

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING

According to historical records, the initial stage of the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋 722 - 481 B.C.) era was a period during which the powerful states used their military strength to dominate the weaker states. In this period the major powers which were active in the Yellow River valley were Zheng 郑, Qi 齐, Lu 鲁, Song 宋, and Wei 卫. Among these five states, Zheng was partial to Qi and Lu, while Song took sides with Wei. The power of the first party (Zheng, Qi, Lu) was stronger than the second party (Song, Wei). In the first party, Zheng was the strongest at the initial stage, later it was Qi. After the internal disorder in Zheng, the state became poorer, and Qi rose after the decline of Zheng. In 679 B.C., Duke Huan of Qi 齐桓公 became the hegemon (*bazhu* 霸主),<sup>1</sup> and as a response to the situation of the time; he made a decision at the right moment with his call to "honour the king and expel the barbarians" (*Zunwang Rangyi* 尊王攘夷).

As is often said, "the various times produce their own respective heroes". The person who is able to respond to the times would be a great man. So, who was

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<sup>1</sup> The term *bazhu* refers to the hegemon or the leader of the alliance of the dukes. For example, Duke Huan of Qi was the first *bazhu* during the Spring and Autumn period.

the great man in question, and how was the political situation during his time?

## 1. The Historical Setting

The political situation of the Zhou 周 Dynasty (c. 1066 B.C.-256 B.C.) became worse from the time of the Spring And Autumn. After the fall of Western Zhou 西周 (c. 1066 B.C.-771 B.C.), King Ping 平王 (r. 770 B.C.-720 B.C.) moved the capital to the east, hence began a tense situation among the dukes. They started contending for hegemony.<sup>2</sup> The scramble for supremacy had not occurred before the fall of the Western Zhou, but when King Li 厉王 (r. 857 B.C.-828 B.C.) was driven out by the people due to his tyranny, this incident had created a precedent for the people to revolt against the tyrant. Hereafter, The dethronement of rulers frequently occurred among the states.<sup>3</sup> Wei Zhengtong 韦政通 states that it was the big powers which

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<sup>2</sup> King Ping moved the capital to Luoyang 洛阳, and the dynasty since then has been referred to as the Eastern Zhou 东周. King Ping was unable to recover the lost territory. He had to rely on the support of the dukes to safeguard the state and his people... The dukes fought with one another in order to strive for dominant position ...". See Dai Dongxiong 戴东雄, *Guan Zi De Falu Sixiang* 管子的法律思想, in *Zhonghua Wenhua Congshu* 中华文化丛书, Taiwan: (Zhongyang) Wenwu Gongyingshe 中华文物供应社, 1985, pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> The historian, Zhang Yinlin 张荫麟 notes that according to the historical data from 643 B.C. onwards to 484 B.C., this incident happened eight times. See Zhang Yinlin, *Zhongguo Shanggushi Gang* 中国上古史纲 in *Wenji Shangce* 文集上册, Taipei: Jiushi Chubanshe 九思出版社, 1965, pp. 56-57.

accelerated the collapse of the feudal system. <sup>4</sup>

Since the founding of Zhou, the founding ancestors of the dynasty had frequently stressed that the authority of the ruler originated from the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming 天命). Consequently the frequent revolts of the people against their rulers must have shaken the faith of the people concerning the Mandate of Heaven. <sup>5</sup> Essentially, the belief of the Mandate of Heaven was not only a religious belief, more importantly, it was also a political conviction. The Guo Yu 国语 says: "Li 厉, Xuan 宣, You 幽, Ping 平, were getting calamity from Heaven as they behaved badly". <sup>6</sup> That means the bad behaviour of the four kings influenced the destiny of the Zhou Dynasty. After the collapse of the Western Zhou which was caused by the incapability of King You 幽王 (r. 781 B.C.-771 B.C.), King Ping moved the capital to the east. After that, the royal court of Zhou was controlled by the dukes, signifying a drastic change in history, and the beginning of a new era. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Wei Zhengtong 韦政通, *Zhongguo Sixiangshi* 中国思想史, Taipei: Shuiniu Tushu Chubanshiye Youxiangongsi 水牛图书出版事业有限公司, 1991, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "Zhou Yu Xia" 周语下, in *Guo Yu* 国语, see *Sibu Beiyao* 四部备要, Taiwan: Zhonghua Shuju 中华书局, 1965, *juan* 3, p. 7b.

<sup>7</sup> Wei Zhengtong, *op.cit.*, p.33.

## 2. The Political Setting

During the Spring and Autumn period, the external relations among the states could be divided into three types:

1. The Chinese (Huaxia 华夏) versus the barbarians (Yi Di 夷狄),
2. The dukes versus the King of Zhou 周天子,
3. The dukes versus the dukes.

During this period, the barbarians were a constant threat to the security of the Chinese states (Zhuxia 诸夏), causing the king of Zhou to move the capital to the east.<sup>8</sup> Although the royal family of Zhou (Zhoushi 周室) was never driven away by the barbarians, they still had to move to the east. Anyway, when confronted with the barbarians, the feudal relatives still shared a bitter hatred against their common enemy. In due course, there was an able and sagacious man who stepped forward to resist the barbarians. This man was Guan Zhong 管仲 (c. 719 B.C.-645 B.C.), the prime minister of the Qi state during the Spring and Autumn period. He put forward a proposal to overcome the nationwide calamity, and his renowned proposal was to "honour the

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<sup>8</sup> "Xigong Zhong" 僖公中 in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Jinzhu Jinyi* 春秋左传今注今译, hereafter CZJJ, annotated and translated by Li Zongtong 李宗侗, edited by Wang Yunwu 王云五, Taiwan: Shangwu Yinshuguan 商务印书馆, *juan* 7, p. 344.

king and to expel the barbarians". Subsequently, he united the strength of the dukes in defence against external invasions. In this way he managed to save the Zhou civilization and safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. That was Guan Zhong's diplomatic strategy. In dealing with the barbarians, he saw the importance of the existence of goodwill among the various ducal states, and the importance of mutual understanding and sympathy among these states when confronted with their enemy.

