

РОЗДІЛ 15

ЛІТЕРАТУРНЕ ДЖЕРЕЛОЗНАВСТВО І ТЕКСТОЛОГІЯ

UDC 821.581'01.09

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/tps2663-4880/2021.17-2.39>

THE INFLUENCE OF *ZUO ZHUAN* ON THE CONCEPTION OF CHINESE FICTIONS

ВПЛИВ «ЦЗО ЧЖУАНЬ» НА КОНЦЕПЦІЮ КИТАЙСЬКОЇ ФАНТАСТИКИ

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Zuo Zhuan is a famous book of Chinese history, which was written by an outstanding Chinese historian Zuo Qiuming (502–422 BC). It is the earliest chronological history book in China, relating historical events happened in the Spring and Autumn period which starts from 772 BC and ends 468 BC. It is more than a history book and is regarded as the origin of ancient Chinese fictions. Ancient Chinese critics put forward an important viewpoint: historical writings account events with literary grace, while successful fictions invent events following artistic imagines. In ancient China, representing official and orthodox ideas, historians tend to belittle fictions. Fiction commentators adopted the imitated-history approach to lift up novel to official history so as to put a higher value on it. In ancient China, representing official and orthodox ideas, historians tend to belittle fictions. It plays an important role in building the conspiracy of Chinese fictions. This paper discusses the literary breakthroughs *Zuo Zhuan* has achieved, from its narration technique, narration perspective, the author's role in narration, to its imaginary elements and the shaping of characters. The paper Claims that *Zuo Zhuan* has the elements as fiction judged from the theory of fiction by E. M. Forest and by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg. It focuses on recording historical events of this period. So it is unquestionably a book of history. At the same time, it is widely regarded as the origin of Chinese fictions. The writing strategies of *Zuo Zhuan* have gained wide popularity with later writers. From these, it is reasonable to say that *Zuo Zhuan* has great influence on the conspiracy of Chinese fictions. In this way, the paper explored the influence of *Zuo Zhuan* on the conspiracy of Chinese fictions.

Key words: *Zuo Zhuan*, conspiracy, Chinese fiction, narration, history and literature.

Цзо Чжуань – відома книга про китайську історію, яка була написана видатним китайським істориком Цзо Цюмінг (502–422 рр. до н. е.). Це найдавніша хронологічна книга історії в Китаї, у якій описуються історичні події, що відбувалися під час весняно-осіннього періоду 772–468 рр. до н. е. Це більше ніж книга з історії, це початок давньокитайської фантастики. Давньокитайські критики фантастики застосовували підхід до імітації історії, щоб піднести роман до рівня офіційної історії та надати йому більш високого значення. У Стародавньому Китаї, представляючи офіційні та ортодоксальні ідеї, історики, як правило, недооцінювали фантастику. Це відіграло важливу роль у створенні конспірології китайських фантастичних історій. У статті розглядаються літературні прориви, яких досягнуто у книзі «Цзо Чжуань», – із техніки переказу, перспективи переказу, ролі автора в оповіданні до його уявних елементів і формування персонажів. У статті стверджується, що хоча «Цзо Чжуань» ще не можна розглядати як фантастику, але ця книга вже включає її основні елементи відповідно до теорії художньої літератури Е.М. Фореста, Роберта Скоулза та Роберта Келлога. Водночас у ній основна увага приділяється фіксації історичних подій цього періоду. Тому можемо дійти висновку, що, хоча китайські вчені розглядають роман як «надлишок офіційної історії» або «неофіційну історію», це, безсумнівно, історична книга, що одночасно розглядається як джерело китайської фантастики. Тісний зв'язок історії та китайської фантастики наділяє останню рисами, що відрізняють її від західної, та розвиває її найособливішу категорію у світі – історичний роман. Стратегії розгляду історії через призму фантастичних історій, що застосовувалися під час написання «Цзо Чжуань», набули широкої популярності у наступних письменників. Виходячи із цього, можна стверджувати, що книга «Цзо Чжуань» впливає на формування китайської фантастики. Таким чином, у статті досліджено вплив «Цзо Чжуань» на конспірологію китайської фантастики.

