

Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* and Beyond: A Study of the Chinese Ideal of Loyalty*¹

从京剧《赵氏孤儿》说开去：中国人忠诚观考察

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Abstract: It has often been proposed by Chinese scholars that the ideal of loyalty is drastically different in the cultures of Japan and China: while it is relative to the moral virtue of benevolence in China, it is absolute in Japan. This paper examines the validity of this proposal as applied to China. Starting from an analysis of a Peking Opera entitled *The Orphan of Zhao*, this research indicates that, while the proposal seems valid when applied to the 1959 opera, it collapses when we look beyond that play. Evidence from several sources, including historical records, and the evolving stage of *The Orphan of Zhao*, shows the proposal to be faulty. Indeed, the proposal is not only faulty, but also prevents us from understanding the dynamics underlying the complicated and often intense interactions of history, literature, and politics in modern China. The most serious problem of the proposal, however, is its advocacy of stereotypical views of Chinese and Japanese cultures reflected in its claim that the different Japanese and Chinese ideals of loyalty are inherent and timeless, existing mysteriously in the national characters of the two peoples. In conclusion, the proposal amounts to a *chūgokujinron*—a Chinese counterpart of *nihonjinron*—and must be treated as such.

Keywords: Historiography; *The Orphan of Zhao*; *Chūshingura*; Chinese ideal of loyalty; Japanese ideal of loyalty; *nihonjinron*; *chūgokujinron*

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Women by Shiba Shirō). His translations are collected in *Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature* and *Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Drama*. His other publications include “Reflections Of and On the Times: Morimoto Kaoru’s *A Woman’s Life*,” “*Chūshingura* and Beyond: A Study of the Japanese Ideal of Loyalty,” “The Reception of *Chūshingura* in China: A Chinese Version of *Nihonjinron*,” “From War Responsibility to the Red Purge: Politics, *Shingeki*, and the Case of Kubo Sakae” and “Politics of Canon Formation and Writing Style: A Linguistic Analysis of *Kajin no kigū*.”

It is widely believed among Chinese scholars that the Chinese and the Japanese have completely different ideals of loyalty: the Chinese ideal of loyalty is something relative, but that of the Japanese is something absolute. For example, comparing drama in China and Japan, Ge Shumin 葛淑敏 stated the following:

Chinese moral and ethnic ideals emphasize two virtues: *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) to one’s elders within the family and *zhong* 忠 (loyalty) to the emperor beyond the family. But in China, filial piety and loyalty are both subject to the checking of *ren* 仁 (benevolence), the highest moral virtue in Confucianism... With the checking of benevolence, it is no longer absolute whether one practices filial piety at home or is loyal to the emperor: if the emperor is not benevolent, he would not be entitled to rule the country; if a minister is not benevolent, he would not be entitled to his office. All must be measured by the yardstick of benevolence and judged accordingly...

In contrast, filial piety and loyalty are both regarded as absolute in Japan. The virtue of benevolence has lost its function as a guiding principle in both one’s social action and one’s everyday life, the status that it holds in China—its birth place.²

Similar views have been expressed by other Chinese scholars, often when comparing *Zhaoshi guer* 赵氏孤儿 (*The Orphan of Zhao*) and *Chūshingura* 忠臣藏 (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*), revenge dramas which are well-known in China and Japan respectively. For example, Liu Rui 刘瑞 made the following remarks about the origin of loyalty in the two pieces:

Concerning the origin of loyalty, there is a clear distinction between *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Chūshingura*. In the Chinese piece, loyalty originates from a sense of justice and the virtue of benevolence; in the Japanese piece, however, it originates from... a blind execution of loyalty, with no trace of benevolence.³

² 葛淑敏:《“情美”与“善美”:中日戏剧传统的异同》,《戏剧》1995年第2期,第94页。[GE Shumin, “Qingmei” yu “shanmei”: Zhongri xiju chuantong de yitong” (*The Beauty of Passion versus the Beauty of Virtue: Differences between Chinese and Japanese Theatre Traditions*), *Xiju (Theatre)* 2 (1995): 94. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are my own.]

³ 刘瑞,《〈赵氏孤儿〉和〈忠臣藏〉“忠”的比较分析》,《戏剧之家(上半月)》2013年第5期,第158—159页。[LIU Rui, “Zhaoshi guer he Zhongchen zang ‘zhong’ de bijiao fenxi (*A Comparative Analysis of the Virtue of Loyalty in The Orphan of Zhao and Chūshingura*), *Xiju zhi jia, shang banyue (The Home of Theatre, First Half of Month)* 5 (2013): 158–59.]

Likewise, Zhou Pingping 周萍萍 and Li Gang 李刚 came to the following conclusion in their study:

The Chinese take revenge in order to seek social justice, while the Japanese take revenge in order to “get even” with the enemy about an insult. The two ideals, while named by the same character for *loyalty* (忠), have entirely different connotations: “loyalty” is guided by the principle of “benevolence” in China; it lacks the guidance of such a principle in Japan.⁴

Similarly, Mo Wenqin 莫文沁 made a claim about how the relationships are different between loyalty and filial piety in China and Japan.

In Japan, “loyalty” is not just more important than “filial piety,” but the two are simply a “unified one” and taken as a fundamental principle of moral education of its population... thus the absolute obligation of the forty-seven samurai [in *Chūshingura*] to sacrifice their own lives for their master... This is in sharp contrast with the Chinese view of the two virtues, which either leaves people in a dilemma—over which of the two virtues to follow—or urges people “to sacrifice loyalty for the sake of filial piety.”⁵

It must be pointed out that a theory is being proposed here on how the Chinese ideal of loyalty differs from that of the Japanese. Moreover, it is a theory in which such a difference is inherent and timeless, existing mysteriously in the national characters of the two peoples. The latter point is stated explicitly in unequivocal terms by Li Dongjun 李东军. In his article “Reading Japanese National Character through the Kabuki *Chūshingura* Phenomenon,” he made the following contention:

Given the fact that the Kabuki *Chūshingura* [first staged in Japan in 1748] is still loved today by the Japanese, we have to say that it carries in its theme some spirituality that transcends time, political views of any kind, and social systems.⁶

⁴ 周萍萍, 李刚:《中日复仇文学作品比较:以〈赵氏孤儿〉与〈忠臣藏〉为例》,《日本研究》2007年第2期,第83—89页。[ZHOU Pingping and LI Gang, “Zhongri fuchou wenxue zuopin bijiao yanjiu, yi Zhaoshi guer yu Zhongchen zang wei li” (A Comparative Study of Chinese and Japanese Revenge Literature with a Focus on *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Chūshingura*), *Riben yanjiu (Japanese Studies)* 2 (2007): 83–89.]

⁵ 莫文沁:《〈赵氏孤儿〉与〈忠臣藏〉忠孝观念的比较研究》,《湖北第二师范学院学报》2016年第9期,第9—12页。[MO Wenqin, “Zhaoshi guer yu zhongchen zang zhongxiao guannian de bijiao yanjiu” (A Comparative Study of Loyalty and Filial Piety in *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Chūshingura*), *Hubei dier shifanxueyuan xuebao (Journal of Hubei Second Normal University)* 9 (2016): 9–12.]

⁶ 李东军:《透过歌舞伎〈忠臣藏〉现象解读日本民族性格》,《日语学习与研究》2005年第1期,第54—58页。[LI Dongjun, “Touguo gewuji Zhongchen zang xianxiang jiedu Riben minzu xingge” (Reading Japanese National Character through the Kabuki *Chūshingura* Phenomenon), *Riyu xuexi yu yanjiu (Japanese Language Learning and Research)* 1 (2005): 54–58.]

This is a bold proposal touching on issues enormous in scale and across two cultures. I have previously examined this sweeping proposal as it is applied to Japan and pointed out that this proposal is not only invalid but indeed dangerous, given the strained Sino-Japanese relationship in recent years due to territorial disputes between the two countries and the controversy over whether all of Japan's war-dead, including Class-A war criminals should be worshipped.⁷ The present paper attempts to address the remaining half of the issue by examining the validity of the proposal as it is applied to China.

1. The Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* and the Validity of the Proposal

A good place to start is the Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*. Published in 1959, the play dramatizes the revenge of an orphan in ancient China. This play has been chosen as point of departure because it presents an antithesis of *Chūshingura*,⁸ a Kabuki play dramatizing the best known revenge in Japan, which the above-mentioned Chinese scholars have all cited to support their characterization of the Japanese ideal of loyalty as absolute and, as such, comes closest to an embodiment of the ideal of relative loyalty, which they have all claimed to be distinctively Chinese.

The story of the Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* is set in the Spring and Autumn Period (770–403 BC) in Chinese history when China was divided into many states rivaling for hegemony. Tu'an Gu 屠岸贾 is a minister in the court of Duke Ling of the State of Jin (晋灵公, 624–607 BC). At one time, he supervised the construction of a peach garden for Duke Ling. During a tour of the garden when it is completed, he invites the Duke to a game of shooting at people with a catapult from the top of a tower in the garden and watching them flee in panic. When Prime Minister Zhao Dun 赵盾 learns this, he remonstrates with Duke Ling and criticizes Tu'an for leading the Duke astray from the way of benevolence. Duke Ling takes offense at the remonstrance but finds it difficult to punish Zhao Dun, a popular minister whose family has served the Jin court for three generations. When Tu'an indicates that he has a way to kill Zhao Dun without incurring outrage from other officials, Duke Ling readily grants his permission. Thereupon Tu'an makes two attempts at Zhao Dun's life: once by an assassin, once by a Tibetan dog. When both attempts fail, he secures a decree from the Duke to execute Zhao Dun's whole family, including his son, Zhao Shuo 赵朔, who married the Duke's sister. Before his death, Zhao Shuo tells his pregnant wife, Princess Zhuangji 赵庄姬, to see to it that the child she carries, if it is a boy, avenge the Zhao

⁷ Guohe Zheng, "Chūshingura and Beyond: A Study of the Japanese Ideal of Loyalty," in *Text & Presentation 2006: The Comparative Drama Conference Series*, ed. Stratos Constantinidis (Jefferson, South Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 2007), 195–207.

⁸ Normally, the translation of this piece, *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, should be used when it is referred to again in the paper, as is required by the manuscript style of this journal. But this piece is often known in its original in the West. See Henry D. Smith II, "The Capacity of Chūshingura," *Monumenta Nipponica* 58: 1 (Spring, 2003): 2.

family. When a baby boy is born in due time, Cheng Ying 程婴, a country doctor, smuggles the baby out of the palace in a medicine box. The mysterious disappearance of the Orphan of Zhao infuriates Tu'an. He orders a public notice posted saying that a reward will be given to anyone who turns in the Orphan of Zhao—or all babies in the State of Jin six months old or younger will be killed.

To ensure the survival of the Orphan of Zhao, Cheng Ying visits Gongsun Chujiu 公孙杵臼, a court official who has retired out of indignation at the corrupt Duke and the treacherous Tu'an and is now living in Mt. Shouyang. A secret plan is made between the two to bring up the baby. Following the plan, Cheng Ying reveals to Tu'an that Gongsun is hiding the Orphan of Zhao in his home in Mt. Shouyang. While delighted at the report, the suspicious Tu'an questions Cheng Ying's motives in reporting on Gongsun. Cheng Ying answers that he reports on Gongsun for the sake of all innocent infants in the State of Jin, one of whom is his own. This confession convinces Tu'an, who then kills both Gongsun and the baby. When Cheng Ying indicates concern about his own safety and that of his baby son given what he has done, the childless Tu'an decides to adopt Cheng's son without knowing Cheng has switched his own son and the Orphan of Zhao.

