



## The Realistic and Elegant Spirit of Virtuous Ministers in the State of Lu in the “Zuo Zhuan”

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### Abstract

Duke Zhou established the rites and music, creating the civilization of rites and music of the Western Zhou Dynasty. The realistic and elegant spirit originated from the *Book of Songs* and is the product and essence of the ritual and music civilization of the Zhou Dynasty. As the fief of Duke Zhou, the State of Lu was the most prosperous state in terms of ritual and music civilization during the Spring and Autumn Period. The virtuous ministers of the State of Lu exhibited a strong realistic and elegant spirit. Represented by Zang Wenzhong, Ji Wenzhi, Meng Xianzi, and Shusun Muzi described in the *Zuo Zhuan*, these virtuous ministers of the State of Lu possessed a strong sense of responsibility for assisting in governance and loving the people, enthusiasm for governing, courage and perseverance, dedication to state affairs, and wholehearted devotion. They often composed poems to express their aspirations, displaying an elegant demeanor, courtesy, and gracefulness, and are typical representatives of the realistic and elegant spirit of the Spring and Autumn Period.

**Key words:** *Zuo Zhuan*; Virtuous ministers of the State of Lu; Realistic and elegant spirit; Assistance in governance and love for the people; Gentle and courteous

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### INTRODUCTION

The term “fengya” originated from the *Book of Songs*, where “feng” refers to folk songs from various regions, and “ya” represents the court’s formal music. In *The Analects: On Government*, Confucius praised the *Book of Songs* for its purity, stating it was “without evil thoughts.” The realistic and elegant spirit embodies the pure realism of the Zhou people’s concern for reality and their active enthusiasm, as reflected in the *Book of Songs*. During the Zhou Dynasty, culture flourished, with rituals and music thriving. The realistic and elegant spirit is the essence and product of the ritual and music civilization of the Zhou Dynasty. In the Spring and Autumn Period, the State of Lu preserved the Zhou rituals most comprehensively, deeply influenced by the culture of rituals and music. It was even said that “all the rituals of the Zhou Dynasty are preserved in Lu” (Yang, *Year 2 of Duke Zhao*, 2000, p.1227), and Ji Zha, from the State of Wu, yearned to visit Lu to witness the music. As a historical record of the Spring and Autumn Period, the *Zuo Zhuan* depicts numerous virtuous ministers of the State of Lu. Influenced deeply by ritual and music culture, these virtuous ministers were enthusiastic about governance, talented, gentle, composed, and elegant, embodying the spirit of focus on reality and elegance, leaving splendid images on the Spring and Autumn stage. Compared to the abstract realistic and elegant spirit depicted in poetry in the *Book of Songs*, as a reliable historical record, the *Zuo Zhuan* vividly restores the elegance of ritual and music in the portrayal of historical events and the delineation of characters, making the realistic and elegant spirit more concrete and perceptible, vivid and lively.

## 1. THE ZEAL OF LU STATE'S WORTHY MINISTERS TO SAVE THE WORLD: ZANG WENZHONG, JI WENZI, MENG XIANZI, AND SHUSUN MUZI

Represented by Zang Wenzhong, Ji Wenzi, Meng Xianzi, and Shusun Muzi, the virtuous ministers of the State of Lu exhibited a strong sense of responsibility for assisting in governance and loving the people, showing enthusiasm for governing, courage, perseverance, dedication to state affairs, and wholehearted devotion.

Zang Wenzhong, who served through the reigns of Duke Zhuang, Duke Min, Duke Xi, and Duke Wen, for over fifty years, achieved remarkable accomplishments in governance. In the twenty-eighth year of Duke Zhuang's reign, when famine struck Lu, Zang Wenzhong, newly appointed to political office, immediately went to the State of Qi to seek assistance, actively advocating for the welfare of the state. During a severe drought in Lu, when Duke Xi of Lu was at a loss for solutions and contemplated burning the divine sorcerer Wu Wang alive to alleviate the disaster, Zang Wenzhong opposed this absurd idea, revealing his compassionate nature and the pragmatic mindset of a statesman. He sympathized with Wu Wang, arguing that burning him alive would be futile in resolving the drought. Defending Wu Wang's innocence, Zang Wenzhong emphasized that even if the drought were caused by him, executing him would only exacerbate the situation. He soberly pointed out that "repairing the city, degrading food, saving money, doing things well, and persuading people to divide the country" (Yang, *Year 21 of Duke Xi*, 2000, p.390) are the only practical measures to deal with the drought. He advised Duke Xi to reinforce city fortifications to prevent unjust neighboring states from taking advantage of Lu's vulnerabilities, to practice thriftiness, prioritize agricultural efforts, set an example by leading the way, and endure hardships alongside the people.