Ключові слова: Цзо Чжуань, конспірологія, китайська фантастика, оповідання, історія та література.

Introduction. The literary genre of fiction in ancient China featured an early origin and slow development. Through the years, it has evolved into readings for leisure, gaining increasing popularity with people. It cannot be separated from various traditional cultures, including classics, historical

works, religions, architectures, gardens, political systems and mainstream ideologies. Ancient Chinese fiction has taken thousands of years to become mature in its conception. What is conception? It may be simply defined as organization of a literary piece. *The Literary Mind and Carving of Dragons* (Wenxin

Diaolong) described it as the following: What is the meaning of *fu-hui* (organization)? It means a comprehensive view of a literary piece as a whole with respect to both its language and its ideas; it provides an underlying principle to unify all its parts, it defines the conditions governing what should be included and what excluded, and elements of a literary piece from all the various fields into harmony...In short, it organizes the whole piece in such a way that, though composed of a variety of elements, it will not as a whole fall short of the proper standard. In this way the author can achieve a close-knit organization from beginning to end, which manifests a unity of external and inner elements. These achievements constitute the art of *fu-hui*, or organization [9, p. 262].

During the course of its growth, fiction have been influenced to varied degrees by multiple factors, a key one of which is history. Considered as the «surplus of official history» and «the trivial works of official historians», Chinese fictions had been classed into the section of historical writings for a long time. It was not grouped into the works of story-tellers until the advent of *The New Tang Dynasty* (Xin Tang Shu). Historical works play a decisive role in the conception of Chinese fictions. Most scholars regard *Historical Records* (Shi Ji) by Sima Qian as the origin of fictions, but it is more accurate to ascribe the title to *Zuo Zhuan*, which appeared long before the former [11, p. 18]. Therefore, much attention should be put to *Zuo Zhuan* which was written by Zuo Qiuming (502-422 BC), a court historian of the Kingdom of Lu. He wrote the book to interpret the *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu) by Confucius, so his book is also called *Zuo's Commentary on The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Zuoshi Chunqiu). As the earliest chronological history, it relates historical events happened in the Spring and Autumn period which starts from the first year of the Duke Yin of Lu (772 BC) and ends in the twenty-seventh year of the Duke Ai of Lu (468 BC), that is, thirteen years beyond the last entry in *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu). It deals with the decline of the Zhou Dynasty and historical tales and legends about how the princes vied for supremacy, and expounds the concise accounts of *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu) into complete narrative prose. Because of its lively description on historical figures, this work possesses great literary value and has exert influence on later historical and novel writing. This paper will explore the influence of *Zuo Zhuan* on the conception of Chinese fictions from the following aspects.

Research analysis. The Literary Breakthroughs *Zuo Zhuan* Achieved. *Zuo Zhuan* is rightfully celebrated as a masterpiece of grand historical narrative. The text is replete with narrative detail

and dramatic encounters, with a highly complex architecture in which extensive strings of anecdotal narrative develop in parallel, overlapping, and recurrent patterns. It is also hailed for its didactic orientation. Instead of offering authorial judgments or catechistic hermeneutics, the *Zuo Tradition* lets its moral lessons unfold within the narrative itself, teaching at once history and historical judgment. This combination of historical account, narrative aesthetics, and didactic persuasion is fundamentally self-contradictory: both rhetorical brilliance and didactic purpose tend to undermine the modern reader's trust in the historical account – yet to the literary tradition, it was precisely this powerful combination that has elevated *Zuo Zhuan* to its preeminent stature of a classic in the Confucian canon [13, p. 49]. Let's discuss the literary breakthroughs *Zuo Zhuan* achieved in the following chapters.

