

Chapter 1

The Emergence of the *Wen/Wu* Problem

The dominance of the civil over the martial in most Chinese historical and philosophical texts of the imperial era has tended to obscure the essential importance of *wu* in the Sinitic (*Huaxia* 華夏) realm during the pre-Qin period. In the compiling of China's standard histories (*zhengshi* 正史), for example, military affairs were largely restricted to incidental treatment in the basic annals (*benji* 本紀) and biographical accounts (*liezhuan* 列傳), and garnered only uneven coverage in the treatises (*shu* 書 or *zhi* 志). Generally speaking, if military matters were considered at all in the official accounts of Chinese regimes, institutional evolution and penal administration were the principal interests of traditional scholars, not the broader significance of martiality in Chinese culture and society.¹

And yet, as shown in the *Hanshu* "Treatise on Literature," there was a sizable and diversified stratum of general and specialized works in the Han and pre-Han eras dealing wholly or in part with martial affairs as an ingredient of government policy and intellectual discourse. The volume of these titles bespeaks keen interest in the early imperial era and before in resolving a set of compelling sociopolitical, philosophical, and practical questions centered on martiality and its proper relation to civility—that is, the *wen/wu* problem. This chapter will explore the conditions that led initially to the consideration of this problem and the major solutions proposed to resolve the issue in the pre-Han period.

The Achievement of Balance

Repeatedly one finds in pre-Qin writings the notion that war is a natural, evolving attribute of the human community, and that martial activity allowed, paradoxically, for the advancement of civilized life. In a number

of works from the period, the origins of war are said to coincide with the drive to survive and with the demands of the natural environment. Following the way of Heaven and Earth, the sages of Chinese antiquity, according to tradition, did not exclude violence but rather stipulated it as an outlet for hostile feelings, much as those manifested by armed beasts. War was perceived as an impetus for positive change rather than a negative feature of social life. Harkening back to earliest times, the “Wu zheng” 五正 section of the *Jing* 經—one of the *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經 dating from the pre-Han era—uses an anecdote about preparations for battle between the legendary sovereign Huangdi 黃帝 and his rival, the tribal leader Chiyou 蚩尤, to illustrate the necessity of martiality in maintaining harmony.

Huangdi [asked Yanran 闞冉], “I want to show myself to be humble. What is your opinion?”

[Yanran] replied: “Those who share the Way share the same affairs and those who differ from the Way differ in their affairs. Today the world is in great conflict and the time has come [to take action]. Can you therefore be so cautious that you will not engage in combat?”

Huangdi said, “What if I did not engage in combat?”

[Yanran] responded, “Anger is a matter of blood and vital energy (*qi* 氣), while combat is a matter of exterior fat and flesh. If anger is not released, its fluid will collect into pustules, which can then ruin your [other] four [vital organs]. How would dry bones be capable of fighting?”

Huangdi then withdrew from his state ministers, and going up to the Bowang 博望 mountains, he lay back and communed [with himself] for three years, searching himself [for the answer]. Shancai 單才 and Yanran then went up for Huangdi, roused him and said: “It must be done. To engage in combat may be inauspicious, but not to fight is also lacking in merit. How can you refuse?” Huangdi then produced his *qiang* 鏑 halberd, prepared his battle weapons, and, taking drumsticks in hand, [led his army] to meet Chiyou, whom he subsequently captured.²

The therapeutic release of vital energy being a positive function of war, martiality was viewed in antiquity as a cultural *sine qua non*. Even in Western Han times, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE), author with his father, Sima Tan 司馬談 (ca. 165–110 BCE), of the first general

history of China, the *Shiji* 史記, seemed to recognize the hygienic attributes of combat:³

Now, music is the means by which the former kings embellished their happiness, and armies and battle weapons were the means by which the former kings embellished their anger. Hence the happiness and anger of the former kings each attained its meet [expression]. With happiness the world was harmonized, and with anger the violent and disorderly were overawed.⁴

In similar organic fashion, warfare was seen in Chinese antiquity as an extension of hunting practices. The *Shi* 詩 (*Odes*), an anthology of verse dating from about 1000 to about 600 BCE, provides an example of this in the ode “Shu yu tian” 叔于田, in which Shu 叔 the huntsman is hailed not only as “admirable and kind” and “admirable and good,” but “admirable and martial” (*mei qie wu* 美且武).⁵ Another *Shi* ode, “Qi yue” 七月, tells us that certain times of the year were set aside in ancient times for aristocratic hunting exercises that served concurrently as war games.⁶ Also, the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 (hereafter *Zuozhuan*), composed perhaps during the fourth century BCE, gives a description of a custom practiced since earliest times of combining hunting expeditions and martial training.⁷ In a remonstrance in 718 BCE with Lord Yin 隱公 of Lu (r. 723–712 BC), Zang Xibo 臧僖伯, a noble in Lu, is quoted to say:

The frequent indulgence in a government of disorder is the way to ruin. In accordance with this there are the spring hunting, the summer hunting, the autumn hunting, and the winter hunting—all in the intervals of husbandry to address affairs [of state]. Then every three years there is the [grand] military review (*zhibing* 治兵). When it is over, the troops are all led back (*zhenlü* 振旅),⁸ and their return is announced by the cup of spirits in the temple—all to take reckoning of the accouterments and spoils, to display the various blazonry, to exhibit the noble and the mean, to distinguish the observance of order and ranks, to show the proper difference between the young and the old, and to practice the various observances of discipline.⁹

In comparable fashion, warfare and agriculture were seen in early texts as complementary activities, contributing together to social harmony. The

Guoyu 國語, a work whose contents were composed variously in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, recounts an ancient tradition of devoting three seasons to agriculture and one season—the autumn—to military instruction. The ruler may thus be “awe-inspiring” in conducting punitive expeditions and have the resources when in defense. “He is able to be pleasing to the spirits and bring harmony to the people.”¹⁰ In the Zhanguo period, one of the military treatises, the *Liutao*, likewise draws a close linkage between martial warfare and civil agriculture by pointing out the double utility of agricultural implements:

The equipment for offensive and defensive warfare is entirely within the scope of people’s [everyday] affairs: plows and plowshares become their *chevaux de frise* (*xingma* 行馬) and [blocking] spiked rods (*jili* 蒺藜); horses and oxen, carts and carriages become their encampment ramparts and covered turrets; hoes and harrows become their spears and halberds (*ji* 戟); wild ginger and marsh grass, bamboo umbrellas and rain hats become their armor, helmets and shields; mattocks, spades, cleavers, saws, pestles and mortars become their instruments for assaulting fortress walls. Oxen and horses become means for transporting provisions and equipment; cocks and dogs become lookouts; wives’ weaving [techniques are used for] banners and flags; husbands’ land-clearing [techniques are used for] assaulting fortresses. [The techniques for] slashing down grass and brambles in spring become [the means for] fighting chariots and cavalry; [the techniques for] weeding fields in summer become [the means for] fighting infantry; [the techniques for] cutting grain and firewood in autumn become [the means for] collecting provisions and stores; and [the techniques for] filling granaries and warehouses in winter become [the means for] making a solid defense.¹¹

In short, martial activities were considered integral to early Sinitic society. Far from being an aberration, war was thought to be a normal feature of the yearly cycle of life. Moreover, both martial and civil activities were part of the descriptions of China’s earliest cultural heroes. As we have seen, while the legendary Huangdi was hailed for his civil accomplishments, he also had to excel in martial affairs if he was to maintain harmony in his realm. In similar fashion, Lord Liu 公劉, a leading member of the Ji 姬 clan that founded the Zhou dynasty, is described in the *Shi* as making

proportional use of martial force even as he moved his clan away from hostile northern tribes and established agricultural lands in a new territory.

Of generous devotion to the people was Lord Liu.
 Unable to rest or take his ease [where he was],
 He divided and subdivided the country into fields;
 He stored up the produce in the fields and in barns;
 He tied up dried meat and grain,
 In bottomless bags and in sacks—
 That he might hold [the people] together, and glorify [his tribe].
 Then with bows and arrows all ready,
 With shields and spears, and axes, large and small,
 He commenced his march [to a new settlement area].¹²

In this fashion, the praiseworthy leaders of China's antiquity were, by necessity, warriors as well as creators of civilization.¹³ And, as suggested above, intercultural conflict in ancient China was, at least in its early stage, seen as progressive: war constituted a means for societal consolidation and dialectical advancement, and the arts of peace and war for the early cultures in the river valleys of north China were mutually supportive, synergistic.

Yet there was impending danger in the continued practice of occasional, random conflict. As populations in north China grew closer to one another and internal frictions grew, the benefits of unregulated warfare diminished.¹⁴ Probably as early as late Shang 商 times (ca. 1100 BCE), if one can extrapolate back from Western Zhou sources, there was a realization that war, though still useful for expansion and cultural enrichment, had to be balanced carefully with the pacific arts of government, with internal ordering, and with social stabilization. Differentiation and hierarchies under absolute authority could not be maintained with continual exposure to destruction and debilitating war levies. It may have been at this time that civility and martiality first began to be recognized among Chinese thinkers as important and perennial factors in Chinese cultural change.

Evidence for this recognition of tension between *wen* and *wu*, and the problem of resolving this tension, can be gleaned from the earliest known literature. The "Chang fa" 長發 ode in the *Shi*, for instance, expresses an indirect admiration for *wu* in its description of the moving splendor of a soldier's garb and bearing. Similarly, the "Yi jie" 猗嗟 ode in the *Shi* expresses delight in the martial prowess and awesome appearance of a now-dead archer.

Alas for him, so handsome and accomplished!
 How grandly tall!
 With what elegance in his high forehead!
 With what motion of his beautiful eyes!
 With what skill in the swift movements of his feet!
 With what mastery of archery!

. . .

