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### “Fathers” Galore

Comments on a Suffix in Ancient Chinese Names

*Foison de pères. Commentaires sur un suffixe nominal en Chine ancienne*

衆父——對一個古代中國名詞后綴的幾點看法

Robert H. Gassmann

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## **“Fathers” Galore: Comments on a Suffix in Ancient Chinese Names**

*Robert H. Gassmann*<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Father and “Father(s)”**

The role of father in Chinese society is one of paramount importance, being the commanding position in the fundamental dyadic relationship of father and son. This position ranks supreme—even in rather awkward and discrediting situations as the one described in the following passage from the *Hánfēizì*:<sup>2</sup>

E 1 Among those of [the principality of] Chǔ, there was “Upright Gōng”. When his father stole a sheep, he reported him to the authorities. The magistrate said, “Put him to death!” He thought the man was being honest towards the ruler but dishonest towards the father. So he revenged this and sentenced him to death. From this is to be seen that the honest subject of a ruler is the beastly son of a father.<sup>3</sup>

The enormous prestige and great structural importance of the role of the father in ancient Chinese society also show up in the doubling of the character fù as the written form for, on the one hand, the word ‘father’ (noun), on the other hand, the word ‘to behave as a father’ (verb):

E 2 The ruler should behave like a ruler, and the ministerial like a ministerial; the father should behave like a father, and the son like a son.<sup>4</sup>

In many essential situations and for many important social events, fathers were clearly the ultimate point of reference. When Duke Dìng of Téng died, his son

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1. I gratefully acknowledge the insightful and helpful comments made by William G. Boltz, Kai Vogelsang and Nicolas Zufferey on a pre-publication version of this paper.
  2. For Chinese characters of transcribed expressions, name, titles, and quotations from the sources, readers are kindly referred to the annex.
  3. *HFZ* 49.09. Cf. Watson (1967): 105-106.
  4. Lùn Yǔ 12.11. Cf. Legge (1960a): 256.

and successor, Duke Wén, sent Rán Yǒu to consult Mencius about how to properly discharge the funeral duties. Mencius informed him of the various ceremonies to be observed, and Rán Yǒu returned to Téng to report to the new ruler, who determined that three years' mourning should be observed.<sup>5</sup> The received text then tells us how certain groups of mourners reacted to these measures:

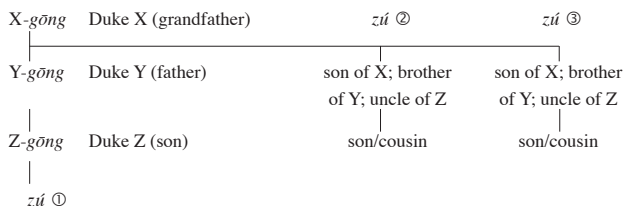
E 3 His aged relatives, and the body of the officers, did not wish that it should be so, and said, “The former Patriarchs of Lǚ, that kingdom which we honour, have, none of them, observed this practice, neither have any of our own former Patriarchs observed it. For you to act contrary to their example is not proper. [...]”<sup>6</sup>

The expression translated by Legge as “aged relatives” has the following form in the original: “father(s) and elder brother(s)” (*fǔ xiōng*). Given the context, this expression must strike the non-Chinese reader as quite unusual: The *father* of Duke Wén had just died, so the first term could definitely not refer to him. Who, then, does it refer to? Furthermore, given the generally observed rules of primogeniture, it is to be assumed that Duke Wén became his successor because he was the eldest son, so why should elder brothers be mentioned?

In the text quoted above, the two elements of the composite term *fǔ xiōng* seem to belong to the realm of kinship. This could be based on the following observation: the larger expression “aged relatives (*fǔ xiōng*) and the body of officers (*bǎi guān*)” appears later on in the text in the modified form “all the officers (*bǎi guān*) and his relatives (*zú rén*)”. The latter part contains the word *zú* meaning “branch of a lineage”. So, the expression *fǔ xiōng* in this case obviously refers to members of the kinship group. As it cannot refer to the father and elder brothers of the new ruler, *i.e.*, in genealogical terms, of ego, it therefore suggests an interpretation within a generational framework: the term “father(s)” would be referring to relatives belonging to the same generation as the biological father; the term “brother(s)” would be referring to relatives belonging to the same generation as ego. This normally implies that the persons thus designated would be older than ego (but not necessarily all “aged”). The following graph serves to illustrate this kind of constellation within a lineage:

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5. By following the traditional conventions for transcribing names I hope to give consideration to the reading habits of the general reader and to facilitate comparisons with the usual translations. For the few names just mentioned I would normally adopt the—admittedly more cumbersome, but far more informative—forms (at times added in brackets): Ding-Patriarch of Téng for Duke Ding, Wén-Patriarch for Duke Wén, Yǒu of the lineage of the Rán for Rán Yǒu, and Squire Mèng for Mencius (Mèng zǐ). For more information, *cf.* Gassmann (2006a).
  6. *Mèng* 3A.2. Translation (with adaptations) according to Legge (1960b): 237.
  7. For the reading *fǔ* instead of *fù*, *cf.* below and note 8.