In this way Qi was able to establish hegemony among the various states. Concerned with the position of the King of Zhou, he initiated the policy to "honour the king" and with regard to the dukes, he resorted to using the status of the king, as it was in theory within the king's jurisdiction to command the dukes.

In the area of internal administration, the *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史记) records the internal affairs of Qi as follows:

Since Duke Huan had commissioned Guan Zhong together with Baoshu Ya 鲍叔牙, Xi Peng 隰朋, and Gao Xi 高奚 to assist him in the government administration of Qi 齐, to organize the military system, to set up the weight system, and to utilise the profits of aquatic products and salt in order to provide for the poor, and to pay emolument to the able and virtuous persons, all the people in Qi

were happy. <sup>9</sup>

So, from these records, we learn that during the Spring and Autumn period, to make one's country rich and to build up its military power was a common idea of the states. Normally, the state which intended to achieve this ideal policy would have to improve in two areas, firstly, to increase agricultural production, and secondly, to unite the population at the grass roots level. To attain these two objectives, the state had to satisfy the people by making some of the laws flexible. That means the state had to be prepared to make the necessary concessions which would benefit the masses. In addition, the ruler of the state had to organize the thinly scattered population into an organized unit of administration. <sup>10</sup>

Guan Zhong placed much emphasis on practical results during his term of administration. He knew well the crux of the matter. So, he ran the state according to the conditions that were prevalent at that time. He was able to combine both theory and practice, which accounted for some of the great achievements in his official career. He attached much importance to the building up of military strength and the establishment

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<sup>9</sup> Sima Qian 司马迁, "Qi taigong Shijia" 齐太公世家 in *Shiji* 史记, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中华书局, 1959, *juan* 32, p. 2131.

<sup>10</sup> Wang Xiaobo 王晓波, *Xianqin Fajia Sixiangshi Lun* 先秦法家思想史论, Taipei: Lianjing Chubanshiye Gongsi 联经出版事业公司, 1991, p.8.

of diplomatic relations. His political view played a constructive role; innumerable facts from his achievements in political affairs showed that the state and the populace really benefitted from it.

To strengthen the internal administration, he overhauled and consolidated the organization of the government. He assigned talented persons such as Baoshu Ya, Wangzi Chengfu 王子城父, Xian Ziqi 弦子旗, Ning Qi 甯戚, Xi Peng and others to be in charge of each and every department.<sup>11</sup> In his political planning, everything was taken care of by specially assigned people.

Guan Zhong made vigorous efforts to bring prosperity to the state. With regard to the government of the people, he was strict and impartial in meting out rewards and punishments. In order to build up the morale of the state, rewards were given to the people as a means of encouragement, while punishments were inflicted to redress biased judgement. He even emphasized that the sovereign had to hold firmly the six powers (Liubing 六柄), that is, power to enable survival (Sheng 生), power to kill (Sha 杀), power to impoverish (Pin 贫), power to enrich (Fu 富), power to elevate (Gui

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<sup>11</sup> *Guan Zi Jinzhu Jinyi* 管子今注今译, hereafter GZJJ, annotated and translated by Li Mian 李勉, Taiwan: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1990, p.391.

贵), power to degrade (Jian 贱).<sup>12</sup> These six powers had to be handled with great care; no one could do as one pleased. In this respect, he advocated using authority to rule the people. Only when the people dreaded authority then the state could be brought under control.<sup>13</sup> In short, he advocated rule by law, and only law was used as the standard judgement for the people. The Legalist school at the later stage therefore claimed Guan Zhong to be the founder of the school, as what he advocated was closely related to the above ideology.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, he knew the political situation of the entire nation. So, when he conducted state affairs, he could view the situation as a whole. For instance, when dealing with the conflicts between the Chinese and the barbarians, he made a strategic decision to "honour the king and expel the barbarians". We know that after the Western Zhou was destroyed by the barbarians (Quan Rong 犬戎) the barbarians from the South (Nan Yi 南夷) and the barbarians from the North (Bei Di 北狄) ran wild for a time at the Central Plain (Zhong Yuan 中原). At once, the dukes who were without a leader were faced with a formidable foe. On these grounds, Duke Huan of Qi took

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 738-739.

<sup>13</sup> Guan Zhong told Duke Huan that he must execute the six powers in order to rule the state properly. See "Qi Yu" 齐语, in *Guo Yu*, *juan* 6, p.2b.

<sup>14</sup> Liu Zehua 刘泽华, *Xianqin Zhengzhi Sixiangshi* 先秦政治思想史, Tianjin: Nankai Daxue Chubanshe 南开大学出版社, 1984, p. 124.



the interest of all parties into account. He was determined to serve the interest of the dukes. In accordance with the trend of the time and being concerned with the overall situation, he proposed to overhaul and consolidate the internal military administration. For the external affairs, he proposed to honour and pay respects to the royal family of Zhou. At the same time, he formed an alliance with the other dukes. Duke Huan of Qi implemented a survival plan for the Zhou Kingdom in order to put an end to its political crisis. In this survival plan, all the dukes in the alliance had to cooperate with one another to fight the barbarians. We could say that his proposal for honouring the king and expelling the barbarians was made at the right time. The advocations that he made were practical and realistic, and they were geared to the needs of the people at that time. In implementing the above proposals, Guan Zhong rescued the various states from their crises, and assisted Duke Huan to achieve hegemony. This is what is called: "The times produce their heroes and the heroes produce the trend of the time."