As an outstanding statesman, Zang Wenzhong always prioritized state affairs, showing flexibility and pragmatism instead of adhering rigidly to his own views or clinging to tradition. In the thirty-first year of Duke Xi's reign, Zang Wenzhong was sent on a diplomatic mission to the State of Jin. During his journey, he rested at a posthouse for the night. The posthouse keeper advised him that since Jin had recently established its dominance, it would favor and respect those who showed early reverence. Therefore, it was essential for Zang Wenzhong to arrive promptly in Jin to demonstrate respect. Zang Wenzhong did not dismiss the advice of the posthouse keeper due to his lowly status. Instead, he willingly accepted the counsel and hastened his journey to Jin. As a result, Jin allocated a considerable amount of land to the State of Lu. The incident with the posthouse keeper exemplifies Zang Wenzhong's humility, adaptability, and openness to good advice.

The subsequent events of this incident are recorded in the *Guo Yu*: After achieving success, Zang Wenzhong, maintaining his integrity, did not seek personal gain but instead requested substantial rewards for the posthouse keeper, demonstrating his appreciation for talented individuals. Despite Lu being an esteemed vassal state of the Zhou dynasty, emphasizing hierarchy and respect for authority, Zang Wenzhong was able to transcend rigid social norms, valuing talent and merit. This illustrates his political acumen and wisdom.

In the twenty-fourth year of Duke Xi's reign, King Xiang of Zhou sought refuge in the State of Zheng due to unrest caused by his maternal uncle. As Lu held the highest rank among the vassal states and had the closest relationship with the royal family, King Xiang of Zhou sent envoys to seek assistance from Lu. While it was a prime opportunity for powerful vassals to demonstrate their strength by supporting the king, Zang Wenzhong recognized Lu's limited resources and the potential toll on its people and finances that military campaigns would entail. Understanding that mobilizing troops to support the king would further strain Lu's resources and had no intention of seeking hegemony, Zang Wenzhong tactfully declined the Zhou envoys' request. Although he expressed utmost respect and deference to King Xiang in his response, Lu did not commit to assisting in the suppression of the rebellion.

Zang Wenzhong frequently engaged in diplomatic missions, dedicating himself to the peace and stability of the State of Lu and fostering friendly relations with neighboring states. He advocated for forging alliances with neighboring states, earning their trust through marital bonds and oaths of allegiance, thus ensuring mutual assistance in times of need. Proficient in diplomatic rhetoric, he skillfully cultivated friendships with other states, effortlessly transforming conflicts into opportunities for cooperation, and resolving hostilities through dialogue and negotiation.

In the thirty-third year of Duke Xi's reign, although Duke Wen of Jin had replaced Qi as the dominant power, the influence of Duke Huan of Qi still lingered, making Qi stronger than Lu. After Lu's diplomatic engagement with the State of Qi through the marriage of Duke Zhuang's daughter to Lu, Zang Wenzhong advised Duke Xi to seek reconciliation with Qi, citing Qi's reputation as a courteous state, and emphasizing the importance of strengthening ties with neighboring states to ensure the stability of the nation.