Soon, a rumor spreads that Cheng Ying sold the Orphan of Zhao for money. For fifteen years, Cheng Ying lives in infamy. Meanwhile, Cheng Wu 程武, Tu'an's adopted son and the real Orphan of Zhao, has grown into a young man outstanding in both civil and military arts. When a new Duke ascends to the throne, he calls back Wei Jiang 魏绛, a general who has successfully restored peace on the border. Back in the capital, General Wei learns of the tragedy that had befallen the loyal Zhao family fifteen years earlier and of the rumor of Cheng Ying's selling the Orphan of Zhao. When he confronts Cheng Ying on the matter, however, he learns the truth unbeknownst to the public. Cheng Ying and General Wei resolve to join hands in facilitating the mission of revenge.

An unexpected encounter between Cheng Wu and Princess Zhuangji around this time prompts the youth into asking Cheng Ying about his true identity. Cheng Ying reveals the tragedy of the Zhao family and the true identity of the young man, upon which the young man, now called by his real name Zhao Wu 赵武, kills Tu'an with a dagger. Seeing the mission of revenge accomplished, the overly gratified Cheng Ying dies laughing. Zhao Wu and Princess Zhuangji kneel down, prostrating themselves in front of their benefactor.

It is obvious from the synopsis that loyalty is constantly relativized in this play. First of all, Duke Ling is presented as a wicked ruler and is criticized by officials loyal to the State of Jin for his lack of benevolence. For example, in Act One, General Wei Jiang hurries back to the palace from the departing army to remonstrate with Duke Ling. He is joined on the way by Gongsun Chujiu, who later decides to retire from office when the Duke turns a deaf ear to them.

The bluntest remonstrance, of course, comes from Zhao Dun, who thus criticizes Duke Ling:

Your Majesty neglects state affairs and holds no morning court for days in a row, knowing only to favor crafty sycophants and indulging yourself in wine. Moreover, you now shoot from a high tower sending people fleeing with nowhere to tell their grievances.⁹

In the mind of Zhao Dun, “The people are the foundation of the State. The State is sound and secure only if the foundation is sound and secure.”¹⁰ In other words, Duke Ling’s behavior is here subjected to the measurement of benevolence.

The real villain of the play, however, is Tu’an Gu, who fails in his duty to help Duke Ling rule wisely. Not only does he build the peach garden, tiring the people and draining the treasury, but he urges the Duke to take pleasure in shooting at people. Tu’an tries repeatedly to get rid of the outspoken Zhao Dun and eventually obtains a decree from the Duke to execute the Zhao family. Moreover, for fear of revenge, he even issues an order to kill all babies of six months or younger in the State of Jin to ensure the death of the Orphan of Zhao. Tu’an’s behavior as a minister cannot be further away from benevolence and, for that reason, he is presented as a villain.

On the opposite end of the good–evil continuum, relativized loyalty is represented in the conflict between loyalty to one’s master on the one hand and one’s sense of righteousness in which Tu’an’s retainers find themselves on the other. For example, Chu Ni 锄麿 is one of Tu’an’s retainers who has been treated well by his master. When Chu Ni is entrusted by Tu’an with the “secret mission” to assassinate Zhao Dun, he expresses his willingness to risk any danger to accomplish the mission and thereby to repay the kindness of his master, a kindness “higher than the heaven and deeper than the ocean.”¹¹ When he sneaks into the backyard of Zhao Dun’s residence at night in Act Two, however, he is deeply touched to see the Prime Minister praying alone to the heaven that Duke Ling listen to his remonstrations so that the State of Jin will be prosperous with loyal ministers and a benevolent duke. Unable to bring himself to assassinate such a loyal Prime Minister—nor, for that matter, able to betray his own master and benefactor—Chu Ni chooses death by smashing his head against a tree.

Another example of the same conflict is seen in Han Jue 韩厥, a military officer under Tu’an. To uproot the grass rather than cutting it short, Tu’an orders Han Jue to guard the palace to prevent anyone from smuggling the Orphan of Zhao out. When Han Jue catches Cheng Ying with the baby, however, not only does he release Cheng Ying and the baby, but he also cuts his own throat so that

⁹ 王雁改编:《赵氏孤儿:北京京剧团演出本》,北京:中国戏剧出版社,1959年,第6页。[WANG Yan, ed. *Zhaoshi guer* (The Orphan of Zhao), Beijing: Chinese Drama Press, 1959, 6.]

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

Cheng Ying need not worry that Tu'an might later know what has happened to the orphan and, more importantly, he does not have to face his boss who trusted him so much.

This is also the case with the character of Ti Miming 提弥明, one of Duke Ling's bodyguards. After his first failed attempt to assassinate Zhao Dun, Tu'an convinces Duke Ling of the effectiveness of a Tibetan dog in telling a loyal official from a wicked one. The dog to be used, of course, is Tu'an's own that has been specially trained to attack anyone wearing Zhao Dun's court outfit. When Duke Ling approves Tu'an's absurd suggestion and Zhao Dun is attacked in front of the Duke in the palace in Act Three, Ti Miming rushes to Zhao Dun's rescue. He kills the dog on the spot and helps Zhao Dun escape, which leads to his own execution.

But the character who best embodies relativized loyalty is undoubtedly Cheng Ying. As he makes clear when first appearing in Act Four, Cheng Ying is a country doctor with no special connection with the Zhao family.¹² However, Cheng Ying is not just *any* country doctor, but one "with a sense of great justice" (*ming dayi* 明大义).¹³ It is this sense of justice that puts him firmly on the side of the Zhao family. In order to help with the mission of revenge, he is willing to make any sacrifice. It is Cheng Ying who smuggles the orphan out of the palace at the risk of his own life; it is he who, in collaboration with Gongsun Chujiu, hits upon the idea of switching his own son with the Orphan of Zhao to put an end to Tu'an's relentless pursuit of the latter. Moreover, as a result of such a sacrifice, he has to bear the infamy of being considered a traitor for 15 years—and bear it after suffering the ultimate agony of a parent: to watch his own son killed in front of him.

It is clear that loyalty is constantly relativized in the Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*. Duke Ling of Jin is remonstrated with by Zhao Dun and other officials for his lack of benevolence, and even the Duke's bodyguard goes against his will and helps Zhao Dun escape. Similarly, retainers and subordinates of Tu'an Gu, who have been beneficiaries of Tu'an's trust and favor, choose death rather than follow his orders out of their sense of righteousness. Given the above analysis, the proposal that Chinese ideal of loyalty is relative seems to be valid.

2. Historical Records and the Validity of the Proposal

The validity of the proposal, however, rests only on the basis of a single play in the above analysis, the Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*. If we look beyond this play, an entirely different picture emerges. In fact, the picture beyond is so different that we would be guilty of stereotyping if we generalize the above conclusion and regard it as an accurate characterization of the Chinese ideal of loyalty. This point is supported by evidence from multiple sources. This section focuses on evidence from historical records before we move on to other sources.

¹² Ibid., 14.

¹³ Ibid.

An examination of historical records casts serious doubt on the validity of the proposal. The author of the Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* noted that the piece was adapted from earlier plays dealing with the story.¹⁴ But, as pointed out by scholars, while *Zuo zhuan* 《左传》 (The Commentary of Zuo) served as one of the historical sources, all versions of the Orphan of Zhao, from Yuan Period to modern times, are largely based on a single chapter in *Shiji* 《史记》 (Records of the Grand Historian) by Sima Qian 司马迁 (145—86 BC), the Grand Historian of China—the chapter on “Zhao shijia” 赵世家 (The Hereditary House of Zhao).¹⁵ Before I present my case, therefore, it is necessary to take a look at the somewhat lengthy narrative from that chapter regarding the Orphan of Zhao:

Zhao Dun died during the reign of Duke Jing of Jin... In the third year of Duke Jing of Jin 晋景公, a high-ranking official named Tu'an Gu wanted to exterminate the Zhao family... In the past, Tu'an had been favored by Duke Ling of Jin 晋灵公 [predecessor to Duke Cheng of Jin 晋成公, Duke Jing's father and predecessor]. Later he became the Minister of Justice under Duke Jing. It was then that he decided to carry out a plot against the Zhao family. He said that Zhao Dun was an unpunished regicide against Duke Ling. He convinced the generals that even though the real regicide was Dun's cousin Zhao Chuan 赵穿, without Dun's knowledge, he should still be held responsible as the Prime Minister. Now, even though Dun himself died, his son is still in high position and, therefore, the Zhao family should be exterminated... Without Duke Jing's authorization, Tu'an attacked the residence of the Zhao family in Xianggong with the generals and killed the entire Zhao Clan including Dun's three brothers Zhao Tong 赵同, Zhao Kuo 赵括, and Zhao Yingqi 赵婴齐, as well as his son Zhao Shuo.

¹⁴ These include *Zhaoshi guer da baochou* 《赵氏孤儿大报仇》 (The Big Revenge of The Orphan of Zhao) by Yuan Period dramatist Ji Junxiang 纪君祥, *Bayi ji* 《八义记》 (The Tales of the Eight Righteous Men) by Ming Period dramatist Xu Yuan 徐元, Shanxi Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* adapted by Ma Jianling 马健翎 (1907—1965), and Han Opera *The Orphan of Zhao* adapted by Xu Ruiyun 徐慕云 (1900—1974) and Wang Zhaoci 王照慈. See Introduction to Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*. See Wang Yan, Introduction page.

¹⁵ 黄朴民:《真相难觅:〈赵氏孤儿〉背后的历史重构》,《中华读书报》2014年12月17日第13版。[HUANG Pumin. “Zhenxiang nanmi: Zhaoshi guer beihou de lishi chonggou” (Searching for Truth: The Reconstruction of History behind the Play *The Orphan of Zhao*), *Zhonghua dushu bao* (China Reading Weekly), December 17, 2014: 13.]; 沈毅骅:《〈赵氏孤儿〉源流考》,《温州师范学院学报(哲学社会科学版)》2000年第10期,第72—73页。[SHEN Yihua, “Zhaoshi guer yuanliu kao” (Investigations on the Origin and Development of *Zhao Family's Orphan*), *Wenzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of Wenzhou Teachers College) 10 (2000): 72–73]; 董亭:《〈赵氏孤儿〉故事流变过程简述》,《现代语文》2013年第8期第15—16页。[DONG Ting. “Zhaoshi guer gushi liubian guocheng jianshu” (A Brief Account of the Origin and Development of the *Tale of the Orphan of Zhao*), *Xiandai yuwen* (Modern Chinese Language Arts) 8 (2013): 15–16]; 史淳良:《从〈史记·赵世家〉到〈赵氏孤儿〉看历史题材作品创作中改编的艺术》,《孝感师专学报》1985年第2期,第48—53页。[SHI Chunliang, “Cong Shi ji zhaoshijia dao Zhaoshi guer kan lishi tcai zuopin chuanguozuo zhong gaibian de yishu” (From *Records of the Grand Historian · The Hereditary House of Zhao* to the *Tale of the Orphan of Zhao*: The Art of Adaptation as Seen in Works on Historical Topics), *Xiaogan shizhuan xuebao* (Journal of Xiaogan Teachers College) 2 (1985): 48–53.]