**Illustration 1: A multi-generational lineage (*zōng*) with three branches (*zú*)**



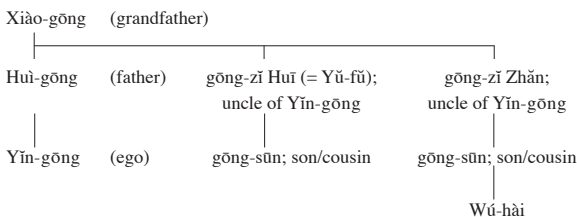
This lets us assume that the paternal uncles of Z/ego belonging to the generation of his father might have been collectively referred to as “fathers”,<sup>8</sup> The paternal cousins of Z/ego, correspondingly, were collectively referred to as “elder brothers” if they were born before him, and as “younger brothers” if born after him.<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, the sources furnish us with instances which bear out the above assumptions. In the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* we find the following text accompanying an entry in the *Chūn Qiū*:

E 4 Wú-hài had died. Yǔ-fū requested [for him from the Duke] a canonical epithetas well as a name for a branch lineage.<sup>10</sup>

The name Wú-hài refers to the grandson of gōng-zǐ Zhǎn (Ducal Son Zhǎn), who was a son of Duke Xiào of Lǔ (Lǔ Xiào-gōng). The elder brother of Zhǎn, Duke Huì, was the father of the current ruler, Duke Yǔn. Yǔ-fū was another son of Duke Xiào, *i.e.* younger brother of Duke Huì, and therefore a paternal uncle of Duke Yǔn.<sup>11</sup>

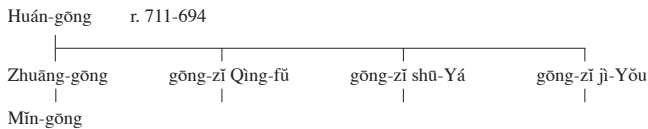
**Illustration 2: Excerpt from the lineage (*zōng*) of the rulers of Lǔ**



8. I therefore suggest that the character concerned should be read *fū* when the word refers to the biological father, and *fǔ* when it writes the suffixal form.
9. The two terms could possibly also include maternal uncles or maternal cousins, as certain commentaries suggest (*cf.* HYDCD 11.267). However, I shall not pursue the analysis of the field of ‘elder brothers’ any further in the context of this paper as there is no evidence that this group was entitled to a specific name form.
10. Yǔn 8.10; Legge (1960c): 26b, Par. 10.
11. On the occasion of the death of a further brother of Yǔ-fū in Yǔn 5.8, the Yǔn-Patriarch refers to this person as *shū fū* ‘uncle-*fū*’; 20b, Par. 7. *Cf.* also below at note 16.

This table shows that the bearer of this suffixed name form belonged to the generation preceding that of the current chief of a lineage (*zōng*), *i.e.* to the generation of Duke Huì, the father of Duke Yīn. As the sources mentioned above only transmit a suffixed name form for Yǔ-fū and not for any of his brothers, the table also raises the question whether *all* the members of the elder generation, *i.e.* all (paternal) uncles, were entitled to this form or not. The situation in the genealogical context of the so-called sān Huán, *i.e.* the three branch lineages issuing from the Huán-Patriarch of Lǚ, seems to suggest an answer:<sup>12</sup>

**Illustration 3: Descendants of the Huán-Patriarch of Lǚ**



The youngest of the three brothers (not counting Duke Zhuāng<sup>13</sup>), the gōng-zǐ jì-Yǒu (Ducal Son junior-Yǒu), was probably the most famous of them, as he occupied the position of chief minister during the reign periods of his brother and of two of his sons, Duke Mǐn and Duke Xī.<sup>14</sup> As a member of the generation of the father of Duke Mǐn and Duke Xī, we would expect there to be some trace of this in a corresponding name form with the suffix *fǔ*. The search is negative; there is no evidence for the form Yǒu-fū. The same applies to his elder brother, the gōng-zǐ shū-Yá (Ducal Son minor-Yá), who due to his seniority would presumably have had even more right to the honorific. This brother died before jì-Yǒu, who had forced him to commit suicide after trying to disrupt the arrangements for succession of Duke Zhuāng.<sup>15</sup> This suggests the following narrowing of our interpretation: the honorific, in this case, is restricted to the eldest living brother or paternal uncle. Younger uncles may be granted this suffix after the death of an elder brother thus named.