Zang Wenzhong, while actively fostering friendly relations with neighboring states and striving to create a peaceful and amicable international environment for the state of Lu, was not afraid of warfare. When faced with foreign aggression, he vigorously sought ways to defend his country, seeking assistance far and wide, never yielding or compromising. In the twenty-sixth

year of Duke Xi of Lu, Qi Xiaogong sought to dominate, harboring ambitious aspirations. With Qi's strength and Lu's weakness, Qi invaded Lu twice in the spring and summer. Despite Lu's efforts to appease Qi and diplomatically resolve the crisis, Qi only temporarily withdrew its troops, maintaining a looming threat over Lu. Zang Wenzhong, astutely assessing the situation, realized that only the ambitious King Cheng of Chu could counter the powerful Qi. Therefore, he and Dongmen Xiangzhong went to Chu seeking aid. By persuading Chu's minister Yu with the argument that Qi was not loyal to Chu, they convinced Chu to send troops to attack Qi, cleverly using Chu's strength to relieve Lu from its predicament. Zang Wenzhong's success in this endeavor was widely acclaimed, and a hundred and sixty-three years later, when Jin sought Lu's assistance in its war against Qi, they still referenced the event of “Zang Wenzhong leading Chu's troops to attack Qi.”

Ji Wen Zi, who served through the reigns of Duke Wen, Duke Xuan, Duke Cheng, and Duke Xiang, was a pillar of the State of Lu, safeguarding its interests and dignity as a trusted minister. For the sake of Lu's honor and interests, Ji Wen Zi repeatedly stepped forward, dedicating himself to the affairs of the state.

When the wife of Duke Zhao of Qi, Lady Zishu Ji, who was a woman from Lu, gave birth to a son named She, Duke Yi of Qi murdered She and seized the throne. Lu sought assistance from the royal family to bring Lady Zishu Ji back to Lu, but the obstinate Duke Yi of Qi disregarded the royal decree, detaining both the royal envoy and Lady Zishu Ji, leading to a deadlock. Ji Wen Zi went on a diplomatic mission to the State of Jin and successfully utilized Jin's power to facilitate Lady Zishu Ji's return to Lu. In the same year, when Qi invaded the western border of Lu, Ji Wen Zi once again tirelessly journeyed to Jin seeking assistance. Even when Lu's interests were compromised, Ji Wen Zi fearlessly advocated for justice, even in the face of the powerful State of Jin.

After the Battle of An, during which Wenyang, originally belonging to Lu, was occupied by Qi, Jin ordered Qi to return Wenyang to Lu. However, in the eighth year of Duke Cheng's reign, Jin reversed its decision, instructing Lu to cede Wenyang to Qi once again. Outraged by Jin's betrayal, Ji Wen Zi rebuked the Jin envoy, condemning Jin's breach of trust and lack of moral integrity, and predicted that Jin would lose the support of the vassal states due to its treachery. His righteous indignation and insightful remarks demonstrated his moral integrity and sagacity.

In the same year, the Jin State summoned the princes to meet in Pudi to stabilize the position of the alliance leader. Ji Wenzi criticized the behavior of the Jin State for not recultivating virtue and blindly bothering the princes, “Virtue is not competitive, what is the purpose of seeking

an alliance?” Indeed, as Ji Wenzi expected, Zheng Guo betrayed the Jin State, Qin State and Bai Di attacked the Jin State, and the princes all had different intentions towards the Jin State. Ji Wenzi also went to Qi many times in the sixteenth year of Duke Wen, the eighteenth year of Duke Wen, the first year of Duke Xuan, and the tenth year of Duke Xuan, and tried to create a peaceful and stable diplomatic environment for Lu.

Ji Wen Zi not only excelled in diplomacy but also made significant contributions to domestic governance within the State of Lu. In the eighteenth year of Duke Wen's reign, the crown prince of the State of Ju, who had committed regicide, fled to Lu and presented a precious jade to Duke Wen. Duke Wen, swayed by personal gain, not only failed to punish the crown prince for his disloyalty and lack of filial piety but also welcomed him and intended to reward him with cities and territories.

Recognizing the critical situation, Ji Wen Zi acted decisively and demanded the immediate expulsion of the crown prince from Lu. Duke Wen's inability to discern right from wrong and his inappropriate rewards and punishments could have had detrimental effects on Lu, even leading to chaos. Fortunately, Ji Wen Zi's discernment of right and wrong, his commitment to justice, and his resolute actions prevented such consequences from occurring.

