

Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan 左傳: *Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”*. Translated with an introduction by STEPHEN DURRANT, WAI-YEE LI, AND DAVID SCHABERG. 3 vols. Seattle: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS, 2016. Pp. xcv + 2147. \$240.

In the introduction to the work under review, translators Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg correctly observe that “*Zuozhuan* deserves a place alongside other great histories from the ancient world” (p. xvii) and suggest several reasons, all connected to the nature of the text and its transmission, to account for why it has not achieved such a place. Yet there is a much simpler explanation: until now, no accessible English translation has been available. Translation is the vehicle through which most readers encounter classics from other traditions, and, for better or for worse, the “world literature canon” primarily comprises works that have been brought across into English. Thus, for example, a contemporary writer whose work has not been translated into English has no hope of winning a Nobel prize for literature, and brilliant works rendered poorly in English also stand little chance.

The *Zuozhuan* (Zuǒ zhuàn 左傳, or *Zuo Tradition*) is one of three major commentarial works associated with the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chūnqiū 春秋, often simply “*Annals*” in the work reviewed here). The *Zuo Tradition* is a core text in the Chinese historiographical and literary traditions: it is the lengthiest work of history from pre-imperial China and often the most ancient (if not only) source for events during the era it covers, and it is renowned for the style of its prose and the rhetorical brilliance of the speeches it records. Yet despite the *Zuo Tradition*’s lofty position in the Classical Chinese canon, it is not well known among anglophone readers. Interest in the writings of ancient China certainly exists, and other early works, including the *Analecets* (Lúnyǔ 論語), *Mencius* (Mèngzǐ 孟子), *Laozi* (Lǎozǐ 老子/ *Dào dé jīng* 道德經), and the *Book of Changes* (Yìjīng 易經), have been brought across into English multiple times in complete translations that are both readable and scholarly. Yet the only full English translation of the *Zuo Tradition*, prepared by James Legge in 1872, is dated and difficult to follow. Other translations include a French rendering by Séraphin Couvreur (1914) and, more recently, a translation of selections comprising less than a quarter of the text by Burton Watson (1989). A complete, updated translation has long been needed in order for the *Zuo Tradition* to take its rightful place in the canon of world literature, and this magnificent work, which has already garnered the 2018 AAS Patrick D. Hanan Book Prize for Translation, does an admirable job of satisfying that need.

The translation team has successfully produced a work that is not only an English rendering but an accessible user manual for the *Zuo Tradition*. Front matter (reproduced in all three volumes) includes a chronology of Chinese dynasties and a series of helpful maps. A substantial introduction (pp. xvii–xcv) provides background on the *Zuo Tradition* and “*Annals*” and an overview of Spring and Autumn period history, explains translation conventions, and discusses the origins and textual history of the *Zuo Tradition* along with its place in the Chinese exegetical, historiographical, and literary traditions. The end matter comprises an exhaustive bibliography followed by indices of place names and personal names, which include additional detail such as modern-day location (places), or alternative names, lineage, and home state (people).

The translation itself is presented in a fashion that is exceptionally easy to navigate. The Classical Chinese source text and English translation are printed on facing pages, and great care has been taken to ensure that they correspond precisely. The major divisions of the *Zuo Tradition*, corresponding to the twelve rulers or “Lords” whose reigns it covers, are noted at the bottom of each page, and both Chinese and English text are marked with the year and divided into numbered sections. Section numbers indicate correspondences between the “*Annals*” and *Zuo Tradition* and also cross-reference the Chinese and English, facilitating easy movement between source and translation. Although the base text for the translation is the Thirteen Classics edition of Ruǎn Yuán 阮元 (1764–1849) (p. xxxii), section numbers are keyed to those used in Yáng Bójùn’s 楊伯峻 *Chūnqiū Zuǒ zhuàn zhù* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhōnghuá, 1990), the best and most widely used modern edition, a boon to scholars wishing to consult the translation in conjunction with Yáng Bójùn’s annotated text.

Like the physical layout, translation conventions and annotations are above all aimed at making this complex work easier to follow. As all experienced translators realize, translation choices inevitably carry a cost, and translators must thoughtfully weigh the benefits and drawbacks of different (if equally

“accurate”) renderings. In general, the translation team has prioritized accessibility and familiarity to twenty-first century anglophone readers, and has done so deliberately and with full awareness of the ramifications of their choices.