This seems to be the case with the gōng-zǐ Qìng-fū (Ducal Son Qìng-fū), who only for a very short time (presumably during his exile) was not mentioned with the honorific but with the form Gǒng-zhòng (Zhuāng 32–Mǐn 2; Wén 15). His youngest brother, the gōng-zǐ jì-Yǒu, died in 643 (Xī 16.2), presumably

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12. Cf. the corresponding chapters in Gassmann (2006a) and Gassmann (2006b): 791-806.  
 13. Of this ruler we have the precise date of birth: *CQ* Huán 6.5, *i.e.* on October 5, 705. He dies on August 11, 661, in his 32<sup>nd</sup> reign year (*CQ* Zhuāng 32.4) at the age of 43 years, 10 months and 6 days.  
 14. “Chéng-jì-Yǒu (the Chéng-junior Yǒu) [...] received Bì and became the Supreme Qìng.” Cf. Zhao 32.6; 741b, Par. 3.  
 15. Zhuāng 32.3 (661); Legge (1960c): 120b-121b, Par. 3.

between fifty and sixty years of age. We do not know for certain, but it seems quite a safe guess to assume that Qìng-fǔ must have died after him, thus preventing that the honorific was transferred to his youngest brother. Clear traces of such a transferal of the honorific can be made out in the case of Yǔ-fǔ, the younger brother of Duke Huì mentioned above: On the occasion of the death of the eldest brother of Yǔ-fǔ, *i.e.* Zāng Xī-bó (the Xī-major from the lineage of the Zāng; note the *bó* ‘major’ denoting a first born), Duke Yīn refers to this person as *shū-fǔ* ‘uncle-fǔ’.<sup>16</sup> As long as this brother was alive, he apparently was the legitimate bearer of the honorific; it was transferred to Yǔ-fǔ, evidently as the next in line, after his death.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation would also explain the, at first sight unnecessary, existence of two forms designating a paternal uncle: the simple form *shū* ‘uncle’ and the suffixed form *shū fǔ* ‘uncle-fǔ’. The first form refers to an uncle without the honorific (because an elder brother is still alive), the second to the eldest surviving uncle and bearer of the honorific.

Interestingly, the gōng-zǐ Qìng-fǔ is bearer of the honorific not only *during the life-time* of his ruling brother, the Zhuāng-Patriarch, but also already at a very early date in his reign (Zhuāng 2.2; 691), *i.e.* shortly after his brother assumed the position of ruler in 692.<sup>18</sup> This seems to indicate that the honorific is due, or granted to a person, as soon as there are members of the next generation, *i.e.* as soon as the ruling Duke has a son and potential successor. This was the case: the son zǐ-Bān, presumably born somewhere round 690 and therefore about thirty years of age, was installed as successor, but was killed before he gained the position of a ruler with ancestral status, *i.e.* his own first calendrical year of reign. It is therefore not unreasonable to believe that the closeness of the dates is simply coincidental. That the gōng-zǐ Qìng-fǔ is registered as bearer of the honorific in 691, and that zǐ-Bān must have been born in the vicinity of the year 690 therefore allows for the following hypothesis: with the birth of a son, the eldest living brother of the father, *i.e.* a paternal uncle, is designated with the honorific *fǔ* in relation to the potential successor.

Let us sum up the observations and their tentative interpretation: the honorific *fǔ* seems to have been granted to the eldest living brother of the head of a

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16. Yīn 5.8; Legge (1960c): 20b, Par. 7.

17. This name form appears for the first time in the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* appended to Yīn 4.5; Legge (1960c): 16b, Par. 5. The *Chūn Qiū* entry has the form ‘Huī’ ([gōng-zǐ] Huī). This slight discrepancy is probably due either to the fact that the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* was written or edited later than the *Chūn Qiū*, or to the fact that the meaning of the difference in form was no longer noticed.

18. This fact flatly contradicts the somewhat hasty explanation I favoured earlier, namely that age and seniority was the decisive factor for assuming or receiving the honorific suffix. Cf. Gassmann (2006a): 540-541.

lineage (*zōng*).<sup>19</sup> The first grant could have been on the occasion of the birth of a successor for the position of head. The honorific was transferred to the next born living uncle upon death of the first supplementary “father”, thus ensuring that this function was always fulfilled. The act of naming and the triggering occasion of a birth brings to mind a ritual or custom which is well known in our cultural sphere: that of a *godfather*.<sup>20</sup> The function of the godfather was clearly to keep his nephew on the path of good conduct, to remonstrate with him when he departed from it, and to be one of his prime counsels. Commenting on the death of his (first) godfather, Zāng Xī-bó, Duke Yīn mentions that despite his uncle-godfather’s dissatisfaction with his conduct of affairs he would in no way be tempted to forget him.