Zuo Zhuan Is Regarded as the Summit of Narrative Prose. Liu Xie (465-520) in his masterpiece *The Literary Mind and the Carving Dragon* (Wenxin Diaolong) proposed that «We go to Qiuming for the beauty of historical writing». Liu Zhiji supposed that *Zuo Zhuan* marks the maturity of Chinese narrative prose, deserving to the title of «the summit of narrative prose» [15, p. 570]. Zhang Gaoping concludes in his monograph that the narrative methods in *Zuo Zhuan* amount to thirty, such as chronological order, flashback, insertion, parallel, overlapping, and recurrent patterns, etc. [8, p. 182-185]. Although his classification may be improper and there are overlaps, undoubtedly, *Zuo Zhuan* marks the height of narration prose and its narrative approaches can be learned by later writers.

Zuo Zhuan always fully describes the course and the causality of events, especially wars. The battle of Chengpu (in Shandong province) between Jin and Chu happened in 632 BC is a case in point. The author offers graphic depiction of the two sides: Duke Wen of Jin was a man of his words, and his subjects made concerted efforts with him, while the subjects of Chu were at odds with their sovereign, and their commander in chief Ziyu was arrogant and autocratic. Thus, there includes the course and the causality of the fight and its characters.

Later fictions tend to follow this narrative tradition. Take the story of *Strange Tales from Liao Zhai – Gongsun Jiuniang* (Liaozhai Zhiyi – Gongsun Jiu Niang) as an example. «In the beginning, Jiuniang and her mother were captured. They were originally taken to the capital Yanjing under escort, but when they arrived at Jinan her mother died of abuses and later she committed suicide in grief» [16, p. 711-712]. This narrative tactic of flashback

signaled by the Chinese expression of «初» (in the beginning) originates from *Zuo Zhuan*.

Characterization as a principal method of narrative works has become mature in *Zuo Zhuan*. The well-known saying «one who does much evil will be doomed» comes from a story named «The Duke Defeated Shuduan at the Place of Yan». In fact, the Duke Zhuang of Zheng who said this line is such a person himself. In the first year of Duke Yin of Lu (772BC), Duke Zhuang of Zheng scrambled for supremacy with his younger brother. At first the Duke purposely overlooked his brother's evil behavior. He did not raise army to fight against him until his brother did all terrible things. After driving his brother away, he made an oath with his mother, who supported his brother, that «not until we reach the Yellow Spring (the nether world) shall we meet again». But later he regretted for this, so in the end he adopted Ying Kaoshu's advice, meeting his mother in a tunnel, saying, «My mind teems with joy in this dark tunnel» [1, p. 14-15].

Personalized language of characters in *Zuo Zhuan* is another prominent feature. Here is an example. Duke Xian of Jin married Lady Li. In order to make her own son heir, Lady Li framed up Shensheng. She put poison in meat which would be sent by Shensheng to the Duke and then deliberately advised the Duke to test the food by a dog and an attendant, proving it poisonous. Some friends asked Shensheng to tell the truth, but he replied: «Without her, my father will be in downcast and cannot have a good appetite. If I tell the truth the blame will fall on the woman. My father is getting old. I cannot make him sad.» [4, p. 288-299]. He refused to explain for himself because he thought the women who set him up could make his father happy. And some friends suggested him to flee from the country, but he answered: «My father has not cleared the actual facts. With such a crime, even I run away, who would accept me?» At last he hanged himself in his city. Shensheng's blind filial piety is highlighted through his words, which displays the important function of monologue in characterization.

His younger brother Chong'er chose to run away. For many years in exile, Chong'er was assisted by some kings but also humiliated by others. In the twenty-third year of Duke Xi of Lu (637 BC), he arrived at the state of Chu to seek for asylum. The King Cheng of Chu entertained him with feast and asked him: «If you return home, what will you reward me with?» He replied: «Slaves either male or females, jades and silks, all these you already have; feathers, furs, tusks and hides are all produced in your land. All these things in the state of Jin are your

