

SARAH A. QUEEN

Beyond Liu Xiang's Gaze: Debating Womanly Virtue in Ancient China

INTRODUCTION

In a sparse but effective illustration originally printed in an early woodcut edition of *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (see the figure, overleaf) we are given a moment's narrative about a woman's life. According to the story, in the year 543 BC, as evening falls, a lone widow of the House of Lu leans plaintively over the balustrade of her palatial home in the state of Song, anxiously searching the horizon for her guardian, while at the same moment a mysterious fire slowly but steadily approaches, threatening to engulf her in flames. Though her servants desperately implore her to make an escape, she remains in her palace, where she willingly succumbs to death by fire. Song Boji 宋伯姬 has chosen to sacrifice her life on a point of ritual protocol: a woman is not to leave her home without her governess. How would history judge her choice? This article makes a deep examination of the ways in which ancient Chinese texts recorded, remembered, and represented such a woman; by doing so, it contributes to current discussions of early Chinese ideals of female virtue by uncovering a contested discourse that concerned the nature of Song Boji's martyrdom.

I begin with an analysis of the remarks about Song Boji that are contained in *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) – the eighth to fifth century BC court chronicle of the state of Lu, where she first makes

I AM indebted to several scholars for their support and suggestions, as I developed and refined this article. I especially thank Moss Roberts and Anne Kinney for organizing a most productive workshop, *Women in the Zuozhuan: Narratives, Power, Chastity, Succession*, at New York University, September 11, 2011. There I presented the earliest draft and benefited immensely from participants' comments. Newell Ann Van Aiken shared invaluable insights about my revised version, presented at the American Oriental Society, 222d Meeting, March 16–19, 2012, Boston, and I thank as well John Major and Gail Hersatter for casting a critical editorial eye on later drafts. Finally, I am grateful to Connecticut College for providing grants that enabled me to attend the conferences and workshops, and thus receive feedback at critical junctures in the development of the text of the article.

her appearance alongside a handful of Lu matrons. I turn next to the three authoritative commentaries to *Chunqiu*, namely, *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*The Zuo Commentary*), *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (*The Gongyang Commentary*), and *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳 (*The Guliang Commentary*), in order to compare and contrast their perspectives of Song Boji. The final part of the article explores Western Han-dynasty (3d century BC to 1st century AD) readings of Song Boji drawn from a variety of didactic, philosophical, and political sources, including Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79–8 BC) *Lienü zhuan* (*Biographies of Exemplary Women*), an authoritative Han-era compilation of stories about women that was meant to educate that gender.

I seek to deepen our current understanding of the gendered aspects of virtue in ancient China in three respects. First, I introduce an important but hitherto undocumented diachronic perspective of the key centuries in which the Song Boji myth emerged and took hold in the public imagination by tracing the development of various Song



Song Boji Refuses to Escape the Flames Due to Ritual Code

After an illustration found in *Xin kan Gu Lie nü zhuan* 新刊古列女傳
(rpt. N.p.: 1930s?), j. 4B, pp. 16a–b.

Boji tropes from the third century BC to the first century AD. Second, I move beyond current studies of early ideals of Chinese womanly virtue that are based solely on didactic literature for women and instead draw on a wider array of literary genres that includes historical, philosophical and political documents from that period. Third, by exploring these genres in their depictions of Song Boji, I broaden a discussion that has hitherto been dominated by Liu Xiang's portrayal of Song Boji in *Lienü zhuan*. Moving beyond Liu Xiang's gaze in order to embrace both earlier and later representations of Song Boji reveals a multitude of images that document an ongoing debate concerning gender roles; this debate focuses on the meanings, limits, and applications of womanly virtue. Indeed, as this article will suggest, Liu Xiang's depiction of Song Boji is the most conservative position in a wide spectrum of opinions. It is best understood as part of his broader campaign to curb the kinds of womanly freedoms and important influences exerted by women upon their societies.

SONG BOJI IN THE *CHUNQIU* ANNALS

The earliest extant reference to Song Boji appears in *Chunqiu*.¹ Though records of women are scarce, ten entries document incidents in Song Boji's life and these constitute more than 25 percent of all records devoted to Lu daughters: nine entries mention her explicitly and one records the calamitous fire that caused her death.² Typically, only women who have come to Lu to marry ruling lords of Lu as well as the daughters of these lords who marry foreign rulers appear in the *Chunqiu*'s records. Thus, their marriages seem to afford them a place there. With regard to the daughters of Lu rulers who marry and establish their marital home outside Lu, *Chunqiu* briefly and succinctly records the most crucial events in their life-cycle in a manner that bespeaks their special status, a point to which I will return, below. To understand the mythic heights to which Song Boji would later ascend in the three early and well-established commentaries to *Chunqiu*, and beyond, it is

¹ Song Boji was the granddaughter of lord Wen of Lu and Jing Ying, and the daughter of lord Xuan of Lu and Mujiang. For an outstanding analysis of the political and ethical implications of three generations of Song Boji's family, according to the *Zuo Commentary*, see Anne Kinney, "A Spring and Autumn Family," *The Chinese Historical Review* 20.2 (2013), pp. 113–37.

² See *Chunqiu*, Lord Cheng 8.8.4, 8.8.5, 8.8.11, 8.9.3, 8.9.4, 8.9.5, 8.10.4, and Lord Xiang 9.30.3, 9.30.6, 9.30.9. All references to *Chunqiu* follow the text as printed in D.C. Lau 劉殿爵 et al., eds., *Gongyang zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 公羊傳逐字索引 (*Concordance to the Gongyangzhuan*), Institute for Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995; hereafter abbreviated as *CQ*).

important first to analyze her treatment in *Chunqiu*. Does she enjoy a special kind of attention in these earliest records that document a few brief but liminal moments in her life? The answer requires an examination of the recording practices that pertain to the daughters of Lu rulers and to their significance. Ultimately, I will argue that *Chunqiu* does more than merely pay a certain kind of attention or treatment to Song Boji and all her women peers: in fact it grants Sun Boji in particular a specific textual status, that is, a person of such moral bearing and influence to deserve special, more detailed and more analytical, entries about her.

Chunqiu does not record the daughters of the Lu ruling house by name but rather according to a formulaic expression that describes their birth-rank and clan name. Lu daughters are referred to in three different ways as Bo Ji 伯姬, Shu Ji 叔姬, or Ji Ji 季姬, depending on their respective birth-order – eldest (or first), third, or fourth daughter of the Ji Clan.³ Where relevant, these references are preceded by the name of the state in which the respective daughter established her marital home.⁴ Thus Song Boji means literally, the Eldest daughter of the Ji Clan (who established her marital home) in Song. Fourteen daughters appear in *Chunqiu* under the reigns of six of the twelve ruling lords of Lu: Yin, Zhuang, Xi, Wen, Xuan, Cheng, and Xiang. The table, below, summarizes their distribution among the reigning Lu lords and the number of references to each, demonstrating that records devoted to Song Boji outnumber those devoted to her peers.

Chunqiu uses a variety of ways and specific terms to track how daughters in the state of Lu change their statuses and locations relative to their natal and marital families. The typical records document their leaving Lu to take up residence in a marital home abroad and later returning to Lu to die or be buried. The sheer number of records pertaining to Song Boji's marriage, death, and burial suggest that she was remarkable among her peers; and it is a fact that she comes down to us as the most richly documented daughter of Lu.⁵

³ That second daughters are not recorded suggests an intriguing and unresolvable problem. Perhaps these were the daughters who, when their elder sisters and cousins married, were assigned as "accompanying brides."

⁴ To be more precise, no state is mentioned in conjunction with unmarried daughters of Lu rulers as they still reside in Lu and so like other members of the Lu nobility, the state is not listed. Only after they are married is the new marital state noted.

⁵ For a path-breaking analysis of the formal features of the *Chunqiu* records that identifies the recording conventions and rules that define the text, see Newell Ann Van Auken, "A Formal Analysis of the *Chuenchiou* (Spring and Autumn Classic)," unpub. Ph.D. (Seattle: University of Washington, 2006). My arguments for the exceptional quality of Song Boji's records are indebted to her research.

Table of Fourteen Daughters of Ji-Clan Rulers in the State of Lu

d.= daughter

MARRIED NAME, BIRTH RANK	FATHER NAME	MARITAL RESIDENCE	NO. <i>CHUNQIU</i> REFERENCES	CITATIONS, NOTES
■紀伯姬 Ji Boji 1st d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Ji	Lord Yin	紀 Ji	3	Lord Yin 1.2.6, Lord Zhuang 3.4.2 and 3.4.5 record marriage, death, ad burial of Lord Yin's 1st d.
■紀叔姬 Ji Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Ji	Lord Yin	紀 Ji	4	Lord Yin 1.7.1 relates her move to Ji to establish marital home; Lord Zhuang 3.12.1 recounts move to Xi to make home after annihilation of Ji; Lord Zhuang 3.29.4 and 3.30.4 record her death, burial.
■杞伯姬 Qii Boji 1st d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Qii	Lord Zhuang	杞 Qii	6	Lord Zhuang 3.25.4 records her establishing marital home in Qi; Lord Zhuang 3.27.1 recounts lord's meeting with her at Tao; Lord Zhuang 3.27.4 notes she arrives in Lu for visit in winter; Lord Xi 5.5.2 records she came to Lu for audience with her son; Lord Xi 5.28.13 and 5.31.1 note her arriving in Lu 2 more times.
■莒叔姬 Ju Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Ju	Lord Zhuang	莒 Ju	1	Lord Zhuang 3.27.5 relates that Jing of Ju came to Lu to meet 3d Ji d. as his bride. According to <i>Gongyang</i> , this entry is a criticism of great officer's breach of ritual protocol: "When great officer crosses borders of his state to meet a bride, such actions violate ritual protocol."
■Unnamed d.	Lord Zhuang	陳 Chen	1	Lord Zhuang 3.19.3: "In Autumn, Gongzi Jie escorted a d. of Lu to Chen to accompany wife of a man of Chen."
■伯姬 Boji 1st d.of Ji Clan	Lord Xi	n/a; died while betrothed	1	Lord Xi 5.9.3 records her death.

■ 宋蕩伯姬 Song Dang Boji 1st d. of Dang of Ji Clan; married into House of Song	Lord Xi	宋 Song	1	Lord Xi 5.25.3 relates this 1st d. of Lu who married into powerful Dang Clan of Song came to Lu (presumably) to receive wife for her son.
■ 鄆季姬 Zeng Jiji 4th d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Zeng	Lord Xi	鄆 Zeng	3	Lord Xi 5.14.2, 5.15.9, and 5.16.3.
■ 子叔姬 Zi Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married to rank-4 noble	Lord Wen	n/a; died while betrothed	1	Lord Wen 6.12.3.
■ 子叔姬 Zi Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married to rank-4 noble	Lord Wen	n/a	2	Lord Wen 6.14.12 and 6.15.11. Though all 3 citns. under reigning Lord Wen employ designation “3d d. of Ji Clan, married to rank-4 noble (Zi Shuji 子叔姬)” because: since 1st citn. records her death, latter two must refer to d. of another lord who shared this rank, or possibly to next youngest d. of same lord who stepped into this position upon death of elder sister.
■ 鄆伯姬 Tan Boji 1st d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Tan	Lord Xuan	鄆 Tan	1	Lord Xuan 7.16.3.
■ 齊子叔姬 Qi Zi Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married to rank-4 noble of Qi	Lord Xuan	齊 Qi	1	Lord Xuan 7.5.3 and 7.5.5.
■ 宋伯姬 Song Boji 1st d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Song	Lord Cheng	宋 Song	10	Lord Cheng 8.8.4, 8.8.5, 8.8.11, 8.9.3, 8.9.4, 8.9.5, 8.10.4, Lord Xiang 9.30.3, 9.30.6, and 9.30.9.
■ 杞叔姬 Qii Shuji 3d d. of Ji Clan; married into House of Qii	Lord Cheng	杞 Qii	3	Lord Cheng 8.5.1, 8.8.8, and 8.9.1.