Many choices are subtle. For example, the *Zuo Tradition* and “*Annals*” identify days using sexagenary cycle (*gānzhī* 干支) notations. The translation renders these notations as follows: “In the ninth month, on the *wuchen* day (13)” (p. 293). Readers familiar with *gānzhī* dates will immediately notice that *wùchén* 戊辰 is day 5, not 13. As the translators explain, the parenthetical number refers not to the cyclical day, but to the day of the month given in *Yǎng Bójùn*’s annotations (p. xxxvi). We now conceive of days as sub-units of months, much as hours are sub-units of days, but in the *Zuo Tradition* (and indeed throughout most of the pre-imperial corpus), individual days were not recorded as days of the month, and it is uncertain that they were conceptualized as such. Instead, passage of time was marked by two separate cycles, and the sexagenary cycle of days (comprised of six ten-day “weeks”) spun independently of, yet synchronically with, the cycle of months and years. This conversion thus comes at the relatively minor cost of concealing a subtle difference in ancient and contemporary conceptions of time units, yet carries the advantage of rendering dates using a simpler system (month plus day of month) that is familiar to contemporary readers.

Another, more conspicuous choice is the standardization of personal names. The *Zuo Tradition* identifies many individuals by multiple different names, a practice that the translators rightfully describe as “bewildering.” Rather than directly translating the names used in the source text, thereby preserving what is perhaps its most confusing aspect, the *Zuo Tradition* translation consistently refers to each person by a single, standardized name throughout, indicating when an alternative name is used by superscript letters that are keyed to entries in the “Index of Personal Names.” The “*Annals*” translation retains the names given in the source text, and if the standardized name differs, it is included in parentheses. The diversity of names is largely an artifact of the *Zuo Tradition*’s complex textual history and, if pressed, one could quibble that standardizing names obscures a major stylistic feature of the original. But the translators have found a compromise that indicates when alternative names are used yet at the same time consistently employs standard names, thereby enabling readers to follow the words and deeds of individuals through various accounts with relative ease. This decision alone stands as a major contribution, as it enhances the coherence and readability of the translation immeasurably.

However, readers interested in alternative names should note that the “Personal Name Index” is indeed an index of the translated text and is thus limited to names that occur in the translation. Thus, if one looks up the name *Zijia*, there will be no results; one must know that *Zijia*’s standard name is *Gongzi Guisheng* in order to locate him in the index. Rarely, standardization of names has introduced stylistic inconsistencies. For example, a passage listing “Lord’s sons” (*gōngzǐ* 公子) in Chinese reads 公子嘉、公子駒、公子黔奔衛，公子鉏、公子陽生來奔 but is rendered “*Gongzi Jia*, *Gongzi Ju*, and *Gongzi Qian* fled to *Wei*. *Nanguo Juyu*^[a] and *Gongzi Yangsheng* came to us in flight” (p. 1861). Only a reader who is able to refer to the Chinese text or who takes time to check the index will see that in fact all of these men, including *Nanguo Juyu*, were identified as “*Gongzi*” in the source. The introduction states that the name chosen as the standardized form was sometimes the one that “an English reader might remember most easily” and sometimes the one used most frequently in the *Zuo Tradition* (p. xxxv). Yet these principles sometimes appear to conflict, and one wonders why *Nanguo Juyu*’s standard name is not *Gongzi Chu* or, alternatively, why *Gongzi Guisheng*’s standard name is not *Zijia*.

The translators employ new translations for the five ranks, replacing four of the conventional and very unsatisfactory Eurocentric renderings. Thus *hóu* 侯, often rendered “Marquis,” is translated “Prince,” *bó* 伯 is “Liege” rather than “Earl,” *zǐ* 子 is not “Viscount” but “Master”, and *nán* 男 is not “Baron” but “Head.” In a long overdue and most welcome corrective to earlier translations, the translators distinguish different usages of *gōng*, retaining “Duke” for the ruling rank but rendering the posthumous honorific *gōng* as “Lord.” They have thereby eliminated the previous confusing situation in which living rulers of various ranks all were transformed into “Dukes” upon their deaths. Although, as noted above, the translation standardizes most names, references to rulers have not been standardized and for the most part, the translations follow the source text. This is significant, since although it is often uncertain why a particular *Zuo Tradition* passage uses a given form of reference, “*Annals*”

