

Chapter One

THE WARRIOR ARISTOCRACY

During the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., China was dominated by a warrior aristocracy whose privileged status was marked by its monopoly of ritually directed violence. Sanctioned killing in the forms of sacrifice, warfare, and hunting constituted the central rites of the cults of the ancestors and the state altars, and the performance of these rites set the aristocracy apart from the common people. This aristocracy was in turn divided on the basis of ascriptive kin ties into a hierarchy of lineages, each with its own capital, temple, and military forces. United by kinship and a shared nobility, and identical in their basic organizations and capacities, the senior and cadet lineages in a state enjoyed a proximate equality distinguished only by the ritual ranking of their cults. Originally, the senior lineages were dominant, and interstate wars were the primary form of the ongoing struggle for supremacy and glory, but over the centuries the cadet lineages proved able to expand their power and gradually asserted their dominance in the various states. This competition among lineages led to a world of vendetta and civil war, where alliances both among and within states could be secured only by the religious sanction of sharing the blood of a sacrifice in the ritual of the covenant, and the expansion of the social range and functions of these blood oaths led to a gradual redefinition of the political realm. Thus it was out of the aristocratic pattern of licit violence and the internecine struggles to which it led that the Warring States and the Chinese empire emerged.

The major problem for studying this era is that apart from some of the poems in the *Shi jing* and a few of the later chapters of the *Shang shu*, which cannot be dated with any precision, we have no literary

sources written during the period in question. A highly detailed narrative of the years from 722 to 464 B.C., however, appears in the *Zuo zhuan*, a work generally dated to the mid-fourth century B.C. This work is a compilation of historical anecdotes appended to a year-by-year chronicle of events written from the perspective of the state of Lu. It is obviously a multilayered work drawing on many sources and having passed through many hands, but it was compiled in its final form by men working in the Confucian tradition, and it later became one of the "classics" of that school. The judgements and attitudes of the final redactors are consistent with those expressed in the *Lun yu*, and when the stories have a clear "moral," these are in harmony with the positions of the Confucian school. However, the actions and speeches attributed to the historical actors frequently depict a world of institutions and values totally at odds with those of the Warring States Confucians and the other philosophical schools. In many cases these speeches and actions are the objects of criticism, but even the words and deeds of seemingly "positive" characters often suggest a world far removed from that of the Warring States authors, and these traces of an "alien" world offer an intelligible, internally consistent vision of society.

Moreover, in contrast to the philosophical texts of the period, in which historical incidents are cited as adjuncts to an argument, or with the more closely related *Guo yu*, which is "philosophy and rhetoric in a historical setting," the *Zuo zhuan* contains many stories that have no clear moral message, as well as extensive chronicles that offer no more than dated events.¹ The preservation of large amounts of material that serve no moral argument and of speeches and actions that depict a world alien or hostile to Warring States Confucianism suggests that despite heavy reworking, the *Zuo zhuan* is our only detailed repository of information on a social order that was already vanishing by the time that philosophical and historical texts appeared in the late Spring and Autumn period. Because much of the evidence is preserved simply as a target for criticism, and the chronological arrangement of speeches and anecdotes is not necessarily reliable, the text does not allow a detailed study of the process of change in the Zhou socio-political order. Instead, one can at best achieve a schematic contrast of "before" and "after," where the extant text already represents "after," and "before" must be deduced from otherwise unexplainable values and practices appearing in the anecdotes. This reconstruction can also be supplemented by evidence preserved in Warring States philosophical works, the writings of Sima Qian, and many archeological finds.

For expository purposes I have divided the chapter into four sections. The first discusses how the ritual violence of sacrifice, warfare, and hunting in the service of the ancestral cult defined the nobility of the

period. The second shows how a political order defined by lineage segmentation dispersed authority throughout this nobility and produced a multitude of rivals for honor and power. The third section focuses on the obsession of the nobility with an honor based on martial prowess and shows how this led both to constant interstate warfare and a regular recourse to blood vengeance, vendetta, and civil war. The final section examines the crucial role of blood oaths in creating new political ties in a world where internecine struggles were destroying the old ties of shared kinship and cult.

Warfare and Sacrifice

In the Spring and Autumn period political authority was derived from the worship of potent ancestral spirits and the gods of locality through regular offerings made at the altars of the ancestral temple and the state. The actions that set the rulers apart from the masses were the "great services" of those altars, and these services were ritually directed violence in the form of sacrifices, warfare, and hunting. These activities, symbolically linked through the ceremonial exchange and consumption of meat, reached their common culmination in the offering up of living beings at the altars. Thus the noble was above all a warrior and sacrificer, a man who took life in order to feed the spirits who gave him power.

The centrality of violent acts to religious cult and the political order was axiomatic in the Spring and Autumn period.

The great services of the state are sacrifice and warfare. In the sacrifices one takes the meat from the sacrifices in the ancestral temple, and in warfare [before setting out on campaign] one receives the meat from the sacrifices at the *she* altar. These are the great ceremonies of the spirits.²

This passage states explicitly that sacrifice and warfare were the principal forms of state or public service, and it links them through the shared ritual consumption of meat. This consumption, in turn, presupposed the killing of sacrificial animals, so the ritualized taking of life constituted the defining feature of the political realm in Zhou China.

A remonstrance to the duke of Lu supposedly offered in 716 B.C. not only asserted that warfare and sacrifice were the chief services of the state, but went further and argued that they were the sole activities proper to the lords of men.

When the duke was about to go to Tang to view the fishing, Zang He Bo remonstrated, "The prince does not take any animal that is

not of use in the practice of the great services [of state] or whose substance cannot be used to make implements [for sacrifice or battle]. . . . Therefore one uses the spring hunt, the summer hunt, the autumn hunt, and the winter hunt, all in the intervals between agricultural labor, to practice the [great] services. Every three years there should be a review of the troops. . . . The lord does not shoot any bird or beast whose flesh is not offered in the sacrificial pots or whose hide, teeth, bones, horns, fur, or feathers are not used on the sacrificial vessels. The creatures which fill the mountains, forest, streams, and marshes and the providing of tools are the business of underlings and the lowly officers; the lord has nothing to do with them."³

In this passage lordship is defined exclusively through the performance of ritually coded violence in sacrifices, military action, and the hunt. All other activities are dismissed as the work of "underlings."

The inclusion of the hunt might appear to be at odds with the first passage, which cited only warfare and sacrifice, but as Walter Burkert observed in his study of sacrifice in ancient Greece, "For the ancient world, hunting, sacrifice, and war were symbolically interchangeable."⁴ In this period of Chinese history warfare was not clearly separated from hunting, for numerous early texts describe hunts as a form of military ritual or training, and it was not uncommon for a hunt to turn into a campaign or a campaign into a hunt.⁵ Writers would often invoke images of the hunt to describe the conduct of battles.⁶ Moreover, the hunt and warfare were equated in both linguistic usage and law. The most common terms for "military" or "martial" (*wu* 武, *rong* 戎) also applied to hunting, the word "hunting" (*lie* 獵) could also describe an army's attack, and the same word (*huo* 獲) applied to what was captured in battle or taken in the hunt. Collective oaths with the force of law were sworn at the beginning of a hunt just as before a battle, and misconduct during a hunt was punished according to military law.⁷ Hunting as a form of warfare thus was also one of the "great services."

The identification of sacrifice and warfare/hunting as the central forms of state service is made explicitly only in the *Zuo zhuan*, but this idea underlies many passages in other Confucian works that generally suppress appeals to the primacy of violence. Thus, in the introduction to his famous periodization of the Zhou decline, Confucius stated:

When all under Heaven has the Way, then rites, music, and punitive expeditions are initiated by the Son of Heaven. When all under Heaven lacks the Way, then rites, music, and punitive expeditions are initiated by the feudal lords.⁸

This passage refers to rites and music rather than simply sacrifice, but given the centrality of sacrifice in the Zhou ritual complex, it clearly echoes the equation of political authority with sacrifice and warfare. This point is made explicitly in another passage attributed to Confucius, where "the Way" itself is identified with sacrifice and warfare.

Confucius said, "When I engage in war I conquer, and when I sacrifice I obtain good fortune. This could be called obtaining the Way."⁹

The lengthy ode "Closed Temple" is a hymn to the glories of the ruling house of Lu, and its panegyric dwells solely on the wealth and regularity of its sacrifices and the size and conquests of its army. Indeed the two major forms of taxation in the Warring States and early empires were simply transformations of the "feudal" levies for sacrifices and warfare.¹⁰ An account of the proper building of a palace complex stipulates that the ruler should first build the ancestral temple—the locus of sacrifice—then stables and military storehouses—the "locus" of warfare—and last of all the royal dwelling proper.¹¹ These quotations show that the definition of the political realm through sacrifice and warfare operated not only as an explicit maxim but also as an unspoken assumption underlying ritual practice, poetic conventions, and models of historical evolution.

Evidence from archeology and iconography supports the statements of these literary texts. Bronze metallurgy was the most advanced technology during the Shang, Western Zhou, and Spring and Autumn periods, and the production of bronze artifacts required resources and labor on a scale possible only for those with considerable power. Consequently, the types of artifacts made from bronze clearly demonstrate the concerns and priorities of the ruling elite, and as K. C. Chang has pointed out, bronze was used almost entirely for the manufacture of weapons, ritual paraphernalia associated with sacrifice, and carpenters' tools which were necessary for the construction of chariots.¹² The same priorities are demonstrated in the development of the technique of gold and silver inlay, which appeared first on weapons in the Spring and Autumn period, then on ritual vessels in the early Warring States, and on implements of daily use only in the late Warring States.¹³

The symbolism of royal authority in Zhou China also demonstrates the centrality of sacrifice and warfare. The chief symbols of the monarch were the banner, the ax, and the Nine Bronze Tripods.¹⁴ The first two were aspects of battle: the ax was a weapon which symbolized the king's punishing power, while the banner was the means by which commands were visually signalled. Tripods were vessels in which the

meat of sacrifices was cooked, and passages describing the sacred Nine Tripods state that they could cook meat without using fire. Thus political authority was symbolically identified with the waging of war and the performance of sacrifice.