Alas for him, so beautiful!
 His bright eyes and high forehead how lovely!
 His dancing so choice!
 Sure to send his arrows right through!
 The four all going to the same place!
 One able to withstand rebellion!¹⁵

Other verses in the *Shi*, however, tell of an aversion to the wrongful byproducts of war. The “Bo xi” 伯兮 ode, for example, combines wonder and pride in military events with sadness in the separation and loss that war brings. Likewise, many *Shi* verses like “Cai wei” 采薇 tell of soldiers’ toils and regrets during seemingly interminable marches. And yet a few odes in the *Shi* reveal an affinity for both the warlike and the peaceful. The “Pan shui” 泮水 ode, for example, integrates the martial and civil virtues into a single exemplary figure. A marquis of Lu is described throughout the ode as a dashing figure, bristling with martial splendor, leader of victorious armies. But at times in the ode he is also described as one who appreciates civil qualities and desires to institute such qualities in his realm:

Very admirable is the marquis of Lu,
 Reverently displaying his virtue,
 And reverently watching over his deportment,
 The pattern of the people.
 With great qualities truly civil and martial,
 Brilliantly he affects his meritorious ancestors.
 In everything entirely filial,
 He seeks the blessing for himself.¹⁶

Thus, in the airs and encomiums of the *Shi* one can find ambivalence about civility and martiality. On the one hand, the glories of potential combat are conspicuously admired, but on the other hand, the trauma of

participation in actual combat and its attendant marches is emotionally on display. The modern China scholar C.H. Wang once pointed out that the actual clash of arms in battle is largely undescribed in the *Shi*. The emphasis instead is on the effects that grandly intimidating formations of men and equipment, especially particular personalities in military costume, have on the minds of friend and foe alike. In Wang's view, this lack of expressed violence was due to the overweening stress on civility in this collection of verses. But it is also possible to say that the *Shi*'s lack of Homeric battle gore was the result of an emphasis on the potency of martiality, rather than its violent effects.¹⁷

The Western Zhou Solution

To further examine this matter, we turn to the events surrounding the overthrow of Shang by Zhou and the results of this overthrow on thought regarding the *wen/wu* problem. In this momentous transition to a new regime there was a father-son combination of talents, King Wen 文王 (d. 1086 BCE) and King Wu 武王 (d. 1043 BCE), whose posthumous names became eponyms for model culture builders.¹⁸ Even before the integrity and strength of the Zhou ruling house began to falter under King Li 厲王 (d. 828 BCE) and later King You 幽王 (r. 781–771 BCE), a nostalgia for the august progenitors of the dynasty was evoked in documents and song to commemorate those heroic, spring-like years of the kingdom and the leaders that made that kingdom possible. We see this in several *Shi* odes, including the “Bi gong” 閼宮, “Lai” 賚, “Wu” 武, and “Huan” 桓 odes. Of particular note is the “Da Ming” 大明 ode, which describes the crucial Battle of Muye 牧野 that spelled the end of the Shang dynasty at the hands of King Wu, following the establishment of the Zhou dynasty by King Wen:

The favoring mandate was from Heaven,
 Giving the throne to our King Wen,
 In the capital of Zhou.
 The lady-successor was from Xin,
 Its eldest daughter, who came to marry him.
 She was blessed to give birth to King Wu,
 Who was preserved and helped, and received also the appointment,
 And in accordance with it smote the great Shang.

The troops of Shang
 Were collected like a forest,
 And marshaled at Muye.¹⁹
 We rose [to the crisis]—
 “God is with you,” [said Shangfu 尙父 to the king],²⁰
 “Have no doubts in your heart.”

Muye spread out extensive;
 Bright shone the chariots of sandalwood;
 The teams of bays, black-maned and white-bellied, galloped along;
 Was like an eagle on the wing
 Assisting King Wu,
 Who at one onset smote the great Shang.
 That morning’s encounter was followed by a clear bright [day].²¹

Finally, there is the “Shi mai” 時邁 ode, which not only depicts a triumphant progress by King Wu after the establishment of Zhou, but also describes the king’s evident success in shifting from the martial battlefield where he won victory to the cultivation and display of “admirable virtue” (*yi de* 懿德) to bring civil peace to the kingdom.

Now is he making a progress through the states,
 May Heaven accept him as its son!
 Truly are the honor and succession come from it to the House
 of Zhou.
 To his movements
 All respond with tremulous awe.
 He has attracted and given rest to all spiritual Beings,
 Even to [the spirits of] the Yellow River and the highest hills.
 Truly is the king the sovereign lord.
 Brilliant and illustrious is the House of Zhou.
 He has regulated the positions of the princes;
 He has called in shields and spears;
 He has returned to their cases bows and arrows.
 I will cultivate admirable virtue,
 And display it throughout these great regions—
 Truly will the king preserve the mandate.²²