Leaving Lu to Take up Residence in One's Marital Home

Several Lu daughters make their first appearance under a reigning lord when *Chunqiu* records the month in which they leave Lu to marry leaders of other states and establish their marital homes abroad. Exceptions to this rule appear to be prompted by unusual circumstances such as when engaged daughters die before the marriage takes place or when a nuptial rite is violated in some manner.⁶ As the following examples demonstrate, the five marriage records pertaining to Lu daughters follow a standard pattern: they all employ the specific term “*gui yu* 歸于” (“to take up residence in one’s marital home”) to denote this important life-changing event.

1. *Chunqiu* Lord Yin 1.2.6: 冬. 十月, 伯姬歸于紀.
In winter, in the tenth month, Boji (our eldest Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Ji.
2. *Chunqiu* Lord Yin 1.7.1: 七年春王三月, 叔姬歸于紀.
In the seventh year, in spring, in the Royal third month, Shuji (our third Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Ji.
3. *Chunqiu* Lord Zhuang 3.25.4: 伯姬歸于杞.
Boji (our eldest Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Qii.
4. *Chunqiu* Lord Xi 5.15.9: 季姬歸于鄆.
Jiji (our fourth Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Zeng.
5. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.9.3: 二月. 伯姬歸于宋.
[In the ninth year], in the second month, Boji (our eldest Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Song.

As the last example (no. 5) demonstrates, there is nothing exceptional or remarkable about Song Boji’s marriage record: it conforms closely to comparable records of other daughters of the Lu ruling house who established marital homes outside Lu. However, other records pertaining to her marriage were indeed exceptional. How so? No less than six additional entries record rites associated with her marriage, making Song Boji’s nuptials the most fully described of all similar interstate unions recorded in *Chunqiu*. When daughters of the reigning lords of Lu left the state to marry dignitaries of other states the formal departure was preceded and followed by a number of associated nuptial rituals that the bridegroom, the bride’s family or relatives of the bride’s family initiated. Those mentioned elsewhere in *Chunqiu* include: “paying a friendly diplomatic visit 聘,” “presenting betrothal gifts 納幣,” “receiving the bride 逆女,” “sending secondary consorts to accompany the bride 媵,” and “sending greetings to the bride after the bride has

⁶ For example, two Lu daughters died before marrying. See *CQ* Lord Xi 5.9.3 and Lord Wen 6.12.3.

assumed residence in her marital home (*zhinü* 致女 or *zhifu* 致婦).” In contrast to other Lu daughters whose marriages were noted with single entries or recorded with a single associated rite, *Chunqiu* includes the following seven entries relating to Song Boji’s marriage:⁷

1. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.8.4: 宋公使華元來聘.
The lord of Song dispatched Hua Yuan to come on a friendly diplomatic visit.
2. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.8.5: 夏, 宋公使公孫壽來納幣.
In summer, the lord of Song dispatched Gongsun Shou to present betrothal gifts.
3. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.8.11: 衛人來媵.
Someone from Wey brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride].⁸
4. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.9.3: 二月伯姬歸于宋.
In the ninth year, in the second month, Boji (our eldest Ji daughter) went to her [marital] home in Song.
5. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.9.4: 夏, 季孫行父如宋致女.
In summer, Jisun Hangfu went to Song to give greetings to the lady.
6. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.9.5: 晉人來媵.
Someone from Jin brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride].
7. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.10.4: 齊人來媵.
Someone from Qi brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride].

Passing Away

In addition to her marriage records, Song Boji’s death records also seem unique as compared with those of her peers. *Chunqiu* states the deaths of seven of the fourteen daughters that appear in the above table. These entries follow a regular convention, and the most complete of them include year, month, sexagenary cycle day, and marital state of the daughter in question. In every case, *Chunqiu* employs the identical verb “*zu* 卒” to indicate that a daughter has “passed away”:

⁷ Lady Ai Jiang, who was married to lord Zhuang of Lu, is nearly as extensively documented, but in contrast to Song Boji she traveled to Lu from abroad to marry and she is treated as a negative exemplar in *Chunqiu*.

⁸ For evidence to support translating *ren* as “someone” (an individual rather than several) in *Chunqiu* passages, see Newell Ann Van Auken, “Who is a *ren* 人? The Use of *ren* in Spring and Autumn Records and Its Interpretation in the Zuo, Gongyang, and Guliang Commentaries,” *JAS* 131.4 (2011), pp. 555–90. My translations of the term will, however, vary according to the commentary under discussion. Though the *Zuo Commentary* generally reads *ren* as referring to a singular person, the *Gongyang* and *Guliang* sometimes read it as indicating more than one person. In those instances, below, I render the term “men.”

1. *Chunqiu* Lord Zhuang 3.4.2: 三月, 紀伯姬卒。
In the third month Ji Boji (our eldest Ji daughter, married to the House of Ji) passed away.
2. *Chunqiu* Lord Zhuang 3.29.4: 冬十有二月, 紀叔姬卒。
In winter, in the twelfth month, Ji Shuji (our third Ji daughter, married to the House of Ji) passed away.
3. *Chunqiu* Lord Xi 5.9.3: 秋七月乙酉, 伯姬卒。
In autumn, in the seventh month, on an *yiyou* day, Boji (our eldest Ji daughter) passed away.
4. *Chunqiu* Lord Xi 5.16.3: 夏, 四月, 丙申, 鄆季姬卒。
In summer, in the fourth month, on a *bingshen* day, Zeng Jiji (our fourth Ji daughter, married to the House of Zeng) passed away.
5. *Chunqiu* Lord Wen 6.12.3: 二月庚子, 子叔姬卒。
In the second month, on a *kangzi* day, Zi Shuji (our third Ji daughter, married to a noble of the fourth rank) passed away.
6. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.8.8: 冬十月癸卯, 杞叔姬卒。In winter, in the tenth month, on a *guimao* day, Qii Shuji (our third Ji daughter, married to the House of Qii) passed away.
7. *Chunqiu* Lord Xiang 9.30.3: 五月甲午, 宋災, 宋伯姬卒。
In the fifth month, on *jiawu*, there was a calamitous fire in Song. Song Boji (our eldest Ji daughter, married to the House of Song) passed away.

In her thoroughgoing analysis of the formal features of *Chunqiu*, Newell Ann Van Auken demonstrates that the records are, in fact, highly regular and that they do appear to have been written in accord with formal rules. This thesis is invaluable for putting to rest the notion that the commentaries to this classic were based on a fabrication or fantasy. More specifically, Van Auken shows that the death records found in *Chunqiu* can be divided into three types, according to the main verb employed: death records for the Zhou Sons of Heaven employ the term *beng* 崩 “to succumb”; death records for the lords and consorts of Lu employ *hong* 薨 “to pass into dormition”; and those for the Lu noblemen, Lu daughters, and rulers of foreign states employ *zu* 卒 “to die.”⁹ She concludes:

[R]ecords of deaths in the *Chunqiu* were recorded only for certain classes of individuals; thus deaths of noblemen of states other than Lu, or daughters of Lu rulers who were not married to rulers of other states, were not recorded. Death records adhered closely to rigid formal rules that governed features of the record such as which verb was used in recording a death, the title used in ref-

⁹ Van Auken, “Formal Analysis of the *Chuenchiou*,” p. 215.

erences to the deceased, and whether the name of the deceased was included in the record. The form of a death record appears to have been determined primarily by the rank of the deceased vis-à-vis the Lu ruler. ...¹⁰

Given the formal rules governing *Chunqiu* in general and its death records in particular, the uniqueness of Song Boji's death record is beyond doubt. A review of the entries reveals a curious phenomenon: the record of Song Boji's death is the only one to link the death of a Lu daughter, in this case the daughter of lord Xuan of Lu, to a plausible cause, a calamitous fire in Song.

Burying

Song Boji's burial record confirms another exceptional instance. Of the seven daughters of Lu rulers whose deaths are recorded, *Chunqiu* notes the burying 葬 of four of the seven, suggesting that they are all unusual in some respect. The funerals of Ji Boji, Ji Shuji, Qi Shuji, and Song Gongji (the Eldest Daughter of the Ji Clan, married to lord Gong of Song) are recorded as follows:

1. *Chunqiu* Lord Zhuang 3.4.5: 六月乙丑, 齊侯葬紀伯姬.
In the sixth month, on a *yichou* day, the marquis of Qi buried Ji Boji (our eldest daughter of the Ji Clan, married into the House of Ji).
2. *Chunqiu* Lord Zhuang 3.30.4: 八月癸亥, 葬紀叔姬.
In the eighth month, on a *guihai* day, we buried Ji Shuji (our third daughter of the Ji Clan, married into the House of Ji).
3. *Chunqiu* Lord Cheng 8.9.1: 九年春王正月, 杞伯來逆叔姬之喪以歸.
In the ninth month, in spring, the king's first month, the earl of Qii came to Lu to receive the remains of Shuji (our third daughter of the Ji Clan) and returned home with them to Qii.
4. *Chunqiu* Lord Xiang 9.30.6: 秋七月, 叔弓如宋, 葬宋共姬.
In the autumn, in the seventh month, Shugong went to Song and buried Song Gongji (the eldest daughter of the Ji Clan, married to lord Gong of Song).

These four examples suggest that the *Chunqiu* only recorded the burials of Lu daughters when the burial was unusual in some way. For instance, Ji Boji was not buried in the state of Ji, where she lived after her marriage, but in Qi, and not by the dignitaries of Ji, but by the marquis of Qi. Ji Shuji, the third daughter of the Ji Clan, married into the House of Ji, was buried in Lu rather than Ji. This was an unusual occurrence for a Lu noblewoman who had married abroad. It probably happened because her husband, the marquis of Ji, abandoned her when he fled

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 220–21.

his endangered state. In the case of Qii Shuji, the third daughter of the Ji Clan married into the House of Qii, the earl of Qii traveled to Lu to bring home the remains of his deceased wife, another unusual event. (She may have died during a visit to her natal state.) The fourth example demonstrates the uniqueness of Song Boji's burial record in two respects: 1. it reports the presence of the Lu dignitary Shugong at her funeral, and 2. it refers to her by the posthumous honorific of her late husband as Song Gongji "our daughter of the Ji Clan married to lord Gong of Song."¹¹

The Exceptional Quality of Song Boji's Records in Chunqiu

This brief examination of the ways in which *Chunqiu* documents the activities of the daughters of the Lu ruling house that married out of state suggests that *Chunqiu* seems to take note of daughters who had a decided influence on interstate relations due to their marriages to foreign rulers. With the exception of her burial record, the records of Song Boji follow the normative conventions of other Lu daughters recorded in the *Chunqiu*. The word-order and verbs employed to describe these events are consistent with entries of a similar kind for other daughters of the Lu ruling house. At the same time, the ten records relating to Song Boji far outnumber other Lu daughters who married foreign leaders, distinguishing this Lu daughter as the most richly documented of her peers. The cause, however, of this exceptional attention given her is anything but clear. One possible explanation for it is that she was especially beloved or important in Lu for reasons that have disappeared from the historical records. A more likely explanation lay in her high-born family pedigree as a descendant of lord Wen of Lu. Another possibility is that her marriage to a ruler of a very high-ranking state earned her relatively higher regard in general. Most daughters of Lu married rulers of much lower-ranking states. The only other high-ranking marriage of a Lu princess was to Qi, but that was of a third daughter of the Ji Clan, who was married to an unnamed "noble of the fourth rank" of Qi. There are only two records relating to that marriage. Perhaps Song Boji was more fully documented compared to her peers because she herself was of high rank, she was married to the lord of the high-ranking state of Song, and relations with Song were of great importance to Lu.¹² Though *Chunqiu* remains silent on this issue, the three *Chunqiu*

¹¹ For a discussion of these funerals see *ibid.*, p. 232.