Ji Wen Zi also excelled in military affairs. In the second year of Duke Cheng's reign, Ji Wen Zi led the troops of the State of Lu to participate in the Battle of An. In the twelfth year of Duke Wen's reign, Ji Wen Zi led the army in various regions, including Zhu and Yun, to construct city walls. These cities came to be known as “Jisun Cities.” Yun was situated near the State of Ju, and by fortifying both Zhu and Yun with city walls, Ji Wen Zi strengthened defenses, safeguarding the borders of Lu. This demonstrates Ji Wen Zi's strategic military wisdom and far-sightedness.

Meng Xian Zi, who served through the reigns of Duke Xuan, Duke Cheng, and Duke Xiang, stood alongside Ji Wen Zi as a prominent figure in the political arena of the State of Lu, both being esteemed ministers. During Ji Wen Zi's tenure as prime minister, Meng Xian Zi assisted him, and after Ji Wen Zi's passing, Meng Xian Zi succeeded him as prime minister, holding the position for fourteen years. The *Zuo Zhuan* holds a reputation for its unbiased and objective portrayal of characters, sparing no detail in depicting their flaws. However, it is noteworthy that there is no mention of any shortcomings of Meng Xian Zi in the text, which highlights his exceptional qualities.

Meng Xian Zi possessed a deep understanding of the geopolitical landscape among the states. Following the Battle of Bi, where Chu emerged victorious, Chu subsequently launched an expedition against the State of

Song, with Jin unable to provide assistance. Meng Xian Zi astutely recognized the burgeoning dominance of Chu and its far-reaching implications. Therefore, he advised Duke Xuan of Lu to quickly establish friendly relations with Chu. The *Zuo Zhuan* repeatedly documents Meng Xian Zi's prophetic predictions regarding the outcomes of wars and the rise and fall of various states, demonstrating his remarkable foresight.

Initially, Duke Huan of Qin formed an alliance with Duke Li of Jin. However, later on, Qin allied with the forces of Di and Chu to invade Jin, betraying their previous agreement. In response, Duke Li of Jin united forces with Qi, Lu, Song, and Wei to launch an attack on Qin, denouncing their treachery.

Meng Xian Zi confidently asserted, "When the Jin commander is in harmony, great achievements are certain", predicting the outcome of the Battle of Masui, where the Jin army indeed emerged victorious. When the State of Zheng betrayed Jin and aligned itself with Chu, instigating conflicts and attacking the State of Song, Duke Li of Jin intended to gather the forces of Lu, Qi, and Wei to retaliate against Zheng, prompting Chu to come to Zheng's aid. Meng Xian Zi foresaw the inevitable victory of the Jin army. Subsequently, in the Battle of Yanling, Jin achieved victory, once again confirming Meng Xian Zi's keen foresight.

In the tenth year of Duke Xiang of Lu's reign, the State of Zheng, under the command of Chu, engaged in warfare three times within three months, invading Lu, attacking Xiao, and assaulting Song, depleting its military strength. At this time, Duke Jian of Zheng was only eight years old, and the governance of the state was entrusted to the three senior ministers, Zisi, Zigu, and Zier. Meng Xian Zi foresaw that Zheng's frequent participation in warfare would inevitably lead to calamity, and this calamity would befall upon the three senior ministers. Indeed, shortly afterward, Zisi and the other two senior ministers of Zheng were assassinated, precisely as Meng Xian Zi had predicted.

Meng Xian Zi not only possessed a profound understanding of the geopolitical landscape and a keen insight into worldly affairs, enabling him to foresee the outcomes of wars, but he also excelled in strategic planning and was rich in military tactics. During a gathering of vassal states convened by Jin, where Jin sought to assert authority over Zheng, Meng Xian Zi foresaw the potential complications and expenses that would arise if military force were employed, affecting all the states involved. He proposed a strategic maneuver: "Let us fortify Hulao to pressure Zheng" (Yang, *Year 2 of Duke Xiang*, 2000, pp.922-923). Hulao was a strategically important location formerly under the control of Zheng but currently occupied by Jin. By fortifying Hulao, Zheng would be intimidated and compelled to submit to Jin's demands.