From this body of verse many later Chinese scholars judged that the aftermath of the Battle of Muye—disarmament and pacification—was

more important than the martial actions taken to overwhelm the Shang. In their eyes, *wen* metaphorically overtook *wu* in importance. Herrlee G. Creel (1905–1994), in his work on the origins of statecraft in China, supported this traditional view, in part by pointing out the larger number of references in the *Shi* to King Wen as compared to King Wu by a ratio of three to one.²³ However, those genuine portions of the Zhou-era *Shu* 書 or *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Documents*) that deal with the Shang-Zhou transition fail to lend solid support to this interpretation.²⁴ It is true that the “Kang gao” 康誥 document speaks of King Wen as the principal actor in the Zhou’s takeover of Shang. However, as Creel pointed out, since the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) there was general agreement among Chinese scholars that King Wu was the author of the “Kang gao.”²⁵ If so, then filial deference would probably have prevented him from inserting into the declaration his own contributions to the Zhou success, which were clearly substantial. Thus, it is probably not warranted to place King Wen over King Wu in importance, and therefore of symbolically ranking *wen* over *wu*. Based on the evidence available, it seems more reasonable to infer that, at a time of Shang dynastic weakness when war seemed imminent, King Wen and King Wu must have realized the necessity for both military preparedness and civil stability. As we have seen earlier, such had been the attitude ascribed to the early cultural heroes, and such would also be the case for King Cheng 成王 of Zhou (d. 1021 BCE) and his regent, the Duke of Zhou 周公 (brother of King Wu), at least until after the failed rebellion fomented by Wu Geng 武庚, a son of the last Shang king.

Accordingly, it would seem more appropriate to say that Kings Wen and Wu approached the problem of conquest and pacification in two different phases of the takeover of the Shang, but with the same essential balance of martial and civil. King Wen, as founder of the Zhou dynastic line, had already consolidated a degree of power during the reign of King Zhou 紂王 of Shang (d. 1046 BCE), in hopes of carrying out a coup d’état. However, he died before consummating his plans. King Wu therefore inherited the responsibility for continuing the buildup of military and ideological strength King Wen had created and for leading the decisive attack on Shang. The “Wu cheng” 武成 document of the *Shangshu* illustrates King Wu’s strategy as seen in the prosecution and aftermath of the Battle of Muye:

On the *wuwu* 戊午 day the army crossed Meng Ford (Mengjin 孟津), and on the *guihai* 癸亥 day it drew up in array on the outskirts of Shang, waiting for the mandate of Heaven. On the *jiazi* 甲子 day, at early dawn, Shou 受 [i.e., King Zhou of

Shang] led forward his hosts like a forest and assembled them at Muye. But they would offer no opposition to our army. Those in the front inverted their spears and attacked those behind them until they fled, and the blood flowed until it floated pestles. Thus did [King Wu] but once don his arms and the world was greatly settled. He overthrew the government of Shang and made it resume its old course. He released Jizi 箕子 from captivity, performed sacrifices at the grave of Bi Gan 比干, and bowed in his carriage at the gate of Shang Rong's 商容 village.²⁶ He disbursed the [accumulated] treasures in Lu Tower 鹿臺 and distributed the [stored] grain at Juqiao 鉅橋, conferring great gifts throughout the realm.²⁷ As a result, the people joyfully submitted.²⁸

Not by sheer force of arms did King Wu cause the grisly demise of King Zhou of Shang and his hapless army, but rather by the will of Heaven. With that spiritual assistance there was no need for total war; instead, King Wu emphasized economy of force. As King Wu is quoted in the “Mu shi” 牧誓 document of the *Shangshu*:

Now I, Fa 發 [i.e., King Wu], am simply executing respectfully the punishment appointed by Heaven. In today's business do not advance more than six or seven steps, and then stop and adjust your ranks—my brave men, be energetic! Do not exceed four blows, five blows, six blows, or seven blows; and then stop and adjust your ranks—my brave men, be energetic! If you are not thus energetic, you will bring destruction on yourselves.²⁹

Indulgent toward the fallen, King Wu was concerned with the neutralization of power, not bloody retribution. In reflection of his father's intentions, King Wu sought to preserve the essential cultural traits of Shang civilization in the wake of his conquest of the Shang royal house. Militaristic policies were, from his viewpoint, the least effective means to conquer the Shang while retaining the values of what had been a constructive, vibrant society. Thus, in conjunction with martial potency, Kings Wen and Wu together championed the notion of virtue (*de* 德) to legitimize in civil terms Zhou's rise to leadership. At the same time, the co-founders realized that virtue alone was not sufficient to unify and retain their captive empire; *de* had to be coupled with a complementary martial notion of due punishment (*xing*

刑) to justify Zhou's military consolidation efforts. In tandem, these moral entities served to transform the idea of *wen/wu* balance shared by Kings Wen and Wu into a workable policy.