Based on these findings, we suggest to emend the translation of E 3 above in the following way:

E 3 *His godfather, elder cousins, and the body of the officers, did not wish that it should be so, and said, [...].*

## 2. More “(God)father(s)”

So far, the cases discussed covered situations within a kinship group, *i.e.* within one and the same lineage. What about the situation in non-related lineages? The impression that the terms *fù/fǔ* (“fathers”) and *xiōng* (“elder brothers”) must, in certain contexts, have been implicitly *collective* correlates with the existence of the explicitly collective term *zhū fǔ* (“all the fathers”) and *zhū xiōng* (“all the elder brothers/cousins”). In a conversation between Tāng and his minister, Yīn, the latter says:

E 5 Ministerials whom the ruler does not address with the personal name are of four [types]: the (god)fathers (*zhū fǔ*) he uses as ministerials but does not address with the personal name; the elder brothers/cousins (*zhū xiōng*) he uses as ministerials but does not address with the personal name; the ministerials of predecessor (ancestral) kings he uses as ministerials but does not address with the personal

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19. This condition, *i.e.* being the eldest living brother of the head of a lineage (here of the ruler of a principality), already reveals a fundamental weakness of these explanations, as normally and due to the rule of primogeniture there is no living elder brother. This can only happen, when the person with the suffix *mèng* indicating the eldest of a secondary wife (in contrast with *bó*, the son of the principal wife), is older. The search will evidently have to go on.

20. It is not unusual for a language to have related words for this function, *e.g.* Italian (*padre* - ‘father’ vs *padrino* ‘godfather’), French (*père* vs *parrain*).

name; officers whom he is fully obliged to he uses as ministerials but does not address with the personal name.<sup>21</sup>

These collective terms, especially *zhū fǔ*, cause one to wonder whether all the threads of the story surrounding the suffix have already been unravelled. It seems natural to assume that one and the same person could only have one godfather at a time; a collective term would then only be plausible if deceased godfathers were counted. But the above excerpt E 5 is unmistakably talking about more than one godfather *of the ruler*. Within the kinship group, we seem to have already encountered the working of a mechanism which transfers the honorific from a deceased godfather to the next paternal uncle, one at a time. This clearly implies that the term *zhū fǔ* must include further “godfathers”, *i.e.* “godfathers” originating from other, unrelated kinship groups. The “original” godfather in the stricter sense of the word could, of course, be a member of this group.<sup>22</sup>

Do we have evidence for such “non-kindred godfathers”? Let us look at the following revealing excerpt from the *Hánfēizǐ*:

E 6 Duke Huán of Qí intended to install Guǎn zhòng (the midborn of the lineage of the Guǎn) [as godfather]. He called together the group of ministerials and said: “I, the solitary Rén, intend to install Guǎn zhòng as ‘midborn godfather’ (*zhòng fǔ*). Whoever finds this commendable, turns left after entering the door; whoever finds this not commendable, turns right after entering the door.” Dōng-guō Yá placed himself in the middle of the door. The Duke said: “I, the solitary Rén, am installing Guǎn zhòng as ‘midborn godfather’, and I ordered those in favour to the left, those against it to the right. Now, Squire,<sup>23</sup> why are you standing in the middle of the door?” Yá said: “Is Guǎn zhòng, because of his knowledge, going to be made [someone] capable of making plans for the Empire?” The Duke said: “[He will] be capable.” [Yá said:] “Is he, by [this] decision, going to be made [someone] daring to undertake great operations?” The Duke said: “[He will] dare to.” Yá said: “If he knows how to make plans for the Empire and is [also] enabled [to do so], and if he takes decisions and [also] dares to undertake great operations, then you, Sire, are subsequently exclusively charging him with the [power] grips of the principality. If someone with the capabilities of a Guǎn zhòng rides in the position of the Duke and thereby creates order in the principality of Qí, will you succeed in making the danger [for you] disappear?” The Duke said: “I think [this analysis] excellent.” He then commanded Xí Péng to look after the inner [affairs], and Guǎn zhòng to look after the foreign affairs. With [these] chancellors he formed a triad.<sup>24</sup>

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21. *Shuō Yuǎn* (1992): 2.2.

22. *Cf.* the remarks at note 27.

23. This is my translation of ǐ, the term of address for ministerials.

24. *Hánfēizǐ* 33.12. Liao II:69-70. The name form ‘midborn godfather’ (*zhòng fǔ*) is met with quite frequently in the *Lǚ Shì Chūn Qiū*.