The above evidence clearly demonstrates the primacy of ritually directed violence in the Zhou state, but it explains neither the rationale of linking sacrifice and warfare/hunting together, nor how they served to define the political order. There is evidence to suggest at least two links between sacrifice and warfare in the constitution of authority. First, they were both modes of taking life, and taking life is a vivid expression of power. Second and more important, these activities were recognized as the primary means of serving the ancestors and the gods of locality, a service which consisted of both the physical feeding of these spirits and the "feeding" of their honor. I shall discuss each of these links below.

Earlier scholars have noted that the close linkage of warfare and sacrifice in Zhou China suggests the highly ritualized character of combat in the period, but it also indicates that sacrifice was clearly regarded as a form of bloodshed and killing analogous to warfare. The central act of any sacrificial ceremony was the slaughter and consumption of one or more animals, but the role of bloodshed in these rituals went beyond this. The cereal dishes that accompanied the sacrificial banquet were made with grain from a special field sanctified through the dismemberment and burial of several animals, and even the ice employed in some offerings had to be consecrated with the blood of a sacrifice.¹⁵ Several scholars have argued that the most common character for "sacrifice" (*ji* 祭) was a variant of one character meaning "to kill" and was virtually homophonous with the most common character used to refer to killing (*sha* 殺).¹⁶ In some cases the texts refer explicitly to "killing altar-sacrifice" (*sha yin* 殺禋) or "blood sacrifice" (*xue ji* 血祭).¹⁷ Thus the early Chinese were quite conscious of the centrality of killing to the act of sacrifice.

Moreover, there is evidence from Warring States texts that the Chinese of that period clearly perceived the objects of sacrifice as victims. Stories in the *Zuo zhuan* tell of a barbarian chief who recognized that a cow was lowing to mourn the fate of its sacrificed offspring, and of cocks who mutilated themselves to avoid being sacrificed.¹⁸ The *Mencius* tells of how King Xuan of Qi substituted a sheep for an ox about to be sacrificed because the ox had the "terrified look of an innocent man being led to the place of execution."¹⁹ The *Zhuangzi* repeatedly hailed the good fortune of animals whose imperfections saved them from sacrifice, and scorned the honors that preceded death on the altar.²⁰

Not only was sacrifice seen as a form of killing, but the link between taking life and authority was emphasized by the fact that the king

and the feudal lords acted as their own sacrificers; they personally performed the sacrifices in their own states.²¹ This practice was based on the idea that ancestral spirits would accept sacrifice only from the eldest male descendant of their line, so the heads of the cadet lineages must also have served as the sacrificers in their own temples.²² Consequently the privilege of personally killing the sacrificial victims offered to the ancestors marked paramount authority in the state and in the subordinate lineages.

However, while the privilege of killing as a sacrificer, hunter, or warrior was a hallmark of power in the Spring and Autumn period, these acts were all justified as elements of ancestor worship, and it was the service of this cult that was the ultimate basis of authority. The cultic role of sacrifice seems clear, but those of hunting and warfare will require some elaboration.

Hunting played at least three roles in the service of the ancestors: 1) it provided animals that were offered up in the temples; 2) hunts were an element of ceremony in several major sacrifices; 3) hunts were identified with combat, which was itself a form of service to the ancestors. Evidence of the third role was provided above, so I will here deal only with the first two.

Organized hunting and fishing expeditions to provide offerings for use in sacrificial rituals or as dried meat for ceremonial banquets are the subject of frequent divination in the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty. The same practices are also mentioned in bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou and in the poems of the period, both those in the *Shi jing* and the somewhat later poems of the "Stone Drum" inscriptions discovered in the seventh century A.D. Finally, the systematizing ritualist texts of the Warring States period also prescribe the use of seasonal hunts to gather offerings for the sacrificial altars, and they list numerous officials who had charge of preparing this game for use in temple rituals.²³ The role of hunting in providing game for sacrifices is also demonstrated by the fact that the term for whatever was captured in hunt or battle (*huo* 獲) was also a technical term meaning "living beings obtained for sacrifice."²⁴ Finally, it is probably the use of wild animals in sacrifices that underlay the development of the "animal parks," which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. One function of these parks, which first appeared in the Spring and Autumn period, was the training of wild beasts by human handlers, and the use of such animals in sacrifices is portrayed on one of the bronze cowrie shell containers discovered at Shizhaishan in Yunnan.²⁵

In addition to providing creatures for offerings, hunts themselves also played a role in some sacrificial ceremonies. When it was devastated by fires in 524 B.C., the state of Zheng held a special sacrifice at

the *she* altar to ward off misfortune, and this ceremony included staging a general hunt.²⁶ Other references to hunts staged as elements of sacrificial ceremonies, including those in the "Stone Drum" inscriptions, also link them to the *she* altar, perhaps because of its strong ties to warfare and punishments.²⁷ In any case, it is clear that the great, collective hunts were also potentially forms of worship.

Like the collective hunts, military campaigns were also forms of serving the ancestors. This point is explicitly made in a story set in the state of Chu in 555 B.C.

[Zheng] was going to turn against Jin and raise the Chu army to drive them off, but Zi Kang [chief minister of Chu] did not agree. The king of Chu heard of this and sent his messenger Yang to tell Zi Kang, "The capital populace says that I am master of the state's altars but will not send out the army, and when I die they will not bury me with proper ritual. It has been five years since I ascended to the throne, and the army has not yet gone out. The people say that I am enjoying my leisure and have forgotten the inherited achievements of the previous rulers. May the minister please plan some way to deal with this."²⁸

It was as "master of the altars" that the king was obliged to send out his armies. The purpose of sending them out was to defend the "inherited achievements of the ancestors," and the result of failure to do so would be denial of proper rites when he himself became an ancestor. The men of Jin, Chu's great northern rival, also justified warfare as a form of "service to the previous rulers," and in 539 B.C. Shu Xiang supposedly foretold the destruction of the lineage of the ruler of Jin because he and his officers no longer went out on expeditions.²⁹ To a degree this prophecy reflects a utilitarian recognition of the need for military preparedness, but its stress on regular expeditions and the emphasis on the fate of the lineage clearly link it to the other passages which insist that the purpose of war is to serve the ancestors.

The identification of warfare as a form of religious "service" is also reflected in the highly ceremonial character of military campaigns. Every stage of the campaign was marked by special rituals that linked the actions in the field to the state cults and guaranteed the sacred character of battle. Although some Western scholars have described these as a "ritualistic overlay" covering the pragmatic "reality" of battle, they actually defined the basic nature of warfare in the period. The aristocratic warriors of Zhou China were never allowed to forget that they fought in the service of their ancestors and gods, and that combat was ultimately an element of cult.

Every campaign began at the temples, where the rulers performed a series of rituals to assure the success of the campaign. The state's ruler first sacrificed at the *she* altar and at the ancestral temple, where he announced the campaign to the spirits of the previous rulers. Religious insignia from the *she* and the spirit tablets of the ancestors were then brought out from their temples to accompany the army on its march.³⁰ The commander of the army received his charge in the ancestral temple and an offering of meat at the *she* altar, and passages from later works say that the ruler also presented him with a weapon, either a bow or an ax, at the ancestral temple.³¹ Leaders of participating sublineages likewise sacrificed at the temples of their ancestors and exchanged meat from these sacrifices with the ruler of the state. After the rulers had purified themselves through fasting, the weapons of the army were issued at the ancestral temples.³² Finally the troops were assembled in their ranks at the *she* altar in a special ceremony (*zhi bing* 治兵), and with the rituals completed, they set out to battle.³³

While on the march, the army regularly made sacrifices to the major mountains or rivers that they passed. These sacrifices generally took the form of a *lü* (旅), a "travel sacrifice" intended to ward off harm from evil spirits or from the gods of the localities upon whose domains they had trespassed.³⁴

When an enemy force was encountered in the field, the day and place of battle would be formally fixed by the two parties, and then the preparations for combat would begin. Many of these were simply questions of physical readiness, such as sharpening weapons, checking chariots, feeding horses, and having the army eat their fill.³⁵ However, the pre-battle meal is identified by a special name (*ru shi* 辱食), and it is likely that it was a ceremonial occasion peculiar to the field of battle. This conclusion is supported by the fact that a soon-to-be-defeated commander's recklessness is shown by his remark that he will destroy the enemy first and only then have his meal.³⁶

The battle proper was likewise preceded by a series of religious rituals, and these are described in a scene prior to the battle of Yanling in 575 B.C. The king of Chu ascended a sort of crow's nest to observe the opposing Jin army with a defector from that state, and the latter explained what was happening.

The king said, "They have dispatched men to the left and right; what is this?" "They are summoning the officers." "They have all gathered at the central army." "They are planning together." "They are pitching a tent." "They are reverently divining before [the spirit tablets of] the earlier rulers." "They are striking the tent." "They are going to issue the command [*ming* 命]." "There

is a clamor and a rising of dust." "They are filling in the wells and leveling the cooking-places and then forming ranks." "They are getting on the chariots and those on the left and right [the two warriors on either side of the driver] are picking up their weapons and dismounting again." "They are listening to the solemn declaration [*shi* 誓]." "Will they fight?" "I cannot yet tell." "They have got back on their chariots and those on the right and left have dismounted again." "This is the battle prayer."³⁷

Divination and the battle prayer clearly served to invoke the presence of the ancestors and other guardian divinities of the state, and these rituals are mentioned prior to several battles.³⁸ The systematic destruction of the camp is also a regular feature of the preparation for battle, and it had a strongly ritualistic character. Some argue that it was simply a means of creating a level space on which to arrange the army, but it would have been easier to line up outside the camp. Kierman has suggested that this leveling "had an essentially ceremonial significance comparable to the burning of boats after crossing a river," and this is clearly correct. It was a maxim of the period that the true warrior was the man who had resolved on death, and the leveling of the camp was the tangible expression of this resolution not to return from the battle.³⁹

The most significant religious ceremony in the preparations for battle, however, was the "solemn declaration" or "oath" (*shi* 誓). This character signified a solemn statement that invoked the spirits as witnesses to bind a man to act in a certain manner. In Zhou China the commander of an army issued such a declaration before every battle, and the *Shang shu* contains five texts that purport to be examples. Although the declarations attributed to the founders of the Xia and Shang dynasties are fabrications, and it is uncertain that any of the others represents a declaration actually given before an army, these documents show us the basic character of the genre, and their evidence can be corroborated by the text of one *shi* preserved in the *Zuo zhuan*.