It is possible to illustrate this moral linkage of *wen* and *wu* by observing that in the conquest legend King Wu did not attack when he had the military wherewithal to do so. Instead, as suggested in the “Zhuo” 酌 ode of the *Shi*, he bided his time:

Oh! powerful was the king's army,
But he nursed it in obedience to circumstances while the time
was yet dark.
When the time was clearly bright,
He thereupon donned his grand armor.³⁰

Not only was King Wu waiting for the militarily advantageous time to attack, he was waiting for the proper moral opportunity when King Zhou's malfeasances were no longer bearable. He thereby set an important precedent for future martial planning. He saw the wisdom of timing his attack to accord with objective conditions, whether they were human or environmental power relationships or accepted standards of moral legitimacy. Here, clearly, the evidence is weighted toward the latter, for King Wu was acting on the basis of the words in the “Zhonghui zhi gao” 仲虺之誥 document of the *Shu*, which advocated “showing favor to the able and right-principled” and “aiding the virtuous,” while “punishing the willfully blind” and “dealing summarily with those going to ruin.”³¹

Thus, through their chroniclers, Kings Wen and Wu came to represent a synthesis of values necessary for the success of the Zhou regime at a time when the former benefits of warfare had become obsolete. *Wu* was now viewed as an expedient for rapid, decisive change when conditions, moral and otherwise, demanded it. Once administered, *wu* must properly retreat into dormancy, allowing *wen* to manifest itself.

This Western Zhou solution to the *wen/wu* problem, calling for reciprocal use of martiality and civility based on the situation at hand, became one of the fundamental axioms in a developing philosophy of war in early China. Though reliable textual sources are still few, it is nevertheless reasonable to suggest that during Western Zhou the complementarity of *wen* and *wu*, and its derivative, the complementarity of virtue (*de*) and punishment (*xing*), had already entered the realm of political ideology. By the time the legends of Kings Wen and Wu had been formalized in

the later Western Zhou period, the concepts of martiality and civility had become primary causative factors in the founding and maintenance of a harmonious realm: *Wu* was that force necessary to punish (*xing*) those who failed to submit to a ruler's *de*; *wen* was the exercise of *de* for social well-being. Together these moral imperatives represented the principal means for assuring cultural equilibrium and vigorous growth.

The Duke of Zhou seems to have continued this advocacy of martial/civil balance during King Cheng's reign. Because of his prototypal position as a wise advisor, later Ruist and other philosophers aspiring to comparable government power in the Zhanguo period hailed the duke as the creator of several Zhou institutions and as virtuous minister *par excellence*. No solid evidence exists for most of these ascriptions, but on the basis of genuine documents in the *Shangshu*, it was plausibly the duke who standardized the Heavenly mandate (*tianming* 天命) ideology. Moreover, it was probably he who directed the suppression of the Shang counterattack and, with the establishment of Luo 洛, consolidated the eastern territories under Zhou rule. Like Kings Wen and Wu, of whom he was continually mindful in his proclamations, the duke combined conqueror and administrator into a single vocation. In addition, by promoting the rationale of a Heavenly mandate, he strengthened the key intellectual hinge connecting martial and civil activities into a balanced whole.³²

Evolution in Chunqiu Times

During Chunqiu times, the Western Zhou solution to the *wen/wu* problem still retained much of its original vitality. The *Guoyu* describes Lord Huan 桓公 of the state of Qi 齊 (r. 686–643 BCE), who became the first hegemon (*ba* 霸) of the lords of the realm (*zhuhou* 諸侯), as adopting policies that closely followed the Western Zhou solution regarding martiality and civility. As a result, we are told in the *Guoyu*, “none of the lords of small states all over the empire dared to oppose him.” They “put trust in his humaneness and were overawed by his martiality.”³³ The *Zuo zhuan* provides comparable evidence in its description of an incident of 558 BCE, when the then marquis of Jin 晉侯 consulted a Jin noble, Zhonghang Xianzi 中行獻子, about a possible attack on the state of Wei 衛. Zhonghang Xianzi's reply is drawn directly from the “Zhonghui zhi gao” document of the *Shangshu*: “Deal summarily with states that are going to ruin, and take their states from the disorderly. To overthrow the perishing and strengthen what is being

preserved is the way in which to administer a state.' Let Your Lordship now settle Wei, and wait the time [for a different course]."³⁴

While adherence to the Western Zhou solution was evident during the Chunqiu period, the *wen/wu* nexus was also being interpreted in new ways, which served to give *wu* more definition. Martiality and civility became less general descriptions of punitive or pacifying behavior and more a set of clearly defined characteristics and mutual relationships.

At the conclusion of the Battle of Bi 郟 between the states of Jin and Chu 楚 in 597 BCE, the viscount of Chu 楚子 was encouraged to construct a monument out of the soldiers of Jin who had been killed in combat. He rejected the idea, saying: "You do not know what you are talking about. The character for 'prowess' (*wu*) is formed by those for 'stay' (*zhi* 止) and 'spear' (*ge* 戈)."³⁵ After citing the virtues of King Wu of Zhou as expressed in the *Shi*, the viscount continued:

Thus military prowess is seen in the repression of cruelty, the calling in of the weapons of war, the preservation of the great appointment, the firm establishment of one's merit, the giving of repose to the people, the harmonizing of all [the states], and the enlargement of the general wealth; and King Wu took by those stanzas that his posterity should not forget this. Now, I have caused the bones of the soldiers of two states to lie bleaching on the earth—an act of cruelty; I display my weapons of war, how can I preserve the great appointment? And while still the state of Jin remains, how can I firmly establish my merit? There are many things by which I oppose what the people desire, and how can they get repose from me? Without the practice of virtue, striving by force for supremacy among the states, how can I produce harmony among them? I have made my gain from the perils of others, and found my safety in their disorders—these things are my glory, but what enlargement of the general wealth is there in them? Not one of the seven virtues belonging to military prowess attaches to me—what have I to display to my posterity? Let us simply make here a temple for the tablets of my predecessors and announce to them our success. The merit of military prowess does not belong to me!"³⁶

Once again King Wu is esteemed as the source of true martiality—military power that has its effect in a state of latency. Indeed, the viscount of

Chu sees his ideal in a figure such as the marquis of Lu in the “Pan shui” ode of the *Shi*, who combined *wen* and *wu* but manifested them in paradoxical ways. Civility must be open, visible to all, for it to be effective; martiality, on the other hand, must remain awe-inspiring but unconsummated. It might appear from the viscount’s description that martiality is actually civility in disguise, but this is only to emphasize the concealed nature of *wu*. While acts of *wen* appear clearly to all, *wu* lies in a state of potentiality, giving force to *wen*’s inner power. The *Guoyu* has the following illustrative passage:

King Wu was preparing to chastise the Quanrong 犬戎 [an ethnic group to the north of the Zhou], when Moufu 謀父, lord of Ji 祭公, admonished him, saying, “It must not be done. The former kings manifested their virtue, but did not display their weapons. If weapons are stored away and only used on timely occasions, then when they are used, they will be awe-inspiring. But if they are displayed, then they will [tend to] be overused. And if they are overused, then they will hold no terror.”³⁷

According to this notion, true power—the ability to motivate others to fulfill your wishes—lies not in coercion but in a concerted application of manifest *wen* and latent *wu*. Consequently, though *wen* may appear dominant, *wu* also has utility in potency. Based on the tradition invoked by the viscount, *wu* cannot exist without manifest *wen*, and as implied by the above *Guoyu* passage, *wen* without the opportune display of *wu* cannot be effective. The *Zuozhuan* similarly highlights this truth in an anecdote set on the eve of the Battle of Bi in 597 BCE. In the passage, Zhizi 穉子 (Xianhu 先穀), adjutant to the commander of the Jin army, advises an attack against Chu despite the danger of a defeat. He reasoned that a failure to attack would be to dismiss the tradition of military prowess (*wu*) that had made Jin first among the states of the realm.³⁸ Rather than being an example of bravery in the face of danger, however, the parable is intended to show a misapprehension of power and its uses. Zhizi’s concept of *wu* is taken in the *Zuozhuan* to be an incautious advocacy of brute strength and a brash show of chauvinism, which in the end led to a debacle for Jin. Even in waging a battle, martiality must be applied sparingly to achieve the best outcome.

Another strain of Chunqiu-era thinking on *wen/wu* expands on the reciprocity of civility and martiality seen in the Western Zhou era. This is evident in the *Zuozhuan* description of the events surrounding the

nonaggression covenant conference of 546 BCE, which was hosted by the state of Song 宋 and succeeded in temporarily halting the repeated military incursions by the principal state rivals of the time, Jin and Chu, and their respective allies. In the wake of the conclave, Xiang Xu 向戌, Song's master of the left, asked the lord of Song to reward him for his efforts in managing the conference, saying, "Please grant me some towns for arresting the occasion of death." After the lord issued an edict rewarding Xiang Xu sixty towns, Xiang Xu showed the grant document to Zihan 子罕 (Yue Xi 樂喜), a senior minister in Song. Zihan replied by underscoring the importance of martiality, even as attempts were being made to arrest its use in favor of civility:

"It is by their arms that Jin and Chu keep the small states in awe. Standing in awe, the high and low in them are loving and harmonious; and through love and harmony they can keep their states in quiet, and thereby serve the great states. In this is the way of preservation. If they were not kept in awe, they would become haughty. That haughtiness would produce disorder, and that disorder would lead to their extinction. This is the way of ruin. Heaven has produced the five materials (*wu cai* 五材), all of which may be dispensed with, but who can do away with the instruments of war? They have long been in requisition. It is by them that the lawless are kept in awe and accomplished virtue is displayed. Sages have risen to their eminence by means of them and men of confusion have been removed. The courses which lead to decline or growth, to preservation or ruin, to blindness, on the one hand, and intelligence, on the other, are all to be traced to these instruments, and yet you have been seeking to do away with them. Is not your scheme a delusion? No offense can be greater than to lead the states astray by such a delusion. You have escaped without a great punishment, and yet you have sought reward with extreme insatiableness." With this Zihan cut to pieces the grant document and cast it away.³⁹