This excerpt, on the one hand, shows the range of power that could accompany the function of a godfather. On the other, it illustrates that men from a different kinship group could be appointed godfathers.<sup>25</sup> Guǎn Yí-wú, better known by the name form Guǎn zhòng (midborn of the lineage of the Guǎn), was the outstanding ministerial of Duke Huán of Qí (r. 684 to 642), who, with his expert help, managed to become a hegemonial leader. The lineage of Duke Huán of Qí belonged to the Jiāng clan, the lineage of the Guǎn to the royal Jī clan. Another example: Xún Lín-fǔ was an important ministerial of five of the Dukes of Jin (*cf.* Illustration 5 below). The lineage of the Dukes of Jin belonged to the royal Jī clan, the lineage of the Xún to the Zǐ clan. These two cases are clear evidence that personages from non-related kinship groups were eligible for the function of godfather.

Having ascertained that the suffix *fǔ* is attached to the name of personages functioning as godfathers, and referring back to the lexicographical description of the meaning of *fǔ* (*i.e.* “honorific suffix attached to names of high-ranking men”), it seems surprising that not all high-ranking men happened to be bearers of this suffix. In fact, compared to the really large number of men in high ranks we know of in various principalities, for only comparatively few of them this name form is actually transmitted. In the following listings of such men from the principalities of Lǚ and Jin distilled from the *Chūn Qiū* and the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* quite an unexpected pattern appears.<sup>26</sup> The listings show the periods when a person was mentioned with the suffixed name form (capital letters refer to the person; numbers from left to right refer to the years in the reign periods of the Dukes of Lǚ; *e.g.* Zhòng-fǔ [A] was so named in the 1st year of the reign period of Duke Yīn [1]; the gōng-sūn Guī-fǔ [G] was so named between the years 10 and 18 of Duke Xuān [7]):

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25. In this case it can also not be verified whether the appointment took place on the occasion of the birth of a son and successor.
  26. Some of them are, of course, also mentioned in other sources, but the passages quoted are difficult to arrange in chronological sequences (which is evidently possible with the two sources mentioned here). Surprisingly, further sources do hardly add to the various lists of godfathers compiled here, thus indicating that these can be regarded as comparatively complete for the period covered. A range of major sources not tapped here is certainly the corpus of inscriptional material on bronzes, where the suffix occurs in considerable number. This would, no doubt, confirm the importance of these personages and maybe extend the period of validity my preliminary observations presented here. However, due to my limited competence in this field I shall gladly leave this line of research to better qualified colleagues.

Illustration 4: Godfathers in the Principality of Lǚ

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	1											
B	2											
C	4-11											
D		9										
E			2	2								
F						6	10					
G							10-18					
(F)								2	5			
H									29			
I										22-26		
J											7-12	
K												11
L												16

Rulers of Lǚ: 1: Yǐn; 2: Huán; 3: Zhuāng; 4: Mǐn; 5: Xǐ; 6: Wén; 7: Xuān; 8: Chéng; 9: Xiāng; 10: Zhāo; 11: Dìng; 12: Āi.

Godfathers of Lǚ: A: Zhòng-fǔ; B: Bì Qín-fǔ; C: Yǔ-fǔ; D: Shī-fǔ; E: gōng-zǐ Qīng-fǔ; F: Jì-sūn Háng-fǔ; G: gōng-sūn Guī-fǔ; H: Céng Gū-fǔ; I: Mǐn Mǎ-fǔ; J: Gōng-liǎn Chù-fǔ; K: Guān Zhōu-fǔ; L: Kǒng Ní-fǔ (= Confucius).

There are two further men in Lǚ who have the suffix *fǔ* in a name form: Wáng-fǔ from the lineage of the Zhǎn, and Jǐn-fǔ from the lineage of the Qín. In the source text, these are identified as family ministerials (*jiā chén*). Such ministerials were attached to families one level lower than the Duke, *i.e.* to families with the rank of a *qīng*. This implies that the system of godfathers existed on at least two levels: on the level of the counsels of the rules of a principality, and on the level of counsels of highest-ranking ministerials, *i.e.* the *qīng*.