The Jin minister, Zhi Wu Zi, was greatly pleased with Meng Xian Zi's proposal, recognizing it as beneficial

not only to Jin but also to the other vassal states: "This proposal from a noble gentleman is indeed a blessing for the vassal states, not just a reliance of our small state." Meng Xian Zi's brilliant strategy proved effective; after the fortification of Hulao, Zheng indeed sought peace, and Jin achieved victory without engaging in warfare.

Shusun Muzi, who served through the reigns of Duke Xiang and Duke Zhao, succeeded Meng Xian Zi as the prime minister of the State of Lu (Gu,1993), holding this position for sixteen years. In diplomatic affairs, Shusun Muzi displayed a resolute commitment to righteousness, successfully defending the rights and dignity of Lu on numerous occasions. He epitomized loyalty and patriotism, standing as a stalwart defender of the nation.

When Shusun Muzi went on diplomatic missions, he consistently upheld the principle of prioritizing the interests of the state. Ji Wu Zi, acting in the name of Duke Xiang, requested Shusun Muzi's participation in a peace treaty between Jin and Chu, intending to diminish the status of Lu and liken it to vassal states like Zhu and Teng. Ji Wu Zi's concern stemmed from the fear that, as a major state, Lu would be burdened with excessive tribute payments to Jin and Chu, and he also worried that Shusun Muzi might not comply with his demands. Therefore, he falsely claimed to be acting on behalf of the ruler of Lu.

However, during the treaty negotiations, it turned out that neither Zhu nor Teng participated as independent states; instead, they were under the jurisdiction of Qi and Song, respectively. In order to maintain the independent status of Lu and preserve its dignity, Shusun Muzi chose to defy the orders of his ruler rather than be reduced to the status of a vassal state like Zhu and Teng. In doing so, he effectively safeguarded the honor of Lu.

In the first year of Duke Zhao's reign, when Shusun Muzi participated in the treaty renewal meeting at Guodi, Ji Wu Zi attacked the State of Ju. Chu accused Lu of disrespecting the peace treaty and openly provoking them, using this as a pretext to demand that Jin execute Shusun Muzi as a warning to other vassal states. Taking advantage of the situation, Minister of the State of Jin, Le Wang Fu, attempted to extort Shusun Muzi by subtly hinting at bribery, requesting his belt and sash.

Shusun Muzi, realizing that if he were to bribe Le Wang Fu and escape death, it would result in the invasion of Lu by the combined forces of Chu and Jin. Putting the interests of Lu above his own life, he resolutely refused to compromise his principles, knowing that yielding to such pressure would endanger the sovereignty of Lu. Feigning ignorance of Prince Le's intentions, he tore his garments and directly handed them to Prince Le, while subtly mocking him: "Here are your 'belts.'"

This act deeply moved Zhao Meng, the prime minister of Jin, who praised Shusun Muzi for his loyalty, trustworthiness, integrity, and righteousness, ultimately pardoning him for his actions.

In the twenty-ninth year of Duke Xiang's reign, when Duke Xiang of Lu led Shusun Muzi to visit the Chu court, King Kang of Chu passed away. During the mourning period, Chu requested Duke Xiang to perform the ritual of "qinsui" for the deceased, a gesture typically reserved for ordinary envoys. This act was seen as a slight against Duke Xiang's status. Although Duke Xiang felt ashamed by this, he was constrained by Chu's power and couldn't openly resist.

Shusun Muzi advised Duke Xiang to adapt to the situation and take the initiative. He suggested that they perform the ritual of "qinsui" first to dispel any ominousness, as per the protocol for a superior dealing with the mourning of a subordinate. Then, they could proceed with the ritual requested by Chu. Thanks to Shusun Muzi's quick thinking and adaptability, not only did he elevate the status of Lu, but he also made Chu suffer the consequences of its own actions, leaving them in an awkward and difficult position.

In the third year of Duke Zhao's reign, when Duke Mu of Zhu visited Lu, Zhu was a small state, and Ji Wuzi showed disrespect. Shusun Muzi, citing historical precedents, advised Ji Wuzi to treat Zhu with courtesy, as only through respectful treatment could they gain the allegiance of more states.