The oaths in the *Shang shu* all follow a basic formula. The commander details the crimes of his enemies, asserts that he himself is without particular merit but is following the will of Heaven, tells the members of his army how they are to conduct themselves in the battle, and stipulates the punishments that will befall them if they do not obey and, in some cases, the rewards they will receive if they obey and triumph. The oath in the *Zuo zhuan* follows this pattern.

Zhao Yang [commander of the army supporting the lord of Jin against rebel lineages] declared [*shi*], "The Fan and Zhonghang lineages have gone against the mandate of Heaven, slaughtered

the common people, and seek to tyrannize Jin state and slay its lord. Our lord relied on Zheng to protect him, but now Zheng has betrayed him; they cast off the lord and aid his [rebel] servants. But in this battle we follow Heaven's mandate, obey the command of our lord, restore the potency of duty, and eradicate the shame [of our state]. For one who conquers the enemy, if he is a higher minister he will receive a large district and if he is a lower minister a small district; if he is a noble he will receive 100,000 *mou* of land; if he is a farmer, artisan, or merchant he will be permitted to seek service at court; if he is a slave or bound to menial service he will be freed. Should I commit no crime [i.e., win] then the lord will consider [how to reward me]. Should I be guilty [of defeat], then may I be punished by strangulation, may I have only a thin coffin with no outside layers, may it be drawn by an unornamented horse and wagon, and may I not be buried in the graveyard of my lineage."⁴⁰

This declaration differs from those in the *Shang shu* only in that it dwells exclusively on the rewards to be given to the army in the event of success and the punishments to be visited on the commander should he fail. This perhaps reflects the desperation of the situation, which called for drastic measures. In any case, the punishing of defeated commanders was a common practice in the period, and the rest of the oath follows the pattern of the *Shang shu*.⁴¹

Before every battle the warriors would assemble and be told why the will of Heaven, the imperatives of duty, the honor of the state, and the spirits of the ancestors demanded that this battle be fought. Together with the divination before the tablets of the ancestors, the battle prayer, and the ceremonial command (*ming*), this oath fixed the day's carnage within the political and religious framework. It stipulated the rules of discipline, but did so in a form which bound both the commanders and the warriors to the common service of their ancestors and the gods.

After the battle the immediate task was to dispose of the bodies of the dead. Given the centrality of ancestor worship in the period, securing the corpses for burial was extremely important, and men would fight to retrieve the bodies of their fellows on the field or arrange exchanges after the battle.⁴² But the corpses of the enemy might also be collected into a large tomb mound as a monument to bring glory to the ancestral cult. Fan Dang said:

Why doesn't my lord build a collective tomb and gather the Jin corpses into it to make a *jing guan* [京觀, literally a "great dis-

play," a large mound with a marker to identify it]? I have heard it said that when you defeat the enemy you must show it to your descendants in order that they not forget the achievements of your military prowess.⁴³

The king of Chu rejected this proposal, insisting that such treatment was reserved for the particularly wicked, but even his rejection acknowledges the practice. Other passages in pre-Qin texts also refer to this custom, and one states that the *jing guan* of numberless bones rose up like the hills and mountains.⁴⁴

A victorious army would often use the corpses of the defeated to erect a monument to its victory, like the Greek *tropaion*. These artificial hills would stand as visible and lasting memorials to the victors, and as the passage above suggests, the tumuli were part of the web of practices that linked warfare to ancestor worship and the service of the lineage. The mound was to be left especially for the descendants of the victors, that they might know the prowess and glory of those who came before and seek to extend that glory in their turn.

When the army returned to their own state after the battle, they performed the ceremony of "calling the army to order" (*zhen lu* 振旅) and then the ceremonial drinking (*yin zhi* 飲至) to mark the conclusion of the campaign.⁴⁵ Prisoners, the heads or left ears of those slain, and any spoils taken in battle were then presented at the ancestral temples of the state and the cadet lineages.⁴⁶ With these ritual offerings the campaign proper ended, although the spoils of battle could also be sent as gifts or tribute to the Zhou king, the hegemon, or a friendly state.⁴⁷

Thus the hunt and the military campaign both culminated in offerings at the temples, and as was noted above, the word for what was taken in battle or hunt had the technical sense of "living beings obtained for sacrifice." All the "great services" converged in the sacrificial service of the altars, and indeed the word translated as "service" (*shi* 事) could in the narrow sense mean "sacrifice," as in the standard phrase *you shi* (有事). When several speakers identified battle as a "great service," and even applied the phrase *you shi* to combat, they were explicitly describing warfare as a form of religious, sacrificial ritual.⁴⁸ In this way warfare logically culminated in the offering up of the spoils of battle, and above all in human sacrifice.

Under the Shang dynasty human sacrifice had been a regular institution closely linked to military activities. Excavations have revealed the mass execution of slaves or prisoners to "accompany" the deceased Shang rulers, and the oracle records contain many divinations regarding the sacrifice of members of non-Shang states or tribes. The hundreds of bodies discovered in some royal tombs were probably prisoners taken in

warfare, and it is even possible that some campaigns were fought solely for the purpose of obtaining these sacrificial victims. Combat was tied to the service of the cult of the dead, and military success was clearly manifested in the scale of human sacrifice.

Although apparently not as central as it had been to the Shang kings, the practice of human sacrifice continued into the Zhou. A tradition is preserved in many later Zhou works that following his defeat of the Shang army, King Wu sacrificed the Shang king and his two wives, presented the heads of all the slain enemy soldiers at his *she* altar, and then had the heads burnt as an offering at his ancestral temple.⁴⁹ The *Zuo zhuan* lists several instances of human sacrifice in order to criticize the practice, but the existence of this polemic—which also appears in the *Mozi*—suggests that in the fourth century human sacrifice was still a common practice. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the king of Qin attempted to ban human sacrifice in 383 B.C.⁵⁰ However, the primary evidence for human sacrifice during the Zhou comes from archeological excavations, which show that it continued throughout the dynasty; indeed, more examples have been found from the Warring States period than the Spring and Autumn.⁵¹ Even under the Han dynasty human sacrifice was still practiced in the Dian state on the southwestern frontier, as depicted on the covers of the bronze containers found at Shizhaishan.⁵²

The scattered references to human sacrifice in the historical records and even its more frequent appearance at the archeological sites cannot show how often it was performed or how widely accepted. However, there is clear evidence of several regular institutions that were modified versions of human sacrifice. The most important of these was the aforementioned presentation of prisoners at the ancestral temple, the *she*, or some other locus of sacrifice. In several cases the text states explicitly that the prisoners were sacrificed or killed, while in others their ultimate fate was unclear. However, even if the prisoners were finally spared, the symbolism of the practice and the terminology used clearly equated the prisoners with animals taken for sacrifice in the ceremonial hunts, objects captured in battle, and the heaps of heads or ears of the slain.⁵³ Whether those captured were sacrificed or spared, the ceremonial presentation demonstrated that warfare *logically* culminated in the sacrifice of the enemy, just as the hunt culminated in the sacrificial offering of the game.

A second version of human sacrifice accepted as regular by the speakers in the *Zuo zhuan* and by its redactors was the use of the blood of a prisoner to consecrate newly cast war drums.⁵⁴ It is true that in the cases cited in the text no prisoner is ever actually sacrificed, but the speeches and narration show that no one questioned the possibility or

probity of the action, and from the evidence of human sacrifice cited above there is no reason to doubt that men were sacrificed in such circumstances.

A final form of human sacrifice was the punishment inflicted upon several major rebels and assassins of rulers, who were rendered into a meat sauce and fed to members of the court or army.⁵⁵ Although this was a form of capital punishment, the shared consumption of the criminal evoked the image of sacrifice.⁵⁶ Moreover, the etiological myth for this practice, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, clearly demonstrates that it was regarded as a form of sacrifice.

This systematic evocation of human sacrifice in the period reflects the constitution of political authority through the service of the ancestral cult and the altars of the state. The "great services" were ultimately united through their culmination in sacrifice, in the taking of meat at the altars which defined them in the quote with which this section began. Sacrifice was the central religious practice of the period, and the nobility were those who devoted themselves to it. To take life and offer it up on the altars were the defining actions of the political realm, and the rulers of men were those who engaged in hunting and warfare, and then presented the fruits of their prowess to the ancestors and the gods.

The Segmentary Aristocracy

This definition of political authority through the service of the altars in the forms of hunting, warfare, and sacrifice underlay the social order of China in the Spring and Autumn period. Those who participated in these services formed an elite which set itself apart from the general populace through its devotion to ritual performances, and this elite was in turn ranked as king, feudal lords, hereditary ministers, and nobles according to kin ties defined in "lineage law." These ranks were marked in the ritual performances which defined status in this period through the assignment of a graded number or form of various ritual implements or privileges. However, these gradations were based on incremental additions to a fundamental nobility common to all members of the elite on the basis of their kinship and joint participation in the "great services." This idea of a common nobility led to a proximity of status and a sharing of authority which was radically different from the later imperial system.

Moreover, in the "feudal" system based on lineage segmentation, the lords of the individual states were lesser replicas of the Zhou king, and the hereditary ministers lesser replicas of the feudal lords. Each had his own temple for sacrifice and army for warfare, and the authority of king over feudal lord and of feudal lord over minister was based solely

on relative degree of power and ritual status. Over the course of centuries power gradually shifted from the king to the feudal lords and then from the feudal lords to the ministerial lineages, and the Confucian school and subsequent Chinese writers made this downward shift of authority the fundamental theme in their accounts of Zhou history.⁵⁷ This devolution of authority, however, was in fact the direct consequence of the organizing principles of the Zhou elite, the principles of a common nobility and a "segmented" political organization, in which both individual nobles and geographic foci of authority shared common attributes or structure and differed only in degree.⁵⁸ This general distribution of power made possible the constant, internecine warfare that finally destroyed the Zhou aristocracy.