Zihan's vigorous defense of the ineluctability of *wu* is later complemented in the *Zuozhuan* by commentary from Shen Shushi 申叔時, a noble of Chu, in speaking to the Chu general Zifan 子反 before Jin's attack on the state of Zheng 鄭, an ally of Chu, in the Battle of Yanling 鄢陵 in 575 BCE. After learning of Jin's intentions, Zheng alerted Chu,

whose viscount sent an army in relief, with Zifan commanding the army of the center. As the Chu army passed by Shen 申, Zifan entered the city to see Shen Shushi and ask him what he thought of the expedition. According to the *Zuozhuan*, Shen Shushi replied:

“Virtuous goodness, punishments, religion, righteousness, propriety, and good faith, all are the appliances of war. Virtuous goodness appears in the exercise of kindness; punishment in the correction of what is wrong; religion in the service of the spirits; righteousness in the establishment of what is beneficial; propriety in doing things at the proper times; and good faith in the watchful keeping of everything. [When these things obtain,] the people live well off and their virtue is correct; all movements are with advantage and affairs are rightly ordered; the seasons are all accorded with and everything is prosperous; harmony prevails between superiors and inferiors; all movements are made without insubordinate opposition; whatever the superiors require is responded to; everyone knows his duty. Hence it is said in the ode, ‘Thou didst establish [and nourish] the multitudes of our people, / The immense gift of thy goodness.’⁴⁰ In consequence of this, [in that ancient time] the spirits sent down their blessing, and the seasons all passed without calamity or injury. The wants of the people were abundantly supplied, and with consenting harmony they received the orders of their superiors. They all did their utmost to obey those orders and would devote themselves to death to supply the places of any that were lacking. This was the way to secure victory in battle.”⁴¹

Here Shen Shushi eloquently states the case seen elsewhere in Chunqiu writings that *wen* and *wu* are tandem elements, one depending on the other, and that their apposite application leads to a harmonious result.

An additional indication of the continued reciprocity seen in Chunqiu times between martiality and civility appears in other *Zuozhuan* passages addressing the close connection between warfare and ritual—a connection that existed as far back as the Shang era. Battles described in the *Zuozhuan* were typically preceded by a whole series of prescribed rites (*li* 禮) designed to ascertain the ancestors’ and/or Heaven’s purposes and desires.⁴² The “Wang zhi” 王制 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記, despite its later

compilation, probably gives what may have earlier become a standardized procedure:

When the sovereign was about to go forth on a punitive expedition, he sacrificed especially, but with the usual forms, to the Lord on High (*Shangdi* 上帝), offered the *yi* 宜 sacrifice at the altar of the Earth, and then performed the *zao* 造 sacrifice in the temple of his deceased father. He offered sacrifices also to the Father of War (*ma* 禡) [on arriving] at the state which was the object of the expedition. He had received his charge from his ancestors and the complete [plan] for the execution of it in the Jade Academy (*biyong* 辟雍).⁴³ He went forth accordingly, and seized the criminals; and on his return he set forth his offerings in the Jade Academy and announced [to his ancestors] how he had questioned [his prisoners], and cut off the ears [of the slain].⁴⁴

Referring to such spiritual proceedings for prosecuting martial expeditions, the *Zuozhuan* quotes the viscount of Liu 劉子 as saying in 578 BCE: “The great affairs of state are sacrifice and war. At sacrifices [in the ancestral temple, officers] receive the roasted flesh; in war they receive that offered at the altar of the soil—these are the great ceremonies in worshiping the spirits.”⁴⁵ While the viscount was restating a tradition of antiquity, the religious rituals of war of which he spoke were being expanded during the Chunqiu period to include rites of a purely military nature.

This change may be illustrated by a dramatic incident in 569 BCE, in which Yanggan 揚干, a brother of the marquis of Jin, after having thrown the ranks of his military unit into confusion, was executed by his military superior, Wei Jiang 魏絳. Angered by the killing of his brother, the marquis called for Wei Jiang to be put to death. Wei subsequently appeared before the marquis to present his explanation in writing and to demonstrate his willingness to die for having offended his lord. However, after reading Wei’s statement, the marquis realized he had been too quick to demand retribution. Running out barefoot to speak to Wei in person, the marquis admitted that he had responded to Yanggan’s death out of brotherly love and had not considered that Wei, as Yanggan’s military superior, was correct in punishing Yanggan in accordance with military rites (*junli* 軍禮). “I was not able to instruct my brother, which made him violate your great orders. That was my fault; do not you render it still heavier.” As concluded in the

Zuozhuan, Wei Jiang, by using proper military punishments, had proven “capable of aiding in the government of the people” and therefore was qualified for promotion to assistant commander of the Jin army.⁴⁶

In this passage we have clear evidence that military rites were being recognized as essential to both internal army discipline and civil justice, and that disorder either in ranks of soldiers or in communities of civilians was considered preventable through the potential application of *wu*'s correlate—*xing*. As the frequency of war increased during the latter part of the Chunqiu period, rites to the ancestral spirits as part of military activity were being adapted for internal military order and discipline.