In the attack, Princess Zhuangji, pregnant with Zhao Shuo's child, took refuge in the palace of her brother, the late Duke Cheng. Zhao Shuo had a retainer called Gongsun Chujiu and a friend called Cheng Ying. The former asked the latter, "Why is it that you didn't die with Zhao Shuo?" The latter answered "Because Princess Zhuangji is carrying Zhao Shuo's child. If she gives birth to a boy, I'll be obliged to bring the boy up to revive the Zhao family. If the child is a girl, I'll die happily at that time." In due time, a boy was born and Tu'an tried to find the infant in the palace to kill him but failed to find him... Gongsun again asked Cheng Ying, "Which is harder to do—to bring up the Orphan or to die?" Cheng Ying's answer was immediate: "Of course it's much harder to bring up the Orphan than to die." To this, Gongsun said: "Zhao Shuo treated you well. You are obliged to take the harder task and leave the easier job to me." Thereupon, the two conspired to obtain an infant from a stranger and hide him in the mountains with Gongsun. Following the plan, Cheng Ying went to the generals and said, "I'll tell you the whereabouts of the Orphan of Zhao if you reward me with a thousand pieces of gold." The generals were pleased and promised Cheng Ying the desired reward... With Cheng Ying's report, Tu'an and the generals killed Gongsun and the infant. They were all relieved that the root of future revenge had been eliminated. In reality, however, the Orphan of Zhao was still alive, hidden in deep mountains with Cheng Ying.

Fifteen years passed and one day Duke Jing fell seriously ill. He consulted a diviner who told him that his illness was caused by the curse of a revengeful spirit. He then consulted Han Jue, who knew that the Orphan of Zhao was still alive. He said this to Duke Jing: "The revengeful spirit must be that of the Zhao family. Among the families who had served the State well and made important contributions, the Zhaos are the only one that had been exterminated. People of the State are saddened by this." When Duke Jing asked whether the Zhao family had any survivors, Han Jue revealed the truth. Thereupon, Duke Jing discussed with Han Jue on how to reinstate the Orphan. As a result, Duke Jing summoned the Orphan of Zhao and hid him in the palace. Then, when the generals paid a visit to Duke Jing, the Duke and Han Jue arranged for them to meet the Orphan, called Zhao Wu now. The generals said that the extermination of the Zhao family fifteen years earlier was plotted by Tu'an, with a forged order of the Duke. "In fact, we meant to request that Your Majesty reinstate the Orphan of Zhao. The order from Your Majesty today is exactly what we wished for." Thereupon, Zhao Wu and Cheng Ying met the generals. Soon, the generals attacked Tu'an, exterminated his family and returned to Zhao Wu all the fiefs that had belonged to his family.

At the ceremony of Zhao Wu's coming of age when he turned twenty, Cheng Ying told the young man that he couldn't die twenty years ago because he needed to bring up the orphan to avenge his family. Now that the mission of revenge was accomplished, he was ready to die

and report to Gongsun the good news. Thereupon he cut his own throat... Zhao Wu dressed himself in black for three years to mourn Cheng Ying and built a temple for people to honor him twice a year, in the Spring and the Fall, for generations to come.¹⁶

The story of the Zhao family and the Orphan of Zhao is known among historians as *Xiagong zhi nan* 下宫之难 (the Xiagong Disaster), named after the residence of the Zhao family, the site of Tu'an's attack. There are many discrepancies between this narrative by Sima Qian and the 1959 Peking Opera, an important point to be discussed in the next section, but overall the 1959 Peking Opera follows the narrative in "The Hereditary House of Zhao" in terms of the driving force of the revenge: the fight between the villain Tu'an and figures like Gongsun and Cheng Ying who are loyal to the Zhao family.

However, is this narrative reliable history (信史)? Scholars disagree on this issue. The large majority of scholars believe that it is not.¹⁷ According to these scholars, the first evidence of its unreliability is, ironically, provided by Sima Qian himself, in his second account of the incident in a different chapter of *Shiji*, the chapter of "Jin shìjiā" 晋世家 (The Hereditary House of Jin). The second account is very brief:

In the seventeenth year of his reign [583 BC], Duke Jing of Jin executed Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo. Their families were exterminated. Han Jue then said to Duke Jing: "Have you forgotten the contributions made to the State of Jin by Zhao Cui and his son Zhao Dun? How can you exterminate the Zhao family?" Thereupon, Duke Jing reinstated Zhao Shuo's orphan son, Zhao Wu, and returned to him all the lands that had belonged to his family.¹⁸

This account of the Xiagong Disaster drastically differs from the narrative in Sima Qian's first account. Four discrepancies have been identified by Huang Pumin:

1. There is no Tu'an Gu in this account as a villain trying to kill the Orphan of Zhao;
2. Since the life of Orphan of Zhao is not threatened, no loyal figures are needed to sacrifice themselves to rescue the Orphan of Zhao and bring him up to avenge his family;
3. There is a fourteen year gap between the two accounts: the tragedy took place in the

¹⁶ (西汉)司马迁:《史记·赵世家》,北京:中华书局,2006年,第285—286页。[SIMA Qian, *Shiji · Zhao shijia* (Records of the Grand Historian · The Hereditary House of Zhao), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 285–86.]

¹⁷ Among them are Tang Period scholar Kong Yingda 孔颖达 (574–648 BC), Qing Period scholar Liang Yusheng 梁玉绳 (1745–1819), modern day scholars Yang Bojun 杨伯峻 (1909–1992), Huang Pumin 黄朴民 and Tian Weiping 田卫平。See 董亭:《赵氏孤儿》故事流变过程简述,《现代语文》2013年第8期第15—16页。[DONG Ting, "Zhaoshi guer gushi liubian guocheng jianshu" (A Brief Account of the Origin and Development of the Tale of the Orphan of Zhao), *Xiandai yuwen* (Modern Chinese Language Arts) 8 (2013): 15–16.]

¹⁸ (西汉)司马迁:《史记·晋世家》,北京:中华书局,2006年,第253页。[SIMA Qian, *Shiji · Jin shijia* (Records of the Grand Historian · the Hereditary House of Jin), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 253.]

seventeenth year of Duke Jing (583 BC) in the second account instead of the third year (597 BC) as in Sima Qian's first account;

4. Only Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo were executed here, instead of the whole Zhao Clan as in Sima Qian's first account.¹⁹

Obviously, the discrepancies between the two accounts—particularly the first two—carry vital significance because the fight between the villain and the loyal figures seen in Sima Qian's first account is completely missing in his second account. The absence of this fight means that the driving force of the entire story of the Orphan of Zhao in “The Hereditary House of Zhao” is gone, and without that force, the historical basis of the 1959 Peking Opera collapses—and the validity of the proposal regarding the Chinese ideal of loyalty collapses with it.

Needless to say, the discrepancies between the two accounts do not make the second account more reliable than the first. But scholars who dismiss the first account as unreliable have compelling evidence to support their view. For example, Huang Pumin pointed out that Sima Qian's first account is unreliable because it is *ad hoc* (孤证)—being the sole narrative about Tu'an Gu, Cheng Ying, and Gongsun Chujiu with no other historical documents to back it up—and it is generally unacceptable in historiography to use *ad hoc* account as evidence.²⁰ In contrast, the second account is corroborated by other documents. For example, identical and more detailed accounts supporting Sima Qian's second account are found in *Chunqiu* 《春秋》 (the Spring and Autumn Annals), the first Chinese chronicle, and *Zuo zhuan* 《左传》 (The Commentary of Zuo), a supposed commentary of the former. The account of the Xiangong Disaster in *Zuo zhuan* goes as follows:

Zhao Dun's brother Zhao Yingqi committed adultery with Zhao Shuo's widowed wife, Princess Zhuangji.²¹ [When the adultery was discovered,] Zhao Yingqi was sent to exile in the State of Qi by his brothers Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo. Zhao Yingqi begged his brothers for forgiveness: “When I am around, the [rivaling] Luan Clan dare not do anything against the Zhao family. If I am far away in exile, you two will have many troubles... What would be the

¹⁹ 黄朴民：《真相难觅：〈赵氏孤儿〉背后的历史重构》，《中华读书报》2014年12月17日第13版。[HUANG Pumin. “Zhenxiang nanmi: Zhaoshi guer beihou de lishi chonggou” (Searching for Truth: The Reconstruction of History as Seen in the Drama of *The Orphan of Zhao*), *Zhonghua dushu bao* (*China Reading Weekly*), December 17, 2014: 13.]

²⁰ It should be noted the narrative of Tu'an Gu's plot to exterminate the Zhao family, the rescue of the Orphan of Zhao by Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu, and the reinstatement of Zhao Wu is found in another chapter in *Shiji* as well, the chapter about “Han shijia” 韩世家 (The Hereditary House of Han). Since this is a much shorter version of the narrative found in “The Hereditary House of Zhao,” it can be regarded as part of Sima Qian's first account and does not change the fact that it is *ad hoc*.

²¹ Translated from *Zuo zhuan* 《左传·成公八年》. For the original text see 郭丹、程小青、李彬源译注：《中华经典名著全本全注全译丛书·左传·中》，北京：中华书局，2012年，第940页。[GUO Dan, CHENG Xiaoqing and LI Binyuan, trans. and anno., *Zhonghua jingdian mingzhu quanben quanzhu quanyi congshu Zuo zhuan, Volume II* (Chinese Classics Series, with Complete Original Text, Completely Annotated and Translated), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012, 940.]

harm if you just forgive me?” His brothers refused to listen to him... He ran away.²² Zhuangji accused Tong and Kuo of plotting against Duke Jing of Jin. Her false charges were supported by testimonies by the Luan (栾) Clan and the Xi (郤) Clan [the two rival clans of the Zhao family]. In June of 583 BC, Duke Jing executed Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo, exterminating their families. At the time of the incident, Zhao Shuo’s son, Zhao Wu, was with his mother in the Palace of his grandfather, the late Duke Cheng, and the land of the Zhao family was given to Qi Xi (祁奚). Later, Han Jue said to Duke Jing: “Zhao Cui made tremendous contributions to the State and the loyalty of his son Zhao Dun is known across the State. However, none of the Zhaos are carrying on the family name and fortune. This will deter people from doing good things for the State”... Thereupon, Duke Jing appointed Zhao Wu as the successor of the Zhao Clan and returned to him all the land that had been taken away.²³

We notice above that Sima Qian’s second account merely records the execution of Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo without giving the reason. The reason, however, is provided in *Chunqiu* and *Zuo zhuan*—Princess Zhuangji’s false accusation against Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo. Again, this is significant: the fact that Princess Zhuangji was the culprit of the Xiangong Disaster means that there is no villain plotting against the Zhao family, and thus no need for loyal figures to rescue the Orphan of Zhao for future revenge. As seen in the above translation, the historical records in *Chunqiu* and *Zuo zhuan* make it crystal clear that the Orphan of Zhao was in no danger following the Xiangong Disaster: “At the time of the incident, Zhao Shuo’s son, Zhao Wu, was with his mother in the Palace of his grandfather, the late Duke Cheng.” Once again, the absence of a villain against the loyal figures takes away the driving force of the entire story of the Orphan of Zhao in “The Hereditary House of Zhao,” and without that force, the historical basis of the 1959 Peking Opera—and the validity of the proposal about Chinese ideal of loyalty—collapses.