surplus! So I don't know what could I give you what you need?» The king said: «Be that as it may, how are you going to award me?» Chong'er answered: «If I can come back to Jin owing to your kind assistance, one day the troops of Jin and Chu states meet on the battlefield, I will withdraw my army ninety *li* (forty-five kilometers) for your sake. But if you still insist on fighting, I will combat against you with whip and bow in my left hand and arrow case and bow case in my right hand.» In this dialogue, the King was aggressive, and Chong'er handled him carefully at first, acting courteously with sincerity, but in the end he unrolled his nature of courage and uprightness. Though relying on the King's benefits, Chong'er still confessed that once they became enemies he would first retreat backward his troops ninety *li* and fight against him. And the history later did develop as he said. This dialogue makes the disposition of characters quite distinct. Hearing what he said, Ziyu, a general, proposed to kill him, but the King said: «Chong'er has a great aspiration and lives a simple life. All his followers are earnest and tolerant, devoted and capable. Now Marquis Hui of Jin is being forsaken by allies, and the people at home and abroad dislike him too. I know that the surname Ji is the descendant of Tangshu, which is the last to wane in powerful history. Perhaps Chong'er of Jin will revitalize it. The heaven is ready to raise him, who can drag him down? One who is contrary to the will of heaven must be punished for his crime.» [3, p. 408-409]. The words serve as a positive description of the king and, at the same time, praise Chong'er in an indirect way too. This method of characterization gains wide popularity with later novelists.

Additionally, some of its outstanding language has been adopted by posterity, such as «a horse and a cow even in rut still cannot mate with each other»; which means two things have nothing in common with each other; «Qingfu being alive, the national crisis of Lu will never cease,» meaning there will be no peace in the country unless the chief culprit of civil disorder is removed; and «teeth are cold when lips are lost», referring that two states share lots of commons and the same fate. These expressions have developed into idioms which are not only employed by novelists but all walks of Chinese life.

Results and discussion. The Author of *Zuo Zhuan* Writes Down the Truth and Expresses His Personal Praise and Criticism Through Narration.

The artistic method of «zero degree writing» advocated by western writers is neither employed by the author of *Zuo Zhuan* nor by other ancient Chinese novelists.

The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Qiu) contains Confucius' implicit praise for and censure on historical figures and events. Liu Xie (465-520) said in his book *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (Wenxin Diaolong): «One word of praise from him (Confucius) was worth more than the carriage and official cap of high government position; and one word of censure cut deeper than hatchet and halberd.» [9, p. 106]. Here Liu Xie emphasized the great significance of a simple word expressing the author's attitude to historical figures in *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu).

Likewise, *Zuo Zhuan* is written according to historical facts but carries the author's criticism and compliment. Here is an example.

In the spring of the tenth year, the army of Qi made its attack on the state of Lu. As the duke of Lu was ready to face the attack, Cao Gui, a man in Lu, asked to meet the duke. Somebody who lived in his same village said to him: «These nobles have their own plan, what would you do?» Cao Gui replied: «These noblemen are shortsighted and good-for-nothing.» Then he entered the palace to see the duke, asking the duke what method he would use to fight with the enemy. The duke said: «I cannot dare to enjoy all good clothes and food alone, which should be distributed to others.» Cao Gui said: «This is but a little favor that cannot benefit all people, and they will not follow you.» The duke said again: «Oxen, sheep, gems and silks used in sacrifice, I cannot dare to go beyond our regulations. The prayer I make must be carried out exactly.» Cao Gui remarked: «An insignificant sincerity cannot cause the people to believe, and the gods and spirits will not give you blessings.» The duke said again: «Though I cannot investigate all legal cases, small or great, thoroughly, yet I may do it in accordance with the facts.» Then Cao Gui nodded to say: «This relates to the sincerity of the people and the spirits. You may fight on that. I beg to be allowed to attend you for the fight.» When they set out, Duke Zhuang had Cao Gui with him to take the same chariot. The armies of Lu and Qi clashed at Changshao (in Shandong province). The duke was about to command to beat battle drums for the advance, but Cao Gui said: «Not yet now.» After the Qi's drums to be beaten the advance three times, Cao Gui said to the duke: «It's time for us now to beat drums.» His suggestion was followed and the army of Qi was defeated crushingly. When the duke was about to pursue the army of Qi while they were routed, Cao Gui advised again: «Not yet now.» Then he got down from the chariot and examined the tracks left by the wheels of the army chariot carefully. On return to the chariot he gazed into far for a while,