New Solutions in the Zhanguo Era

Thus we see that during the Chunqiu period the idea of *wen/wu* reciprocity in the Western Zhou began to change as warfare became more frequent between the lords of the realm. Each of the two elements acquired greater texture, a clearer intention, and a more definitive relationship with the other as the problems of interstate strife, social-cultural changes, and royal house decline intensified. After the mid-fifth century BCE, when the Warring States period is generally said to begin, new solutions were needed to deal with these stresses and, as a result, there was a surge in discourse on the roles of martiality and civility and the means for applying these elements in real-world situations.

Three new solutions for the *wen/wu* problem appeared during the late Chunqiu and Zhanguo eras that built on Western Zhou ideas and came to the fore as violence increased, social order broke down, and the political-religious values inherited from the Western Zhou went into decline. These solutions were *militarism*, *syncretism*, and *compartmentalism*.

Militarism

The first of the three solutions placed high value on martiality, as opposed to civility, to secure social stability and to build a lasting political order. For many commentators looking back on the roots of the Qin reunification, the generators of a militaristic ideology to unify the realm were members of the Legalist school (*fajia* 法家). However, as various scholars and analysts of the *Huangdi sijing* have demonstrated, Legalists were an often misconstrued, artificial assemblage of thinkers who would not have agreed on any one

body of ideas, including a single thesis on the problem of martiality and civility.⁴⁷ That is, authors who held traditionally Legalist notions about the worthiness of penal law and administrative discipline had different views on the *wen/wu* relationship from those represented by Huang-Lao 黃老 philosophers, who combined these same legalistic beliefs with the Daoist idea of nonassertion (*wuwei* 無為) and a naturalistic cosmology. Consequently, the idea of promoting a solution to the *wen/wu* problem that emphasized martiality at the expense of civility—what I am calling *militarism*—can be currently observed in only two sources from the Zhanguo period, namely, the *Shangjunshu* 商君書 and the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, which conventionally have been labeled Legalist.⁴⁸

In the *Shangjunshu*, the putative author, Shang Yang 商鞅 (ca. 390–338 BCE; also known as Wei Yang 衛鞅), and his followers asserted that it was not only acceptable but imperative in a period of constant strife such as Zhanguo that war become a premier instrument of political action.⁴⁹ But more than punitive measures, war was for Shang Yang the only means for assuring national wealth and sustained sovereignty.

From antiquity to the present time, it has never happened that one attained supremacy without conquest, or that one came to ruin without defeat. If the people are brave, one conquers in war, but if they are not brave, one is defeated in war. If one can unify the people for war, they are brave, but if one cannot unify the people for war, they are not brave. A sage-king obtains the kingship through the efforts of his soldiers. Therefore, he rouses the country and charges it with the obligation of military service. If one enters a state and sees its administration, it is strong if its people are of use. How does one know that the people are of use? If they, on perceiving war, behave like hungry wolves on seeing meat, then they are of use. Generally, war is a thing that people hate; he who succeeds in making people delight in war attains supremacy.⁵⁰

Even for those advocating *militarism*, however, a nominally civil complement to war existed in the guise of agriculture. Again, from the *Shangjunshu*:

When the army is mobilized for an offensive, rank is given according to military merit, and, reliance being placed upon the military, victory is certain. When the army is in reserve and

agriculture is pursued, rank is given according to the production of grain, and, reliance being placed upon farming, the country will be rich. If in military enterprises the enemy is conquered and if, when the army is in reserve, the country becomes rich, then it attains supremacy.⁵¹

This recognition of the necessity of agriculture notwithstanding, elements of civility that had been cited since the days of Kings Wen and Wu of Western Zhou as positive forces were considered by Shang Yang and his disciples as lethal to a country's deterrent strength:

If in a country there are the following ten things: odes and history, rites and music, virtue and cultivation thereof, humaneness and integrity, sophistry and intelligence, then the ruler has no one whom he can employ for defense and warfare. If a country is governed by means of these ten things, it will be dismembered, as soon as an enemy approaches, and even if no enemy approaches, it will be poor. But if a country banishes these ten things, enemies will not dare to approach, and even if they should, they would be driven back. When it mobilizes its army and attacks, it will gain victories; when it holds the army in reserve and does not attack, it will be rich.⁵²

The *Hanfeizi*, probably authored by Han Fei 韓非 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BCE), expresses a *militarist* opinion in terms similar to those in the *Shangjunshu*. Like Shang Yang, Han Fei links a legalistic devotion to agriculture and war as critical to state power, and he describes the absence of such dedication as dangerous:

Now, the people of the state all discuss good government, and everyone has a copy of the works on law by Shang Yang and Guan Zhong 管仲 in his house,⁵³ and yet the state gets poorer and poorer, for though many people talk about farming, very few put their hands to a plow. The people of the state all discuss military affairs, and everyone has a copy of the works of Sun Wu and Wu Qi in his house, and yet the armies grow weaker and weaker, for though many people talk about war, very few buckle on armor. Therefore, an enlightened ruler will make use of men's strength but will not heed their words, will reward their accomplishments but will prohibit useless activities. Then