¹² For the relationship between the form of a *Chunqiu* record in relation to the rank of a given state, see Newell Ann Van Auken, "Could 'Subtle Words' Have Conveyed 'Praise and Blame'? The Implications of Formal Regularity and Variation in *Spring and Autumn* (Chun Qiu) Records," *EC* 31 (2007), pp. 82–93.

commentaries propose different types of exegetical resolutions to explain the unsolved mystery of Song Boji's singularity.

SONG BOJI IN THE *ZUO COMMENTARY*:
A TRAGIC MISREADING OF RITUAL PROTOCOL

To appreciate their respective interpretations it is important to bear in mind that all three commentaries share an important and foundational assumption: *Chunqiu* was written according to specific formal rules and violations of those rules were purposeful and significant. The fact that there were normative rules of recording and that in some cases these norms were abrogated created an exegetical space in which to explore and explain the causes of such departures, giving voice to various historiographical positions evident in the different ways in which the three commentaries make sense of such textual disruptions. Song Boji is a case in point.

As we have seen, *Chunqiu* treats Song Boji more fully than any other Lu daughter. With no fewer than seven entries concerning her marriage and three entries related to her death by fire, Song Boji clearly stands out in the text, contrasted to its mentions of her peers. In the case of her union with lord Gong of Song, *Chunqiu* contains seven pertinent records. Two of those were initiated by the lord of Song's having dispatched his underlings to Lu before Song Boji departed her natal home;¹³ one documented the arrival of the official named Hua Yuan, presumably to formalize the engagement; one describes another official, Gongsun Chou, presenting betrothal gifts; three state that the ruling houses of Wey, Jin, and Qi supplied secondary consorts for Song Boji; one notes her departure from her natal home of Lu to her new marital home in Song; and one indicates that shortly after she took up residence in Song a Lu official traveled to Song to ask after the new bride. In the case of Song Boji's death, the three relevant records are no less exceptional. One departs from convention by relating her death to a clearly identified cause, a calamitous fire in Song; one names the official sent from Lu to participate in her burial in Song; and one relates that a diplomatic meeting involving representatives of several states was convened because of the fire.

The *Zuo Commentary* provides the earliest comments on six of the ten *Chunqiu* records concerning Song Boji. These passages greatly illuminate *Chunqiu*'s bare bones account through different kinds of exegeti-

¹³ Recorded at Lord Cheng 8.8.4, and 8.8.5 (discussed above, in the section "*Leaving Lu to Take up Residence in One's Marital Home*").

cal strategy that exemplify the multi-layered and composite nature of the *Zuo Commentary*. The first relevant *Zuo* passage fills out the *Chunqiu* entry through the work of identification, making explicit what was only implicit in the original record. Following the *Chunqiu* record at Lord Cheng 8.8.4 stating, “The lord of Song dispatched Hua Yuan to come on a friendly diplomatic visit 宋公使華元來聘,” the *Zuo Commentary* reports: “The friendly diplomatic visit pertained to Gong Ji 聘共姬也.”¹⁴ Thus, though the *Chunqiu* record does not state the purpose of Hua Yuan’s official visit initiated by the lord of Song, *Zuo* suggests that the visit was prompted by the lord’s pending marriage to Song Boji.

Additional *Zuo* passages concerning Song Boji make comments on other nuptial rites, in certain cases judging a particular rite as being either “in accordance with ritual protocol *li* 禮” or “in violation of ritual protocol *fei li* 非禮,” based on an unidentified ritual code. More specifically, in the case of Song Boji the *Zuo Commentary* sanctions the rituals for presenting betrothal gifts and bringing secondary consorts to accompany the bride as normative and legitimate. By normative I mean, first, that the actual record of the rite in *Chunqiu* seems to follow the latter’s own formal rules, and second, that the performance of the rites was judged commensurate with ritual protocol. In the first instance, at Lord Cheng 8.8.5, where the *Chunqiu* states: “In summer, the lord of Song dispatched Gongsun Shou to present betrothal gifts 夏宋公使公孫壽來納幣,” *Zuo* comments: “This was in accordance with ritual protocol 禮也.”¹⁵ In the second instance, *Chunqiu* notes at Lord Cheng 8.8.1: “Someone from Wey brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 衛人來媵.” In this first record involving secondary consorts brought to Lu from the state of Wey, the *Zuo* commentary announces its approval by stating once again: “This was in accordance with ritual protocol 禮也.” But it also provides a general principle to be applied to other cases of this type: “It is a general rule that when the regional lords betroth their daughters, ruling houses with the same surname provide secondary consorts; ruling houses with different surnames do not do so 凡諸侯嫁女，同姓媵之，異姓則否.”¹⁶ A third *Chunqiu* record at Lord Cheng 8.9.5 notes that consorts were also brought from the state of Jin: “Someone from Jin brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 晉人來媵.” The *Zuo* similarly sanctions this act

¹⁴ *Zuozhuan*, Lord Cheng 8.8.4. All references to *Zuo zhuan* follow the text as printed in D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhuzi suo yin* 春秋左傳逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Chunqiu Zuozhuan*), Institute for Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995; hereafter abbreviated as ㄗㄗ).

¹⁵ ㄗㄗ, Lord Cheng 8.8.5.

¹⁶ ㄗㄗ, Lord Cheng 8.8.1.

stating, “This was in accordance with ritual protocol 禮也.”¹⁷ A fourth entry at Cheng 8.10.4 says that secondary consorts were also brought from Qi: “Someone from Qi brought secondary consorts 齊人來媵.” The ruling house of Qi, however, did not share a surname with Lu and thus clearly violated the general rule stated above. However, *Zuo* provides no comment. Why *Zuo* fails to judge this event as a violation of ritual remains unclear. Nevertheless, what is clear is that in the case of Song Boji, we have the fullest recording of consorts being brought to Lu on the occasion of the marriage of a Lu noblewoman.

Although, as we have seen, *Chunqiu* records Song Boji’s departure from Lu to take up her marital home in Song, likely at the approximate age of fifteen based on references to pinning and naming young girls upon reaching womanhood,¹⁸ the *Zuo Commentary* does not discuss this event but elaborates greatly on the next *Chunqiu* record, which notes that lord Cheng sent an envoy named Jisun Hangfu to inquire after the new bride, an important ritual visit that marked the formal ending of the marriage ceremony. In reference to this official visit that follows Song Boji’s marriage, the *Zuo* includes a narrative. This is the third type of exegesis represented in the *Zuo Commentary*, one that is narrative in literary form. Narrative sequences, which vary radically in length across this work, sometimes include a single speech or series of speeches. Read together, they provide a meta-history of praise and blame, which has been discussed in several illuminating studies.¹⁹

¹⁷ ㄗㄗ, Lord Cheng 8.9.5.

¹⁸ *Bai Hu Tong*, chap. 33, “Family Names and Personal Names *Xing Ming*” 姓名, states:

Boys and girls differ in their maturation and each has his/her respective sequence [of change] in imitation of yin and yang each of which has its beginning and end. A commentary to the *Spring and Autumn* states: What does the expression “Boji” indicate? It is a reference to the daughters of the Interior.” Why is it the case that when a lady turns fifteen she is designated the eldest or the second? She is a woman, having reached her full stature with little change. The Way of Yin is fast, maturing early on. At fifteen she has mastered the task of weaving silk and her thoughts are stable. Therefore she is engaged to be married, receives her hairpin and in accordance with ritual propriety she is referred to by her designation in the family/style name. Thus the *Classic of Ritual* states: A woman at fifteen is engaged to be married and her hair is bound up with a pin. In accordance with ritual propriety she is referred to by her designation in the family. Why is there a designation that accompanies the family name of the woman? To make clear that she may not be betrothed to someone who shares her family name. Thus the *Spring and Autumn* states: “Our eldest Ji daughter returned home to Song.” Ji is the clan name. 男女異長, 各自有伯仲, 法陰陽各自有終始也。春秋傳曰: “伯姬者何? 內女稱也。” 婦人十五稱伯仲何? 婦人值少變。陰陽道促, 蚤成。十五通乎織絲任之事, 思慮定, 故許嫁笄而字。故禮經曰: “女子十五許嫁, 笄。禮之稱字之” 婦姓以配字何? 明不娶同姓也, 故春秋曰: “伯姬歸於宋。” 姬者, 姓也。

See He Zhihua 何志華, ed., *Bai hu tong zhu zi suo yin* 白虎通逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Baihutong*) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995) 33/61/12–16.

¹⁹ See Zhang Suqing 張素卿, *Xu shi yu jie shi: Zuo zhuan jing jie yanjiu* 敘事與解釋, 左傳經解研究 (Taipei: Shulin chubun, 1998); Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: In-*

The narrative about Song Boji, however, tells us little about her or the content of Jisun Hangfu's greetings, a point to which we will return later. Rather, it elaborates on the *Chunqiu* record of this event in three distinct ways: it extends the record temporally, by describing what occurs upon Jisun Hangfu's (called alternatively Ji Wenzi in *Zuo*) return to Lu; it amplifies the record by including the official's description of how the bride was faring in her new marriage; and thirdly, it introduces lord Cheng and Mu Jiang, lord Xuan's widow and lord Cheng's and Song Boji's mother, familial personalities not mentioned in the original record. *Zuo* explains:

In the summer, Ji Wenzi went to Song to give greetings to the lady. When he returned from his official mission, our lord entertained him, and he chanted the fifth stanza of [the ode] "Hanyi." (See *Odes*, Mao no. 261.) Mujiang emerged from her chamber, bowed twice and said: "Our Great Officer has been most diligent, neither forgetting our former lord nor our descendants. Your efforts even extend to me, the one who awaits death. You have done precisely what our former lord expected of you. I dare to presume to bow in respect to our great officer's due diligence. She chanted the final stanza of [the ode] "Lüyi." (See *Odes*, Mao no. 27.) before returning [to her chamber]. 夏季文子如宋致女，復命，公享之，賦韓奕之五章，穆姜出于房，再拜曰，大夫勤辱，不忘先君，以及嗣君，施及未亡人，先君猶有望也，敢拜大夫之重勤，又賦綠衣之卒章而入。²⁰

The Lu official Jisun Hangfu has fulfilled his mission brilliantly. He has gathered information critical to understanding Boji's marital situation in Song. Upon his return, he communicates with lord Cheng through the recitation of an ode, a vignette that aptly depicts the kind of refined communication that defined court culture at the time. Song Boji is indeed blossoming in Song. How so? Jisun Hangfu recites a stanza of the ode entitled "Hanyi," to report by way of analogy on Song Boji's marriage to the lord of Song. The ode describes Han Ji's felicitous marriage to the lord of Han. Song Boji has settled into her new life as bride to the lord of Song and is doing splendidly in her new role as wife, finding both honor and happiness in Song. By chanting "Hanyi," the Lu official relates critical information not only of Song Boji, but of lord Xuan in his role as matchmaker for his daughter: paralleling the fifth

Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period 722-453 BCE (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2002); David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2003); and Li Wai-ye, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2007).

²⁰ ZZ, Lord Cheng 8.9.5.

stanza of the ode which affirms not only that Hanji is flourishing in her marital home of Han, but that her father Guifu has made a fine match in selecting the state of Han and its ruler. Moreover, an assessment of marital relations between Song Boji and the lord of Song provides a critical sign with which to read interstate relations between Song and Lu: the marital bliss of the two individuals was an important barometer of the accord between the two states. Perhaps this is why Mujiang, lord Cheng's mother, responds by praising the official's due diligence through her chanting of a stanza of the Ode entitled "Lüyi."²¹

Whatever marital bliss Song Boji and the lord of Song enjoyed was to end abruptly, however, because he passed away only six years later.²² By the time we next encounter Song Boji in *Chunqiu* – an entry that records her demise – she is already an old woman of about sixty years of age, widowed for several decades.²³ Only a single *Zuo* entry devoted to lord Ping of Song, Song Boji's son by lord Gong of Song, interrupts the *Chunqiu*'s silence concerning the intervening years: it associates Song Boji with the disturbing news recorded elsewhere in *Chunqiu* that the lord of Song executed his heir-apparent.²⁴ As Anne Kinney has pointed out: "The *Zuo Commentary* elaborates on this event, suggesting that Lord Ping's wrongful execution of his own son (and the grandson of Bo Ji) can be traced back to a casual decision on the part of Bo Ji to bestow on Lord Ping a servant in Bo Ji's employ whom her son seemed to fancy."²⁵ Indeed, the *Zuo* narrative implicates Song Boji still further by pointing out that the servant favored by lord Ping had been found as an abandoned infant and then taken to Song Boji's palace, where she was named and raised, ultimately to blossom into a destructive beauty.²⁶ Whatever the possible implications of this episode,

²¹ As Wai-ye Li has noted, Mu Jiang is one of only two women in *Zuozhuan* who is said to have cited the *Odes*, and the only who does so in a public setting. For a fascinating analysis of the deeper implications of Mu Jiang's actions, see Li, *Readability of the Past*, pp. 225–27.