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## 2. THE WORTHY MINISTERS OF LU STATE IN THE "ZUO ZHUAN": REFINED DEMEANOR AND THE BEAUTY OF LANGUAGE

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The elegance and grace of the virtuous officials of Lu are further exemplified by their dignified and graceful demeanor. In the "Zuo Zhuan", this is primarily demonstrated through the elegant language they employ, especially through their poetic expressions of aspirations and ideals.

Shusun Muzi once remarked that establishing virtue, achievements, and language are the three immortal legacies. He praised Zang Wenzhong as a figure whose reputation would endure through his words. Similarly, in "The Family Sayings of Confucius: Yan Hui", Confucius is quoted as saying, "Even after death, his words endure", referring to Zang Wenzhong. In the eleventh year of Duke Zhuang's reign, when Song State faced a flood, the envoy sent to convey condolences from Song State to Lu State showed humility and self-blame. Upon learning of this, Zang Wenzhong commented, "This bodes well for Song. Yu and Tang blamed themselves for their faults, which led to their rise; Jie and Zhou blamed others, which led to their fall." Zang Wenzhong emphasized the virtue of the sovereign, believing that Song State's monarch's humility, lack of resentment towards the heavens or others, and willingness to bear responsibility would

lead to prosperity. In the twentieth year of Duke Xi's reign, when Duke Xiang of Song State was arrogant and overconfident, seeking to dominate the other vassal states, Zang Wenzhong predicted his downfall, saying, "If he seeks to follow the will of others, he may succeed; if others follow his desires, his success will be short-lived." In the fifth year of Duke Wen's reign, when two states, Liu and Liao, were destroyed, Zang Wenzhong lamented, "Without the establishment of virtue and the support of the people, it is a tragedy!" He believed that the downfall of the two states stemmed from their neglect of virtue.

Zang Wenzhong's words were often profound and insightful, serving as timeless guidelines for both his contemporaries and future generations. He passed away in the tenth year of Duke Wen's reign, and seven years later, Xiang Zhong cited Zang Wenzhong's saying, "A ruler who is lazy will surely die" (Yang, *Year 17 of Duke Wen*, 2000, p.627), to criticize Duke Yi of Qi for his laziness. Soon after, Duke Yi of Qi was indeed assassinated. When Ji Wen Zi expelled Prince Pu of Ju, he openly declared that he followed the teachings of Zang Wenzhong regarding the rites of serving a ruler, stating, "When one sees propriety in his ruler, he serves him as filial children care for their parents. When one sees no propriety in his ruler, he eliminates him as hawks and falcons chase birds" (Yang, *Year 18 of Duke Wen*, 2000, p.633). Zang Wenzhong's enduring and insightful words possess a universality that transcends time and space, ensuring their lasting legacy.

Confucius said, "Without learning poetry, one cannot speak." During the Spring and Autumn Period, especially in the culturally rich state of Lu deeply influenced by ritual and music, virtuous ministers often adeptly expressed themselves through quoted the *Book of Songs* in various political, military, and diplomatic contexts. Their poetry was subtle and elegant, fostering mutual understanding and harmony. With just a few words exchanged over wine and food, they could achieve victory without resorting to warfare, overcoming obstacles peacefully. The Zuo Commentary records numerous instances of poetic expressions by virtuous ministers of Lu such as Ji Wen Zi, Meng Xian Zi, and Shusun Mu Zi. Taking Ji Wen Zi as an example, Zuo Commentary mentions six occasions where he quoted the *Book of Songs* to express meaning.

