gongyang zhuan*, they exclude sections or entire chapters based on the *Five Phase* theory from Dong’s corpus. Keimatsu Mitsuo 慶松光雄 and Dai Junren 戴君仁 argue that Dong Zhongshu is not connected to Five Phase theory in either the *Hanshu* or in any other source, whereas in the “Treatise on the Five Forces” (“Wuxing zhi 五行志”) of the *Hanshu* he has been identified with employing the theory of *yin* and *yang*. Five Phase rhetoric was used in political language that postdates Dong Zhongshu. The translators say that this cosmological theory was used by Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE – 23 CE) to “support his claim to be the legitimate heir of the Han to be the ruling power”. In addition to these two categories, the translators find many different

³⁹ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 495.

chapters dispersed throughout the text which almost certainly cannot be ascribed to Dong Zhongshu.

7. The Basic Text of the 2016 Translation and the Quality of the Translation

The basic text which Queen and Major chose to follow for their translation is the reconstruction of *CQFL* proposed by D. C. Lau *CQFL zhuzi suoyin* 春秋繁露逐字索引 [*A Concordance to the "Chunqiu fanlu"*]. The printed text of the *Concordance* is based on the Sibugakan 四部叢刊 (SBCK) edition, a reprint of the text in the Siku quanshu zhen ben 四庫全書珍本 (1773 or 1775) from the Qing period (1644 – 1911). The editors of the *Concordance*, while noting that there had been four Song dynasty editions of the work, accepted Lou Yue's 樓鑰 (1137 – 1213) edition preserved in the encyclopedia *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (completed 1408). In places where they find D. C. Lau's arrangement of the chapters insufficiently plausible, they use the edition of the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911) scholar Su Yu 蘇輿 *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, as in e.g. the "Ritual Principles" unit (chapters 65 to 70). For some chapters, such as chapters 78, 80, 81, and 82, they provide translations of both D. C. Lau's and Su Yu's editions of the texts. For commentaries, they also consulted the *Chunqiu fanlu jinzhu jinyi* 春秋繁露今注今譯, by Lai Yanyuan 賴炎元 and the extensive commentaries provided by Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬 in his *Chunqiu fanlu huijiao jishi* 春秋繁露彙校集釋.

As for the method of translation, the translators established principles "tailored to address the specific characteristics and challenges posed by the *Chunqiu fanlu*". These principles are: (1) the translation must be complete and accurate; (2) it "must use standard, highly readable English"; (3) it "must preserve the vital features of the Chinese original, such as parallel prose, verse, and aphoristic sayings"; (4) attention "must be paid to the formal characteristics of the chapter titles and chapter contents"; (5) it must follow "the organization, content and contours of individual chapters and the text as a whole".⁴⁰ The translators succeed in following these established principles, which makes this translation of a high quality.

⁴⁰ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 30.

Nevertheless, it remains possible to find some errors. An account of these errors may be found in Michael Loewe's review of this book in the *Journal of Chinese Studies*.⁴¹

For the purpose of this review, I compare the section of Queen and Major's translation with the translation from my doctoral dissertation "Elements of the Syncretist Tradition in the *Chunqiu Fanlu*'s Chapters on the Theory of Rulership". I take as an example Chapter 21 of *CQFL*, "Kao gong ming 考功名". It is an essay on personnel administration that discusses the evaluation of civil service officials throughout the empire. It describes a system of the examination of merit (*kao ji* 考績) on the basis of which those who served commendably were promoted and those who served discredibly were demoted. The chapter opens with a definition of the principle on which the examination of officials is based. It sets up its main argument by listing a sequence of correlative statements. Drawing a parallel with the Way of Heaven, which accumulates vital elements (*jing* 精) to produce light, it argues that the accumulation of good deeds is the way for a sage to produce achievement. This correlative method of argumentation is followed by four lines of negative statements, which further emphasize the statecraft argument. It points out the importance to the state of an abundance of achievements, stressing that the great peace (*tai ping* 太平) of a state is the result of such an abundance. Basing his course of action on the principle of accumulating goodness, a sage establishes authority by measuring geographical circumstances/positional advantage (*shi* 勢) and regulates righteousness by following (*yin* 因) particular affairs (*shi* 事). The opening passage ends with a set of arguments and the conclusion that the sage, in administering the realm, has two forces at his disposal: providing benefit (*li* 利) and eliminating harm (*hai* 害). These principles are principles of nature, and thus the sage can be compared to the *qi* 氣 of spring when he provides benefit, and can be compared to a river when he eliminates harm. This is the structural foundation on which the order and prosperity of a state is built.