Given Princess Zhuangji’s responsibility as the culprit of the incident, people may take the Xiangong Disaster to be the accidental consequence of the poor handling of a family discord among the Zhaos. Scholars, however, have pointed out that the disaster was by no means accidental. Rather, it was the inevitable result of the power struggle between the Zhao family and the Duke of

²² Translated from *Zuo zhuan* 《左传·成公五年》. For the original text see 郭丹、程小青、李彬源译注：《中华经典名著全本全注全译丛书·左传·中》，北京：中华书局，2012年，第916页。[GUO Dan, CHENG Xiaoqing and LI Binyuan, trans. and anno., *Zhonghua jingdian mingzhu quanben quanzhu quanyi congshu Zuo zhuan*, Volume II (Chinese Classics Series, with Complete Original Text, Completely Annotated and Translated), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012, 916.] This narrative implies here that Zhao Yingqi’s exile left Zhuangji in grudge against Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo.

²³ Translated from *Zuo zhuan* 《左传·成公八年》. For the original text see 郭丹、程小青、李彬源译注：《中华经典名著全本全注全译丛书·左传·中》，北京：中华书局，2012年，第940页。[GUO Dan, CHENG Xiaoqing and LI Binyuan, trans. and anno., *Zhonghua jingdian mingzhu quanben quanzhu quanyi congshu Zuo zhuan*, Volume II (Chinese Classics Series, with Complete Original Text, Completely Annotated and Translated), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012, 940.] 2012, 940.]

Jin, as well as between the Zhao family and rival families. Tian Weiping 田卫平, for example, outlined the long history of the struggle and concluded that Princess Zhuangji's false accusation was merely the trigger of the outbreak of the power struggle. To understand the nature of the struggle, we have to look at the history of the State of Jin. The State of Jin became one of the five powers in the Spring and Autumn Period (春秋五霸) during the time of Duke Wen of Jin 晋文公 (671–628 BC) thanks to the support of his 5 “wise men (贤士)” including Zhao Cui 赵衰 (?–622 BC), father of Zhao Dun. Duke Wen rewarded Zhao Cui with newly conquered land, high positions, even one of his daughters as Zhao Cui's wife making the Zhaos a powerful family in the State of Jin. Taking advantage of the power and outmaneuvering rival families, Zhao Cui and his son Zhao Dun began to encroach on the power of the Duke. The process of the encroachment is examined in great detail by several studies including a well-researched blog and two books, entitled respectively *Jinguo shi gangyao* 《晋国史纲要》 (An Outline of the History of the State of Jin) and *Jinguo shi* 《晋国史》 (A History of the State of Jin).²⁴ In fact, the fifth chapter of both books is devoted to the power struggle beginning with a section entitled “*Zhao Dun zhuanzheng*” 《赵盾专政》, or “The Encroachment of Zhao Dun.” Two examples demonstrate what Zhao Dun did to take power away from the house of the duke. First, Zhao Dun tried to replace Duke Ling with his own candidate as the successor to the throne ignoring the will of Duke Xiang of Jin (晋襄公, ?–621 BC)—Duke Ling's father—who died in 621 BC. And then, when Duke Ling eventually took the throne next year, it was Zhao Dun—instead of Duke Ling himself—who appeared at the enthronement ceremony and received congratulations from dukes of other states. Resentful of Zhao Dun's encroachment—and annoyed by his repeated remonstrations, Duke Ling of Jin tried several times to kill Zhao Dun, but failed. When Dun was escaping after two attempts on his life, Duke Ling himself was assassinated in 607 BC by Dun's cousin, Zhao Chuan 赵穿 (?–607 BC). Soon afterward, Dun came back to his position as Prime Minister. Naturally, Zhao Dun's encroachment not only led to counter measures by the Duke but also alarmed rival families. When Duke Jing of Jin (晋景公, ?–581 BC) took the throne, he was determined to strengthen the power of the Duke against the ministers including the Zhaos. The Xiagong Disaster took place against this background. It is, therefore, little wonder that Zhuangji's false accusation against Zhao Tong and Zhao Kuo was supported by two other families and that Duke Jing was so credulous about the charge, since the false accusation gave them a convenient excuse to get rid of the Zhaos.²⁵

²⁴ 常金仓, 李孟存:《晋国史纲要》, 太原: 山西人民出版社, 1988年。[CHANG Jincang and LI Mengcun, *Jinguo shi gangyao* (An Outline of the History of the State of Jin), Taiyuan: Shanxi People's Press, 1988.] ; 李孟存, 李尚师:《晋国史》, 太原: 山西古籍出版社, 1999年。[LI Mengcun and LI Shangshi, *Jinguo shi* (A History of the State of Jin), Taiyuan: Shanxi Ancient Books Press, 1999.]

²⁵ 田卫平:《“孟姬之谗”与“赵氏孤儿”》,《河北学刊》1998年第1期,第92—98页。[TIAN Weiping, “Mengji zhi chan' yu 'Zhaoshi guer'” (The False Change by Princess Mengji and the Orphan of Zhao), *Hebei xuekan* (*Hebei Journal*) 1 (1998): 92–98.]

Similarly, Huang Pumin thus commented on the nature of the Xiagong Disaster as recorded in *Zuo zhuan*: it was the result of the conflict between the Duke of Jin and the powerful ministers as well as conflicts among the ministers themselves. No one stood on a higher moral ground in the conflict; everyone tried to outsmart their rivals and come out on top. In other words, no one was loyal to anyone else.²⁶ In fact, some scholars believe that the reinstatement of Zhao Wu 15 years later thanks to Han Jue's recommendation was not Duke Jing's recognition of the contributions of the orphan's father and grandfather, but rather, it was Duke Jing's strategy to recruit someone to counter other ministers who became powerful after the fall of the Zhao family as a result of the Xiagong Disaster.²⁷ In short, that is the view of scholars who believe that Sima Qian's second account is more reliable as history than his first and that power struggle, rather than the fight between villains versus loyalty figures, was the essential nature of the Xiagong Disaster.

However, not everyone agrees with the above view. A recent study by Meng Shiping 孟世平, for example, defended Sima Qian's first account. Recall how, as mentioned above, the discrepancies between Sima Qian's first account versus his second and *Chunqiu/Zuo zhuan* have been cited by scholars as evidence for the unreliability of his first account. But Meng challenges that view. Building on studies by Ming Period scholar Wang Qiao 王樵 (1521–1599), he argues that Sima Qian's two accounts are actually records of two separate incidents and that the perceived discrepancies between them were the unfortunate result of linguistic mistakes made by previous scholars.²⁸ As we know, the text of original Chinese classics had no punctuation marks, which were only added later to their modern printed versions, and the character 皆 (*jiē*, “every one, all”) can be used as a phonetic replacement (假借字) for the character 偕 (*xié*, “together with”). Due to the mis-punctuation (断句之误) and the failure to identify 皆 as a phonetic replacement for 偕, the following text from Sima Qian's first account has been pronounced and interpreted as in (1) instead of the correct punctuation and reading as in (2). Their respective translations are provided in (1a)

²⁶ 黄朴民:《真相难觅》。[HUANG Pumin. “Zhenxiang nanmi” (Searching for Truth).]

²⁷ See Blog entitled(春秋)晋公子:《说“赵盾专权”——〈晋公子读史记〉之〈赵世家〉(二)》, <https://zhuannlan.zhihu.com/p/74843645>, 2020年8月5日检索。[Jingongzi, Shuo “Zhao Dun zhuanquan”——Jingongzi du Shiji zhi Zhao shijia er (My Reading of Shiji · “The Hereditary House of Zhao,” Part II: Zhao Dun's Encroachment)], <https://zhuannlan.zhihu.com/p/74843645>, [August 5, 2020];《说“下宫之难”——〈晋公子读史记〉之〈赵世家〉(三)》, <https://zhuannlan.zhihu.com/p/78551290>, 2020年8月5日检索。[Jingongzi, Shuo “Xiagong zhi nan”——Jingongzi du Shiji zhi Zhao shijia san (My Reading of Shiji · Part III: “About the Xiagong Disaster”)], <https://zhuannlan.zhihu.com/p/78551290>, [August 5, 2020].

²⁸ 孟世平:《“下宫之难”发生原因新探——对〈史记/赵世家〉的文字误读是导致争论的根本原因》。《晋阳学刊》2013年第6期,第23—29页。[MENG Shiping, “‘Xiagong zhi nan’ fasheng yuanyin xintan—dui Shiji · zhao shijia de wenzhi wudu shi dao zhi zhengsong de genben yuanyin” (Mis-punctuation and Mis-pronunciation of “The Hereditary House of Zhao” Chapter of Shiji Is the Cause of All the Disputes: A New Approach to the Reason for the “Xiagong Disaster”), *Jinyang xuekan (Jinyang Journal)* 6 (2013): 23–29.]

and (2a):

(1) 贾不请而擅与诸将攻赵氏于下宫，杀赵朔、赵同、赵括、赵婴齐，皆（*ji ē*）灭其族。

(1a) Without Duke Jing's authorization, Tu'an attacked the residence of the Zhao family in Xianggong with the generals and executed the entire Zhao Clan including Dun's three brothers Zhao Tong, Zhao Kuo, Zhao Yingqi as well as his son Zhao Shuo.

(2) 贾不请而擅与诸将攻赵氏于下宫，杀赵朔、赵同、赵括、赵婴齐皆（*xi é*），灭其族。

(2a) Without Duke Jing's authorization, Tu'an attacked the residence of the Zhao family in Xianggong with the generals and killed Zhao Shuo, executing his entire family. Dun's three brothers Zhao Tong, Zhao Kuo, and Zhao Yingqi joined the attack.

In the first interpretation, taken by the majority of scholars, Tu'an's attack killed the entire Zhao Clan, including Dun's three brothers as well as his son Zhao Shuo, as translated earlier and reproduced in (1a); in Meng Shiping's interpretation, represented in (2) and translated in (2a), Tu'an's attack killed only Zhao Shuo. Not only were Dun's three brothers not targeted in the attack, they were among the attackers!

If we accept Meng's argument, discrepancies between Sima Qian's two accounts will no longer be a problem—they are records of two separate incidents taking place in 597 BC and 583 BC respectively. However, if Meng's argument is accepted, one still wonders why Dun's brothers would join Tu'an in attacking their nephew. Meng's answer to this question is simple: *duó dí* 夺嫡, or power struggle to win back their status as sons of Zhao Cui's primary wife. As recorded in *Shiji* and *Zuo zhuan*, Zhao Cui had two wives. The first was Shu Kui 叔隗 (?—635 BC), from Qianggaoru 膺咎如, an ethnic group living to the north of the Huaxia realm called the Red Di 赤狄. She gave birth to Zhao Dun. His second wife was Princess Zhaoji (赵姬, 280—229 BC), daughter of Duke Wen of Jin. Princess Zhaoji gave birth to Dun's three brothers (or half-brothers, to be specific). As a princess, Zhaoji's status was much higher than that of a Red Di woman. But Zhaoji was unusually kind and generous. When Zhao Cui married her, she insisted that Zhao Cui keep Shu Kui as his primary wife (正妻) and Dun inherit the direct line (嫡子) of the Zhao Clan. This left Dun's three brothers bitter as grown-ups because, not being direct-line sons, they were bound to be always lower than Zhao Shuo in rank. Thus, after Zhao Dun's death in 601 BC, they tried to win back their status as sons of Zhao Cui's primary wife by getting rid of Zhao Shuo. Tu'an Gu's plot against Zhao Shuo in 597 BC gave them the desired chance. Fourteen years later, however, two of the three brothers had to pay a heavy price for their actions against their nephew.