²² CQ Lord Cheng 8.15.7: In autumn, in the eighth month, on the *gengchen* day, lord Gong of Song was buried.

²³ See ZZ, Lord Xiang 9.30.3.

²⁴ For the full details of Song Boji's involvement in the incident, see ZZ, Lord Xiang 9.26.6.

²⁵ Kinney, "Spring and Autumn Family," p. 132.

²⁶ As Kinney astutely points out, "The survival of the abandoned infant Qi, her chance discovery, and her subsequent adoption into the ducal palace, all point to divine intervention or retribution – but for what reasons and to achieve what specific end is not entirely clear. Zuo, the son of the beautiful foundling Qi, goes on to succeed his father after the established heir apparent is killed due to the slander of a eunuch. The eunuch is supported in his false claims by Qi. In response, Bo Ji's son, lord Ping of Song, decides to execute his heir apparent." Ibid., p. 133.

of which there are many,²⁷ this *Zuo* narrative appears to function as an important prelude to the entry recording Song Boji's final demise. It begins to build a more intimate portrait of Song Boji as a woman with a decided influence on court politics and whose less than stellar character is reflected in the decision to indulge her son's whimsical sexual attractions by encouraging him to mate with her lowly servant. In this brief vignette, Song Boji emerges as an influential woman whose moral decisions seem wanting in deeper reflection.

The *Zuo* passage devoted to Boji's death has a tripartite arrangement.²⁸ It begins with an ominous portent that speaks to the tragedy that she and her state will soon encounter: "Someone called out from the grand temple of Song saying: 'The heat! The heat! Come out! Come out!' Birds cried out at the earth altar at Bo as if saying 'The heat! The heat!' 或叫于宋大廟曰：譴譴出出。鳥鳴于亳社，如曰譴譴。" Beckoning from the world beyond, the ancestral spirits anticipate the great heat of the disastrous fire to come, and implore an unnamed future victim to escape the flames. Their sentiments are echoed by the birds dallying at the earth altar at Bo, a place that stands as the most holy embodiment of the state. Perhaps their calls from this sacred space underscore the hopes of the ancestral spirits that the future victim will choose to run. Perhaps they presage the scope of the disaster to come; it will not only swallow up Song Boji but will wreak havoc upon the entire state of Song as well.²⁹

The next section of the passage comments on the *Chunqiu* lines that record the Song conflagration: "On a *jiawu* day, there was a calamitous fire in Song, and Song Boji died 甲午，宋大災。宋伯姬卒。" *Zuo* explains, "She was waiting for her guardian 待姆也。" The veracity of the portent is confirmed. The calamitous fire has arrived and Song Boji has died as a consequence. As in the earlier *Zuo* passage, Boji is depicted as a woman whose decision-making skills are flawed at best. Ignoring the portentous advice of her ancestral spirits to "come out," she decides instead to remain in her place awaiting her guardian, as ritual protocol dictated that unmarried women of noble status should not leave their chambers without accompanying personnel.

The appraisal of Song Boji concludes with a formulaic moral pronouncement identified as coming from "the Superior Man," the fourth

²⁷ For a rich discussion of the many implications of this episode see, *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁸ 左，Lord Xiang 9.30.3.

²⁹ For a discussion of prognostication in the *Zuo Commentary*, see Li, *Readability of the Past*, pp. 172–248.

kind of comment typically found in *Zuo*. His judgment of Song Boji echoes the *Zuo*'s earlier judgment of Boji's decision to indulge her son with a beautiful but destructive servant and that of the ancestral spirits who first anticipate the tragedy and call for Song Boji to escape to safety: "The Superior Man said of Song Gongji that she acted as if she were a young girl and not a married woman. A young girl waits for others but a married woman attends to her duties as she finds suitable 君子謂宋共姬女而不婦。女待人，婦義事也。" Thus according to the judgment of the sage, she should have exercised better moral judgment concerning what kinds of actions are most suitable in a given situation. In assuming that she was to wait for her guardian, Song Boji misread the situation with tragic consequences. Unlike the young girl who typically is expected to wait for her female caretakers to accompany her, Song Boji must choose what is appropriate to the situation to fulfill her womanly roles and responsibilities, a choice expected of her as a mature woman in contradistinction to a young girl. The judgment of the Superior Man is one of blame rather than praise. As we will see, this is an unusual appraisal, one that stands out as singularly negative relative to the assessments to come.

Chunqiu states that the tragic episode in Song concluded with an interstate meeting held on account of the fire that killed Song Boji, the proportions and implications of which we can only imagine. Presumably state leaders met to consider what kind of aid might be extended to Song but their rank is omitted as the relevant entry suggests: "Someone from Jin, someone from Qi, someone from Song, someone from Wey, someone from Zheng, someone from Cao, someone from Ju, someone from Zhu, someone from Teng, someone from Xue, someone from Qii, and someone from Lesser Zhu met at Chanyuan on account of the calamitous fire in Song 晉人，齊人，宋人，衛人，鄭人，曹人，莒人，邾人，滕人，薛人，杞人，小邾人，會于澶淵，宋災故。"³⁰ The *Zuo* passage associated with this entry is in fact a pastiche of two comments that must have originally circulated separately from one another because each offers an explanation as to why *Chunqiu* omits the names of the delegates of the interstate meeting. Both hinge upon the exceptional quality of the record – the names and ranks of the men involved have not been recorded – and both agree that the stripping away of one's name and rank was to assign blame to those who met at Chanyuan. In the first half of the *Zuo* entry concerning this meeting, the fourth type of exegetical comment appears, one that resembles most closely that of

³⁰ CQ Lord Xiang 9.30.9.

the *Gongyang* and *Guliang Commentaries*, namely, a textual gloss on the specific wording of a passage and its deeper meaning. The stripping away of the delegates' identity and rank is explained as a punishment for their failure to provide disaster relief to Song:

On account of the calamitous fire in Song, the regional lords met to confer about providing resources to Song. In winter, in the tenth month, Shusun Bao joined Zhao Wu of Jin, Gongsun Chai (ZiWey) of Qi, Xiang Xu of Song, Beigong Tuo of Wey, Han Hu of Zheng, and the great officers of Lesser Zhu in a meeting at Chanyuan. But thereafter no aid was offered to Song. This is why the names of the delegates are not recorded. 爲宋災故，諸侯之大夫會，以謀歸宋財，冬，十月，叔孫豹會晉趙武，齊公孫董，宋向戌，衛北宮佗，鄭罕虎，及小邾之大夫，會于澶淵，既而無歸於宋，故不書其人。³¹

In the second half of this *Zuo* entry, the moral pronouncement of the Superior Man moves the entire discussion to the virtue of trustworthiness:

The Superior Man said: "One must not fail to be prudent about trustworthiness!" [In the case of] the meeting at Chanyuan, the names of the ministers are not recorded. This is because they lacked trustworthiness. Now when the high-ranking ministers of the regional lords met but they lacked trustworthiness, both rank and name were cast aside. This is how unacceptable a failure of trustworthiness is. An Ode proclaims: "King Wen ascends and descends. Always by the side of the God on High." (See *Odes*, Mao no. 235.) This refers to trustworthiness. Another [Ode] proclaims: "Use caution well in your conduct. Do not harbor deceit." (See *Odes*, Mao no. 256.) This refers to the lack of trustworthiness." The record states "So and so and so and so met at Chanyuan on account of the calamitous fire in Song": this is to blame them. That the great officer from Lu is not mentioned is for the sake of concealment. 君子曰：信其不可不慎乎！澶淵之會，卿不書。不信也。夫諸侯之上卿，會而不信，寵名皆棄。不信之不可也如是。詩曰：“文王陟降，在帝左右。”信之謂也。又曰：“淑慎爾止，無載爾僞。”不信之謂也。書曰：“某人某人會于澶淵，宋災故”：尤之也。不書魯大夫，諱之也。

The *Zuo* comment concludes with a historical appraisal of the regional lords: having given their word that they would provide disaster relief to Song they fail to make good on their promises. Because they failed in their trustworthiness, the Superior Man stripped them of their ranks and names to express his disapproval. The lapse of good faith

³¹ ㄗㄗ, Lord Xiang 9.30.9.

on the part of the regional lords provides an occasion to underscore the importance of this cardinal virtue in interstate relations. Neither *Zuo* passage mentions Song Boji in relation to the interstate meeting, in contrast to the *Gongyang* reading of this *Chunqiu* entry, which is discussed below.

GONGYANG READINGS OF SONG BOJI:
COMMEMORATING A WORTHY EXEMPLAR

Whereas the *Zuo Commentary* remarked on Hua Yuan's diplomatic visit and Song Boji's move to Song to establish her marital home, the *Gongyang Commentary* does not. Nor does it comment on the disastrous Song conflagration. In contrast to the *Zuo Commentary*, however, it delivers a radically different message from the remaining seven records pertaining to Song Boji. As the following examples demonstrate, six of these seven records employ the term *lu* 錄, which indicates that the events described were especially singled out for detailed recording:

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.8.5: "In summer, the lord of Song dispatched Gongsun Shou to present betrothal gifts 夏, 宋公使公孫壽來納幣."

Gongyang: "The presentation of betrothal gifts is not normally recorded. Why was it recorded here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji 納幣不書, 此何以書? 錄伯姬也."³²

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.8.11: "Men from Wey brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 衛人來媵." *Gongyang*: "The bringing of secondary consorts is not normally recorded. Why was it recorded here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji 媵不書, 此何以書? 錄伯姬也."

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.9.4: "In summer, Jisun Hangfu went to Song to give greetings to the lady 夏, 季孫行父如宋致女." *Gongyang*: "The one who receives the bride has not been mentioned yet. Why was receiving the bride mentioned here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji 未有言致女者, 此其言致女何? 錄伯姬也."

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.9.5: "Men from Jin brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 晉人來媵." *Gongyang*: "The bringing of secondary consorts is not normally recorded. Why is it recorded here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji 媵不書, 此何以書? 錄伯姬也."

³² All references to *Gongyang zhuan* follow the text printed in D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Gongyang zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 公羊傳逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Gongyang zhuan*), Institute for Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995; hereafter abbreviated as *GYZ*).