D. C. Lau's edition reads as follows:

考績之法，考其所積也。天道積聚眾精以為光；聖人積聚眾善以為功；故日月之明，非一精之光也；聖人致太平，非一善之功也。明所從生，不可為

⁴¹ LOEWE, M. Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn. Attributed to Dong Zhongshu. Edited and translated by Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major (ed. and trans.). In *Journal of Chinese Studies* (中國文化研究所學報), 2017, Vol. 64, pp. 327–329.

源，善所從出，不可為端，量勢立權，因事製義。故聖人之為天下與利也，其猶春氣之生草也，各因其生小大，而量其多少；其為天下除害也，若川瀆之瀉於海也，各順其勢傾側，而製於南北；

Queen and Major render the beginning as follows:

Investigating Achievement and Reputation (*title*)

The method of investigating the merit (*of an official*) is to investigate what he has amassed.

The Way of Heaven accumulates and collects an abundance of quintessence in order to be radiant;

the sage accumulates and collects an abundance of excellence in order to be meritorious.

Therefore the brilliance of the sun and moon is not (*due to*) the radiance of a single (*ray of*) quintessence;

the Great Peace summoned by the sage is not (*due to*) the merit of a single (*act of*) excellence.

That from which brilliance is born cannot be (*a single*) source;

that from which excellence is born cannot be (*a single*) starting point.

Weigh the positional advantage and establish your authority;

adapt to the situation and institute (*standards of*) righteousness.

Therefore, the way the sage brings benefit to the world is like the way the spring *qi* engenders vegetation.

Each grows small or large in accordance with its inborn (*nature*) and measures up to its greater or lesser (*vitality*). The way the sage eradicates wrongdoing in the world is like the way the rivers and streams flow into the sea. Each complies with the inherent potential of the land and is directed to the south or the north.⁴²

My translation is as follows:

Examining Achievement and Reputation (*title*)

The correct way (*fa*) to examine merit (*ji*) consists of examining what [an official] has accumulated.

The way of Heaven accumulates (*ji*) and assembles (*ju*) a multitude of vital elements (*jing*) in order to create light.

⁴² QUEEN, J. S., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 213–14.

A sage accumulates and assembles a multitude of good deeds (*shan*) in order to create achievement.

Thus, the brightness of the sun and moon does not consist of the light (*guang*) of a single vital element (*qing*).

The sage's spreading of a great peace does not consist of the achievement of a single good deed.

That from which brightness arises cannot be a [single] source (*yuan*).

That from which goodness emerges cannot be a [single] sprout (*duan*).

By accessing concrete circumstances/situations (*shi*), power (*quan*) is established,

by following practical requirements (*shi*), rightness (*yi*) is regulated.

Therefore, the sage, in conferring the benefit to all under heaven, is like the spring's *qi* in making the grass grow;

Each [making the grass grow] is compliant with its size and takes its quantity (*duo shao*) into account.

He, in the elimination of harm to all under Heaven, is like the draining and flowing of a river into the ocean,

each [draining and flowing of the river] conforms (*shun*) to its geographic circumstances (*shi*), pours out and meanders (*ce*), and then he commands them towards the north and south.

The differences between these two translations turn out to be generally matters of vocabulary and style, and not matters of differing interpretation. The translators translate *ji* 積 as “amassed” in the first sentence, while I translate *ji* consistently as “accumulated”. In the second sentence, they change the translation of *ji* from “amassed” into “accumulating”. We translated some concepts differently, such as *kao* 考 investigate/examine, *jing* 精 quintessence/vital elements, *hao* 善 excellence/good deeds, *duan* 端 starting point/sprout, *quan* 權 authority/power, *shi* 勢 positional advantage/concrete circumstances, *yi* 義 righteousness/rightness.