As we have seen in *Chunqiu* and *Zuo zhuan*, as well as in Sima Qian's second account, Zhuangji, the widow of their nephew, made a false charge against them, a charge supported by ministers from two rival families, leading to their execution by Duke Jing in 583 BC.²⁹

As noted by Meng Shiping, the fight over the status of direct line of the Zhao Clan may look like a family internal discord, but underlying the fight was a much broader and intense dynamic: the power struggles between the Zhao Clan and rival clans and between the Zhao Clan and the Duke of Jin.³⁰

The above, in short, is a summary of the dispute over whether Sima Qian's first account of the Xiangong Disaster is reliable as history. As they stand now, each side of the dispute still has its own problems. For example, convincing as it is, Meng Shiping's argument does not change the fact that the narrative of Tu'an Gu's struggle with Cheng Ying and Gongsun Chujiu in Sima Qian's first account is *ad hoc*. Similarly, scholars who dismiss Sima Qian's first account as unreliable have to answer questions raised by Meng Shiping about the mis-punctuation and misreading. I will leave these issues for historians to solve and concentrate here instead on what is more relevant to the subject of this paper: the view—shared by both arguments despite their differences—that the Xiangong Disaster was the result of a constant and intense power struggle in which no one was loyal to anyone else. Duke Ling's repeated attempts to kill Zhao Dun and his own assassination by Zhao Dun's cousin attest to the intensity of the struggle—a point made more poignant by the assassination of Duke Li of Jin (晋厉公, ?–574 BC), son of Duke Jing, by two powerful ministers, one of whom being no other than Luan Shu 栾书 (?–573 BC), the person who supported Zhuangji's false charges against Zhao Dun's two brothers.³¹ Zhao Yingqi's warnings to his brothers before his exile about the threat to the Zhao Clan from the rivaling Luan Clan testifies to the same point. The eventual partitioning of the State of Jin in 403 BC by the three clans of Han, Zhao, and Wei (三家分晋), of course, is the ultimate testimony of the power struggle. Therefore, historical records as analyzed by both sides testify to the lack of historical basis of the 1959 Peking Opera—and thus against the validity of the proposal that the Chinese ideal of loyalty is relative.

3. The Evolving Stage of the Orphan of Zhao and the Validity of the Proposal

Numerous plays have been written to dramatize the story of the Orphan of Zhao since the

²⁹ Zhao Yingqi, Zhao Dun's third half-brother, is not mentioned in this incident, presumably he was still in exile, or had died by that time.

³⁰ 孟世平:《“下宫之难”发生原因新探》,第24—26页。[MENG Shiping, “‘Xiangong zhi nan’ fasheng yuanyin xintan” (A New Approach to the Reason for the “Xiangong Disaster”), 24–26.]

³¹ This assassination is recorded in《史记·晋世家》(*Shiji* · “Jin shijia”) as follows: “悼公元年正月庚申,栾书、中行偃弑厉公”(In January of the first year of Duke Dao of Jin, Luan Shu and Zhonghang Yan murdered Duke Li of Jin). See (西汉)司马迁:《史记·晋世家》,北京:中华书局,2006年,第254页。[SIMA Qian. *Shiji, Jin shijia* (Records of the Grand Historian, The Hereditary House of Jin), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 254.]

Yuan Period³² but the stage of the story has been changing over time. An examination of the evolving stage of the Orphan of Zhao also lends evidence against the validity of the proposal. This paper will focus on four major versions including the 1959 Peking Opera.

3.1. The Yuan Period Version

The earliest version was written by Ji Junxiang during the Yuan Period (1260–1368).³³ Of the six plays accredited to Ji Junxiang, *The Orphan of Zhao* is the only one extant.³⁴ However, the version available today only has the singing lines with the dialogues missing. It has four acts, the conventional structure of Yuan drama, ending with the Orphan of Zhao pledging revenge after learning his true identity from Cheng Ying. The result of the revenge is unclear due to the missing dialogues.

This version portrays Zhao Dun as a minister loyal to Duke Ling of Jin and caring for the people, and as someone who has played a central role in making the State of Jin strong. It also features a powerful general and a weak duke, as seen in the following lines of Cheng Ying: “How powerful a general he is—Tu’an Gu! How weak a duke you are—Duke Ling of Jin!”³⁵ But Zhao Dun is not on good terms with Tu’an, who has tried to kill him, first by an assassin and then by a Tibetan dog. When both attempts fail, Tu’an accuses Zhao Dun of plotting against Duke Ling and obtains a decree from the Duke to kill the entire Zhao family including the new born Orphan of Zhao. Several characters come to the rescue of the Zhaos. These include Chu Ni, Tu’an’s assassin, who kills himself by smashing his head against a tree; Ling Zhe, who helps Zhao Dun escape from the Palace after the attack by the Tibetan dog; Han Jue, who kills himself after letting the Orphan of Zhao be smuggled out; and Gongsun Chujiu, who kills himself after making a secret plan with Cheng Ying to protect the Orphan of Zhao from Tu’an. But Cheng Ying is the one who makes the biggest sacrifice in rescuing the Orphan of Zhao—he switches his own son with the Orphan of Zhao who is later adopted by Tu’an. Cheng Ying’s sacrifice of his own son and Tu’an’s adoption of him

³² For a list of these plays, see 吴丽娜:《实践理性的政治历史剧——〈赵氏孤儿〉题材剧的文化结构分析》,《戏剧》2004年第1期,第49页。[WU Lina, “Shijian lixing de zhengzhi lishiju: zhaoshi guer tici ju de wenhua jiegou fenxi” (A Practical Rational Political Historical Drama: A Culture Structural Analysis of *The Orphan of Zhao*), *Xi ju (Theatre)* 1 (2004): 49.] The story has also been adapted in the West, by such playwrights as Voltaire in French, Goethe in German, W. Matchett and A. Murphy in English, and Metastasio in Italian. For an analysis of some of these adaptations, see 李祥林:《〈赵氏孤儿〉的西方改编》,《华夏文化》2003年第4期,第37—39页。[LI Xianglin, “Zhaoshi guer de xifang gaibian” (Adaptations of *The Orphan of Zhao* in the West), *Huaxia wenhua (Chinese Literature)* 4 (2003): 37–39.]

³³ The script of this version is collected in 古本戏剧丛刊编辑委员会,编:《元刊杂剧三十种·中》,上海:商务印书馆,1958年。[Ancient Drama Series Commission, ed., *Yuankan zaju sanshizhong, zhong (Thirty Plays from the Yuan Period)*, vol. 2, Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1958.] The script cited in this paper is from 王季思:《全元戏曲第三卷》,北京:人民文学出版社,1999年,第634—646页。[WANG Jisi, *Quan yuan xi qu · Di san juan (Complete Works of Yuan Drama, Volume 3)*, Beijing: Peoples’ Literature Press, 1999, 634–46.]

³⁴ In addition to the title *The Orphan of Zhao*, this version has an elaborate “official title” (正名) naming the play’s four characters: Han Jue, Cheng Ying, Gongsun Chujiu, and the Orphan of Zhao. See Wang Jisi, 646.

³⁵ The original script for the above translation is 好臣强也屠岸贾,好君弱了晋灵公。See Wang Jisi, 638.

is an effective device to make the play more appealing to the audience. This device is Ji Junxiang's creation with no historical basis, but it was inherited by all subsequent versions of the play.

A careful reading of this version indicates that the loyalty of two characters—Ling Zhe and Cheng Ying—is not due to their sense of righteousness, but rather out of their desire to repay the favor that they have received from the Zhao family. This is seen in Han Jue's following lines in Act II:

[Zhao Dun once] helped Ling Zhe when he was in distress
Who later repaid the kindness by helping Zhao Dun escape...
You [Cheng Ying] have been treated well by Zhao Shuo...
The favor must be repaid in kind.³⁶

These lines reveal that their loyalty is not relative and measured by benevolence as claimed by Chinese scholars to be the case with the Chinese ideal of loyalty.

Ji Junxiang's version also contains, in Act IV, the usurpation of the throne planned by the Orphan of Zhao as Tu'an's adopted son 20 years later:

I'll make sure my father take the throne and be the Duke of Jin,
He'll then be the lord of the land and the ruler of the country.
That's a matter as easy as grabbing something out of a bag...
I'll overthrow Duke Ling of Jin, the current ruler, and assist the new lord Tu'an Gu...
the New Duke! New Duke!
I don't care whether a duke is benevolent, or a minister is worthy,
With the father a paragon of benignity and the son a model of filial piety,
Who cares about a ruler's woes or a minister's humiliation?³⁷

This plot to overthrow Duke Ling shows no consideration of whether Duke Ling is benevolent or not, as seen in the line "I don't care whether a duke is benevolent, or a minister is worthy." This presents unmistakable evidence against the validity of the proposal that the Chinese ideal of loyalty is relative.³⁸

³⁶ The original script for the above translation is [赵盾]救灵辄受窘, [灵辄]曾扶轮报恩, 你是赵驸马堂上宾……有恩的合报恩。See Wang Jisi, 636.

³⁷ The original script for the above translation is 【中吕粉蝶儿】待教我父亲道寡称孤, 要江山, 夺社稷, 似囊中取物……【醉春风】俺待反故主晋灵公, 助新君屠岸贾……别换个主! 主! 问甚君圣臣贤, 既然父慈子孝, 管甚君忧臣辱。See Wang Jisi, 643.

³⁸ After the Orphan of Zhao learns his true identity from Cheng Ying later in the same Act (meaning later the same day), he suddenly questions the usurpation plot, as seen in his line "Tu'an Gu, you become the Duke and I your Prime Minister?—Where would the Will of Heaven be? (屠岸贾, 你为帝王, 咱为宰辅, 天意何如)" See Wang Jisi, 644. One might take this line as evidence that the usurpation plot was Tu'an's idea. Even if that is the case, however, the Orphan's wholehearted embrace of the plot earlier in the same act shows no consideration of benevolence and is thus guilty of colluding with Tu'an Gu. On the other hand, his drastic change of views on the plot makes this Yuan Version self-contradictory.