The idea of a nobility linked by a common ancestry and devotion to the great services of the state, primarily warfare and sacrifice, is best summed up in a speech attributed to Zi Chan, the reforming minister of Zheng state, who lived in the second half of the sixth century B.C. A member of the court, Kong Zhang, had arrived late at a ceremonial reception for an embassy from Jin and in trying to remain inconspicuous had stood in the wrong position. The emissaries laughed at this *faux pas*, and after the ceremony a minister of Zheng criticized Zi Chan for allowing Zheng to appear ridiculous in the eyes of the visitors. Zi Chan replied:

Kong Zhang is a descendant of the elder brother of our lord, and his ancestor [Zi Kong] controlled the government of our state. He is a hereditary minister. He has received a charge as an ambassador and traveled throughout the realms of the feudal lords. The capital populace respects him, and the feudal lords know him. He has a position at the court and makes sacrifices in the temple of his branch lineage. In the state he has command of and income from his fief, and in the army he contributes his allotted share of men and equipment. He has his office in the funerals and sacrifices. He receives the meat [from sacrifices at the state's altar] and returns the meat [from sacrifices at the altar of his own lineage]. He assists in the sacrifices at the ancestral temple of our lord, and he already has a fixed, exalted position. His family has held this position for several generations, and for generations they have performed their duties. What have I to be ashamed of if he forgets his place?⁵⁹

In this passage Zi Chan lists the hallmarks of a worthy man: he descends from the ruling lineage, holds hereditary office, participates in the ceremonial of the court, performs the sacrifices in his own temple and assists in those of the state temples, engages in the ritual exchange of meat that

precedes a campaign, and takes part with his followers in military expeditions. This is an epitome of the nobility based on shared descent and participation in the great services.

The mention of the ritual exchanges recalls the importance assigned to meat in the passage with which this chapter began, and the presentation and consumption of meat indeed played so crucial a role in the Zhou state that one term for the aristocracy was "the meat eaters."⁶⁰ Those who participated in a sacrifice received some share of the meat. The Zhou king regularly presented meat from his sacrifices as a special honor to feudal lords who bore his surname and to descendants of previous dynasties.⁶¹ Like the Zhou king, the rulers of the feudal states presented meat to their officers and received meat in return, so that in fact all ties within the nobility were marked by the giving and sharing of the meat of sacrifice. This reliance on the "fruits" of sacrifice to bind men together was a direct expression of the organization of the state on the basis of kin ties that were constituted through the sacrificial ancestral cults.

Meat was central not only to carrying out the social role of sacrifice, but also in the second "great service," warfare. The king gave a ritual present of meat to those of the feudal lords who performed signal services in the military realm, and consequently the presentation of meat came to play a fundamental role in the ceremony of designating the dominant feudal lord as hegemon.⁶² Prior to launching any expedition the commander likewise received an offering of meat at the *she* altar as part of the ceremony of appointment.⁶³ Hunting, a form of warfare, also culminated in the offering up and communal eating of meat. So important were these offerings of meat that, according to the *Mencius*, Confucius resigned from office simply because the lord of Lu neglected to give him his share of meat from the solstitial sacrifice.⁶⁴ As the ceremonial culmination of sacrifice, hunting, and even warfare, eating meat was a hallmark of aristocracy and a privilege of all nobles.

In addition to defining men as aristocrats, the performance of the great services and the closely related ritual consumption of meat also set them apart from the common people.

The sons of princes devote themselves to ritual, while the petty people use all their physical strength. In devotion to ritual nothing is more important than reverence, while in the complete use of physical strength nothing is more important than respectful sincerity. Reverence consists in nourishing the spirits [of the ancestors], while sincerity consists in holding to inherited occupations.⁶⁵

This passage posits the division of society into an elite defined by its devotion to the rituals of ancestor worship and a general populace de-

finned through hereditary occupations. This division also underlies two recurring lists of categories of men that appear in many pre-Qin texts: the listing of the ranks of the nobility and those of the occupational classifications.⁶⁶

The first of these lists the four levels of nobility—king, feudal lord, hereditary minister, and *shi*—and attributes to each level a certain number of some ritual implement, a special appellation, or some type of subordinate. The number, title, and type descend in accord with the level of nobility. Thus the nine tripods were the symbol of monarchy, and each lower level was allowed correspondingly fewer tripods. Other hierarchical ritual attributes included the number of dancers employed in certain rituals, the number of rows of bells allowed in musical performances, the verb used to refer to a man's death, the rank of subordinates, the number of layers permitted for a coffin, the number of ancestral altars, the type and number of animals sacrificed, and the frequency of sacrifices.⁶⁷ Although many of these distinctions may have existed only on paper, archeological excavations have shown that some of them, most notably the number of tripods, were actually used to mark the status of a burial.⁶⁸ Those which were not related to the material elements of burials would unfortunately leave no trace in the archeological record, but numerous Confucian critiques of nobles who violated the ritual prescriptions suggest that these formulas were still a reality, if a fading one, in the fifth century B.C. These lists of ritual attributes prove that those who "devoted themselves to ritual" were men who held one of the four ranks of nobility, and the archeological evidence confirms that the basic principles sketched in the texts reflect the social reality of the period.

The second list draws together those who are defined through their occupations (*ye* 業). Unlike the lists of the nobility, those dealing with occupations were not fixed. All include the basic categories of merchants, artisans, and peasants, but longer ones also refer to two types of merchants, those who work in orchards or gardens, stable hands, gatherers of wood, herdsmen, seamstresses, menials, and those who collect the produce of mountains and wastes.⁶⁹ Several times these people are explicitly identified as those who have an "occupation," and one of the hallmarks of a well-governed state was that these occupations would not be changed. These are clearly the "petty people" who hold to their "hereditary occupations," as contrasted with the nobles who devoted themselves to ritual.

The crucial feature of this model of society is the existence of the hereditary nobility defined in the first list, those men who were set apart from the common people through their focus on the ritual service of the state cults in the forms of sacrifice and warfare. This reflects an organization and interpretation of authority radically different from that of

imperial China. The nature of this difference and its significance can best be demonstrated through an analysis of the use and significance of the character *shi* (士). In later social models this term became another occupational category, those who held government office, but in its earlier usages it was a generic term for "nobility" and even "true manhood." This earlier use thus epitomizes the idea of an authority based on noble descent and martial valor.

Although the term *shi* in the narrow sense referred only to the lowest level of the noble hierarchy, there is evidence that it had a broader meaning as a generic term for nobleman. When a hereditary minister (*qing* 卿) went on a mission to the court of the Zhou king, he was introduced in the court with the formula "*shi* + personal name."⁷⁰ This shows that the man's office at the court of a cadet lineage did not apply in the court of the king, and without his title he was simply a *shi*, an ordinary noble. A passage preserved in two early ritual texts argues that all levels of the nobility employed the capping ceremony of the *shi* because they were all equal at birth and only distinguished by the subsequent addition of title and office. "The eldest son of the Son of Heaven is a *shi*. None under Heaven is exalted at birth."⁷¹ This idea was expounded at length in a discourse attributed to Confucius, and Han commentators assumed that the rituals for the *shi* were extended to the entire nobility.⁷² This broad sense of *shi*, which included all nobles, is also preserved in the compound "minister-nobles" (*qing shi* 卿士) that occurs in several early texts and refers to all who served in the king's court and controlled the affairs of state. In at least one case the *qing shi* are directly contrasted with the "common people", showing that they are indeed identical with "those who devote themselves to ritual," i.e., the nobility.⁷³

The principle of hierarchy underlying the graded lists of ritual attributes awarded to the different levels of the aristocracy also suggests a notion of a common "nobility" to which honors or titles were subsequently added. Each higher level was granted more musicians, tripods, coffin layers, or sacrifices, but the lowest level *shi* had some number or form of every attribute. The king was at the top of the nobility and the *shi* at the bottom, but the language and ritual procedures of the period insisted that the two shared a common noble nature, that they were divided in degree and not in kind.

Another facet of the character *shi* that suggests this notion of a shared nobility is its sexual connotations. The character etymologically probably depicted the male sex organ, for in the oracle bones it appears as an element that distinguishes the characters for male cattle and sheep from those for their female counterparts.⁷⁴ It preserved this root meaning in later texts where it sometimes meant "man" in opposition to

"woman."⁷⁵ Thus the original sense was probably something like "man" or "real man," which was easily extended to men of power or nobility. This association of nobility with virility and power suggests that it was at least potentially common to all true men, or at least to all warriors.

Moreover, the focus on killing and on devotion to ancestral cult as the definitions of nobility also marked it as a distinctively "masculine" realm. Through the regular offering of sacrifice to their paternal ancestors, along with the initiation ceremony of "capping," the males created lines of kinship defined and transmitted through religious cult rather than biological generation.⁷⁶ This opposition of a masculine kinship based on sacrifice to the "biological" kinship traced through women underlies the argument found in several texts that Zhou, the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, abandoned the sacrifices to his ancestors because of his excessive devotion to women.⁷⁷ The way in which this specifically masculine character assigned to the elite's sacrifice/hunting/warfare complex reflected the proximate equality of a shared nobility will become clear in Chapter Two, where it will be shown how in the absolutist state the sexual model for authority became that of the husband's rule over his wife, rather than the shared manhood of warfare and sacrifice.

In addition to the evidence of ritual procedures, terminology, and sexual imagery, there is abundant anecdotal evidence to suggest that all members of the Zhou elite indeed enjoyed a social and ritual proximity that would have been inconceivable in imperial China. Unlike the exalted, unchallenged autocrat of the later Chinese state, the Zhou ruler—whether the king himself or the head of a feudal state—was only "first among equals." Various stories tell of nobles who upbraided the ruler in public and spat at him without being reprimanded or punished, who rejected requests for precious objects, who played board games with the ruler in the midst of his harem, who helped themselves uninhibited to food from the ruler's table, or who called on the ruler to share dinner, only to find him out back shooting birds.⁷⁸ Being hereditary members of the nobility and rulers in their own domains, the officials and warriors of Zhou China were reduced images of the king or the feudal lords, inferior in rank but not in kind.

This proximity of status based on common descent and service of the ancestral cult was not limited to matters of ritual or sociability; it was built into the very structure of political authority in the Zhou state. Following their conquest of the Shang, the Zhou rulers had been forced to devise a means to control their vast new territories. They had done this by "enfeoffing" relations or allies in walled towns scattered throughout their kingdom and allowing them to act as semi-autonomous "statelets" which owed allegiance to the Zhou king but wielded religious and military authority in their own realms. The kingship itself was transmitted

from eldest son to eldest son, forming the so-called "great lineage" (*da zong* 大宗) of the Zhou court. The brothers, younger sons, and allies of the king held hereditary offices in the Zhou court or were enfeoffed in distant cities to act as peripheral foci of Zhou power. The eldest sons of those enfeoffed would inherit the rule of these cities, where they established their own ancestral temples and thus formed a "small lineage" (*xiao zong* 小宗) which replicated the royal line and the royal court in reduced form. The younger sons of these "small lineages" received hereditary offices at the court of the lineage, or they might in turn be enfeoffed in a smaller city within the sphere of influence of the lineage's capital. These lesser fiefs were likewise inherited by primogeniture, and they then established their own ancestral temples and became new "small lineages." Thus the courts of the feudal lords formed a "small lineage" which was a reduced replica of the "great lineage" of the Zhou king, and the hereditary officials of these lords formed a "small lineage" which was a reduced replica of the "great lineage" of the feudal state.⁷⁹ This is the political structure that was ritually reproduced in the additive lists of implements and titles that defined the aristocracy.

