

## *Introduction*

This Introduction supplements the Preface by giving information about the intent and arrangement of the book, and noting some difficulties with which any student of the Chinese classical period must somehow cope.

**Audience.** In books like this, there is a temptation to make the facts few and the translations easy. This we have resisted, by somewhat respecting the actual complexity of the period (the rival viewpoints were more than three), and by leaving intact some of its courtesies (one addresses a ruler in the third person). We have also shunned “relevance:” the ancient texts were not talking to us, they were arguing with each other. In these ways, we have sought to preserve the pastness of the past, rather than adjust it to the predilections of the present. We entirely agree with the colleague who announces on the first day of class, “This course is not about you; it’s about China.”

**Schools.** The arguments of rival viewpoints make up much of the classical literature (we have little information about political events as such). Many texts are advocacy tracts, put out by groups or “schools,” in the sense of “schools of thought.” Major schools were: (1) the Legalists or theorists of state, the ones who really made the Empire; (2) the Confucians, who derived from the warrior class but later focused on ritual, renounced war, and lost influence; (3) the socially lower Micians, followers of Mwò Dí or Mwòdž (“Master Mwò”), who at first opposed war; and (4) the Dàuists, who taught a technique of breath control and inner cultivation, but also made a contribution to political theory. As with modern political parties, each “school” included a range of viewpoints, and those viewpoints could change over time, in response to new conditions.

For clarity, we introduce each new source text with a box containing basic information, and identify each translation with its source text. Translated passages are numbered within a chapter (**4:5** is the 5th passage in Chapter 4) for easy cross-reference. An index to translated passages begins on page 247.

**States.** The Jōu Dynasty fell in 0771. Its kings relocated to a small central domain; its former fiefs emerged as rival states. The chief ones (see the map on page 21) were Chín in the west, in the old Jōu domain; Chí in the east, with Yēn north of it and Confucius’s Lǚ south of it; and Jìn in the center; Jìn later split into Jâu, Hán, and Ngwèi. Southern Chǔ was the chief non-Sinitic state. Some key dates in the history of the period are given on page 237.

**Society.** The texts have a narrow social range. They come from the upper strata of society: those taking part *in* the government or recommending policy *to* the government. They are propagandist rather than documentary in nature. And before we can even read them in chronological order, to see what issues they reflect or what changes they imply, the texts themselves must be dated.

**Dating the Texts** is not a simple proposition. Many “texts” are the files of an advocacy group, and include tracts written at different times. Some groups had a long life: the Gwǎndǒ Legalists began in the 04c and were still writing in the 02c. In this culture, ancient precedent was valued, and texts claimed to be earlier than they were: the Gwǎndǒ is named for an 07c statesman, Gwǎn Jùng, who lived long before the Gwǎndǒ text had begun to be written. To older texts, new material was often added, to create ancient credentials for modern ideas.

The work of sorting out this confusion has barely begun. The traditional view of the period (embodied in the Dzwǒ Jwàn, itself a Warring States text, and the Hàn Dynasty texts Jàn-gwó Tsù and Shǐ Jì) is still reflected in books which readers of this book will encounter. What to believe? The answer is a question of method. Scattered among our eight chapters are glances into the workshop, under the rubric **Methodological Moment**, which will give an idea of the kind of arguments philologists and historians use. These we recommend. For clarity, the end of each Moment is marked by a spacer:



**Chapters.** Chapter 1 is introductory: the situation that preceded the Warring States proper. Chapter 8 gives the final outcome: the unified Chín Empire.

In between, in Chapters 2-7, comes China’s high classical age, the Warring States period, seen from six aspects, each in its own chronologically arranged chapter. Together, they give a multi-faceted sense of the state modernization process, the background fact against which everything else takes its place. For the convenience of those readers who, whether as a school assignment or out of a special interest, are following one chapter without the preceding one, some persons and events are first-identified more than once. Otherwise, see the Subject Index. Footnotes suggesting further reading may be ignored as desired. At the back of the book are aids for getting an overview of the material: major events, a text chronology, a romanization table, and lists of works cited, passages translated, and subjects treated. We do not give Chinese text for translated passages (see the other books in this series), but characters are useful. To memorize those we do give, write them; to write them, see Bjorksten.

**At The End**, readers will have met some of the texts which represent the classical period, as part of the heritage of China and the global modern world. The selections include many literary and philosophical favorites, but also excerpts from the military and statecraft writings, which best show how the states grew strong and the wars were won. It is, we feel, against that realistic background, at once harsh and pedestrian, that the more philosophical pieces can best tell their part of the story.

Here, then, is China – a distant and in many ways an unfamiliar China, glimpsed in the process of becoming the China that we know.