3.2. The Ming Period Version

The second version was written in the Ming Period (1368—1644). This version is complete, with both dialogues and singing parts, and has an unconventional fifth act in which the mission of revenge is accomplished. The completeness of this version has given it the monopoly of the readership in modern times. So much so, indeed, that some scholars attribute it, mistakenly, to Ji Junxiang, and regard it as the Yuan Period version when in fact it is a Ming Period adaptation of Ji Junxiang's play.³⁹

Entitled *Zhaoshi guer da baochou* 《赵氏孤儿大报仇》(The Big Revenge of the Orphan of Zhao), this version tells a similar story and carries on the same theme of “loyalty out of the desire to repay the favor from the Zhao family.” This is seen in the following lines about Cheng Ying and Ling Zhe respectively:

You [Cheng Ying] have been treated well by the Zhaos... and received much favor from them. Needless to say, you must remember the gratitude and try to repay it.⁴⁰

Who do you think this person might be? He was no other than Ling Zhe, the starved man under a mulberry tree. He [helped Zhao Dun escape to] repay the kindness of a meal from Zhao Dun.⁴¹

Differences, however, exist between the two versions. One difference is the nature of the main conflict of the play. Scholars believe that the main conflict of the Yuan version is between Duke Ling and Tu'an Gu.⁴² This view is supported by the usurpation plan in that version. In contrast, the main conflict of the Ming version is the rivalry between Zhao Dun and Tu'an Gu. This is first made clear in Tu'an's lengthy self-introduction in the Wedge of the Ming version, which sets the stage for the revenge:

I am a general in the State of Jin. Out of all of the court officials, His Majesty trusts only two: a civil servant named Zhao Dun, and an army general, myself. There has never been any

³⁹ See Six Yuan Plays, translated with an Introduction by Liu Jung-en (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1972), 24–25. Also Zhang Zhejun believes that the Ming version is a new creation. See 张哲俊:《悲剧形式:〈赵氏孤儿〉元明刊本比较》,《文学遗产》2000年2期,第74—77页。[ZHANG Zhejun, “Beiju xingshi: Zhaoshi guer yuanming kanben de bijiao” (The Form of a Tragedy: A Comparative Study of the Yuan Version and the Ming Version of *The Orphan of Zhao*), *Wenxue yichan (Literary Heritage)* 2 (2000): 74–77.]

⁴⁰ The original script for the above translation is 你本是赵盾家堂上宾……我想你多曾受赵家恩来,知恩报恩,何必要说。See Wang Jisi, 607.

⁴¹ The original script for the above translation is 你道这个是何人?可就是桑间饿夫灵辄……报取桑间一饭恩。See Wang Jisi, 627.

⁴² 张哲俊:《悲剧形式》,第78页。[ZHANG Zhejun, “Beiju xingshi” (The Form of a Tragedy), 78.]

friendship lost between Zhao and myself. On more than one occasion, I have tried to have Zhao killed.⁴³

In Act Four, Cheng Ying identifies rivalry as the root of the conflict between Zhao Dun and Tu'an Gu when he uses a scroll of paintings to tell the Orphan of Zhao about what happened to his family 20 years ago:

Cheng Bo, my son, listen. This is a long story. In the beginning, the one in the red robe in this painting (Tu'an Gu) and the one in the purple robe (Zhao Dun) were fellow ministers serving in the same court of Duke Ling. Unfortunately, however, General Tu'an Gu and Prime Minister Zhao Dun fell to bad terms and became mortal enemies...⁴⁴

The most significant difference, however, is seen in the contrasting images of Duke Ling in the two versions. In Ji Junxiang's version, Duke Ling is presented as a bad ruler, as seen in the following lines by Han Jue in Act One:

Duke Ling of Jin is a partial ruler,
Entrusting the treacherous Tu'an Gu with high positions.
The loyal are executed down in the market,
The sycophantic and slanderous are safe and prosperous in office.
Those who serve the Duke well are punished with torture,
Those who've done nothing for the people enjoy the rewards from the Duke.⁴⁵

Given such political reality, it is no wonder that Zhao Shuo should predict in the *Wedge* that "the State of Jin is bound to perish under Duke Ling."⁴⁶

The Ming version, however, praises the virtues and benevolence of Duke Ling. For example, when the Orphan of Zhao reappears in Act Four as a young man twenty years after the disaster to the Zhao family,⁴⁷ he thus sings his political aspirations: "I will devote myself to His Majesty, the virtuous and benevolent Duke Ling, and assist the worthy minister Tu'an Gu."⁴⁸ Later in Act Four, when he determines to avenge his family after learning his true identity, he thus plans for the

⁴³ Translated by Liu Jung-en in *Six Yuan Plays*, 45. For the original see Wang Jisi, 601.

⁴⁴ 王季思:《全元戏曲·第三卷》,第625页。[WANG Jisi, *Quan yuan xi qu · Disan juan* (Complete Works of Yuan Drama), vol. 3, 625.]

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 635.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 634. Note this image of Duke Ling is in the eyes of Zhao Shuo and Han Jue and thus cannot be regarded as justification for the Orphan of Zhao's usurpation plan.

⁴⁷ This is in contrast with the 1959 Peking Opera in which the revenge takes place when the Orphan of Zhao turns fifteen.

⁴⁸ The original script for the above translation is 【醉春风】我则待扶明主晋灵公,助贤臣屠岸贾。Wang Jisi, 623.

revenge: “I will first report to His Majesty [Duke Ling] tomorrow and to all of the court officials, and then kill the villain with my own hand.”⁴⁹ Obviously, the wicked Duke Ling of Jin dramatized in the Yuan version has disappeared in the Ming version.⁵⁰

3.3. *The 1959 Peking Opera Version*

The image of the wicked Duke Ling is restored, however, in the 1959 Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*, as we have seen above in the discussion of that version. It was mentioned in Section 2 that the 1959 Peking Opera has numerous discrepancies with its main historical source, Sima Qian’s first account of the Xiangong Disaster. This section will analyze these discrepancies to continue the examination of the evolving stage of the Orphan of Zhao. Six of the discrepancies will be discussed below.

1. In Sima Qian’s first account, Zhao Dun died in 601 BC, before the Xiangong Disaster, but he is brought back to life in the 1959 version to remonstrate with Duke Ling and then become the target of the Xiangong attack.
2. The Xiangong Disaster took place during the reign of Duke Jing (who ruled from 600–581 BC) in Sima Qian’s first account, but the 1959 play moved the incident two dukes earlier to the reign of Duke Ling (who ruled from 620–607 BC), the duke reigning before Duke Jing’s father and predecessor, Duke Cheng (who ruled from 606–600 BC).
3. Sima Qian’s first account records Duke Ling’s attempts to kill Zhao Dun but the attempts—made more specific as by an assassin first and then by a Tibetan dog in *Zuo zhuan*—are imposed on Tu’a Gu in the 1959 play.
4. The 1959 play has Tu’an issue an order to kill all infants six months old or younger in the State of Jin unless the Orphan of Zhao is found, but this has no historical basis in Sima Qian’s account, nor anywhere else.
5. Gongsun Chujiu and Cheng Ying are Zhao Shuo’s retainer and friend respectively in Sima Qian’s first account but they are presented in the 1959 play as a righteous minister outraged by Duke Ling’s behavior and a country doctor with no special relationship with the Zhao family.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 629. The original for this translation reads 到明日我先见过了主公, 和那满朝的卿相, 亲自杀那贼去。

⁵⁰ It should be noted that neither the Yuan Version nor the Ming Version of the play is entirely consistent. For example, while the Yuan version has lines like “the State of Jin is bound to perish under Duke Ling” in the Wedge and “I’ll overthrow Duke of Ling, the current ruler,” it ends with “Relying on the august wisdom of the emperor [Duke Ling], I wish to pay my debt of gratitude to my parents who died an unnatural death [by killing Tu’an Gu] (欲报俺横亡的父母恩, 托赖着圣明皇帝福).” It is obviously self-contradictory. Similarly, while the Ming version has laudatory lines like “I’ll devote myself to His Majesty, the virtuous and benevolent Duke Ling,” it also has condemning lines such as the one in Act II by Gongsun Chujiu “We are unfortunate to have the unbenevolent Duke Ling as the ruler who favors only the villains and persecutes the wise and the loyal (正遇着不道的灵公, 偏贼子加恩宠, 着贤人受穷困).” This is also self-contradictory—even if these lines are by different characters. Given the scripts of the two versions available today, we cannot tell whether the contradictions are due to the oversight of the playwrights, the lack of the dialogues, or the later adaptations by others.

6. The infant killed as a replacement of the Orphan of Zhao is “a stranger’s child” (他人之子) in Sima Qian’s first account but he becomes Cheng Ying’s own son sacrificed to save the Orphan of Zhao in the 1959 play.

These discrepancies are quite diverse in nature, ranging from replacement of one reign period or incident with another, to the changes of historical figures or their relationships. However, one thing is shared in common: they are all adaptations made to create a perfect world of relativized loyalty. Specifically, these adaptations have led to the transformation of characters in the 1959 opera including Zhao Dun, Duke Ling, Tu’an Gu, Gongsun Chujiu, and Cheng Ying.

Let us start by looking at the transformation of Zhao Dun. Preceding the narrative of the Xiangong Disaster cited in Section 2, Sima Qian’s first account has two revealing statements, marked as (a) and (b) below, that describe the relationship between Duke Ling and Zhao Dun:

- (a). After Duke Ling took the throne, Zhao Dun became more aggressive in encroaching on the power of the duke.
- (b). Fourteen years after he took the throne, Duke Ling’s behavior drifted further and further away from that of a benevolent ruler. Zhao Dun remonstrated with him repeatedly but Duke Ling turned a deaf ear to him.⁵¹

A comparison of the above statements and the 1959 play indicates that Zhao Dun’s encroachment, described in (a), is completely ignored in this version. In contrast, the statement in (b) is not only used but elaborated, creating a Zhao Dun whose blunt remonstrations with an unbenevolent duke makes him a shining symbol of relative loyalty.

A similar case is seen in the replacement of Duke Jing with Duke Ling in the play. Duke Jing is recorded in history books as a duke determined to counter the encroachment of the Zhao Clan on the power of the duke. One of the strategies that he took to accomplish this was to increase the number of top military and civil offices to which he promoted people from other families to curb the control of power by the Zhao Clan.⁵² The other strategy, of course, was to crack down on the Zhaos, as seen in the Xiangong Disaster. Scholars have pointed out that “the Xiangong Disaster was the first major victory of the Duke over the ministers, enabling Duke Jing to put an end to the

⁵¹ The original script for the above translation is 灵公既立，赵盾益专国政。灵公立十四年，益骄。赵盾骤谏，灵公弗听……欲杀盾。See (西汉)司马迁：《史记·赵世家》，北京：中华书局，2006年，第285页。[SIMA Qian, *Shiji · Zhao shijia* (Records of the Grand Historian · The Hereditary House of Zhao), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 285.]