At first sight, the illustration seems to suggest that there was only one bearer of the suffixed name at a time. However, it is not sufficiently clear whether this listing is to be interpreted in the sense that there could be no more than one bearer of the suffix at a time, *i.e.* only consecutive bearers, or whether there could be more than one “active” bearer at a time.<sup>27</sup> The uncertainty rests, on the one hand, on Qín-fǔ from the lineage of the Bì [B]: we do not know how long he lived (he is only mentioned in one single entry), nor whether he was bearer of the suffix for a time extending into that of Yǔ-fǔ [C]. Furthermore, the interpretation of his status is uncertain for he could have been a family ministerial, and this would really exclude him from the listing. On the other hand, we

27. Cf. the remarks concerning the collective terms mentioned in E 5 above.

observe that within the same year (Xuān 10), following a lengthy period (Wén 6 to Xuān 10) in which only Jì-sūn Hàng-fǔ is recorded as bearer of the suffix, the gōng-sūn Guī-fǔ is mentioned twice, in Xuān 10.11 and 15 CC, *followed* by a single reference to Hàng-fǔ in Xuān 10.17 CC, immediately followed again by a reference to Guī-fǔ in Xuān 10.18 CC. From then on until Xuān 18, Guī-fǔ exclusively dominates the entries, whereas Hàng-fǔ reappears in Chéng 2 to remain until Xiāng 5. The end of records mentioning Guī-fǔ coincides with the end of the reign of the Xuān-Patriarch.

These observations lead to the following revisions of our current tentative explanation given in the summary above: (a) It seems that members of the same kinship group were preferred as godfathers. In the case discussed above, it was a paternal uncle (gōng-zǐ Qìng-fǔ), *i.e.* somebody from the lineage of the shared father. In the two cases just discussed (Jì-sūn Hàng-fǔ and the gōng-sūn Guī-fǔ), we would judge these persons as already quite distantly related, the degree of relatedness going beyond the generation of shared grandfathers. (b) Each Patriarch could grant the suffix to a personage of his choice. It seems that this did not imply that a godfather of an earlier Patriarch lost his suffix, but the records show that visibility was significantly reduced. So there could be more than one godfather, *i.e.* more than one bearer of the suffix at a time, but usually only one of them was “active”, *i.e.* actually serving in this function. (c) Excerpt E 5 above with the collective expression *zhū fǔ*, “the (god)fathers” confirms that there must have been periods with more than one bearer at a time, and in addition suggests that at times there could have been so many as to justify using the collective *zhū* “all the N”. As far as the sources reveal, the group must have been quite small, with possibly not more than two or three members at a time. (d) The relative scarcity of the name form clearly implies that the suffix *fǔ* marked a function, *i.e.* that it was not merely honorific but in actual fact a *title*. Both title and function seem to have been granted once, and for life, to high-ranking ministerials, as there are no instances showing that bearers of this title reverted to an earlier name form without the suffix.

Was this situation restricted to the principality of Lǚ, or was this title also granted in other principalities and under similar conditions? That this was the case can be shown with the following listing for the bearers of this title in the principality of Jìn:<sup>28</sup>

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28. I have also checked the situation in Qí which due to the information available is less impressive as the two presented here (Lǚ and Jìn, Jì clan), but it seems that the same rules prevail, even though the rulers of Qí belong to a different clan (Jiāng). In Sòng, whose rulers also belong to a different clan (Zì), there seem to be a different naming convention: The “normal” form in the principalities examined is ‘style + suffix *fǔ*’, as in Yǔ-fǔ; in Sòng the form seems to be ‘lineage name + suffix *fǔ*’, as in Kǒng-fǔ Jiā.

Illustration 5: Godfathers in the Principality of Jin

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	6											
B		2										
C					11							
D					27-28							
E					32	6						
(D)						7						
F						9						
(D)						12-17						
G							1					
(D)							1-15					
H									3			
I									4-21			
J										11		
K										15		
L											13-14	
M												2-20

A: Jiā-fū; B: Pān-fū; C: Pī Zhèng-fū; D: Xún Lín-fū; E: Yáng Chù-fū; F: Jī Zhèng-fū; G: Xū Jiǎ-fū; H: Hé Zǔ-fū; I: Jiā-fū, the baron of Wú-zhōng; J: Hú-fū; K: Jí-fū; L: Liáng Yīng-fū; M: Zhì-fū (from the lineage of the Zhào). Possible candidates as family ministerials (*jiā chén*) with the name-element fū: F, and K.

The illustration confirms the same overall pattern: during the whole Chūn Qiū period there were comparatively few bearers of the title, and the records, in contrast to the solitary example in the principality of Lǚ, display absolutely no instances of two “active” bearers at the same time. The sequence D-E-D-F-D-G-D-H with the important ministerial Lín-fū from the lineage of the Xún [D] making several appearances over a long period of time interrupted by three other godfathers not only shows that several bearers could co-exist but also that the title, once granted, was not revoked, thus strengthening the explanation for the group designation *zhū fū*. It also illustrates that rulers not always accepted or were happy with the godfathers appointed by their predecessors, for changes in the activities of bearers are in many cases situated in the critical periods of

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The form Kǒng-fū is nowhere identified as a new lineage name, which theoretically would be possible (*cf.* the lineage Fū-fū name in Lǚ).