then said to the duke: «It's time for us now to chase the enemy!» With that, the chase of the enemy started. After winning the battle, the duke inquired of Cao Gui why he had done that. Cao Gui replied: «The most important in battle depends on courage. The first beating of drums will stimulate the soldiers' moral; the second beating will drop it and after the third, the moral will be exhausted. When the enemy's morals were exhausted, ours were at the highest, so we defeated them. It is hard to fathom the scheming of a big state as Qi, so I was afraid there might be an ambush and I looked at their wheel's track. I found them in all confusion and their banners drooped. In this case I held it was the time to pursue.» [2, p. 182-183].

This episode is quite similar to modern fictions written in the cross-cutting style and has been honored as a genuine classic for strategists and linguists. Some of its expressions like «the noblemen are shortsighted and good-for-nothing» and «the first beating of drums will stimulate the soldiers' morale» have developed into idioms commonly used by modern Chinese people. The characterization of Cao Gui turns out to be successful. Without complex plots and personal favor or censure, the author only writes down what actually transpired but highlights Cao Gui's vision, composure, courage, and resolution.

American scholar, Wang Jingyu, once made a remark about *Zuo Zhuan*: «Obviously, history means more than a list of events but also an attempt to connect all separate happenings it has reported and seek for some truth and meaning from chaotic, incoherent bygone.» [14, p. 22-25]. Indeed, *Zuo Zhuan* always tries to find some truth and meaning from historical events and process and illuminates them through phrases like «the virtuous man says», «Confucius says» and «the virtuous man knows by the following», which has inspired later novelists. The idea of «morality expressed through words» is like a spell, with which they already have become familiar from historical works such as *Zuo Zhuan*. So it is reasonably to say *Zuo Zhuan* is more than a history book, which encodes the author's praise or censure to the character and stories related.

There Exist Imaginary Elements in *Zuo Zhuan*. *Zuo Zhuan* includes fictitious descriptions. Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998) in his masterpiece *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (Guan Zhui Bian) stated: «The book records some secret talks and monologues, which should not be known by others. So how did the author get to know these? How did he know what they were talking about as Jie Zitui and his mother planned to flee away in 636 BC? Chu Ni was ordered to assassinate Zhao

Dun by the Duke Ling of Jin in 607 BC, but at last he killed himself when he saw Zhao Dun was diligent in state affairs, for he thought he should not murder such a loyal subject. So how did the author know what Chu Ni was thinking about at that time? The foregoing cases prove that, instead of a faithful recorder, sometimes *Zuo Zhuan* speaks in the voice of historical figures, just as dialogues and soliloquy of characters in later fictions and dramas. Putting himself in their shoes, the author designs reasonable talks and monologues according to the personalities and identities of characters. All of these originate from his mind.» [10, p. 165].

Additionally, this narrative also contains tales of ghosts and spirits. For example, there is a story about a man whose surname is Peng. When Peng died, his spirit transformed into a hog. The Duke Xiang of Qi was frightened and fell off his horse, hurting his feet, when he saw the hog stood like men and cried at him. Another story goes that on his deathbed Wei Chou ordered his son Wei Ke to put one of his favorite concubine to death and bury with him. Wei Ke thought this will was made when his father could not think clearly due to his serious illness, so he chose to follow his father's another will which was made when his father was sober-minded, allowing the lady to remarry. Few years later, when Wei Ke was chased in a war, an old man tripped his enemy by using grass knots. It turned out that the old man was the concubine's father. The allusion «make a grass knot or champ a ring to repay kindness» stems from this story, and it is always borrowed a lot by novelists. And of course, such stories about ghosts and spirits in this work are all made up.

Judged from the above, in *Zuo Zhuan's* narration, there exist imaginary elements, which is a common feature of fictions.