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.10.4: “Men from Qi brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 齊人來媵.” *Gongyang*: “The bringing of secondary consorts is not normally recorded. Why is it recorded here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji. For three states to bring secondary consorts violates ritual protocol. Why in all cases does it use wording indicating that [the event] was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji? A woman relies on a great many people when shifting her residence 媵不書，此何以書？錄伯姬也。三國來媵非禮也，曷爲皆以錄伯姬之辭言之？婦人以眾多爲侈也。”

Chunqiu Lord Xiang 9.30.9: “Men from Jin, men from Qi, men from Song, men from Wey, men from Zheng, men from Cao, men from Ju, men from Zhu, men from Teng, men from Xue, men from Qii, and men from Lesser Zhu met at Chanyuan 晉人，齊人，宋人，衛人，鄭人，曹人，莒人，邾婁人，滕人，薛人，杞人，小邾婁人會于澶淵。” *Gongyang*: “It was due to the calamitous fire in Song. ... The reasons why interstate meetings are convened have never been stated. Why was it stated here? It was singled out for detailed recording on account of Boji. The regional lords convened and decided to provide relief for Song to conduct the funeral, proclaiming: The dead cannot be restored to life, but material goods can be restored! This was an important event, why is it treated as if it were insignificant? High-ranking officers were involved. If they were high ranking officers why were they referred to as men? It was a criticism. Why were they criticized? High officers are not permitted to show concern for those of noble rank 宋災故。... 會未有言其所爲者，此言所爲何？錄伯姬也。諸侯相聚，而更宋之所喪，曰：‘死者不可復生，爾財復矣！’此大事也，曷爲使微者？卿也。卿則其稱人何？貶。曷爲貶？卿不得憂諸侯也。”

The examples above demonstrate that the *Gongyang Commentary* consistently reiterates a common claim concerning the authorial intent of the *Chunqiu* passages about Song Boji: they were meant to draw attention to this daughter of the Lu ruling house by making a special effort to single out the important affairs of her life with detailed records 錄.³³ The relevant historiographical principle is explained at Lord Yin 1.10.3: “*Chunqiu* records in detail [affairs of the] Interior and records in outline [affairs of the] Exterior 春秋錄內而略外.”³⁴ This principle, however,

³³ The *Gongyang Commentary* uses the term *lu* 錄 sparingly. It appears in only eleven passages. In addition to the passage at *GYZ*, Lord Yin 1.10.3, we see that passages at Lord Zhuang 3.2.3 and Lord Ding 11.4.8 explain two exceptional cases in which *Chunqiu* “singles out for recording” a death and a burial involving the Exterior when not normally recorded because in both instances “We [Lu] acted as host to the affair 我主之也.” Thus, one would expect that internal affairs are recorded in greater detail than those that occur abroad. The six passages relating to Song Boji, however, seem to emphasize further the special quality of records about her life.

³⁴ In the *Gongyang Commentary*, “the Exterior” (*wai* 外) refers to the states outside of Lu in

does not adequately account for Boji's special status as revealed by the way she is treated in *Chunqiu*, and it does not appear to apply equally to other Lu daughters in the *Chunqiu*. Boji stands out among her peers as the most richly documented daughter of Lu.

Why record the events in Song Boji's life in such detail? The *Gongyang Commentary's* discussion of the way *Chunqiu* records Song Boji's burial provides a partial answer:

The burials of wives of rulers of the Exterior are not [normally] recorded. Why is it recorded here? We grieved for her. Why so? There was a fire in Song and Boji died in it. Why is she referred to with the honorary posthumous name [of her husband]? She was worthy. In what respect was she worthy? During the fire in Song, Boji remained in her place. An official repeatedly exclaimed: "The flames are approaching! I beg you to come out!" Boji said: "I cannot do so! I have heard that when a woman goes out at night if she is not attended by her governess and her guardian she does not descend the hall. The governess has arrived, but the guardian has yet to do so." She was engulfed by the flames and died. 外夫人不書葬，此何以書？隱之也。何隱爾？宋災，伯姬卒焉。其稱諡何？賢也。何賢爾？宋災，伯姬存焉，有司復曰：“火至矣，請出。”伯姬曰：“不可。吾聞之也，婦人夜出，不見傅母不下堂。傅至矣，母未至也。”逮乎火而死。³⁵

Departures from the *Zuo* reading of this event are striking: for the first time, Song Boji "speaks," enabling "her" perspective to be heard. Moreover, the *Gongyang Commentary* introduces a decidedly different judgment of her actions: her death by fire is read not as a tragic failure to understand her womanhood, but rather as proof of her worthiness. Her worthiness is first indicated by the fact that *Chunqiu* employs her husband's honorific posthumous title to refer to her.³⁶ So what made Song Boji a worthy? Despite the panicked warnings of a nearby official who repeatedly urges her to leave her home to avoid the spreading flames and save herself, she insists that she cannot. Ritual propriety dictated that to do so she must be accompanied by both a governess and a guardian, but the latter has failed to arrive. Several questions arise: Why does Song Boji follow the letter of the law in this most extreme of circumstances? Why did the guardian never arrive? Does the governess die with Song Boji? Whatever the answers to these intriguing

contradistinction to "the Interior" (*nei* 內), which always refers to Lu.

³⁵ *GYZ*, Lord Xiang 9.30.6.

³⁶ It is curious that *Gongyang* remarks on this but *Zuozhuan* does not, even though it is a striking irregularity in the *Chunqiu* record. *Guliang* also does not mention it.

questions might be, it is clear that, in opposition to the *Zuo* reading, Boji's decision to remain in her palace in the face of certain death rather than abrogate ritual protocol is deemed so praiseworthy and exemplary as to earn her the hallowed status and highest ethical accolade in the *Gongyang Commentary*, that of a worthy (*xian* 賢).³⁷

The *Gongyang Commentary*'s account of these events explains why the manner of Song Boji's death was singled out for detailed recording in *Chunqiu*. But the account of the end of her life does not explain why earlier events pertaining to her marriage were similarly recorded in detail. Two possibilities suggest themselves: Perhaps Boji was special from the very beginning, for reasons that are no longer apparent, so that the scribes of Lu took pains to record in unusual detail the significant events of her life. Or perhaps the records pertaining to her earlier life were written retrospectively: Boji having died in so unusual and exemplary a fashion, the record-keepers went back to add those details long after the fact. It does not seem possible to prove which, if either, of these hypotheses is correct.

GULIANG READINGS OF SONG BOJI: WORTHINESS AS PURITY

With the *Guliang Commentary*, another distinctive reading of Song Boji emerges, one that introduces additional elements to the interpretive literature. In contrast to the *Zuo* and *Gongyang Commentaries*, that given in *Guliang* maintains that several violations occurred when performing the various rituals related to Song Boji's nuptials. The first violation concerns the secondary consorts brought to Lu from Wey and Jin. Members of the same surname ought to have accompanied Song Boji to her marital home but as the next two quotations exemplify, this did not occur:

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.8.11: "Someone from Wey brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride] 衛人來媵." *Guliang*: "The bringing of secondary consorts is a lowly affair. It is not recorded. Why in this case is it recorded? It is because Boji did not obtain what was appropriate to a woman of her station. Consequently the event is fully disclosed 媵, 淺事也. 不志. 此其志何也? 以伯姬之不得其所. 故盡其事也."³⁸

³⁷ For a detailed study of the worthies in the *Gongyang Commentary*, see Sarah A. Queen, "The Limits of Praise and Blame: The Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in the *Gongyang Commentary*," in Paul van Els and Sarah A. Queen, eds., *Between History and Philosophy* (forthcoming SUNY Press).

³⁸ All references to *Guliang zhuan* follow the text printed in D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Guliang*

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.9.5: “Someone from Jin brought secondary consorts [to accompany the bride]” 晉人來媵. *Guliang*: “The bringing of secondary consorts is a lowly affair. It is not recorded. Why in this case is it recorded? It is because Boji did not obtain what was appropriate to a woman of her station. Consequently the event is fully disclosed 媵, 淺事也. 不志. 此其志何也? 以伯姬之不得其所. 故盡其事也.”

Guliang maintains that this type of event is not typically recorded in *Chunqiu* but in the case of Song Boji these two entries are prompted by ritual failure: “It is because Boji did not obtain what was appropriate to a woman of her station.” It appears that when a daughter of Lu married, she was typically accompanied by a half-sister and a cousin 一娣一姪. Two other states sent princesses to attend her; each similarly accompanied by two relatives. Thus, ritual protocol appears to call for the groom’s receiving a total of nine women upon marriage, all of whom shared the same surname. This would be 1. the bride; 2. half-sister of the bride; 3. cousin of the bride; 4. a lady with the same surname from a state accompanied by two relatives and 5. a lady with the same surname from another state accompanied by two relatives.

Why did the *Guliang Commentary* object to Wey and Jin but fail to mention the case of Qi? Perhaps Wey and Jin supplied the wrong number of consorts, traveling to Lu with only a single consort rather than the usual additional two. Perhaps the rank of the women who were to accompany Song Boji as consorts was problematic in some way. While it is not possible to reconstruct the cause of the objections, it remains clear that the *Guliang* differed from the *Zuo* and *Gongyang Commentary* on this ritual issue.

The second ritual violation identified by the *Guliang Commentary* concerns the greetings sent by a bride’s parents after she has taken up residence in her marital state and completed the formal marriage rites:

Chunqiu Lord Cheng 8.9.4: “In summer, Jisun Hangfu went to Song to give greetings to the lady 夏, 季孫行父如宋致女.” *Guliang*: In records of giving greetings to ladies, the one who bears the tidings is not normally recorded. When a woman resides at home, she is governed by her father; when she marries, she is governed by her husband. To travel to Song to send greetings to our lady

zhuan zhuzi suoyin 穀梁傳逐字索引 [A Concordance to the *Guliang zhuan*], Institute for Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1995; hereafter abbreviated as *GLZ*).

was on account of our doing the utmost. It was not in accordance with correct norms. Therefore reference to the Interior was not given. Receiving the bride is an insignificant affair, therefore it states “give greetings to the lady.” The event is described in detail in order to commemorate Boji as worthy. 致者，不致者也。婦人在家制於父，既嫁制於夫。如宋致女，是以我盡之也。不正，故不與內稱也。逆者微，故致女。詳其事，賢伯姬也。”³⁹

The *Guliang Commentary* appears to condemn this rite on the grounds that it oversteps the boundaries established by the marriage rituals. Now that Boji has left her natal home and become the wife of the lord of Song, it is no longer appropriate for her parents to convey their wishes through a messenger. As the passage insists, “When a woman resides at home, she is governed by her father; when she marries, she is governed by her husband.” Yet the *Chunqiu* makes an exception in the case of Song Boji, to draw attention to her worthiness.

The worthiness of this daughter of Lu is developed further in the last three *Guliang* passages devoted Song Boji. The first constitutes the longest and most elaborate discussion of all the commentaries. It introduces a new virtue into the literature of Boji, and makes explicit what was only implicit in the *Gongyang Commentary*: Boji’s worthiness was identified with the quality known as *zhen* 貞, meaning pure or unsullied. Like the *Gongyang Commentary*, *Guliang* builds its case first upon the significance of the word order of the *Chunqiu* record of the fire. It states: “The day of her death is noted before mentioning the calamitous fire to reveal that she died on account of a calamitous fire. Why [does *Chunqiu*] reveal that she died on account of a calamitous fire 取卒之日，加之災上者，見以災卒也。其見以災卒奈何?”⁴⁰ The explanation next reiterates, with some amplification, the story of death by fire seen earlier in the *Gongyang Commentary*:

When Boji was about to succumb to the flames, her attendants said: “My lady, should you not attempt an early escape from the flames?” Boji replied: “The duties of a woman prescribe that she

³⁹ There is a comment on this passage by James Legge: “The phrase *zhinu* 致女 here is difficult to translate. After being married three months, the young wife was introduced into the ancestral temple, and appeared before the parents of her husband, or their shrines; and the marriage was then considered complete. This was the solemn proclamation that she was *the wife*, and she could not after this be sent back to her parents, excepting when there were proper grounds for divorcing her. A message from her parents at this time was called *zhi* 致. It was the finishing and crowning act of her nuptials.” James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: With a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena and Copious Indexes*, vol. 5, *The Ch’un Ts’ew, with the Tso Chuen* (1893–95; rpt. Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1944), p. 371.