The differences between these two translations are more apparent where the language of the chapter is more prone to interpretation. This can be seen later, where the chapter describes the system of the examination of officials. Here, an immediate problem arises: without consulting the commentary tradition, the text becomes difficult to understand:

The Chinese text (from 7.6/20) reads as follows:

先內弟之，其先比二三分，以為上中下，以考進退，然後外集，通名曰進退，增減多少，有率為第。九分三三列之，亦有上中下，以（為一）（一為）最，五為中，九為殿。有餘歸之於中，中而上者有得，中而下者有（員）（負），得少者，以一益之，至於四，（員）（負）多者，以四減之，至於一，皆逆行，三四十二，而成於計，得滿計者細陟之

Queen and Major render it as follows:

First privately [i.e., in closed session of court] establish his ranking, first of all comparing him with two or three [groups], in order [to grade him in the] upper, middle, or lower [subrank], and thereby to examine [his suitability] for employment or dismissal. After that, in a public [session of court], gather [the candidates] and, in accordance with their [earned] designation, pronounce them accepted or dismissed. [In determining whether] to increase or decrease [their emoluments] by more or less, there should be a clear standard and order of ranking. [Establish] nine ranks, laid out as three times three, so that each rank has an upper, middle, and lower [subrank]. Level one is the highest; level five is the middle; and level nine is the lowest. Most officials revert to the middle rank; those who are superior to the middle rank receive [the highest rank]; those who are inferior to the middle rank are demoted. Those who receive [the highest rank] are few; they [are assigned to] the first rank and rewarded. Among those who reach the fourth rank, those who are demoted are more numerous; they are [assigned to] the fourth rank as a diminution. Among those who reach the first rank, their movement is contrariwise. Three times four is twelve, so when the ranking is completed, one apprehends the entire ranking [scheme] to demote or promote them. Time after time, each has his own ranking; each follows his assigned position. In order to comprehensively arrive at the numbers, there is an initial re-rating, [then] [a second], then [a third], and [next] a fourth re-rating, [so that] in each case no one fails [to be assigned to] his [proper] grade. This, too, is using the complete rating [scheme] to demote or promote them.⁴³

⁴³ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, pp. 215–216.

I translate as follows:

“The first step internally is to rank him. He is firstly compared with two and divided into three in order to create the upper, the middle, or the lower subrank, and in order to examine his improvement and regression. Only after this is done will there be an external collection [of evidence for ranking]. To assign titles means to employ or dismiss [them], to increase or decrease their quantity. The section (*di*) [of his rank] is established according to the regulation (*li*). Nine [ranks] are divided into three [categories], of which each is divided into three [subcategories], the upper, the middle and the lower [subrank]. The first [rank] is regarded as the best, the fifth is regarded as the middle, and the ninth is regarded as the lowest. As for those remaining, return them to the middle [rank]. Those who are [returned] to the middle-upper (*zhong er shang*) rank have attainments (*de*), Those who are [returned] to the middle-lower (*zhong er xia*) rank have failures (*fu*). As for those who attained [too] little, using one [point] increases [their attainment], and they obtain four [positive points]. As for those who failed a lot, using four [points] reduces [their negative points], and they obtain one [negative point]. They all go toward different directions. Three, four, and twelve [times] and then the assessment is complete; those who have completed the assessment (*man ji*) will be demoted or promoted.”