succession from one ruler to the next. This can be demonstrated in the period of the above-mentioned sequence (D-E-D-F-D-G-D-H):

**Illustration 6: Changes of godfathers related to periods of succession in the Principality of Jin (excerpt)**

Patriarchs of Jin				5: Xī	6: Wén	7: Xuān	8: Chéng	9: Xiāng
Wén	632	D		27				
Wén	631	D		28				
Wén	627		E	32				
Xiāng	625		E		1			
Xiāng	620		E		6			
Líng	619	D			7			
Líng	617		F		9			
Líng	614	D			12			
Líng	609	D			17			
Líng	607		G			1		
Chéng	605	D				3		
Chéng	599	D				9		
Jīng	598	D				10		
Jīng	580	D					10	
Lì	579	D					11	
Lì	572	D					18	
Dào	571	D						1
Dào	569		H					3

Reign periods of the Dukes of Jin: Wén: Xī 25 (634)-Xī 33 (626); Xiāng: Wén 1 (625)-Wén 6 (620); Líng: Wén 7 (619)-Xuān 2 (606); Chéng: Xuān 3 (605)-Xuān 9 (599); Jīng: Xuān 10 (598)-Chéng 10 (580); Lì: Chéng 11 (579)-Chéng 18 (572); Dào: Xiāng 1 (571)-Xiāng 15 (557).

Apart from confirming the observations (b) to (d) above, this illustration with the demonstrated pattern of change calls for the correction of a suggestion made earlier in this paper, *i.e.* that the act of naming could have been basically associated with the birth of a successor of the ruling Duke (*i.e.* the “classical” role of a godfather).<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, the granting of the title to an elder statesman appears to have been for the benefit of the *acting ruler*, especially of new

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29. Cf. at note 25.

and maybe young and inexperienced rulers who had, in general, just followed in the position of their fathers. An interesting case, in this respect, is to be registered for the principality of Lǚ: On the occasion of the death of Confucius, the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* in Āi 16.4 quotes Duke Āi as referring to him in his sorrow as Ní-fǔ, Ní-godfather. This suggests that Confucius was presumably his elderly counsel and therefore casts new light on his social standing as well as on the several conversations about problems of government recorded between the two: not only in the *Lùn Yǔ* are there passages (2.19; 3.21; 6.03; 12.09; 14.21), but several other received texts transmit dialogues and even whole chapters, e.g. the *Lǐ Jì* (Chapter 27, Āi-gōng wèn), the *Kǒng zǐ Jiā Yǔ* (Chapter 17, Āi-gōng wèn zhèng).<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

The role of father in Chinese society is not only one of paramount importance, but also a model for a number of different social functions. In this paper, such traces of a high structural affinity have been found in the sources examined by following a prominent name form containing the suffixal element *fǔ* ‘godfather’. This name form designates a specialized function, i.e. that of the elder or more experienced statesman, of the personally appointed counsel acting, as it seems, in lieu of a father (and therefore here termed ‘godfather’). This function existed on two levels of society, i.e. on the level of the rulers (Kings and Patriarchs), and on the level just below them, the level of high-ranking ministerials (*qīng*). Although there could be more than one godfather at a time, only one godfather was active.

The modeling of social functions with a high degree of intimacy and influence on patterns of (male) kinship, thus building a wider framework of quasi-kinship, is well attested in (later) Chinese culture and history (see how the terms of address mirror the organization of societies such as the Triads or guilds—or of groups of scholars who passed under the same examiner). Without entering further into these questions, this insight could also furnish a more precise and comprehensive (albeit tentative) explanation regarding the use of the terms *xīōng* (“elder brother”) and *zhū xīōng* (“all elder brothers”). If persons thus designated were—in a way similar to the “godfathers”—not necessarily *akin* in the narrow sense of the term, then we might suggest that they were chosen to perform certain functions of elder brothers and thereby “related to”

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30. Such texts could thus justifiably be termed as “historical” and be regarded as basically reliable sources for reconstructing the views of Confucius.

as elder *blood* brothers.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of quasi-kinship in the functions of “godfathers” and “elder *blood* brothers” could also offer a cogent explanation for the recurrent appearance—often listed in the vicinity of genuine kinship groups—of these two groups in many dedicatory texts in bronze inscriptions.<sup>32</sup>

Based on these results, we suggest a final emendation of the translation of E 3 above:

E 3 *Godfather(s)*, elder (*blood*) brothers, and the body of the officers, did not wish that it should be so, and said, [...].