⁴⁰ GLZ, Lord Xiang 9.30.3.

must not descend from the hall at night when her governess is not present.” The attendants reiterated: “My lady, should you not attempt an early escape from the flames?” Boji replied: “The duties of a woman prescribe that she must not descend from the hall at night when her guardian is not present.” Shortly thereafter she was engulfed by the flames and died. 伯姬之捨失火, 左右曰: “夫人少辟火乎?” 伯姬曰: “婦人之義, 傅母不在, 宵不下堂.” 左右又曰: “夫人少辟火乎?” 伯姬曰: “婦人之義, 保母不在, 宵不下堂.” 遂逮乎火而死.⁴¹

The closing comments provide for the first time an explicitly gendered reading of the event. They are as follows: “A woman takes purity as her code of conduct. Boji fulfilled to the utmost the Way of Womanhood. The event was described in great detail to commemorate Boji as worthy 婦人以貞爲行者也, 伯姬之婦道盡矣. 詳其事, 賢伯姬也.”⁴² Song Boji’s actions are explicitly linked to *fudao* 婦道, namely, the “Way of Womanhood,” which she is said to have “fulfilled to the utmost.” Her conduct no longer speaks to a generalized worthiness but to the gendered worthiness of a woman identified with *zhen* 貞, that is, pure or unsullied. But in what sense? What precisely does *zhen* signify in this context? Pure or unsullied in a ritual sense seems closest to what the commentary is driving at in identifying Boji’s strict adherence to ritual protocol in the extreme case of a fire that promises to take her life. Where most people would run to save their lives, Song Boji willingly remains in her place to be immolated by fire on a point of ritual. Perhaps this is why the commentary speaks of commiserating with Boji in the following passage, which accompanies her *Chunqiu* burial record: “In autumn, in the seventh month, Shugong went to Song to attend the burial of lady Gong of Song. *Guliang*: The burials of wives of rulers of the Exterior are not [normally] recorded. Why is it recorded here? She was our daughter. She died in a calamitous fire. Thus we grieved for her and buried her 秋, 七月, 叔弓如宋, 葬共姬. 外夫人不書葬, 此其言葬何也? 吾女也; 卒災, 故隱而葬之也.”⁴³

Lastly, following the *Chunqiu* record of the Chanyuan meeting, the *Guliang Commentary* concludes:

The reasons why interstate meetings are convened are not stated. Why then does it state “on account of the calamitous fire in Song”? If it did not state “on account of the calamitous fire” there would have been no means to reveal her [Song Boji’s] goodness. Why

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *GLZ*, Lord Xiang 9.30.6.

does it refer to “men”? Those offering relief were numerous. What relief was there? They decided to provide material relief for the Song funeral. 會不言其所爲，其曰宋災故何也？不言災故，則無以見其善也。其曰人何也？救災以衆。何救焉？更宋之所喪財也。⁴⁴

With this entry, discussions of the Chanyuan interstate meeting have come full circle. Initial discussions in the *Zuo Commentary* maintain that the purpose of the meeting was to provide relief for the state of Song. The *Gongyang Commentary* narrows the focus of the meeting to highlight Boji’s funeral. It argues that high-ranking officials were moved to abandon ritual protocol in order to demonstrate their concern for a lady of noble status. Finally, *Guliang* heightens the drama still further through its insistence that *Chunqiu* had broken with its own conventions of recording by disclosing the purpose of an interstate meeting to emphasize Song Boji’s exemplary goodness. Moreover in contradistinction to the earlier discussion, it insists that participants remain unnamed and unranked, not to censure them but to indicate the great numbers who clamored to provide material resources for the funeral of this exceptional Lu noblewoman.

Why does the *Guliang Commentary* condone Song Boji’s behavior unconditionally? Does it advocate that other women who find themselves in similar life-threatening situations should do as Song Boji did? Were they to display the kind of ritual fastidiousness that she exemplified and die as a consequence? Are there no alternatives for those who would take inspiration from Song Boji? We can derive some provisional answers from Han-era readings of this Lu noblewoman.

HUAINANZI

The earliest extant discussion of Song Boji that dates to the Han appears in *Huainanzi*’s chapter 20, “The Exalted Lineage.” A long passage promotes a theme seen elsewhere in the text, namely, that all things in the empire are suitable for something, it is simply a matter of employing them in their proper places; in other words, in a manner that fits the context. *Huainanzi* explains:

Water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain differ as things, but all are used. The compass, the square, the weight, the balance beam, the level, and the marking cord differ in shape, but all are applied. Cinnabar, verdigris, glue, and lac are not identical, but all are used. Everything has something for which it is appropriate; each

⁴⁴ GLZ, Lord Xiang 9.30.9.

thing is suitable for something. Wheels are round; carriage boxes are square; their shafts are parallel; their axles are crosswise—their propensities function to make them convenient. The horses at the side of a team want to gallop; the ones in the middle want to walk. The sash can never be too new; the belt hook can never be too old; if each is properly placed, they are suitable. 水火金木土穀，異物而皆任，規矩權衡準繩，異形而皆施，丹青膠漆，不同而皆用，各有所適，物各有宜。輪圓輿方，轅從衡橫，勢施便也。驂欲馳，服欲步，帶不厭新，鉤不厭故，處地宜也。⁴⁵

Having run through a litany of quotidian examples, the passage turns to the role of the classics and their cultural applications:

[The poem] “Guan ju” originated from [the cry of] a bird. The Superior Man praises it because it advocates that the female and the male should not leave their nest. [The poem] “Lu ming” originated from [the cry of] an animal. The Superior Man exalts it because it describes how deer, having found food, call to one another [to share it]. At the battle of Hong, [Song’s] army was defeated and its prince captured. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* exalts him because he did not attack the enemy before they had set up their formations. Song Boji remained in her [palace] and burned to death. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* exalts her because she would not leave if it meant violating propriety. For perfecting endeavors and establishing affairs, how can these examples be considered excessive? [Each] points in a single direction and discusses it, but you can derive a general outline from them. 關雎興於鳥，而君子美之，爲其雌雄之不乖居也；鹿鳴興于獸，君子大之，取其見食而相呼也。泓之戰，軍敗君獲，而春秋大之，取其不鼓不成列也；宋伯姬坐燒而死，春秋大之，取其不逾禮而行也。成功立事，豈足多哉。方指所言而取一概焉爾。⁴⁶

Typical of the exegetical approaches of its day, *Huainanzi* reads the poems “Guan Ju” and “Lu Ming” in a highly gendered manner that says something crucial about the relations between men and women: linked together the poems sanction the cohabitation of men and women in “the nest” of marriage and affirm the complementary roles of husband and wife, as they provide mutual succor in the form of food, sex

⁴⁵ D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin* 淮南子逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Huainanzi*), Institute for Chinese Studies Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series, Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992): 20/214/8–10. Trans. draws upon that given in John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Meyer and Harold Roth, trans., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2010), pp. 808–9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 20/214/10–13

and other staples of marriage. In the second pair of examples, *Huainanzi* links two events from records in *Chunqiu* that earned the praise of Confucius: lord Xiang of Song's defeat at the Battle of Hong and Song Boji's death by fire.

How, according to *Huainanzi*, could such seemingly tragic events win the praise of the Superior Man? Lord Xiang of Song, along with his army, suffered defeat on the banks of the river Hong by a force from the state of Chu because of his unwillingness to depart from ritual protocol for the sake of a sure victory: the lord rejects the advice of an underling to strike before the enemy has made their formation. His conduct at the Battle of Hong mirrors that of Song Boji in her burning palace.⁴⁷ Both refuse to compromise their commitments to follow ritual protocol, even when such conscientious conduct brings defeat or death. With regard to the *Zuo* discussion of the Battle of Hong, David Schaberg has asked: "Why did a well-intentioned act fail so signally? How could a narrative tradition otherwise quite clear in its lessons preserve so striking an instance of misguided moralism?"⁴⁸ What lesson can be gleaned from the conduct of lord Xiang of Song and Song Boji, conduct that appears hopelessly extreme given the outcomes? As if in response to such concerns, *Huainanzi* concludes: "For perfecting endeavors and establishing affairs, how can these examples be considered excessive? [Each] points in a single direction and discusses it, but you can derive a general outline from them 成功立事, 豈足多哉. 方指所言而取一概焉爾."⁴⁹

Softening the potentially extreme message that such examples might proffer, *Huainanzi* warns the reader to abandon a normative reading of lord Xiang of Song and Song Boji for the "general trajectory" that the example of their lives provide. Locating them properly within the context of their lives, one is to draw inspiration from the conscientiousness of lord Xiang of Song and Song Boji but not become imprisoned by it: "Everything has something for which it is appropriate; each thing is suitable for something." Thus *Huainanzi* ultimately argues that, properly contextualized, the lessons of lord Xiang and Boji are useful guides for "perfecting endeavors" and "establishing affairs;" in other words, for conducting oneself in an exemplary fashion but not necessarily following every detail of ritual protocol, particularly if it means bringing on one's personal or public demise.

⁴⁷ See *CQ* Lord Xi 22.8.

⁴⁸ Schaberg, *A Patterned Past*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin* 20/214/13.

CHUNQIU FANLU

Liu An's nemesis, Dong Zhongshu, is loosely affiliated with three different readings of Song Boji. In Dong's *Chunqiu fanlu* Song Boji appears in chapter 1, "King Zhuang of Chu," and chapter 6, "The Kingly Way." Reflecting the composite nature of the text, these are two disparate images. In opposition to the *Huainanzi* reading, the first discussion couples Song Boji and lord Huan of Qi to sanction the principle that ritual propriety and trustworthiness are not to be abrogated under any circumstances.⁵⁰ An unnamed interlocutor explains:

The *Spring and Autumn* honors propriety and values trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is more valuable than one's territory; propriety is more venerable than one's person. How do we know that this is so? Song Boji clung faithfully to ritual propriety and perished in a fire; lord Huan of Qi clung faithfully to trustworthiness and lost his territory.⁵¹ The *Spring and Autumn* [represents them] as worthies and elevates them to make them exemplary models for the world as if to say: there is nothing to which propriety does not respond, there is nothing which trustworthiness does not repay.⁵² It is Heaven's norm. 春秋尊禮而重信，信重於地，禮尊於身。何以知其然也？宋伯姬疑禮而死於火，齊桓公疑信而虧其地，春秋賢而舉之，以爲天下法。曰禮而不答，信無不報，天之數也。⁵³

From the specific query regarding how interstate rulers sharing the same surname should treat one another, *Chunqiu fanlu* moves to the universal argument that one should exhibit trustworthiness and propriety no matter the circumstance, as did Song Boji and lord Huan of Qi. Unlike the argument in *Huainanzi's* chapter 20, which proposes a more flexible application of ritual protocol reminiscent of the earlier *Zuo* reading of Song Boji, there is no discussion of suitability or context

⁵⁰ *Chunqiu* typically refers to the Lords of the Land of the Central States by referencing the name of their state and their rank, e.g. *Chu zi*, "the Viscount of Chu." In this entry only the name of the state appears. Without a rank the named state is treated in the same way as the tribes or ethnic groups that were not regarded as Sinitic states and did not participate in the rituals of the Central States.

⁵¹ GYZ, Lord Zhuang 3.13.4 states: "Winter. Our Lord met with the marquis of Qi to make a covenant at Ke." The commentary explains that at the meeting between lord Zhuang of Lu and lord Huan of Qi, the leader of the Lu forces threatened lord Huan with a sword and demanded that Qi return lands that they had previously acquired. Lord Huan agreed to his demands. Although it was permissible to violate covenants concluded under threat, lord Huan respected the covenant and returned the occupied territories to Lu.

⁵² Emending *shi* 施 to *xin* 信.