Differences between these two translations arise from our interpretations of the meaning of the section. On the basis of commentarial tradition, I interpret the meaning of this passage as follows:

“The process of placing officials in grades and assigning them rank had two phases: the first phase was an internal ranking (*nei ji* 內第), and the second was an external ranking (*wai ji* 外集). The internal ranking (*nei di*) consisted of listing an individual’s achievements and failures. After three ratings, the results of the first, second, and third rating were added together. On the basis of these three ratings, officials were ranked into the upper, middle, or lower grade. After the internal ranking came the external ranking, *wai ji*, literally ‘external collection’. In this stage of the evaluation, the records of officials were compared with all of the files in the empire, on the basis of which a hierarchical ranking was made. Those who were placed in the upper grade were promoted while those placed in the lower grade were demoted. The rest of them were all returned to the middle grade and were neither promoted nor demoted. Those who gained too little to be promoted, but still had some small measure of achievement (*de* 得), had their achievements recorded for the future. These officials were placed in a fourth rank, the upper-middle grade (*zhong er shang*).

Despite the fact that these officials were not promoted, they were placed in a position in which they were recognized for their achievements (positive scores). Officials who had considerable failures (negative scores) (*fu* 負), were placed into a ninth rank.⁴⁴ Every rating consists of three small assessments and one large assessment, i.e., four assessments, that makes a total of twelve assessments in nine years. Those who completed the assessment, were promoted, demoted or dismissed.

Queen and Major avoid massive annotations, which is understandable due to the limits of this volume. Nevertheless, in sections like this one that are obscure and were likely textually corrupted in the course of transmission, supporting the text with annotations from commentarial traditions would have been of great help. It would be instructive to read how the Chinese tradition interpreted such sections and to see explanations of alternative renderings, emendations, additions, etc. Regarding this aspect, my impression is that Queen and Major did not devote to every chapter the same attention and care as regards textual criticism. Some chapters are given special attention, such as chapters 1–17, chapter 33 and others, which abound with footnoted quotations and explanations of the reasons underlying their choice of terms used in translation. Other chapters, however, are deficient in such annotations.

Also, it can be noted that the introduction of their book devotes some space to an explanation of translation decisions concerning the most significant terms in *CQFL*. Unfortunately, only three pages are devoted to such an important issue. It would be highly useful if they had employed the same approach as in their earlier translation of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, in which they discussed both translation issues and interpretative issues, providing an analysis of both the background and contextual usage of key terms. Also, the glossary in the introduction does not include all the translation choices for particular terms found in this book. For instance, in the glossary the translators state that they generally translate *de* 德 as “virtue” in order to reflect the Confucian orientation of *CQFL*, as opposed to translating *de* as “potency” or “moral potency”.⁴⁵ However, this glossary does not mention that, in addition to translating *de* as “virtue”, they also translate it as “power”. For instance, *de* is translated as such in the chapter “Preserving Position and Authority” (Bao wei quan): “That by

⁴⁴ BULJAN, I. *Elements of the Syncretist Tradition in the Chunqiu Fanlu's Chapters on the Theory of Rulership*, pp. 232–233.

⁴⁵ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 32.

which a state comes to be a state is power [*de*].”⁴⁶ As no reproduction of the Chinese text is included, this can be confusing to the reader, implying that this sentence contains a different character than *de*. Another example of this confusion is the term *quan* 權. In the glossary, the translators explain that “*quan* has the basic meaning of ‘weight’... But in the *CQFL*, it often has the extended metaphorical meaning of ‘expediency’, which we translate accordingly”.⁴⁷ However, *quan* is also translated as “authority” in the chapter “Preserving Position and Authority (Bao Wei Quan)”. One sentence reads: “Without the means to make use of authority (*quan*)...”⁴⁸ While it is very appropriate that they chose to translate terms differently considering the composite nature of the text, it would be helpful if this glossary included all translation choices for the terms mentioned. In spite of this minor point, considering the problematic nature of the text and its length, this translation represents a remarkable achievement, the fruit of a long study of this text. For providing us with a high-quality translation of one of the most important books in Chinese philosophy, rich in its content, Professors Queen and Major undoubtedly deserve our congratulations and warm thanks.

Abbreviations

CQFL Chunqiu fanlu

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⁴⁶ QUEEN, S. A., MAJOR, J. S. *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, p. 210.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

- Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 (Verification of the Meanings in the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*) with commentary by Su Yu 蘇輿. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992.
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