In the thirteenth year of Duke Wen's reign in Lu, the state of Zheng sought reconciliation with the state of Jin and requested assistance from Lu. During a banquet, the envoy from Zheng, Zi Jia, quoted the poem from the *Book of Songs* "Wild Geese" (鸿雁), expressing the hardships endured by Zheng and hoping for Lu's understanding. However, due to Zheng's close ties with the state of Chu and its deep conflicts with Jin, and also because Duke Wen and Ji Wen Zi were returning to Lu from Jin at the time, Ji Wen Zi declined gracefully by quoting the poem

from the Book of Songs “April” (四月), expressing his longing to return home and his reluctance to represent Zheng in Jin. Zi Jia then quoted the poem from the *Book of Songs* “Riding Swiftly” (载驰), narrating seeking aid from a great power. Touched by Zi Jia’s sincerity and acknowledging Lu’s stature as a great state, Ji Wen Zi eventually quoted the poem from the *Book of Songs* “Picking osmunda japonica” (采薇), agreeing to help Zheng without hesitation.

In the fifteenth year of Duke Wen’s reign, Ji Wen Zi criticized Duke Yi of Qi, citing verses from the poems “Rain Knows No Regularity” (雨无正) and “I Will” (我将), condemning Duke Yi for his lack of reverence for heavenly mandate and disregard for rituals, warning that he would eventually face calamity.

In the fourth year of Duke Cheng’s reign, Ji Wen Zi criticized Duke Jing of Jin, quoting lines from the poem “Respect” (敬之), criticizing Duke Jing for his poor treatment of vassal states and lack of humility and adherence to proper etiquette.

In the seventh year of Duke Cheng’s reign, when the state of Wu invaded the state of Tan, Ji Wen Zi was deeply distressed. He quoted lines from the poem “On Mount Nan” (节南山) to express his discontent with Wu’s actions and his concern for the people’s welfare.

In the eighth year of Duke Cheng’s reign, when Jin reversed its decision and demanded Lu to cede the territory of Wenyang to Qi, Ji Wen Zi cited verses from the poems “Person” (氓) and “Plank” (板), expressing sorrow over Jin’s breach of trust and concern about Jin’s lack of foresight.

In the ninth year of Duke Cheng’s reign, after Ji Wen Zi escorted Duke Xuan’s daughter, Lady Bo Ji, to her marriage in the state of Song and returned to Lu, Duke Cheng hosted a banquet to honor Ji Wen Zi. During the banquet, Ji Wen Zi quoted the poem from the *Book of Songs* “Han Yi” (韩奕), using the example of Han Hou to praise Duke Cheng’s thoughtful choice and to express the hope that Lady Bo Ji would enjoy happiness and contentment in her new life in Song.

Upon hearing this, Lady Bo Ji’s mother, Lady Mu Jiang, quoted the last paragraph of the poem from the *Book of Songs* “Green Robes” (绿衣), indicating her approval of Ji Wen Zi and praising him for “truly winning her heart” through his appropriate language.

### 3. THE VIRTUOUS MINISTERS OF LU IN THE ‘ZUO ZHUAN’: INHERITANCE OF RITUAL MUSIC CIVILIZATION AND ELEGANCE OF SPIRIT

The civilization of rites and music in the Western Zhou Dynasty was initiated by Duke Zhou. He established the system of rites and music, Lu was his enfeoffed state.

Since Duke Zhou acted as regent in the royal court, his son, Bo Qin, replaced him to govern the state of Lu. Bo Qin continued to govern Lu according to the system of rites and music established by Duke Zhou, emphasizing the importance of rituals and virtue. Therefore, by the time of the Spring and Autumn Period, as the position of the Zhou royal family declined and their rites and regulations deteriorated, Lu became known as the model state for preserving the rites of the Zhou dynasty. It was called the “The most famous state modeled after the Zhou Dynasty”, maintaining the rites and music civilization of the Western Zhou Dynasty in its entirety.

Nourished by the civilization of rites and music, the virtuous ministers of Lu showed a strong enthusiasm for attending to the affairs of the state and actively saving the world. The *Zuo Zhuan* records the contributions of these virtuous ministers in both domestic and diplomatic affairs. They spared no effort in their service to the state, displaying refined manners and courtesy. The realistic and elegant spirit embodied by the virtuous ministers of Lu in the *Zuo Zhuan* not only belonged to the Spring and Autumn Period but also, as a product and essence of the civilization of rites and music, the spirited and refined demeanor became the genetic heritage of our ancient and great nation, permeating the blood of the people.

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