⁵³ D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Chunqiu fanlu zhuzi suoyin* 春秋繁露逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Chunqiu fanlu*), The Chinese University of Hong Kong Institute of Chinese Studies (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992) 1/1/15–22.

here. Moreover, chapter 1 departs from the highly gendered reading of Song Boji seen earlier in the *Guliang Commentary*. She exemplifies a universal principle relevant to all humankind, one that is irrefutable, unchangeable, and unequivocal. No exceptions are to be made.⁵⁴

Striking off in a new direction, the discussion of Song Boji in chapter 6, “The Kingly Way,” returns to the question of gender. Here, a fragmented passage echoes Song Boji’s proclamation seen earlier in the *Gongyang* and *Guliang Commentaries*: “When a woman goes out at night, unless she is attended by her governess and her guardian, she does not descend [from] the hall 宋伯姬曰: ‘婦人夜出, 傅母不在, 不下堂.’”⁵⁵ Moreover it concludes, as in the *Guliang Commentary*, that Song Boji’s ritual fastidiousness reflects the trustworthiness of a pure woman. The passage proclaims: “Observe Song Boji, and you will understand the trustworthiness of a pure woman 觀乎宋伯姬, 知貞婦之信.”⁵⁶ The topos of Song Boji’s restraint and purity reappears in Dong’s analysis of the Song fire, as quoted by the “Treatise on the Five Phases” in *Hanshu*, where Song Boji is related to the stimulus-response theories of omenology for which Dong Zhongshu is most famous. In this instance, Dong’s opinions are contrasted with those of Liu Xiang:

Dong Zhongshu opined: In the fifth year after Boji went to Song [to marry lord Gong of Song], lord Gong of Song died. [Subsequently] Boji lived in obscurity preserving her chastity for more than thirty years. Moreover she was anxious and bereft over the calamities that had befallen her state. Accumulating *yin* generates *yang*. Thus fire generated the great conflagration [in Song]. Liu Xiang opined: Earlier lord [Ping] of Song had heeded a prognosis and executed his heir apparent, Cuo.⁵⁷ This was the retributive punishment of “fire failing to blaze upward.” 五行志上:

⁵⁴ This position is all the more curious when one considers that elsewhere in the *Fanlu*, the idea of expediency or expedient adjustment to circumstances (*quan* 權) is heralded as normative. For important discussions of this principle, see *ibid.* 3/8/5–27 and 4/11/8–21 and 6/16/25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 6/17/6–7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 6/18/20–21.

⁵⁷ *GYZ*, Lord Xiang 9.26. 6, records the event as follows: “In Autumn the Lord [Ping] of Song put to death his heir-apparent, Cuo 秋, 宋公殺其世子痤.” The *Zuo* narrative following this entry provides detailed background to the incident, suggesting that Song Boji was partially responsible for the troubles in Song because she had presented her son with a servant in her employ who became his concubine; the servant subsequently colluded with others to bring down the established heir-apparent. In fact, as Kinney has argued, “Here, as in other parts of the *Zuo*, the indulgence of a sexual attraction, the casual bestowal of women, the power of feminine beauty to destabilize, and the favoring of low-ranking women all work to open the door to disorder. But in setting the state for this event, the narrative reaches back even further to the abandonment of an ill-favored infant and her retrieval by one of Bo Ji’s harem mates.” Kinney, “Spring and Autumn Family,” p. 132.

三十年“五月甲午，宋災。”董仲舒以爲伯姬如宋五年，宋恭公卒，伯姬幽居守節三十餘年，又憂傷國家之患禍，積陰生陽，故火生災也。劉向以爲先是宋公聽讒而殺太子痤，應火不炎上之罰也。⁵⁸

Dong's reading of Song Boji takes on epic proportions in this omen-analysis in two important respects. First, the purity Song Boji exhibited the night of the devastating conflagration is temporally extended to encompass years of solitary widowhood because the text explains that she “lived in obscurity preserving her chastity for more than thirty years 伯姬幽居守節三十餘年.” This is the first instance to link Boji's chastity explicitly to her status as a widow. Second, Boji's purity is extended spatially beyond the confines of her marriage, as she is now portrayed as a woman who demonstrates a profound concern for the state in which she resides. Indeed her anxiety and mournfulness over the troubled political events that had unfolded in Song before her eyes are seen as the direct cause of the fire. This emphasis on the power of a woman's unsullied emotions to move Heaven is all the more striking when contrasted with Liu Xiang's explanation, one which points to the male domain of public politics, even when the male actor in question was the son of Song Boji, thereby implicating her as his mother, he argues the source of the anomalous fire lay in the actions of lord Ping of Song and his misguided decision to execute his heir-apparent.

XINXU

Consider other writings, such as *Xinxu* and *Lienü zhuan*, in which Liu Xiang demonstrated that he was most familiar with the ways in which a woman's conduct could deeply affect the public and political domains. Indeed a woman's power to influence the life and death of states through her relationships with powerful men, a theme discussed *ad nauseum* in *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, clearly preoccupied Liu Xiang and remained central to Han discussions of female virtue and the dynastic cycle. This is evident in the following reference to Song Boji from Liu Xiang's *Xinxu*, which reiterates a fairly standard list of mothers, wives, concubines, and consorts whose influence shaped the rise and fall of the Three Dynasties:

King Yu's rise was due to the Tu Shan girl; King Jie's fall was due to Moxi. King Tang's rise was due to You Shen; King Djou's fall was due to Danji. King Wen and Wu's rise was due to Ren and Si;⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1962) 27A, p. 1327.

⁵⁹ Ren 任 was the mother of king Wen of Zhou 太任, and Si 嬖 was the mother of king Wu of Zhou 太嬖.

King You's demise was due to Bao Si. This is why the *Odes* rectify with the likes of "Guan Ju" and the *Spring and Autumn* praises the likes of Bo Ji. 禹之興也，以塗山；桀之亡也，以末喜。湯之興也，以有莘；紂之亡也，以妲己。文武之興也，以〔任〕太姒；幽王之亡也，以褒姒。是以詩正關雎，而春秋褒伯姬也。⁶⁰

The rise and fall of the three great dynasties Xia, Shang, and Zhou turned on their respective rulers' relations with particular women. The burgeoning discourse concerning how a ruler's personal relations with the opposite sex could influence the fate of his reign highlights the remedial and restorative aspects of Song Boji's conduct. Her power to forestall the demise of rulers and the devastation of their states takes on seemingly epic proportions as only the likes of a Song Boji can forestall the downfall of a dynasty. Liu Xiang develops the epic quality of Song Boji in the next example from his *Lienü zhuan*.

LIENÜ ZHUAN

Liu Xiang's narrative of Song Boji in chapter 4, "Chaste Compliance" 貞順, of *Lienü zhuan*, constitutes a conscious recrafting of the *Chunqiu*'s general treatment in order to serve a new didactic purpose, one that exaggerates the ritual fastidiousness of Song Boji as an exemplar of "chaste compliance." In this context the term appears to mean a woman who is exceptional for her sustained willingness to submit to ideals of ritual purity. In this refashioning of our noblewoman of Lu, the *Chunqiu*'s records are reinterpreted and narratives are revised through subtle changes of wording and purposeful excisions. A new Boji rises out of the ashes of the fiery death that once consumed her.

In the beginning of the story Liu Xiang recounts two events written in *Chunqiu* (discussed above) in order to highlight Boji's unwavering ritual literalism. The *Chunqiu* states that lord Gong of Song did not personally receive his bride. Instead, prior to his wedding, he sent an official named Hua Yuan on a friendly diplomatic mission to ask after the bride, and later sent the official Gongsun Shou to present

⁶⁰ "D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Xin xu zhu zi suo yin* 新序逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Xinxu*) (Taipei: Taiwan Shang wu yin shu guan, 1992), 1.3/1/20–21. The "Ren Zhi" 仁智 chapter of *Lienü zhuan* similarly writes: 自古聖王必正妃匹妃。匹正則興，不正則亂。夏之興也以塗山，亡也以末喜。殷之興也以有莘，亡也以妲己。周之興也以太姒，亡也以褒姒。 All references to *Lienü zhuan* follow the text printed in D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Gu lienü zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 古列女傳逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Gu lienü zhuan*), The Chinese University of Hong Kong Institute of Chinese Studies (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Commercial Press, 1993; hereafter abbreviated as *LNZ*) 3.14/30/30–31/2. For the *Guoyu* and *Shiji* articulations of this theme, see Lisa A. Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representatives of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 15–20.

betrothal gifts. On the occasion of the impending marriage of another Lu daughter, the *Gongyang Commentary* explains that the ritual protocol for “greeting a bride” dictates that foreign lords should meet their Lu brides in person. Curiously, the commentary also uses this occasion to discuss the rite as it pertained to the lord of Song, who would eventually marry Song Boji, as announced in a much later entry of *Chunqiu*:

“In the ninth month, Lie Xu of Ji came to receive the bride.” Who was this Lie Xu? He was a great officer of Ji. Why is he not referred to as an envoy [of the lord]? In the marriage rites, no reference is made to the bridegroom. To whom then are references made? References are made to paternal uncles, elder brothers, teachers and friends. Why, then, is reference made to the bridegroom in the entry “The Lord of Song sent Gongsun Chou to come and present betrothal gifts”? No other wording was possible. Why? He had no mother. Did the Marquis of Ji have a mother? The answer is, “He had a mother.” If he had a mother then why was no reference made to her [relatives]? The mother did not communicate [with the envoy.] The *Chunqiu* does not record the meeting of brides of regional lords of the Exterior. Why, in this instance is it recorded? It was meant to reprimand. The *Chunqiu* reprimands the marquis of Ji for being the first not to meet his bride in person. Was this actually the first instance of a prince’s not meeting his bride in person? There were instances prior to this. Since this is so, why then, is this noted as the first instance? It was in order to mark it as the first instance. Why should it be so marked? It was the first instance within the period covered by the *Chunqiu*. 九月，紀履緌來逆女。紀履緌者何？紀大夫也。何以不稱使？婚禮不稱主人。然則曷稱？稱諸父兄師友。宋公使公孫壽來納幣，則其稱主人何？辭窮也。辭窮者何？無母也。然則紀有母乎？曰：有。有則何以不稱母？母不通也。外逆女不書，此何以書？譏。何譏爾？譏始不親迎也。始不親迎昉於此乎？前此矣。前此則曷爲始乎此？托始焉爾。曷爲托始焉爾？春秋之始也。⁶¹

The *Guliang Commentary* describes the ritual violation similarly as failure to meet the bride in person, but explains the direct reference to the envoy somewhat differently:

“In the ninth month, Lü Xu of Ji came to receive the bride.” Receiving a bride is something that is done in person [by the groom]. To dispatch a great officer [to receive the bride] violates the correct norm. The name of the state and the family name is employed because [Lü Xu] came and had official contact with us. For that

⁶¹ See *GYZ*, Lord Yin 1.2.5.

reason, the Superior Man promoted him. 紀履緌來逆女。逆女，親者也。使大夫，非正也。以國氏者，爲其來交接於我，故君子進之也。⁶²

Departing from their point of agreement, that ritual protocol was violated when the lord of Song sent Ji Wenzi as a substitute to receive the bride, *Lienü zhuan* expands the narrative by adding a new dimension, one that explains how Song Boji responded to the lord's initial failure to follow proper ritual protocol where their marriage was concerned:

Boji was the eldest daughter of lord Xuan and the younger sister of lord Cheng. Her mother who was called Mu Jiang, betrothed Boji to lord Gong of Song. Lord Gong of Song did not personally receive the bride, but since Boji was compelled by the orders of her father and mother, she proceeded [to Song]. Having entered Song, after three months she was to appear in the ancestral temple, as she was obligated to practice the Way of Husband and Wife. But because lord Gong had not personally received the bride, Boji was not willing to heed his commands. 伯姬者，魯宣公之女，成公之妹也。其母曰繆姜，嫁伯姬於宋恭公。恭公不親迎，伯姬迫於父母之命而行。既入宋，三月廟見，當行夫婦之道。伯姬以恭公不親迎，故不肯聽命。⁶³

The lord's ritual gaffe precipitates a decided reaction in Song Boji: she is reluctant to leave Lu to take up her residence in Song and marry him. Only when compelled by the commands of her parents does she succumb to the pull of filial obligations and travel to Song. Arriving in Song, after the required three months had passed, she was to appear in the ancestral temple presumably to participate in the ceremony that would announce her marriage to the ancestors and the appropriateness of assuming her role as lord Gong's wife. She was now "obligated to practice the Way of Husband and Wife," an archaic code indicating that it was time for Song Boji to consummate the marriage. But Boji tenaciously refuses to do so because the lord's initial failure to carry out the marital rite of "receiving the bride" has presumably negated all those that follow from it.