records observe regular conventions for designating rulers in different contexts, and the translation reflects these conventions accurately. For example, the ruler of Cao is “Ban, the Liege of Cao” 曹伯班 in his death record but his funeral record uses the posthumous form “Lord Zhao of Cao” 曹昭公 (p. 283); similarly, the ruler of Song is “Gu, the Duke of Song” 宋公固 in his death record and “Lord Gong of Song” 宋共公 in his funeral record (p. 817); in other contexts, these men may be identified simply as “the Liege of Cao” 曹伯 and “the Duke of Song” 宋公.

Both *Zuo Tradition* and “*Annals*” identify Zhou nobility using precisely the same forms as regional rulers—the words 伯 and 子 designate ranks, and 公 may also designate a rank, though it is an honorific when following a posthumous epithet—but despite the lack of any formal distinction in the source text, the translation treats references to regional rulers and Zhou nobility quite differently. For example, a Zhou nobleman is identified as “the Shao Liege” 召伯 instead of the Liege of Shao, and elsewhere as “the Shao Duke Zhao” 召昭公 rather than Lord Zhao of Shao (both on p. 487); another Zhou nobleman is “the Shan Master” 單子 (not the Master of Shan) or “Shan Duke Xiang” 單襄公 (not Lord Xiang of Shan). The word 公 is plainly the posthumous honorific, elegantly rendered “Lord” when referring to regional rulers; the decision to translate it “Duke” when referring to Zhou nobility leaves the erroneous impression that these noblemen held two ranks, and it also obscures the distinction between those Zhou nobility who actually did hold the rank “Duke,” such as the Duke of Zhou 周公, and those who held other ranks and were posthumously designated 公. One suspects that this translation choice, together with the inverted order (“Shao Liege” instead of “Liege of Shao”), is intended to mark these men as Zhou nobility rather than regional rulers. If so, readers would have benefited from a note making explicit the significance so subtly encoded in the phrasing of the translation, particularly since this encoding introduces a distinction that, although supported by history books and commentary and widely accepted by scholars, is in no way evident from the language of the source text itself.

Just as *gōng* had two separate meanings and functions in the *Zuo Tradition*, so too did *zǐ* 子, which most often refers to a ruling rank but less frequently refers to an heir to the throne. This distinction is not observed in translating *zǐ*. Thus 衛子 refers to the Heir of Wei and 鄭子 to the Heir of Zheng, yet both instances are rendered “Master” (pp. 407, 605), with the same form as that used to refer to the Chu ruler, “Master of Chu” 楚子. Similarly, the lone occurrence of the phrase 子死 in the “*Annals*” is conventionally understood to refer to the death of the Lu heir apparent, consistent with other instances in which 子 refers to an heir, but in the translation the word 子 is interpreted as plural and the phrase is rendered “the sons died” (p. 565).

Zuo Tradition references to the Chu ruler are notoriously inconsistent, sometimes designating him “Master” 子 and sometimes “King” 王, and, rather than imposing a standard designation, the translation tends to follow the source text. Consequently, on the same page and sometimes even the same paragraph, a single individual is “the Master of Chu” and also “king” (examples include pp. 95, 637, 797, 1361). Although this is somewhat confusing and one wishes the translators had standardized these references as well, yet at the same time, one can only imagine how baffling the rest of the work would have been had the translators not undertaken the labor of standardizing so many other names and designations.

In keeping with the overall aim of accessibility, this annotated translation is accompanied by what may best be described as multiple layers of commentary. Preceding the entire translation is a lengthy introduction—a sort of standalone commentary, described above—and before each of the twelve “Lords” is a synopsis of major events along with a discussion of recurring themes and passages deemed of particular significance for literary or historical reasons. Within each year, many *Zuo Tradition* sections (but no “*Annals*” records) are prefaced by additional commentary set off by italics. The most important function of the italicized commentary is to identify connections between events in the pertinent section and elsewhere in the text. Narrative threads in the *Zuo Tradition* are often broken over multiple years, and these notes coupled with the use of standard names generate a level of continuity and cohesion that is not present in the original work. The italicized commentary also summarizes events, identifies individuals and relationships among them (p. 1065); explains political relationships (p. 821); calls attention to other narratives with similar themes elsewhere in the *Zuo Tradition* (p. 1091) or to other texts that record the same story (p. 627); notes whether predictions about the future are later

fulfilled (p. 81) or not (p. 203); or even registers the translators' response to the account (p. 515) or individuals (p. 1069), or their assessment of the literary value of the text (p. 127).