Narrative Perspective: From «the Virtuous Man Says» to «the Writer Comments». The author of *Zuo Zhuan* in the middle or at the end of stories employs the phrases: «the virtuous man says», «the virtuous man knows by the following», and «Confucius says» to show his opinions on historical events or figures. There is a story concerning Duke Zhuang of Zheng, who struggled for leadership with his mother and younger brother. The Duke's mother disliked him for she suffered obstructed labor while giving his birth. She favoured her younger son and always tried to scramble for more interest for him. The Duke, who was hypocritical and crafty, pretended to meet all extravagant demands of his mother and indulged his younger brother, but in fact, he schemed to kill his brother. At last he even banished his mother to a deserted place and promised they would not meet

again until they reached the Yellow Spring (the nether world). However, later, he regretted the oath, so he took the advice of Ying Kaoshu, asking people to dig a tunnel where yellow spring gushed out so that he could meet his mother. he said in verse: «My mind teems with joy in this dark tunnel.» The image of the Duke as a hypocrite is successfully built in this episode. In the end, the author commented that the virtuous man says: «Ying Kaoshu was not only a dutiful son, but he influenced the duke to treat his mother with filial piety. It is said in *The Book of Songs* (Shi Jing) that 'A filial son's kindness will not end. The heaven will let you have great sons and grandsons.» [1, p. 16]. This passage gives Ying Kaoshu seal of approval while attacking the duke implicitly.

Under the influence of this tradition, Sima Qian (145-90BC) ends each chapter of *Historical Records* (Shi Ji) with «the Lord Grand Historian says», and Pu Songling concludes each episode of *Strange Tales from Liao Zhai* (Liaozhai Zhiyi), the peak of classical Chinese short stories, with «the writer comments». They are authors and at the same time they make their own comments on events and characters. For western critics, writers should avoid speaking out their personal feelings and appraisal in their works, but on the contrary it is a fashion for Chinese writers. That is to say a Chinese writer does not hesitate to show his voice or attitude in narration, which is a tradition set up by the author of *Zuo Zhuan*.

Creation of Flat Characters. E. M. Forest puts forward the conception of «flat» and «round» characters in his book *Aspects of the Novel*. The former refers to characters having a stark sense of good and evil, while the latter complex and life-like ones. He chose Mrs. Micawber in *David Copperfield* as an example. This woman impresses us with her line «I will never desert Mrs. Micawber.» The words will come to our mind as soon as we see Mr. Micawber, and vice versa [6, p. 48-49].

Wang Jingyu states that most characters in *Zuo Zhuan* are flat and still [14, p. 20-22]. His idea makes sense from a general picture. Again, take the story in 1.4 as an example, the Duke impresses people with his cattiness, his brother with his willfulness, the mother with her bias, and Ying Kaoshu with his filial piety. Interactions between these characters spark a chain of events and change their destiny. In the end, to preserve his image as a filial son, the Duke had to take Ying Kaoshu's advice, accepting his mother who actually did not love him. His mother also pretended to be nice to him only to live a decent life.

Zhang Gaoping delves into several dozens of characters of the good and evil in *Zuo Zhuan* [8, p. 182-185]. It is an important feature of Chinese

tales of men to focus on one certain quality of characters. Later works such as *Forest of Sayings* (Yu Lin) and *New Anecdotes of Social Talk* (Shishuo Xinyu) start with certain personality of a character. And a later novel *Romance of Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo Yanyi) is well-known for Cao's treachery, Zhuge Liang's wisdom and Guan Yu's loyalty. Lu Xun remarks that: «Luo Guanzhong (the author of *Romance of Three Kingdoms*) wished to make Liu Pei a kindly man, but draws a character who seems a hypocrite. Wanting to depict Zhuge Liang's wisdom, he makes him appear a sorcerer. His only success is in the portrayal of Lord Guan Yu, who is a gallant general to the life.» [17, p. 168]. All these shows that Zuo Zhuan started a tradition of creating plat characters, which is an important aspect of fiction.