The newfound emphasis on Song Boji's abstinence reframes the next part of the story, which in the passages about her in *Chunqiu* stood as a description of the marital rite known as "giving greetings to the lady 致女," mentioned previously, which occurred after the bride took up her marital home in a foreign state. Recall that in the ninth year of lord Cheng, *Chunqiu* related Jisun Hangfu's going to Song to give greetings to Song Boji shortly after her marriage. In Liu Xiang's re-visioning

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *LNZ* 4/2/1-4.

of the Boji narrative, the Lu representative does not travel to Song to enact the last of a series of marital rites, but rather to resolve a problem in the boudoir precipitated by Boji's refusal to consummate the marriage due to her husband's ritual impropriety. According to *Lienü zhuan*, news of Song Boji's abstinence filters back to Lu, and lord Cheng moves to resolve the problem by sending a messenger to command Boji to acquiesce and consummate her marriage with lord Gong:

Someone from Song reported [the situation] to [the ruler of] Lu, and [the ruler of] Lu dispatched the great officer Ji Wenzi to Song, to deliver his orders to Boji. Upon his return, he presented a report of the mission and the lord entertained him. Mu Jiang emerged from her chamber, bowed twice, and exclaimed: "You, great officer, have been attentive and industrious while on this long journey, humiliating yourself to dispatch [orders] to our young daughter. You have not forgotten our former lord or his future descendants. His messengers below are in the know, and it is just as our former lord would have hoped. I [consequently] presume to bow twice in gratitude for your willingness to suffer humiliation. 宋人告魯, 魯使大夫季文子於宋, 致命於伯姬。還, 復命。公享之, 繆姜出於房, 再拜曰: "大夫勤勞於遠道, 辱送小子, 不忘先君以及後嗣, 使下而有知, 先君猶有望也。敢再拜大夫之辱。"⁶⁴

Liu Xiang's account departs from earlier Boji narratives in several striking ways. Upon his return from Song, Ji Wenzi no longer chants the "Hanyi" ode. This revision is most revealing of Liu Xiang's ultimate design, for Ji Wenzi's chanting of this poem in the *Zuo* narrative affirmed the blissful marriage of Boji and lord Gong. But since the emissary to Song is now predicated on Boji's unwillingness to consummate her marriage, an ode descriptive of a felicitous marriage would hardly fit the new purposes to which the narrative is being crafted. For her part, Mu Jiang no longer chants the ode entitled "Lüyi," when she emerges from her chamber to address the returned envoy. Rather, the narrative emphasizes the envoy's humiliation. What could Mu Jiang have had in mind when she praised the envoy for suffering humiliation? What was the source of the humiliation? One can't help thinking this is a veiled allusion to the embarrassment that this high-ranking official must have felt when he was left with the unsavory job of compelling the young bride to acquiesce to her husband's desire to consummate the marriage. Tellingly, it is Mu Jiang, whose outrageous carnal adventures are well documented in *Zuozhuan*, who alludes to the sexual undertones of the

⁶⁴ LN_Z 4/2/4-7.

affair. Whatever the ultimate source of Ji Wenzhi's humiliation, it is clear that the problems of the bedchamber are ultimately resolved because she does cohabit with lord Gong until his demise ten years later. Echoing earlier versions, the final section details Song Boji's death by fire in the following way:

Boji had been married to lord Gong for ten years when lord Gong passed away, leaving Boji a widow. During the reign of lord Jing,⁶⁵ Boji was caught in a fire one night. Her attendants said: "My lady, should you not attempt an early escape from the fire?" Boji replied: "The duties of a woman prescribe that when her governess and her guardian are both not present, she does not descend from the hall at night. I will wait until the governess and guardian come." The governess arrived but the guardian still did not come. Her attendants implored her once again: "My lady, should you not attempt an early escape from the fire?" Boji replied: "The duties of a woman prescribe that when her guardian is not present, she must not leave her chambers at night. Violating one's duty to save one's life does not compare to dying to preserve one's duty." Subsequently she was engulfed by the flames and died. 伯姬既嫁於恭公十年，恭公卒，伯姬寡。至景公時，伯姬嘗遇夜失火，左右曰：“夫人少避火。”伯姬曰：“婦人之義，保傅不俱，夜不下堂，待保傅來也。”保母至矣，傳母未至也。左右又曰：“夫人少避火。”伯姬曰：“婦人之義，傳母不至，夜不可下堂，越義求生，不如守義而死。”遂逮於火而死。⁶⁶

The passage departs from earlier narratives in several important ways. Boji's actions are now identified with the notion of *yi* 義, denoting her duty or obligation to conduct herself in a manner that includes themes of widowhood and martyrdom. Moreover, Boji speaks in her own voice about both her choice and her impending death as if to quell any debate over her motivations. In choosing death, Boji has done the right thing. Her martyrdom, in turn, becomes the measure of her worth and the very *raison d'être* for the interstate meeting that follows her demise:

Chunqiu makes a detailed record of this affair to establish Song Boji as a worthy, because it considered that among those women who embraced purity as their [standard of] conduct, Boji perfected the Way of Womanhood. At the time, when the regional lords heard of the affair, there was not a single man who failed to be sorrow-

⁶⁵ The reference to the reign of lord Jing is clearly incorrect. As we have seen, *Chunqiu* records the fire as follows: CQ Lord Xiang 9.30.3: 五月，甲午，宋災。宋伯姬卒。 "In the fifth month, on *jiawu*, there was a calamitous fire in Song. Song Boji passed away."

⁶⁶ LNŽ 4/2/7-11.

ful and bereaved. Considering that one who has died cannot live [again] but their material wealth can be restored, they consequently assembled at Chanyuan and indemnified Song for its losses. The *Chunqiu* praised this action. The Superior Man said: “In accordance with ritual protocol, when a woman is not accompanied by her guardian she must not leave her chambers at night. If she does proceed, she must carry a candle. Boji exemplifies this protocol.” An Ode proclaims: “Watch well over your behavior, and allow nothing wrong in your rectitude.”⁶⁷ It may be said of Boji that she never lost her rectitude. 春秋詳錄其事，爲賢伯姬，以爲婦人以貞爲行者也。伯姬之婦道盡矣。當此之時，諸侯聞之，莫不悼痛，以爲死者不可以生，財物猶可復，故相與聚會於澶淵，償宋之所喪。春秋善之。君子曰：“禮，婦人不得傳母，夜不下堂，行必以燭。伯姬之謂也。”詩云：“淑慎爾止，不愆于儀。”伯姬可謂不失儀矣。⁶⁸

The concluding verse summarizing Boji's story reads:

伯姬心專，守禮一意。 Boji possessed a steadfast heart, preserving
the rites single-mindedly.
宮夜失火，保傅不備。 One night her palace caught fire, while
unattended by governess and guardian.
逮火而死，厥心靡悔。 Consumed by fire she met her death,
though she harbored no regret.
春秋賢之，詳錄其事。 *Chunqiu* deemed her a worthy, and
meticulously commemorated this event.”⁶⁹

Is this simply another version of the Boji story that circulated independently of those discussed earlier or a purposeful reshaping of these earlier narratives? The latter possibility seems most likely because the explication offered above demonstrated that the changes, additions, and omissions must have been purposeful. They consistently serve to expand, emphasize, and even exaggerate a singular theme: Song Boji's exceptional commitment to ritual propriety, which is extended well beyond one fiery night to become a defining quality of her life. Whatever lacunae existed in earlier readings of Boji to allow the reader to debate her feelings as she uttered the words indicating she lacked any ritual sanction for leaving her burning palace, Liu Xiang's narrative serves to resolve the potential ambivalence once and for all: with head

⁶⁷ *Odes*, Mao no. 256 “Yi”; see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics: with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, v. 4. *The She king* (Taipei: South-eastern Materials Center, 1944), p. 510.

⁶⁸ *LNZ* 4/2/11–15.

⁶⁹ *LNZ* 4/2/16–17.

held high, Boji chooses death by fire, willingly sacrificing herself to preserve her moral rectitude.

CONCLUSION

Beginning in the shadowy yet clearly exceptional *Chunqiu* records, Song Boji emerges as a notable daughter of Lu. The ten brief records pertaining to her marriage, death, and burial constitute the essential core of materials through which later commentators would lay out their respective positions on this noblewoman's virtue. In the earliest strata of myth-making preserved in the commentaries to the *Chunqiu*, three distinct visions of Song Boji emerge: one which paints a rather negative portrait of her as a tragic figure who fails to recognize the full import of her womanhood; one which commemorates her as a worthy exemplar; and one which identifies her worthiness with the consummate pure and unsullied female ideal of propriety. In this last reading, Song Boji's virtue is explicitly feminized as her purity is linked to the "Way of Womanhood." These different readings of Song Boji speak to the range of possibilities intellectuals discussed and debated in the closing years of the Warring States period, as they considered ethical questions relating to the female gender in general and the meaning and application of ritual propriety more specifically.

What would future readers glean from the likes of Song Boji? What kind of model of inspiration was she to become in the Han? As the examples from *Huainanzi*, *Chunqiu Fanlu*, and *Lienü zhuan* demonstrate, the debate continued well into the Han. By pairing Song Boji with different exemplars from the tradition and building on the discussions first laid out in the three commentaries, Han intellectuals articulated radically different positions on such vital issues as what constituted ritual purity as opposed to ritual pollution, whether ritual norms were to be applied flexibly to the situation at hand or unexceptionally as a universal given, and how the fundamental values of righteousness and trustworthiness were most productively harmonized with ritual propriety. Addressing these broader debates, each took a particular position on the gendered implications of Song Boji as a didactic exemplar.

As we have seen, Liu Xiang endeavored to codify Song Boji as the perfection of a decidedly female chastity by extending back in time to her early years as a young bride the unwavering commitment to ritual purity she demonstrated in her later years as a widow. But Liu Xiang's reading of Song Boji, which appears to condone the notion that it is right for a woman to sacrifice her life on a point of ritual detail, stands

at the extreme end of a spectrum of Han opinion. Other intellectuals abandoned Liu's puritanical interpretations to pursue a more impassioned reading of Song Boji, one that stood in awe of the power of a woman's emotions to move Heaven itself, precipitating anomalies and disasters that changed the course of history.

With regard to Song Boji as an exemplary model of inspiration, female readers today are left with a number of questions to ponder. Are they to follow the *Zuo* reading and reject Song Boji's fastidiousness for a more liberal reading of ritual propriety, one that celebrates a woman's ability to choose among various contending moral obligations as she moves through her life? Are they to commemorate Song Boji's worthiness as in the *Gongyang Commentary*, remembering her exceptional conduct, but approaching her extraordinary worth as a model of inspiration rather than literal imitation? Or are they to follow Song Boji into the flames, as Liu Xiang's reading would have it, and sacrifice their life to preserve their chastity? With Confucius back in vogue at the behest of the Communist Party in its search to revivify the Confucian tradition in the service of its nationalist agenda, and the rising interest in Confucian education in official and unofficial circles, one wonders which reading of Song Boji will predominate or whether she will be reinvented yet again as a feminine ideal and/or a potentially feminist icon for the twenty-first century. Only time will tell whether Song Boji will rise again from the ashes and, when she does, what guise she will assume.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CQ* *Chunqiu* 春秋, as printed in *GYZ* (see below). In all citations of the D.C. Lau concordances, the first number indicates the number of the lord in the sequence of lords of Lu. E.g., Lord Yin is 1.X.X; Lord Huan is 2.X.X, etc. The second number is the reign year of that lord, and the third is the sequence of the entry. Thus, Lord Huan 2.1.1 means "Huan, the second of the Lu lords to reign, the first year of his reign, the first entry, or record."
- GLZ* D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Guliang zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 穀梁傳逐字索引
- GYZ* D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Gongyang zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 公羊傳逐字索引
- LNZ* D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Gu lienü zhuan zhuzi suoyin* 古列女傳逐字索引
- ZZ* D.C. Lau et al., eds., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhuzi suo yin* 春秋左傳逐字索引