Comprising another layer of commentary are copious footnotes. These identify locations and their contemporary place names (this information also appears in the "Place Name Index") and identify individuals and relationships among them; discuss alternative interpretations or textual variants; explain individual characters or phrases in the source language; and give background on matters such as cultural or religious practices. Perhaps some of the most interesting are the lengthy notes that explain the use and significance of the *Odes* (*Shī* 詩) and the *Changes in Zuo Tradition* rhetoric (e.g., pp. 1200–1202, 1536–39).

At times the functions of the italicized commentary and the footnotes overlap. Thus references to an account of the same events in another early source may appear in the italicized commentary (p. 263), in a footnote (p. 379 n. 324), or both (p. 609 and p. 608 n. 75); and footnotes, like italicized commentary, may explain events or refer the reader to other *Zuo Tradition* accounts in the same chain of events. The italicized commentary and footnotes also interpret and evaluate, and *Zuo Tradition* passages that directly explain "*Annals*" records are a frequent object of attention. Comments on these remarks regularly note their failure to be "consistent" (p. 609 n. 83) or point out the presence of exceptions (pp. 818, 872 n. 434). These evaluations and others concerning "*Annals*" wording (pp. 1230 n. 961, 1301 n. 3) tend to hew closely to the orthodox "*Annals*" interpretation; one wishes that more consideration had been given to alternative explanations.

As explained in the introduction (p. xxxvi), footnotes are abbreviated and rely heavily on Yáng Bójiàn's annotations; indeed, when no additional information or source is mentioned, turning to the corresponding text in Yáng Bójiàn's edition often yields supporting material. A disclaimer states that annotations are not intended as a "comprehensive guide" to sinological scholars but "as an indication to the more general reader," but even so, on occasion citation of a specific source would have been helpful; examples include p. 1217 n. 924, concerning the practice of building a platform during official diplomatic visits; and p. 1597 n. 861, which gives a highly technical discussion of the ecliptic plane.

As with any translation of such length and complexity, this one contains a few renderings with which specialists may disagree, a point the translators themselves note in the introduction (p. xxxvi). Perhaps the most potentially controversial innovation is the decision to translate *guó* 國 (conventionally rendered "state") as "domain." The introduction explains this choice by stating that the "border area was rarely as clearly delineated as the frontiers of a modern state," and that "power . . . was a matter of lineage and sublineage relationships" (p. xxxvii), yet surely these are features of many premodern polities. Despite its etymological connection to *dominus* "lord" (cited in the introduction), the modern English word "domain" is more closely akin to *demesne*, which refers to possession, particularly of lands, and is fundamentally geographic or areal in scope. In addition, by opting to use an unusual term for early Chinese polities, the translation has the (doubtless unintended) consequence of "othering" China, treating its political organization as unique rather than one bearing similarities to others elsewhere in the ancient world.

Another concern is the translation of *shū* 書, which as a noun means "written document," and as a verb, "write." This word regularly appears in commentarial passages concerning the "*Annals*" in which it functions as a verb (negated as 不書) referring to the act of recording the "*Annals*"; this usage also occurs frequently in the *Gōngyáng* 公羊 and *Gǔliáng* 穀梁 commentaries. Although the translation renders the negated form as a verb, "does not record" (e.g., pp. 44, 67, 217), the affirmative form is typically treated as a reference to the "*Annals*" and translated "the text" (representative examples: pp. 547, 615, 865, 1319, 1475, 1647). Although 書 is sometimes used to refer to another classic, the *Documents* (*Shū* 書), I am unaware of any instance in the early corpus in which it refers to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. This translation is thus difficult to accept, and one suspects that *shū* should be understood as a verb in both negated and affirmative sentences.