This structure was also reproduced in the patterns of sanctioned violence that defined political authority. For the performance of sacrifice the king, feudal lords, and hereditary ministers each had an ancestral temple and altars of the earth and soil where they offered up the choicest of their flocks and the booty of their hunts and battles. Each was uniquely empowered as the eldest of his line personally to offer sacrifice to the ancestors in his own lineage, and each also supervised the sacrifices at the *she* and *ji* altars. Each had the privilege of all the ritual appurtenances of nobility for funerals and other rituals, and these were distinguished only in number or scale.

In the realm of warfare this "segmented" pattern of authority—wherein peripheral foci of authority reproduced the administrative, ritual, and military forms of the central government on a reduced level—reappeared in the distribution of command and in the organization of the troops. Even in the early Spring and Autumn period, the actual power of military command lay not in the king or the ruler of the state but in the chief minister (*dangguo* 當國, *guozheng* 國政, *lingyin* 令尹) or in the minister of war (*sima* 司馬). The story cited earlier of the king of Chu who desired to send out the army but was blocked by his chief minister demonstrates this fact, and numerous cases in the *Zuo zhuan* show that such a situation was not exceptional. The most famous case was in the state of Lu, where the three ministerial families who gained control of the state each took command of one of the state's three armies.⁸⁰ In another example, Xi Ke of Jin desired to invade Qi to avenge an insult he had received on a mission to that state, but the ruler

refused to allow it. However, when the chief minister of Jin retired and yielded his position to Xi Ke, the latter proceeded to invade Qi over the objections of the ruler.⁸¹ As early as the seventh century the "Grand Tutor" in Jin selected the sites of the training hunts and appointed the commanders of the armies, who were generally chosen from among the leading ministerial households. Whoever commanded the central army at the spring hunt would in the next year become chief minister and hence commander-in-chief.⁸² These and many other cases show that the titular lords of states neither held supreme command in the army nor had the power to decide who did.⁸³ Of course these developments were to a degree simply the expression in the military realm of the general rise of the ministerial lineages to dominance, but that rise was made possible by the state's segmentary structure and the distribution of authority throughout the nobility.

Even more important than the division or rotation of the supreme command among the nobility was the fact that each lineage relied on its own fief to provide soldiers, and the army of the state was an amalgam of these locally raised detachments. Bronze inscriptions show that even under the Western Zhou, nobles would provide troops to supplement the royal armies. After the collapse of royal power in the ninth and eighth centuries military power lay in the armies of the feudal states, which were themselves composed of levies (*fu* 賦) from the capital region and the fiefs of the leading lineages.⁸⁴ Accounts of campaigns reveal that in the field these levies remained under their own commanders, that major decisions were generally made by group consultation among the leaders, and that the detachments were only loosely bound together so that a commander might lead off his own men without regard for the rest of the army.⁸⁵ This constitution of the states' armies through a multitude of private, "lineage" armies also facilitated the innumerable armed feuds and civil wars that characterized society in the late Spring and Autumn period.

Thus the idea of a common nobility that was marked in terminology, ritual, and the patterns of sociability simply reflected the distribution of authority in the segmentary state articulated through the twin principles of "lineage law" and "feudalism." Members of the elite were linked by ascriptive kinship ties and marriage, access to office was gained through inheritance, and the powers of government were dispersed through a multitude of local centers that mimicked the royal court, so the primacy of the ruler remained a matter of degree. Indeed, the subordinates were in many ways stronger than the ruler, who always depended on their local levies to create his armies. As the ties of kinship and shared conquest that had originally united the Zhou state weakened, this segmentary pattern of authority led to a general struggle

for power and prestige in which the higher levels steadily lost authority to the lower ones that had direct control of military resources. Since the nobles were by definition warriors, it is scarcely surprising that this struggle took the form of almost continuous warfare, first between feudal states and later between the powerful lineages within the states.

Warfare and Honor

Warfare was the greatest theater for sanctioned violence in the Spring and Autumn period, and it pervaded the life of the nobility. The *Zuo zhuan* lists some 540 interstate wars and more than 130 major civil wars in a span of only 259 years. Moreover, this list of wars is clearly not complete, for the text refers to campaigns which never appear in its pages, and the statistical distribution of wars among the various states clearly reflects limits in the sources employed by the redactors.⁸⁶ Years without combat would have been so infrequent that they would scarcely have been noticed, and if one counts the seasonal hunts as forms of warfare, which the Chinese did, then no year went by without military action. Thus the warrior aristocracy lived in a state of constant warfare.

This regularity of warfare is not surprising, since combat was one of the great services of the state and hence a religious duty. The obligation to engage in regular campaigns is demonstrated by the aforementioned plaint of the king of Chu, who faced the opprobrium of the people and the prospect of denial of proper burial for failing to send out the army. This duty to fight was justified by the need to preserve and extend the achievements of the earlier Chu kings, and these "achievements" were clearly Chu's eminence, won through repeated wars, as a leading state and head of the southern league. Warfare was ultimately a matter of prestige or honor, in which the living sought to preserve or augment the glories of their predecessors; it was through its role in defending the state's or lineage's honor that warfare became a fundamental part of the ancestral cult.

Chu's great rival in the north, Jin, also regarded warfare as a means to win eminence among the states and thereby fulfill its obligations to the ancestral spirits. In 633 B.C., the year before Jin's great victory over Chu at Chengpu, a minister of Jin argued in favor of relieving Chu's siege of Song with the argument, "Here is the opportunity to acquire majesty and secure the hegemony."⁸⁷ In 597 B.C., prior to the battle of Bi, the commanders of the Jin army had decided to withdraw because Chu was too strong for them, but one commander protested:

We cannot. Jin became hegemon because of the prowess of its armies and the strength of its officers. Now if we lose the feudal

lords [i.e., the hegemony], this cannot be called strength. If there is an adversary and we do not pursue him, this cannot be called prowess. Rather than lose the hegemony because of this, it would be better to die. If you form an army and go out on expedition and then retire because you hear the enemy is strong, you are not a man. Having received the lord's charge to command the army, you might be willing to end it without your manhood, but I am not.⁸⁸

In 575 B.C., at the battle of Yanling, when several Jin commanders advocated retiring in the face of the Chu army, Fan Wen Zi objected that to retreat would disgrace the "service of the previous rulers."⁸⁹ In 570 B.C., the lord of Jin explicitly stated that the reason for engaging in combat was to secure the hegemony. "We assembled the feudal lords for our glory."⁹⁰

These repeated statements that warfare was fought to secure glory or hegemony among the states are supported by Rebecca Byrne's study of the reasons for launching campaigns given in the *Zuo zhuan*.⁹¹ She has shown that virtually all the interstate wars of the period were fought to establish the dominance of one state amongst the others, to carry out the responsibilities that a recognized dominance entailed, to avenge insults to the state or its members, and to eliminate any perceived threat to the state. Thus interstate warfare in the Spring and Autumn period was an ongoing struggle for honor and pre-eminence among the states, and the wars between the ministerial lineages were likewise battles for pre-eminence within the state. In a society that defined its elite through the performance of licit violence and identified manhood with martial prowess, warfare was the ultimate trial of honor.⁹²

That warfare was a struggle for honor is shown not only by the statements of participants and the motives of campaigns, but also by the frequency with which "shame" was invoked as a cause of war and the basis of valor. It was assumed in the period that to shame a man or a state was bound to elicit an attack, that men were bound to fight if anyone offended their honor. Thus when the king of Chu asked his ministers if he should humiliate an emissary from Jin, an official replied:

If you have sufficient military preparations, why shouldn't you? If you shame even a common man you must be prepared to fight, how much more if you shame a state? For this reason the sage kings devoted themselves to diplomatic ritual and never sought to shame anyone.⁹³

A few years later Song acceded to a request from Chu because to deny the request would shame Chu and lead them to attack. We saw above

how one of the Jin commanders insisted on fighting rather than suffer the shame of retreat, and the idea that honor demanded combat and, if necessary, death appears in other passages.⁹⁴ Rebecca Byrne's study indicates that redress for insults or slights was the second most common motive for war, surpassed only by the desire to force another state to acknowledge one's own superiority.

Since defense of one's honor was the primary spur to battle, it is not surprising that various speakers suggested that shame was also the root of military discipline. Only men who had an acute sense of shame would be impelled to risk their lives for the sake of the honor of their state, their lineage, or their person. Thus one man argued that since the Di peoples had no shame, they would be routed if pursued. When criticizing Lord Xiao of Song for refusing to attack the enemy until they had crossed the river and formed their ranks, Zi Yu gave the following account of the conduct of war. "You make clear what is shameful, teach them how to fight, and then seek to kill the enemy."⁹⁵ It was the fear of shame that drove men to fight, so instruction in what was shameful was the basis of all military training.

The centrality to warfare of questions of honor is also revealed in the conduct of campaigns. In addition to the numerous rituals which linked their every step to the service of the states' altars, campaigns were also guided by a set of strictures that guaranteed the honorable character of the battle and hence assured the glory of the victors. As we have seen above, an encounter with an enemy in the field obliged an army to fight or suffer dishonor, and in at least one case a commander was executed for withdrawing in the face of an enemy army.⁹⁶ Some speakers even went so far as to argue that honor demanded that one attack the enemy army at its strongest point.⁹⁷ As combat was a ceremonial trial of strength, states often greeted an invading army with offerings of meat which, as we saw above, established bonds between them as fellow nobles and linked the bloodshed of combat to the sacrificial cults.⁹⁸ The day and field of the battle were then formally agreed upon by the two parties, and different terms were applied to distinguish true combats from those which had not been properly arranged.⁹⁹ Encounters in the field obliged an army to fight, and every fight had to be properly arranged to allow a genuine test of strength.