⁵² This strategy is referred to by scholars as *zhongjian zhuhou* 众建诸侯 (appointing multiple vassals). In 633 BC, Duke Wen of Jin established the *Sanjun liuqing* 三军六卿 (Three Generals and Six Ministers) system. When Duke Jing came to the throne, he expanded it to *Liujun shierqing* 六军十二卿 (Six Generals and Twelve Ministers) system. See (春秋)晋公子：《说“赵盾专权”——〈晋公子读史记〉之〈赵世家〉(二)》，[Jingongzi, *Shuo “Zhao Dun zhuanquan” ——Jingongzi du Shiji zhi Zhao shijia er* (My Reading of *Shiji*, “The Hereditary House of Zhao,” Part II: Zhao Dun’s Encroachment)], <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/74843645>, [August 5, 2020].

nearly forty-year monopoly of political power by the Zhao Clan in the State of Jin.”⁵³ Obviously, Duke Jing is not a good ruler to include in a play meant to glorify Zhao Dun as an embodiment of loyalty. In contrast, Duke Ling fits that role much better because he is recorded in history books as a wicked ruler. For example, Sima Qian’s first account includes the statement cited above, “Fourteen years after he took the throne, Duke Ling’s behavior drifted further and further away from that of a benevolent ruler.” *Zuo zhuan* also has an often quoted characterization of him: “Duke Ling of Jin failed to behave as a duke should have” (晋灵公不君)⁵⁴ followed by a list of examples: shooting at people from a tower and watching them flee, killing his cook who failed to prepare meat properly for him, sending Chu Ni to assassinate Zhao Dun for his unwanted remonstrations, ambushing Zhao Dun at a party, and attempting to kill him using a Tibetan dog.⁵⁵ Clearly, replacing Duke Jing with Duke Ling creates a wicked duke against whom the relative loyalty of Zhao Dun, Gongsun Chujiu, and Wei Jiang can be presented on the stage. It should be noted, however, that the consequence of such a replacement is tampering with history and rehabilitating the historical Zhao Dun.⁵⁶

A more extreme case of tampering with history is seen in the transformation of Tu’an Gu in the 1959 play. In Sima Qian’s first account, Tu’an Gu is not much of a villain and, indeed, his attack on the Zhao family can even be justified: both Sima Qian’s first account and *Zuo zhuan* tell

⁵³ 李孟存, 李尚师:《晋国史》,引自《春秋》晋公子:《说“下宫之难”——〈晋公子读史记〉之《赵世家》(三), <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/78551290>, 2020年8月5日检索。[LI Mengcun and LI Shangshi, *Jingguo shi* (A History of the State of Jin), cited in Jingongzi, *Shuo “Xiangong zhi nan”*——*Jingongzi du Shiji zhi Zhao shijia* (My Reading of *Shiji* Part III: “The Xiangong Disaster”), <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/78551290>, [August 5, 2020].

⁵⁴ The original script for the above characterization of Duke Ling of Jin is 晋灵公不君. See 郭丹、程小青、李彬源译注:《中华经典名著全本全注全译丛书·左传·中》,北京:中华书局,2012年,第734页。[GUO Dan, CHENG Xiaoqing and LI Xinyuan, trans. and anno., *Zhonghua jingdian mingzhu quanben quanzhu quanyi congshu Zuo zhuan, Volume II* (Chinese Classics Series, with Complete Original Text, Completely Annotated and Translated), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012, 734]

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ In fact, scholars have even questioned the reliability of the narrative in *Zuo zhuan* about Duke Ling’s bad behavior because *Zuo zhuan* is a history written several decades after the State of Jin died in the hands of the three families of Han, Zhao, and Wei. This means that *Zuo zhuan* may well be the result of “Victors’ Justice”—a history written by descendants of Zhao Dun who would present the Zhao family positively while demonizing anyone hated by the Zhaos. This view is supported by evidence from Sima Qian’s first account and *Zuo zhuan*. They both tell the story of how Duke Ling, six years old at the time, was denied the throne as wished by his father, the late Duke Xiang of Jin 晋襄公 (?–621 BC), despite his mother’s daily begging in court and in front of Zhao Dun’s residence. He was allowed to take the throne only after Zhao Dun realized that his own chosen alternative successor, an adult, might be harder for him to manipulate. Scholars have also pointed out that Duke Ling must have lived with the humiliating memory of his mother begging Zhao Dun to carry out his father’s will, and that he must have spent his entire life fighting to win back his power as a duke until his death at the young age of twenty in the hands of Zhao Dun’s cousin, and that his dissipation might well be due to the diversion from his frustration with the powerful and manipulating Zhao Dun. For a study on this point see《春秋》晋公子,《说“赵盾专权”——〈晋公子读史记〉之《赵世家》(二)》, <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/74843645>, 2020年8月5日检索。[Jingongzi, *Shuo “Zhao Dun zhuanquan”*——*Jingongzi du Shiji zhi Zhao shijia er* (My Reading of *Shiji*, “The Hereditary House of Zhao,” Part II: Zhao Dun’s Encroachment)], <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/74843645>, [August 5, 2020]. Also see 黄朴民:《真相难觅》。[HUANG Pumin. “Zhenxiang nanmi” (Searching for Truth).]

us that Zhao Dun was recorded as a regicide by Dong Hu 董狐, the court historian of the State of Jin, because as the Prime Minister, he failed to hold his cousin responsible for the murder of Duke Ling of Jin—and Confucius praised Dong Hu for his integrity as a historian in doing so.⁵⁷ Obviously, even though he attacked the Zhao family without authorization in Sima Qian's account, Tu'an Gu is not villainous enough to help bring out the moral heights of the relative loyalty of characters who supported the Zhao family. Tu'an has to be demonized to fit that role. And that is exactly what has happened in the 1959 play: wicked deeds committed by Duke Ling—sending Chu Ni to assassinate Zhao Dun and using a Tibetan dog to attempt to kill him—have been dumped onto Tu'an. Moreover, with no historical basis, Tu'an is made to issue a public notice to kill all babies six months old or younger unless the Orphan of Zhao is found. With these adaptations, the Tu'an Gu in Sima Qian's history has been transformed into a downright villain.

Since Tu'an Gu's villain role is intended to emphasize the moral heights of characters who supported the Zhao family, these characters must be lifted in moral standards from their historical models to fit their roles. That is what has happened to Gongsun Chujiu and Cheng Ying. As cited in Section 2, Gongsun Chujiu was a retainer of the Zhao family who helped with the rescue of the Orphan of Zhao in order to repay the favor from his master. But in the 1959 play, he becomes a righteous official who joins Zhao Dun in remonstrating with Duke Ling and helps rescue the Orphan of Zhao in order to ensure the revenge of the loyal Zhao family against the villainous Tu'an Gu. The lifting of Cheng Ying is more striking. In Sima Qian's first account, he is a friend of Zhao Shuo and thus a beneficiary of his favor, but he becomes a mere country doctor whose "sense of great justice" alone makes him stand firmly on the side of the Zhao family. Moreover, the infant killed as a replacement of the Orphan of Zhao has been transformed from "a stranger's child" to Cheng Ying's own son whom he sacrificed voluntarily to save the Orphan of Zhao in the 1959 play.

We notice that most of the above adaptations are inherited from earlier versions of the drama—such as the resurrection of Zhao Dun, the replacement of Duke Jing with Duke Ling and

⁵⁷ The original in 《史记·赵世家》reads 赵盾复反,任国政。君子讥盾“为正卿,亡不出境,反不讨贼”,故太史书曰“赵盾弑其君”(Zhao Dun returned to the court and resumed his office. Righteous people jeered at him saying “As the Prime Minister he escaped the State of Jin without crossing the border and resumed his office without bringing his cousin to justice.” For that reason, the Grand Historian wrote “Zhao Dun murdered Duke Ling of Jin). See (西汉)司马迁:《史记·赵世家》,北京:中华书局,2006年,第285页。[SIMA Qian. *Shiji, Zhao shijia* (Records of the Grand Historian, The Hereditary House of Zhao), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju (Chinese Book Publishing, 2006, 285.] The original in 《左传·宣公二年》reads 大史书曰:「赵盾弑其君。」以示于朝。宣子曰:「不然。」对曰:「子为正卿,亡不越境,反不讨贼,非子而谁?」……孔子曰:「董狐,古之良史也,书法不隐。」(Dong Hu, the court historian for the State of Jin, showed to the court what he recorded in his history: Zhao Dun committed regicide. Zhao Dun said “That's not true.” To this Dong Hu answered “You are the Prime Minister. You escaped the State of Jin without crossing the border and resuming your office without bringing your cousin to justice. If you are not the regicide, who else would it be?... Confucius said “Dong Hu was a great historian of the ancient times. He never hid anything in his history.”). See 郭丹、程小青、李彬源译注:《中华经典名著全本全注全译丛书·左传·中》,北京:中华书局,2012年,第738—739页。[GUO Dan, CHENG Xiaoqing and LI Binyuan, trans. and anno., *Zhonghua jingdian mingzhu quanben quanzhu quanyi congshu Zuo zhuan, Volume II* (Chinese Classics Series, with Complete Original Text, Completely Annotated and Translated), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju (Beijing: Chinese Book Publishing), 2012, 738-39.]

the demonization of Tu'an Gu—but this inheritance is by no means random or accidental. Rather, it was made deliberately with a purpose. This point is best seen in *what has not been inherited from earlier versions*—the status of Gongsun Chujiu and Cheng Ying as the retainer and friend of Zhao Shuo. Wang Yan, the author of the 1959 opera, thus explains the reason why the status of Gongsun Chujiu and Cheng Ying have been changed in this version from that in history books and earlier versions of the drama:

Gongsun Chujiu and Cheng Ying are retainers of the Zhao family [in history books and earlier versions of the drama]. Their statuses have been changed here: Cheng Ying has become a country doctor and Gongsun Chujiu a righteous official. With these adaptations, the feudal ideology of repaying the kindness of one's master is eliminated and their sense of justice behind their rescue of the orphan is highlighted.⁵⁸

Clearly, it was a conscious decision about what to inherit and what to adapt, a decision made by the author to create a perfect world of relative loyalty. Such a world, however, is artificial and should not be regarded as an accurate reflection of the Chinese ideal of loyalty.

3.4. *Jin Haishu's 2003 Version*

The most powerful evidence against the proposal is seen in the version of Jin Haishu 金海曙, entitled “Zhaoshi guer” 《赵氏孤儿》 (The Orphan of Zhao), first staged in 2003 in Beijing.⁵⁹ What is truly striking about this version is that the wicked Duke Ling, the villainous Tu'an Gu, the loyal Zhao Dun, and even the revenge plot against Tu'an have all disappeared. The theme of this version is succinctly captured in a scroll that Zhao Dun writes for Cheng Ying in Act One, which says: “As thy rising is speedy, thy fall will be abrupt” (*Qi xing ye bo, qi wang ye hu* 其兴也勃, 其亡也忽), meant to characterize the fate of individuals as well as that of country-states of their times.

During this tumultuous period in Chinese history, the State of Jin was trying to survive among the powers—and gain hegemony if possible. Zhao Dun has been the Prime Minister of Jin since the reign of the former Duke, who recently passed away. Twenty years ago, Zhao Dun persecuted Tu'an, allegedly under the order of the former Duke, killing his wife and sending himself to exile in Tibet. In order to curb the powerful Prime Minister, the newly enthroned Duke Ling of Jin has decided to pardon Tu'an and call him back, ostentatiously to strengthen “the pillars of the court” so that “the State of Jin can stand independent among the powers.”⁶⁰ Tu'an is understandably

⁵⁸ See Wang Yan, Introduction to *The Orphan of Zhao*.

⁵⁹ 金海曙:《赵氏孤儿》,《剧本》2003年第9期,第2—33页。[JIN Haishu, “Zhaoshi guer” (The Orphan of Zhao), *Juben (Scripts)* 9 (2003): 2–33.]