Some Episodes in *Zuo Zhuan* Are Close to Fictions. Cases in *Zuo Zhuan* written similarly to fictions are ubiquitous. Here is an example, a short story that happened in 607 BC:

Duke Ling of Jin lost the way of a sovereign. He extorted taxes and levies from the people and used it to paint his palace. He shot the passengers with crossbow from a high tower and amused himself to watch them flee. He killed the cook because he failed to make a bear's paw done, placed his hand cut down from the corpse in a basket and asked a palace maid to carry it on her back to pass through the court. Finding the corpse's hand, Zhao Dun and Shi Ji asked the reason and then became greatly distressed. They planed to remonstrate with their sovereign. Shi Ji said to Zhao Dun: «If your advice is not taken, there will be no one to dare to do it. So let me go first. If he refuse to listen to me, then you go next.» Shi Ji had advanced three times and not until he reached the eaves of the palace did the Duke looked at him and said: «I know I made mistakes and I am ready to correct them.» Shi Ji replied with his head bowed to the ground: «No one is without fault. One who knows how to correct his faults is the most perfect. It says in *The Book of Songs* (Shi Jing) that any thing has its beginning but few its ending. So, there are few who may mend their faults. That you start and carry it through to the end is the security for our country's stability on which your subjects rely. It says again in that book that the ceremonial robe is damaged, and Zhong Shanfu can mend it. This tell us that when King Xuan of Zhou made mistakes and Zhong Shanfu, the prime minister, could help him to correct. Now you correct your fault sincerely, the ceremonial robe will not be cast away». However, the Duke did not change his way. Zhao Dun made proposals for several times and the Duke was annoyed with him. So the Duke sent Chu Ni to kill him. In the early morning Chu Ni stole into Zhao Dun's bedroom and found the door open.

Zhao Dun was sitting dozing in his chair and ready to leave for the court in his court robes. Chu Ni went out of the door and thought with a sigh: «He is the true master of the people because he never forgets to be respectful in his duties. One who kills the master of the people is called disloyalty, and one who does not obey the sovereign's order is called unfaithfulness. If I cannot avoid one of the two crimes, the best way I choose is to die!» After that he dashed his head on a pagoda tree in the garden and ended his life.

In the ninth month during autumn, the Duke entertained Zhao Dun with wine and dispatched some soldiers waiting in ambush to assassinate him. This plot was found by Ti Miming, the right guard of Zhao Dun's chariot. He rushed into the hall and said to the Duke: «Let me attend you at the banquet. It will be my impropriety if I drink more than three cups.» This helped Zhao Dun to leave the court. The Duke immediately set his mastiff to hurt Zhao Dun. Ti Miming fought with the dog and killed it. Zhao Dun said with anger: «He used a dog instead of men. No matter how ferocious the dog is, it is useless! « Zhao Dun and his attendants fought their way out of the court. Ti Miming was killed there at the end.

Formerly, Zhao Dun was hunting at Shuyangshan Hill and he stayed for night under the mulberry trees, where he met Ling Zhe who starved to die. Zhao Dun asked him if he was ill. He replied that he had not eaten anything for three days. Zhao Dun gave him some food, but he ate only half of the food and kept the other half. Zhao Dun asked him why. Ling Zhe said: «I have been out to serve someone as a servant for three years. I don't know if my mother is still alive or not. Now my home is not far away, so I must take this food to her.» On hearing that, Zhao Dun let him eat all the food and gave him another basket of food, including rice and meat. Later this man became a guard of Duke Ling. During Zhao Dun's distress, Ling Zhe used his weapon against these guards sent by the Duke to kill Zhao Dun, helping him to be out of danger. Afterwards Zhao Dun asked him why he did that. He replied: «I was the man who starved in the mulberry forest.» Zhao Dun again asked his name and address, but he went away without answer. He fled to another place after that [5, p. 655-662].

In the story, when Shi Ji came to offer remonstrance, the Duke pretended not to notice him until he reached the eaves of his palace. The Duke did not follow the way of a monarch, because a wise sovereign would welcome his officials as soon as they arrive at his door. When Shi Ji cited *Book of Songs* (Shi Jing) to present his proposals, the Duke said he would correct his behavior but actually did not. As Zhao Dun came to admonish him again, he even

issued an order to kill Zhao Dun but failed. Then he set his mastiff in the court to hurt him but failed too. Zhao Dun survived from the first assassination because the killer was touched by his diligence in state affairs and escaped the second because of his kindness to the hungry man in the mulberry forest.