Since combat ideally matched the prowess of two prepared foes, the dictates of honor prohibited taking advantage of an adversary's difficulties. Thus if the lord of a state had died, an invading army was supposed to withdraw on the principle that one should not "increase mourning." This principle was so routinely observed that in one case a state successfully secured the departure of an invader by staging a mock funeral.¹⁰⁰ Invaders would also usually leave if a state offered no

resistance.¹⁰¹ These ideas were extended onto the field of battle, as in the famous case of Lord Xiang of Song, who would not attack Chu's army until it had reformed its ranks after crossing a river. In justification, he argued that of old those who commanded an army would not make use of an enemy's difficulties to attack him. Although an adviser criticized his action, with the apparent approval of the "author," elsewhere in the text men state explicitly that to take advantage of a foe's difficulties is cowardly, and this idea accords with the practices of arranging battles, not attacking foes who did not offer resistance, and not beginning a battle until both sides had drummed the signal to advance.¹⁰²

The last and perhaps most striking demonstration of the primary concern for honor on the field of battle was the bouts of formalized provocation (*zhi shi* 致師) that preceded the opening of general hostilities. These were feats of bravado in which one or several chariots would ride out from the host, come dangerously close to the opposing lines, attack some members of the enemy army, and then dash back to their own troops, usually pursued by a substantial force.¹⁰³ The textual accounts refer to seeking permission to make a provocation, so these displays appear to have been part of the "formal" preparation for battle. However, since one man who was refused permission proceeded to act on his own accord, they were also personal displays of valor. Both as collective ceremony and personal display they centered attention on the demonstration of courage and prowess, and in this way they epitomized the nature of warfare in this period.

The vindication of honor through force of arms was not restricted to interstate wars, for from the sixth century on ministerial lines came to dominate many of the states, and these lineages likewise fought wars among themselves for supremacy.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as the official from Chu quoted above remarked, even a "common man" would strike if you shamed him, and indeed in the China of the Spring and Autumn period the nobility regularly wreaked bloody vengeance on anyone who slighted their honor. In contrast with the vengeance systematized by later ritual theorists and written into imperial law, which was justified only in response to the murder of a lord or a family member, revenge in Spring and Autumn China answered any fancied derogation of a man's honor.¹⁰⁵ This vengeance almost always entailed murder and often civil war.

The patterns of vengeance amongst the Zhou nobility reflect in miniature all the features of the social organization of violence discussed thus far. The pre-eminence of warfare as a hallmark of nobility, the obsession with an honor that could be defended only through martial prowess, the general distribution of armed forces through all levels of

the aristocracy, and the social and ritual proximity of the nobles with their rulers all figure prominently in the tales of insult, retribution, and civil war. These stories reveal a world in which the casual social intercourse of the nobles provided a fertile ground for quarrels, any perceived slight was answered with force, the segmentation of authority turned appeals to force into wars, and the probability and the severity of reprisals placed great pressure on anyone involved in a quarrel to strike first with full military force in order to avoid falling victim himself to an adversary's assault. It was a world where, as the *Mozi* remarked, men showed that they treasured honor by fighting to the death over a single insulting word, and where elaborate social rituals were gradually erected to minimize the possibility of misunderstandings.¹⁰⁶ It was also a world in which rank was no protection against an avenger's wrath; the *Zuo zhuan* lists thirty-three cases of the murder of rulers and twenty-one of their forcible expulsion from their states, and many of these were the result of acts of vengeance for insults received.

The sorts of insults that could lead to civil war varied from the most trivial to truly mortal offenses. An example of the former is the case of the great strongman Wan of the state of Song. He had been captured in battle with Lu and then returned to Song, and one day while gambling with the lord of Song in the ruler's harem, he chanced to praise the lord of Lu as the only true prince among the feudal lords. Miffed at suffering this aspersion in the presence of his ladies, the ruler observed that since Wan had been captured he no longer respected him. In response to this remark Wan broke his ruler's neck with a single blow, and a second blow to the jaw of an official who ran to the prince's aid shattered it with such force that the flying teeth were lodged in the doorframe. Wan used his own armed followers to set on the throne one of the deceased ruler's sons and waged war on the others.¹⁰⁷ Another ruler was killed for failing to offer some nobles a taste of a rare turtle stew from his table, and a third was driven from his state by nobles whom he had insulted by receiving them while he was still clad in hunting attire.¹⁰⁸

Graver insults were often related to official functions. Thus when the lord of Zheng at an interstate conference violated the dictates of ritual in his treatment of his chief minister, Zi Si, the latter had the lord assassinated and killed his sons as well.¹⁰⁹ Demotions were also a frequent provocation to vengeance, as in the case of the heir-apparent of Chu, who learned that he was to be replaced by his younger brother and consequently had his father strangled, or the Qin emissary who attacked the superior who had passed him over for the leadership of an important mission to Jin.¹¹⁰ When Lang Shen was replaced as the spearman for the lord of Jin, a companion suggested that he should commit suicide in

disgrace, and when he rejected that notion the friend next proposed vengeance against the responsible official.¹¹¹ It seems that any derogation of honor in this period could never be less than mortal.

These cases reveal not only the obsession with honor and the invariable recourse to force to vindicate it, but also the dispersed pattern of prestige and authority in the segmentary state. Several of the quarrels cited above grew out of incidents at the banqueting table or in the prince's private quarters, where nobles came and went with a familiarity inconceivable in later China. Moreover, it is important to note that in those cases where the prince himself felt personally insulted, he generally could do nothing but seek revenge in the same manner as any other noble. The actions, attitudes, and powers of the rulers in these incidents were no different from those of their opponents, and the issues of honor and supremacy were resolved through battle between comparable forces. This identity between rulers and ministers in terms of attitudes and resources is particularly striking in a case in Wei, where the ruler was angered by the fact that his chief minister controlled all the affairs of the court but had no other recourse than to have the minister assassinated.¹¹²

Of course, such affairs of honor were not limited to incidents involving the rulers of states, although these figure most prominently in the historical records. I earlier cited the case of Xi Ke, who gained command of the Jin army and led it to invade Qi to avenge an insult he had received there. Violent revenge could also be carried out within a lineage, as when Zhao Yang killed a fellow clansman for ignoring his orders.¹¹³ In another case an incident at the dinner table led two sons of the ruler of Qi to launch a civil war against the chief minister and ultimately drive him from the state. In fact, the *Zuo zhuan* depicts a world in which the entire nobility not only went out regularly on state-organized hunts and military expeditions but also lived their private lives surrounded by bands of armed retainers, constantly on guard against insult or attack.¹¹⁴

Although vengeance was an ever present threat in the lives of the nobility, it seems to have been particularly prevalent on the field of battle. This is true despite the fact that several speakers explicitly state that one should not use the battlefield, a place of service to the lord or state, to attain private vengeance; perhaps it became an explicit stricture only because of the frequency of its violation.¹¹⁵ Already loci of violence and the focus of concerns over honor, battlefields and their environs proved fertile grounds for acts of revenge. Men who had quarreled over the choice of weapons at the ancestral temple, who had been slighted in the ceremonial pre-battle meal, who had been demoted, or who had been cheated out of prisoners they had captured in battle all sought

recourse to violence to restore their honor, sometimes at the cost of the defeat of their own forces.¹¹⁶

These acts of vengeance usually entailed violations of hierarchy and threatened the survival of the state, so they cannot strictly be considered as sanctioned violence like sacrifice, hunting, and interstate warfare. However, they were so frequent that they seem to have been accepted by the nobility as a fact of life, and it appears that few aristocrats would have accepted the possibility of not responding to insults with some form of violence. In addition, there *are* two pieces of evidence which suggest that revenge had indeed taken on some ritualistic and normative aspects. When the ruler of Qi was still crown prince, he had quarreled with Bing Can's father over a piece of land, and after he ascended the throne, he disinterred the corpse of the deceased father and cut off its legs. When Bing Can was finally able to avenge this act by killing the ruler, he formally reported this act to his lineage's ancestral temple before fleeing the country.¹¹⁷ This action gave the act of revenge a strongly ceremonial character, and indeed linked it to a formal military action which also ended with the reporting of success and the presentation of booty at the ancestral temple.

The "normalization" of vengeance is even more explicit in the case of Yu Pian of Jin state. This man had been punished in front of the entire Jin army by Jia Ji, then commander of the central army, but Jia Ji himself was soon demoted by Yang Hu Fu. When Jia Ji killed Yang Hu Fu for revenge and then fled the state, Yu Pian was given the assignment of escorting the household of the fugitive to the capital. This appointment placed at his mercy the family of the man who had publicly humiliated him, but when urged by his followers to exact his revenge, he quoted a book which stated that neither favors nor insults received from someone could properly be paid back upon his descendants.¹¹⁸ This reference to a book that dictated the proper principles of reciprocity clearly suggests that the practice of vengeance had some degree of social sanction and regularity.

The cumulative weight of all this evidence shows that honor was supremely important to the aristocracy and that military prowess was absolutely central to their idea of honor. Warfare was one of the two great services of the state, and it was devoted to winning glory for the self and the lineage through victory in battle. In addition, a man's honor could be guaranteed in daily life only if he were ready to fight and conquer whoever slighted him. As the *Mozi* argued in the passage cited above, men demonstrated that they treasured honor and duty by fighting to the death over a single insulting word, so the only honorable man was the warrior.

This equation of manliness with martial prowess was appealed to

in the argument of the Jin commander cited earlier, but its most striking formulation occurs in the story of Zi Xi and Zi Nan. These men wooed the same woman, and her father, fearing to offend either, entrusted the decision to the chief minister Zi Chan. Zi Chan discussed the matter with the two suitors, and they agreed to allow the woman to decide. Zi Xi presented himself first, and, clad in his finest clothing, made the correct ritual offerings of jade and silk. Zi Nan followed, but he rode in clad in his warrior's garb, leapt from the chariot, fired in either direction, and then jumped back on the chariot and departed. The woman remarked, "Zi Xi was sincere and fine, but Zi Nan was a man. For a man to be a man and a woman a woman is what we call true order." The spurned Zi Xi sought out his successful rival and attacked him, but in the ensuing battle he himself was wounded.¹¹⁹

It is difficult to know exactly how to read this story. The woman's remarks sound almost like a parody of the Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names, and her choice of the warrior over the ritualist inverts the judgement of later Confucianism. However, as I argued earlier, the *Zuo zhuan* often articulates values at odds with those of later Confucianism, and this equation of true manliness with martial prowess not only jibes with many other passages in the *Zuo zhuan* but also with the ideals that appear in many odes in the *Shi jing* and in the "Stone Drum" inscriptions.¹²⁰ Indeed, in the *Shi jing* the character *ren* (仁), which in Confucian philosophy came to express an ideal of humanity based on tender compassion or benevolence, apparently simply described physical handsomeness or valor, and it was applied to a stalwart hunter of no moral worth.¹²¹ Thus the equation of true manliness with martial prowess probably reflects the standard judgement of the Spring and Autumn nobility.