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

vengeful against Zhao Dun. Unhappy about Duke Ling's reinstatement of Tu'an and arrogant about his father's office, Zhao Shuo has Tu'an's residence surrounded by soldiers to demand the return of a retainer of the Zhao family who has committed a crime and is now in Tu'an's custody. This unauthorized use of the military alarms Duke Ling, who is compelled to grant Tu'an a decree to execute Zhao Dun and his family. With the help of Gongsun Chujiu, Cheng Ying succeeds in rescuing the Orphan of Zhao by switching him with his own son. Sixteen years pass⁶¹ and the orphan, as Tu'an's adopted son, has grown up to be—surprisingly for readers and audience alike of all earlier versions—a playboy, just like his father Zhao Shuo when he was young. Unlike any of the previous versions and clearly out of Jin Haishu's own creation, Tu'an is presented positively in the 2003 version: during the sixteen years following his successful revenge against Zhao Dun, he has turned Jin into a peaceful and prosperous state free of corruption. No wicked behavior is committed by Duke Ling either, a ruler constantly trying to guard his power against encroachment. That is why Duke Ling begins to feel a new threat in Tu'an's growing esteem, and decides to take away his power by having him retire with the honorary title “*Zhenguo gong*” 镇国公 (Pillar of the State). Meanwhile, when Cheng Ying reveals to the orphan his true identity and tries to start him on the mission of revenge for his family, the orphan-playboy refuses to do so because, in his own words, the mission is simply “a historical burden imposed on me by fate.”⁶² Heartbroken at the orphan's reaction, Cheng Ying commits suicide after publicly revealing the well-kept secret about the orphan. Upon hearing this stunning revelation, Duke Ling praises Cheng Ying as a paragon of loyalty but, sensing that Tu'an, certainly unhappy about the empty new title, might harbor evil designs against the young man, decrees that the Orphan of Zhao be protected because “the royal family is currently lacking outstanding personnel.”⁶³ The play ends with the orphan happily following Duke Ling into the palace, giving no thought whatsoever to the idea of revenge, nor showing any appreciation of Cheng Ying's loyalty to—and sacrifice for—the Zhao family.

Clearly, this version is closest to historical fact, in spirit if not in every factual detail. In this version, the power struggle is the driving force which leads to unpredictable risings or fallings of the characters. Moreover, the very concept of loyalty is ridiculed here, instead of being extolled.

In summary, an examination of the evolving stage of the Orphan of Zhao testifies to the invalidity of the proposal that the Chinese ideal of loyalty is relative.

4. Conclusion

It has been proposed by Chinese scholars that the Chinese and the Japanese have completely

⁶¹ Note the contrast: sixteen years in this version but twenty years in the Ming Version and fifteen in the 1959 Peking Opera.

⁶² 金海曙:《赵氏孤儿》,第27页。[JIN Haishu, “Zhaoshi guer” (The Orphan of Zhao), 27.]

⁶³ Ibid., 33.

different ideals of loyalty: Chinese loyalty is subject to the checking of benevolence and thus relative, while Japanese loyalty lacks such a checking and is therefore absolute. This paper has examined the validity of this proposal as it is applied to China from several perspectives. The examination indicates that, while the proposal seems valid when applied to the 1959 Peking Opera *The Orphan of Zhao*, it collapses when we look beyond that play. Evidence supporting this conclusion can be summarized as follows.

First, historical records cast the proposal into serious doubt. The 1959 Peking Opera is based largely on Sima Qian's account on the Xiagong Disaster in his "The Hereditary House of Zhao" but that account is unreliable as history for its being *ad hoc*. Even if it is reliable as history, as believed by a few scholars, it does not change the fact that the Xiagong Disaster was not the result of a fight between a villain and some loyal figures, but rather the result of the power struggle between the duke and the ministers and among rivaling ministers in the State of Jin, in which no one was loyal to anyone else. This view is testified by the assassination of two Jin dukes in three decades and the eventual partitioning of the State of Jin itself by three powerful families including that of the Orphan of Zhao.

Second, the proposal has ignored the evolving stage of the Orphan of Zhao which has presented shifting images of Duke Ling of Jin: a wicked Duke Ling in the Yuan version, a "virtuous and benevolent Duke Ling" in the Ming version, a wicked Duke Ling again in the 1959 version, and a Duke Ling neither wicked nor benevolent but simply determined to guard his power against powerful ministers in the 2003 version. The shifting images of Duke Ling, of course, led to different attitudes of his subjects towards him: a wicked duke to be condemned by Han Jue and Zhao Shuo in the Yuan version, a "virtuous and benevolent" duke worthy of the Orphan of Zhao's devotion in the Ming version, an unbenevolent duke to be remonstrated with by Zhao Dun in the 1959 version, and a cool-headed and unpredictable duke to be grappled with by his ministers in the 2003 version. Section 3 of the paper notes the change in the political aspirations of the Orphan of Zhao, from plotting to overthrow Duke Ling in the Yuan version to pledging to devote himself to him in the Ming version. Scholars have identified contemporary politics of the playwrights as the dynamics behind the change: The usurpation in the Yuan version is Ji Junxiang's roundabout way to express his nationalistic desire to overthrow the Mongolian invaders and restore the Chinese Song emperors, believed to be the descendants of the Orphan of Zhao.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Ming

⁶⁴ 阿英:《元人杂剧史》,《剧本》1954年,第4—9页。[AYING, "Yuanren zaju shi" (A History of Yuan Drama), *Juben (Drama Scripts)* (1954): 4–9.] 周贻白:《中国戏剧发展史》,上海:上海古籍出版社,1979年。[ZHOU Yibai, *Zhongguo xiju fazhan shi* (A History of Chinese Drama), Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Press, 1979). Also see 岳峰:《〈赵氏孤儿〉与〈哈姆雷特〉》,《盐城师范学院学报(哲学社会科学版)》1999年第7期,第3页。[YUE Feng, "Zhaoshi guer yu Hamuleite" (*The Orphan of Zhao and Hamlet*), *Yancheng shifan xueyuan xuebao zhexue shehui kexue ban (Journal of Yancheng Teachers College: Philosophy and Social Studies Edition)* 7 (1999): 3.]

Version is “mostly found in the royal collections of Ming Emperor”⁶⁵ and thus praise for the Duke of Ling may well be the result of the emperor’s own commission. It should be pointed out that this approach has much explanatory power when applied to the remaining two versions of *The Orphan of Zhao* examined in this paper: the perfect world of relative loyalty in the 1959 version is merely the result of the adapter’s conscious decision at a time when all “feudalist ideology” had to be eliminated in China,⁶⁶ while the ridicule of the very idea of loyalty in the 2003 version is just a cynical reflection *of and on* the political landscape of modern China.

The biggest sin of the proposal, I believe, is its advocacy of stereotypes about and Japanese cultures, as stated in its claim that the difference between Japanese and Chinese ideals of loyalty is something inherent and timeless existing mysteriously in the national characters of the two peoples. Stimulated by Ruth Benedict’s influential book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, published in 1946 and translated into Japanese in 1948, a discourse developed after the Second World War in Japan and the US about the national characteristics of the Japanese, a discourse commonly referred to as *nihonjinron* 日本人論 meaning “the theory on the uniqueness of the Japanese.”⁶⁷ The concept of *nihonjinron* include the following central points:

1. The Japanese are different from people anywhere in the world in interpersonal relationships, moral standards and ways of thinking;
2. This uniqueness of the Japanese existed from antiquity and will remain unchanged in the future;
3. All Japanese possess this uniqueness.⁶⁸

In many ways, the proposal examined in this paper is an expanded version of *nihonjinron* with the

⁶⁵ 黄卉:《论悲剧历史剧〈赵氏孤儿〉》,《洛阳师专学报》1999年第12期,第75页。[HUAN Hui, “Lun beiju lishi ju Zhaoshi guer” (On the Historical Tragedy *The Orphan of Zhao*), *Luoyang shizhuan xuebao (Journal of Luoyang Teachers College)* 12 (1999): 75.]

⁶⁶ Incidentally, unlike other versions of *The Orphan of Zhao*, the 1959 Peking Opera has a happy ending in which Princess Zhuangji survives the aftermath of the Xiagong Disaster and enjoys the reunion with her son after witnessing the successful revenge against Tu’an Gu. This is another example of the “good must win and evil must lose” principle dominating literature and drama in China at the time. Wang Guowei 王国维 (1877—1927) has an often quoted characterization of Yuan Period version of *The Orphan of Zhao* as “a tragedy inferior to none among the greatest tragedies of the world” (即列之于世界大悲剧中,亦无愧色也)。See (清)王国维:《王国维文集第1卷》,北京:文史出版社,1997年,第303页。[WANG Guowei, *Wang Guowei wenji* (A Collection of Essays by Wang Guowei), vol. 1, Beijing: Literature and History Press, 1997, 303.] The happy ending of the 1959 version has changed the fundamental nature of the play as a tragedy.

⁶⁷ C. Douglas Lummis, “Ruth Benedict’s Obituary for Japanese Culture,” *Japan Focus: The Asia-Pacific Journal* (July, 2007): 1–21, <https://apjif.org/-C.-Douglas-Lummis/2474/article.html>, [August 5, 2020].

⁶⁸ See 郑国和:《中国的〈忠臣藏〉评介与中国版“日本人论”》,《日本学研究》2009年第00期,第245—258页。[ZHENG Guohe, “Zhongguo de zhongchencang pingjia yu Zhongguo ban ‘Ribennren lun’” (Reception of *Chūshingura* in China: A Chinese Version of *Nihonjinron*), *Ribenxue yanjiu (Japanese Studies)* 00 (2009): 245–58.]

added claims about Chinese ideal of loyalty, as follows:

1. The Chinese ideal of loyalty is relative to the virtual of benevolence, while that of the Japanese is absolute with no checking of benevolence;
2. That difference between the two ideals of loyalty existed from antiquity and will remain unchanged in the future;
3. That difference is true of all Chinese and Japanese.

Clearly these claims amount to nothing less than a *chūgokujinron* 中国人論 (the theory on the uniqueness of the Chinese), a counterpart of *nihonjinron*, and must be treated as such.

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摘要：中国学者中存在一种相当普遍的观点，认为中国人和日本人的忠诚观截然不同：中国人的“忠”因有“仁”这一天平的裁量因而是相对的，而日本人的“忠”是无“仁”之“忠”因而是绝对的。本文的考察从1959年京剧《赵氏孤儿》出发，旨在检验此观点关于中国人忠诚观的部分是否成立。考察显示，虽然就1959年京剧《赵氏孤儿》而言该观点成立，然而当我们的视野转向历史文献、《赵氏孤儿》舞台的演变、中国著名历史人物忠诚观等诸多方面时，发现该观点不仅不能成立，而且妨碍我们正确认识现代中国历史、政治和文学与忠诚观相互交织激烈碰撞的种种现象及本质，因而是极其有害的。然而该观点最大的问题却是其鼓吹的如下刻板成见：即中国人和日本人的忠诚观扎根于各自的民族性格之中，从来如此，将来也不会改变。从这个意义上说，该观点其实不啻于一个类似“日本人论”的“中国人论”，必须对其加以批判。

关键词：历史研究方法论；《忠臣藏》；中国人忠诚观；日本人忠诚观；日本人论；中国人论；

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