Let's explore the basic elements of a fiction in this literary piece above based on the theories of narratives or fictions by scholars of this field. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg list four important elements of a narrative, namely, meaning, character, plot, and point of view [12, p. 4-20]. E. M. Forster listed seven elements of a novel, namely, story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm [7, p. 20]. He defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. He claims that a plot is also a narrative of events with the emphasis falling on causality. «The king died and then the queen died,» is a story. «The king died, and then the queen died of grief» is a plot. In the latter case, the time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel [7, p. 61]. The literary piece above has the following features:

Firstly, it is a complete story.

Secondly, it is mixed with chronological order, flashback and other narrative techniques. The story develops with relaxations and climaxes. Plot is the logical aspect of a novel, and it requires memory and intelligence to find it. In this story, Shi Ji and Zhao Dun remonstrated with the Duke Ling of Jin because of his departure from the way of being an enlightened sovereign, but the duke ordered to murder Zhao Dun. Therefore, «departure from the way of being an enlightened sovereign» is the cause, and «murder» the result. Then because of Chu Ni's righteousness, Zhao Dun survived from the first murder. Due to the sacrifice of Ti Miming and assistance from a man who had accepted his food in a mulberry forest, Zhao Dun avoided the two assassinations. So we can say that this literary piece has pattern, rhythm and rich plots.

Thirdly people in the story possess distinct personalities, such as the tyranny of the Duke, the loyalty of Zhao Dun, the righteousness of Chu Ni, the sacrifice of Ti Miming, the gratitude of Ling Zhe. There are some impressive scenes, some appalling, some hair-rising, and others sweet, such as the scene that Shi Ji and Zhao Dun found the cook's hands in a basket, the scene that the duke set his dog to hurt Zhao Dun, and the scene that the hungry man in the mulberry forest left half of the food for his mother. The author builds these characters with description

of action, language, the fictitious monologue and impressive scenes.

Fourthly, as in other stories, Zuo Zhuan adopted the unchangeable third-person perspective of narration. The author shows his point of view through his narration.

Fifthly, the story has meaning. It's about the conflict between kindness and evil. It teaches the reader that the kindness always brings the good ends.

Sixthly, the author makes up internal monologue of characters, such as Chu Ni's inner thought before committing suicide. So there exist imaginative elements and psychological descriptions in the story.

And lastly, what's more important is that its plots contain causal relationship.

By analyzing fiction from the elements of meaning, character, plot, and point of view, we can conclude that this literary piece above is unquestionably a narrative. Beside that, this literary piece also has elements like story, pattern and rhythm put forward by E. M. Forster. So, though this narrative cannot be regarded as a fiction yet, it already has the basic elements of a fiction. Almost all later Chinese novelists have been influenced by *Zuo Zhuan*, and they have got inspired from the above patterns in the conception of fiction.

Conclusions. Ancient Chinese critics put forward an important viewpoint: historical writings account events with literary grace, while successful fictions invent events following artistic imagines. In ancient China, representing official and orthodox ideas, historians tend to belittle fictions. Fiction commentators adopted the imitated-history approach to lift up novel to official history so as to put a higher value on it. Western reviewers believe that historical works is based on facts while fictions on imaginary events. Traditionally, Chinese scholars consider novel as «the surplus of official history» or «unofficial history». The intimate connection between history and Chinese fiction endows the latter with features setting it apart from western one, and develops its most special category in the world: historical romance. *Zuo Zhuan* originates from *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu). It focuses on recording historical events of this period. So it is unquestionably a book of history. At the same time, it is widely regarded as the origin of Chinese fictions. The writing strategies of *Zuo Zhuan* have gained wide popularity with later writers. From these, it is reasonable to say that *Zuo Zhuan* has great influence on the conspiracy of Chinese fictions.

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