Blood Covenants

The preceding sections have revealed an elite defined through sacrifice and warfare, drawn together through kin ties established by the cult of the ancestors and the ritual exchanges of meat, but riven by a segmentary division of authority among men who were devoted to an honor defined by heroism and martial prowess. Interstate wars, interlineage conflicts, and vendettas launched to avenge slighted honor generated incessant conflicts that broke down the old hierarchies of ritual and lineage law and replaced them with an increasingly savage struggle for dominance through armed force. In the conflicts of the Spring and Autumn period, the primary means devised to create new ties among men no longer tightly bound by the old Zhou order was the blood covenant (*meng* 盟). The practice of sealing these covenants

through the collective drinking of the blood of a sacrificial victim became fundamental to the political and social order in the early Eastern Zhou period, and it developed increasing importance and new functions through the seventh and sixth centuries. In the beginning it was employed to forge large coalitions of states under the dominance of a hegemon, and these coalitions replaced the Zhou monarchy as the primary link between increasingly independent states. Over the course of the centuries, as the power of ministerial lineages grew and the feudal states were riven by internal conflicts, the covenants also came to play the key role in forming alliances between several lineages, between lineages and alien states, and between the various contestants for supremacy in the state and the capital populace. In short, the sacrifices of covenants gradually replaced those of the ancestral cult as the primary mode of constituting a political order, and this order thus began to detach itself from kin structures. In the changing role of the covenant we can see how under the pressure of internecine conflict one of the primary institutions of the old order, sacrifice, began to evolve into one of the bases of the new.

The fundamental importance of covenants to the Eastern Zhou state is suggested by the sheer frequency of their occurrence in the historical records. The concordance to the commentaries on the *Chun qiu* lists 637 references to covenants, and although a single ceremony is often mentioned many times, there were still several hundred instances recorded over a period of less than three centuries.¹²² Moreover, various accounts written during the Warring States, Qin, and early Han periods present the covenant as the basis of the political order of the Eastern Zhou, or even the entire Zhou period. These accounts usually associate the covenant with the reliance on military force that characterized the hegemons of the Eastern Zhou, and they argue that reliance on covenants represented a decline from the charismatic rule of the ancient sage-kings. A story in the *Lü Shih chun qiu* thus portrays the Zhou founders as basing their power on force and blood-smeared covenants, and it criticizes them for "relying on sacrifices and blood oaths in order to create trust."¹²³ The *Huainanzi* lists the principles and practices that underlay social order in the successive dynasties of antiquity.

Shen Nong made no commands and the people followed him. Yu made commands but used no punishments. The Xia never went back on their word. The Shang used oaths [*shi* 誓], and the Zhou used sacrificial covenants.¹²⁴

This list is clearly not only in the order of descending chronology but also descending propriety and efficacy. The Han dynasty writer Huan Tan traced a similar descent with a more explicitly moralizing language.

Those without commands and punishments are called *huang*. Those who make commands but do not punish are called *di*. Those who reward the good and punish the wicked and bring the feudal lords to serve in their court are called "kings". Those who raise up armies and bind men with sacrificial covenants are called hegemons.¹²⁵

That the use of blood covenants was linked to the hegemons of the Spring and Autumn period and represented a decline from the morally potent rule of antiquity became the characteristic doctrine of the Confucian school.¹²⁶

Although enmeshed in a vision of history that idealized a mythic antiquity, the idea that covenants emerged in the Zhou and that their rise to prominence reflected a decline in royal power and an increasing reliance on force is both accurate and insightful. While they did not rule without commands or force, the Shang and Western Zhou monarchs had commanded great prestige as intercessors with the gods and had wielded a considerable military power that gave them clear superiority over other nobles and tribal chieftains. Although there is evidence of some covenant-like ceremonies under the Shang and literary references to their use in the early Western Zhou, it was in the struggles of competing states and lineages during the Eastern Zhou that the covenant came to play a decisive role.¹²⁷ Even the Confucian texts that regarded them as a sign of moral decay acknowledged their fundamental importance to the political order that emerged from the decline of the monarchy, and they described covenants as one of the "great services" of the state.¹²⁸

Covenants were forms of oaths in which all parties pledged to uphold a certain set of rules or pursue a certain course of action, but they were distinguished from ordinary oaths through the killing of a sacrificial animal and the drinking of its blood. This ceremony invoked the presence of the gods and ancestors as witnesses who would punish any breach or nonobservance.¹²⁹ Some Confucian writers state that only after the first of the hegemons, Lord Huan of Qi, did men begin to use sacrifices to sanctify oaths, but various texts including the *Shi jing* refer to blood covenants as early as the Western Zhou, and the records of Lord Huan's activities show that he also used sacrifices.¹³⁰ In only one case, in 541 B.C., was a covenant sealed without a sacrifice, and that was only allowed after a special petition because it was simply the renewal of an old covenant.¹³¹ Without the sacralizing power of a sacrifice there could be no covenant.

The clearest evidence of the sharp distinction between oaths with and without sacrifice, and the unique role of the former in creating bonds between men, appears in two stories dealing with the reception of emissaries. One describes how an embassy from the state of Chu to the

state of Jin had to cross over Zheng. When they reached the border of Zheng, they were met by a delegation from that state and swore an oath to do no harm within its borders. This was a standard practice of diplomatic protocol that was prescribed in ritual texts. However, in another case of receiving an embassy passing through a state, an attending official faked evidence of the sealing of a covenant—a sacrifice buried with the text of an oath—and then reported this evidence to the king. The use of a covenant demonstrated the formation of ties with another state and indicated that the head of the group that had received the embassy, the heir apparent, was planning a rebellion. As a result he was executed.¹³² This contrast demonstrates that the difference between an oath and a covenant was quite clear to the men of the period and that this difference was of the highest significance. The blood of the sacrifice marked a supremely solemn and binding agreement, and it was used to forge political ties between men.

The procedure of sealing a covenant can be reconstructed from scattered references in the sources and confirmed by the archeological excavations of numerous blood covenants at Houma.¹³³ The participants in the covenant first purified themselves through fasting, erected an altar, and then dug a pit in front of it.¹³⁴ They sacrificed an animal, cut off its left ear, placed this in one vessel, and caught its blood in another. The archeological evidence reveals that these sacrifices generally employed a sheep, and the significance of this will be discussed in Chapter Five. Since it was the custom to cut off the left ear of an enemy killed in battle and, according to the *Zhou li*, of animals killed in ceremonial hunts, the disposition of its body clearly equated the sacrificial animal with a vanquished enemy or captured prey. This equation was sometimes heightened through the use of human blood. Blood was then sprinkled on the altar to summon the spirits, and the text of the covenant was read. This text included a list of the participants, the terms of the oath, and sometimes a curse upon those who violated the covenant. Each of the participants then smeared some blood on his lips while another held the left ear of the animal.¹³⁵ After the reading of the text and the smearing of the blood, the sacrificial animal and one copy of the oath, also smeared with blood, were buried in the pit. Other copies of the text were given to the participants, and these were stored in special archives.¹³⁶ Every covenant had a master (*zhu* 主) who directed the proceedings and was charged with enforcing the terms of the oath. The master of the covenant had the honor of drinking the first draught of blood, and the task of holding the left ear, which resulted in drinking last, became a sign of inferior status.¹³⁷

Although the text of the oath sometimes included a curse on those who violated its terms, it was a common practice to perform a separate

ceremony called a “malediction” (*zu* 詛) following the covenant. This served the purpose of calling down the vengeance of the spirits and ancestors on any who transgressed the oath.¹³⁸

The sealing of covenants extended the sanctions of religion to those interpersonal ties which were not secured through sacrificial duties to common ancestors.¹³⁹ In this capacity, the ritual first came to prominence with the decline of the monarchy, when it was used to secure alliances between the increasingly independent states and became the mechanism for establishing the great leagues centered on the hegemon.¹⁴⁰ The flight of the Zhou dynasty to its eastern capital, Loyang, in 770 B.C. marked the definitive end of the political and military dominance of the royal house. When the southern state of Chu began to expand into the valley of the Yellow River and claimed the royal title in 704 B.C., the feudal lords of the Zhou state lacked any means to organize resistance. In response to this threat, Lord Huan of Qi and his chief minister Guan Zhong assembled the rulers of the central states in 681 B.C. at Beixing, and Lord Huan became the “hegemon” (*ba* 霸) of this league of states. In 678 B.C., the league sealed the first recorded multi-state “joint covenant” (*tong meng* 同盟), and in the *Zuo zhuan* the hegemon is routinely called the “master of the covenant.”¹⁴¹ In 656 B.C., Lord Huan led an army of the allied states and defeated Chu. Chu in response organized a league based on a covenant in 633 B.C. For a century and a half the struggle between these two alliances, the northern one generally controlled by Jin and the southern by Chu, dominated the political and military history of China. In 546 and 541 B.C., an assembly of fourteen states dominated by the newly ascendant ministerial houses sealed general covenants to end interstate combat, but these both ended in failure.

In addition to the formation of the great leagues, covenants were used by states to end hostilities, pledge amicable relations, and fix boundaries.¹⁴² The most complete covenant preserved was sealed by a victorious army of several states with the defeated state of Zheng, and it may serve as a model of the content and format of these interstate treaties.

All those who participate in this covenant agree not to hoard grain, not to monopolize profit, not to protect conspirators, not to harbor criminals, to give assistance in the event of civil war or insurrection, to have the same friends and enemies, and to support the royal house.