The translation sometimes incorporates added detail that could just as well have been placed in the footnotes. Many such cases pertain to the identification of women; thus 夫人風氏 is rendered "our former lord's wife, Lady Feng" (p. 481), but the text actually reads "Lady of the Feng clan"; contrary to Western expectations, "*Annals*" records do not identify women by their husbands. Elsewhere, inter-

pretative detail has found its way into the translation; thus Qi Jiang 齊姜 is identified in the translation (but not the source text) as “[Lord Xian’s] father’s concubine” (p. 213), yet the accompanying footnote observes that sources disagree on her identity. In one instance, the practice of adding detail identifying women by their husbands leads to error: 夫人姜氏 is translated “Lord Min’s wife, Lady Jiang” (p. 235); in fact, this was Ai Jiang, wife of the late Lord Zhuang and (as noted subsequently, p. 237) elder sister of the young Lord Min’s mother and complicit in his murder. (Here I hasten to add that I read the entire translation closely, and this was the only such error I discovered.)

Another type of addition to the translation is the occasional insertion of the word “barbarian,” which has no equivalent in the *Zuo Tradition* or “*Annals*.” Thus the phrase 蠻夷, “the Man and Yi,” is rendered “the Man and Yi barbarians” (p. 1507), and 在夷 is rendered “among the barbarians” (p. 773) rather than “among the Yi.” These groups are identified as “tribes,” a term that (like “barbarians”) does not correspond to any word in the source text. The translation also employs form to make distinctions not present in the source; thus, in a single sentence, 狄人 is rendered “the Di” whereas the parallel form 晉人 is translated “Jin leaders” (p. 797); similarly, “Chi, the Rong Man Master” for 戎蠻子赤 appears on the same page as “Jie, the Master of Teng” for the parallel form 滕子結 (p. 1855). The Man, Yi, Rong, and Di were certainly considered “other,” a point confirmed by the simple fact that the *Zuo Tradition* makes no reference to their having states or “domains” 國. Less certain is the extent of their “otherness”: in the later reception of the “*Annals*,” the pejorative term “barbarian” was undoubtedly appropriate, but whether this loaded term was warranted so early remains open to debate.

These issues deserve considered attention precisely because of the strengths of this translation. The choices made by the translation team are likely to supersede previous conventions to set new standards in the field, and their work will exert major influence on the field of early China studies and sinology more broadly for many decades to come. More important still, this translation will at last allow the *Zuo Tradition* to take its proper place among the classics of world literature and ancient history. Those who take a fundamentalist approach to translation could argue that the goal of translation is simply to replicate a work in a different language, whereas certain innovations, such as the decision to standardize names and the addition of commentary linking together narrative chains of events, have reshaped the text in essential ways. Yet this reshaping has generated an accessible work that is likelier to be read, appreciated, and engaged with than a less innovative (and hence less readable) translation.

Finally, the University of Washington Press has done a beautiful job with the physical production of this work. Thin but high-quality paper allows the entire source text plus translation to be printed in three volumes, elegantly presented in traditional cloth binding. No e-book is available at present writing and thus, at nearly five pounds, this is not a work for travel reading. However, physical bulk is the only respect in which this splendid new translation is not entirely accessible to readers.

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“*Die Geheimnisse der Vorväter*”: *Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentierung einer esoterischen mandäischen Handschrift aus der Bodleian Library Oxford*. By BOGDAN BURTEA. Mandäistische Forschungen, vol. 5. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2015. Pp. 153, illus. €49.

The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq are the custodians of a vast library of religious literature in their own idiom, a form of Aramaic similar in many respects to the language of the Babylonian Talmud, albeit recorded in its own distinct script. While the canonical works of Mandaean literature, edited and translated into various scholarly languages, have been the subject of much scholarly discussion, a substantive corpus of esoteric priestly texts has received much less scholarly attention. Bogdan Burtea, our chief translator and interpreter of this corpus, identifies within it two sub-genres, *šarh* or “commentary” texts and *diwān* “scroll” or *tafsir* “explanation” texts, such as the *1012 Questions*, the *Greater First World*, the *Lesser First World*, the *Scroll of Exalted Kingship*, and *Zehrun, the Hidden Mystery*, in