If anyone violates these commands, may the guardians of reverence and covenants, the spirits of the great mountains and rivers, the collected heavenly spirits and spirits who receive sacri-

fi ce, the former kings and former lords, and the ancestors of the seven surnames and twelve states destroy him so that his people desert him, he loses rank and clan, and his state and family are extinguished.¹⁴³

In this interstate covenant of 562 B.C. we already see great concern over internal insurrection and civil war, and during this period covenants were increasingly used to create or reinforce bonds between parties competing for power *within* a given state. Covenants were often sealed between lineages or families conspiring to arrange the selection of a particular prince as heir apparent, to seize the throne, or to destroy an enemy who seemed on the verge of seizing it himself. In some cases, such "private" covenants were likewise sealed between the current ruler of a state and parties whose support was essential to maintain his rule.¹⁴⁴ Covenants also came to play a general role in guaranteeing pledges between individuals and to give religious authority to testimony in legal cases.¹⁴⁵ Thus, over the course of the Spring and Autumn period, these ceremonies came to accompany virtually any collective or public action in which men sought to join themselves together or pledge their good faith and loyalty.

One innovation in the use of the covenant that had a tremendous impact on the development of the Chinese state in this period was the increasing tendency to use covenants to secure the support or allegiance of the capital populace (*guo ren* 國人). As rulers and ministerial lineages battled for dominance, they had increasing recourse to the potential power of the inhabitants of the capital cities who were mobilized for military service or mob action. These inhabitants were the "citizens" of the states of the Eastern Zhou, which at the beginning of the period were city-states that governed directly only their own capitals and the nearby towns.¹⁴⁶ The *guo ren* consisted of the lowest level of the nobility—the *shi*—as well as merchants and artisans. The former were a primary constituent of the army, and the entire population could expel the lord, overthrow the government, and set up new rulers. Consequently it became a maxim that the outrage of the populace was like a raging fire, and the texts often explain that a certain decision was made "in order to quiet the capital populace."¹⁴⁷ The capital's inhabitants thus came to play a decisive role in the internecine struggles between the various lineages of the nobility and often decided the succession to the throne, so ambitious men sought to win their favor through conspicuous exemplary conduct or public charity.¹⁴⁸ In times of crisis the entire populace could be assembled in order to decide the policy of the state.¹⁴⁹ Because of the importance of these men to the political order of the state, many who hoped to seize power, had seized power, or had

recovered the throne after temporarily losing it would seal a blood covenant with the capital populace.¹⁵⁰ Thus in addition to providing the mechanism for new modes of elite political organization, the blood covenant also furnished the means of drawing new social groups into the political order and of binding them to the emerging rulers of late Spring and Autumn China. We shall see in the next chapter the crucial role of this development in the Warring States transition.

The archeological finds at Houma cited above have provided some new insights into the developing role of the covenant at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. At this site Chinese archeologists have excavated more than 300 pits that contain fragments of the texts of covenants and the remains of sacrifices. All the texts refer to a single political struggle that, according to the most likely theory, took place in the years 496–495 B.C. That men involved in a life-and-death struggle for power should have devoted the time and energy to perform this vast number of ceremonies in the span of a few years suggests the tremendous importance attached to covenants in the political realm.

Perhaps even more significant than the frequency of the covenants was their content. The participants in the covenants in all cases were the members of the Zhao clan that had temporarily seized power and their allies. While a few texts pronounced a ban on seizing the property of enemy lineages or households that had fled the state, and one appears to have been a formal address or prayer by the puppet lord of Jin, the vast bulk of the texts deals entirely with bans or collective death sentences placed on various enemy lineages or households. Some of these list only a single lineage or household, while others list as many as nine lineages and twenty-one households, even in some cases giving lists of specific relatives such as paternal grandfathers, uncles, and brothers. The most frequent form of text begins with a reference to the "covenant of Jia," a polite term used in lieu of the taboo personal name of the master of this covenant, but others do not mention him, and these are generally presumed to be covenants by former enemies or neutrals who hoped to join the party that was then in power by pledging to help destroy their enemies.

These Houma covenants thus reflect one of the major developments of the Spring and Autumn period, the war to the death between major lineages, which culminated with the destruction of a lineage (*mie zu* 滅族) or its partition (*fen zu* 分族). In the world of the Zhou nobility the lineages were the fundamental units of political organization, each possessing land, offices, military capacity, a dependent population, and an ancestral temple. They became the leading actors in the internecine wars that dominated the sixth and fifth centuries, and when one of them was defeated, the other lineages divided its land and dependents and

obliterated its temple.¹⁵¹ In addition to enforcing the expulsion or extermination of enemy lineages, the Houma covenants also refer several times to the partition of lineages, so they reveal some of the concrete detail underlying the formulas of the literary texts.

Moreover, in their bans on individual households and the listing of their members they reveal a transitional phase in the political history of the family in China, the gradual disappearance of the kin group as a state-like unit and its replacement by the individual household as a unit of economic production and the provision of service. This shift was marked, as will be discussed in the next chapter, by the shift in the meaning of *mie zu* from a political event approximating the destruction of a state to a form of collective punishment that fixed the legal limits of the individual family.

The Houma documents reveal the culmination of the use of covenants to establish new political alliances and a new public realm in the wake of the breakdown of the old "lineage law." In one of the many civil wars that plagued Jin in this period and led to its ultimate division, one party and its would-be adherents sealed collective covenants which drew up itemized lists of the enemies who were to be driven from the state and killed if they returned. In the midst of general breakdown, men were seeking to reconstitute the state through binding all of its members together with covenants that ostracized all others who would not join. In this inclusion of new elements into the public realm, the redefinition of the bonds between ruler and ruled, and the occasional focus on kin units defined by the individual household, we can see some intimations of the Warring States transition that forms the subject of the next chapter.

Conclusion

The Eastern Zhou states were dominated by an aristocracy that defined itself through performance of the "great services," which consisted of offering sacrifice at the altars of the ancestral temple and the state, and winning booty and glory through ceremonial hunts and equal-ceremonial combats. All these activities culminated in presentations at the altars, and the distribution and consumption of the meat from these ceremonies served both to define the elite and link it together in networks of exchange.

This aristocracy was in turn divided into a hierarchy of lineages through the principles of "lineage law," but the lower-level lineages were simply reduced replicas of the royal house and the feudal lords, each with its own capital, ancestral temple, *she* altar, dependent population, and military forces. Because this segmentary pattern of authority

gave each lineage a base of power independent of its titular lord, and all nobles were ascriptive kin, the lower levels of the Zhou nobility were able to enjoy a proximity of status and a casual sociability with their rulers which was radically different from that of courtiers in imperial China. They were also able to compete with their putative superiors and their fellows in a general struggle for supremacy.

The battles which constituted one element of the "great services" were primarily means of gaining glory for the lineage and the self, so the nobles of the Spring and Autumn period lived a life devoted to the winning of prestige through heroism and martial prowess. This was true not only in wars between states but also in the struggles between lineages for supremacy within the state, and in the constant vendettas and acts of bloody vengeance provoked by the obsessive concern with honor and prowess. The pursuit of honor for the lineage and the individual noble led the Zhou aristocracy into a deepening spiral of civil war and mutual annihilation that ended in the destruction of much of the nobility and the creation of the new political and social forms that characterized the Warring States period.

One innovation that appeared in the Spring and Autumn period itself as a new means of reconstituting the political order was the blood covenant. First used by the most powerful of the feudal states to forge leagues and impose their own authority as the "master of the covenant" or hegemon, these sacrificial oaths were gradually applied to any situation in which men sought to forge new coalitions and impose binding ties on their fellows. In this way these instruments of interstate diplomacy came to provide the means for organizing conspiracy, insurrection, and civil war. They were also employed to draw new social elements, most notably the members of the capital populace, into active service in the political struggles of the day. As civil wars and the increasingly frequent destruction of states and lineages tore apart the old order of feudalism and lineage law, the blood covenant came to play an ever more important role as the sole means of binding men together for collective action. The culmination of this process is vividly demonstrated in the large number of covenants unearthed at Houma.

In the Introduction I suggested that the patterns of sanctioned violence could cast light on the nature and distribution of authority, on the fundamental divisions of a society, on what its people held to be of deepest significance, and perhaps on how men understood their own civilization and its relation to the natural world. For the Eastern Zhou state we have found that authority was explicitly identified with the performance of the ritually guided violence of sacrifice and warfare, that this authority was distributed throughout the aristocracy on the basis of ascriptive kin ties, that the matter of highest significance was honor, that

the fundamental unit of elite society was the lineage, and that ritual violence granted authority and structured society through its culmination in the service of the spirits, both ancestral and local. Sanctioned violence and the authority which it defined were both ultimately expressions of the cultic service which linked men to the world of ancestors and gods.

When the social order defined through differential relations to common ancestors and the ritual service of the altars began to crumble together with the monarchy, new political ties were constituted through the presumptive power of blood sacrifice to substantiate words and thus make oaths sacred and binding. With the accelerating disintegration of that order in the incessant wars and vendettas of the late Spring and Autumn period, the use of blood sacrifice to sanction pledges became the dominant form of binding men together in a political order and imposing obedience to the dictates of the new rulers. In this development we see the beginnings of the new patterns of sanctioned violence and authority that characterized the Warring States period.

Chapter Two

THE WARRING STATE

The constant wars of the Zhou noble lineages gradually led to the creation of ever larger territorial units through the conquest of alien states and the extension of central government control into the countryside. These were called "warring states" because they devoted themselves to warfare, they were created through the progressive extension of military service, and the registration and mobilization of their populations for battle remained fundamental to their existence as states.¹ They kept every form of violence that had defined the political order of the Zhou nobility—warfare, sacrifice, blood oaths, and vengeance—but these were reorganized and reinterpreted as constitutive elements of the new order. Whereas under the nobility the actual performance of ritually sanctioned violence had been the hallmark of authority, in the Warring States all men engaged in licit violence, while authority was associated with its manipulation and control. Instead of being a means of defending honor, sanctioned violence served to establish or reinforce the authoritarian, hierarchic bonds that constituted the new social structure. In place of the lineage as the primary unit of both politics and elite kinship, the state secured control of military force, while the kin groups were reduced to the individual households that provided both taxes and labor service. These kin units were in turn defined through patterns of sacrifice, vengeance, and collective punishments. The ultimate sanction of segmentary, aristocratic rule in the ancestral cults was replaced by forms of sanctioned violence and authority that were justified through the imitation of the "patterns of Heaven" by a single, cosmically potent ruler. Finally, this new organization and interpretation of violence