The current lexicographical explanation (“honorific suffix attached to names of high-ranking men”<sup>33</sup> or simply “elderly man”<sup>34</sup>) is basically the weakest possible definition, but, as has been shown, it lacks fundamental defining elements and certainly fails to specify the conditions under which this special title was granted.<sup>35</sup> As far as age is concerned, it is in many cases even demonstrably

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31. The (extended) binomial constructions *fǔ xiōng* and *zhū fǔ zhū xiōng* are a clear indication that the two terms belong under the same categorical term and thus designate two variant forms of a type of relationship.

32. I owe, and gratefully acknowledge, the lead to the thoughts in this paragraph to an anonymous reviewer, who pointed out correspondences in inscriptional material that seem to support the findings issuing here exclusively from the received texts. In fact, in bronze inscriptions we find these terms as singles and in combinations: *zhū fǔ* (e.g. Jicheng 261); *zhū xiōng* (e.g. Jicheng 4628) *fǔ xiōng* (e.g. Jicheng 183-186); *zhū fǔ zhū xiōng* (e.g. Jicheng 2737). Research regarding these terms is presented by Zhū Fēnghàn in his *Shāng Zhōu jiǎzú xíngtài yánjiū* (p. 292 sq. for the Western Zhōu period, especially p. 300-301, Zhū Fēnghàn (2004): 431 sqq. for changes in the Chūnqiū period). My thanks go to Wolfgang Behr for his generous help in a field where my competence is unfortunately limited.

33. Schuessler (2007): 243.

34. Yáng Bójùn (1985): 153.

35. Another interesting field taking its cue from the role of a father is to be found in terms designating outstanding professionals who due to their mastery became bearers of a title with the suffix *fǔ*. The *Zuǒ Zhuàn* transmits three designations of professional functions with the suffix *fǔ*: *bǔ zhāo fǔ* ‘master diviner for summons’, *bǔ tú fǔ* ‘master diviner for followers’, and *qí fǔ* ‘master of the royal domain’ (cf. Yáng Bójùn (1985): 11, 302.). In ancient Chinese society, age was intimately linked with experience and therefore with knowledge, expertise and *savoir-faire*. The correlation of the suffixal element *fǔ* ‘father’ with outstanding professional mastery is quite evident and establishes a clear link between such designations and the function of a godfather as described in this paper. However, the fact that, as an example, the designation *yú-fǔ* ‘master fisherman’ (= “fisherman-father”) in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (Chapter 17) appears in a reminiscently similar passage in *Shuō Yuǎn* 11.11 in the form *yú-fū*, would open up a new line of investigation which cannot be pursued here.

wrong. The suffix definitely has the character of a *title* and not of a mere honorific, *i.e.* the honorific effect is due to service in a high function and to professional merits, and not just a matter of (formal) respect. These results may now serve as a foundation for further research into the definition of the function of such personages.<sup>36</sup>

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36. It could be promising to follow up on the question why some of the name forms have the suffix *fǔ* in an alternative reading, *e.g.* in the case of an ancestor of Confucius, Zhēng-kǎo-fǔ (*cf.* list of characters). The alternative character is—together with fù ‘father’—part of series 102 in Karlgren (1972) and appears in characters writing words like ‘protect, help’ (102v), ‘assist’ (102c’ and 102u’), or ‘teach, instruct’ (102u’). The first and the last item also appear in (later) titles recorded in Hucker (1985); entries 2031 and 2035.



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ANNEX

Source texts of quoted excerpts

- E 1 楚之有直躬。其父竊羊，而謁之吏。令尹曰：“殺之！”以為直於君而曲於父，報而罪之。以是觀之，夫君之直臣，父之暴子也。
- E 2 君君，臣臣，父父，子子。
- E 3 父兄百官皆不欲也，故曰：「吾宗國魯先君莫之行，吾先君亦莫之行也；至於子之身而反之，不可。」
- E 4 無駭卒，羽父請諡與族。
- E 5 君之所不名臣者四：諸父，臣而不名；諸兄，臣而不名；先王之臣，臣而不名；盛德之士，臣而不名。
- E 6 齊桓公將立管仲。令群臣曰：“寡人將立管仲為仲父。善者入門而左，不善者入門而右。”東郭牙中門而立。公曰：“寡人立管仲為仲父，令曰：‘善者左，不善者右。’今子何為中門而立？”牙曰：“以管仲之智為能謀天下乎？”公曰：“能。”[牙曰:]“以斷為敢行大事乎？”公曰：“敢。”牙曰：“若知能謀天下，斷敢行大事，君因專屬之國柄焉。以管仲之能，乘公之勢以治齊國，得無危乎？”公曰：“善。”乃令隰朋治內，管仲治外。以相參。

Chinese characters for Figures 4 to 6

1: Yīn (隱); 2: Huán (桓); 3: Zhuāng (莊); 4: Mǐn (閔); 5: Xī (僖); 6: Wén (文); 7: Xuān (宣); 8: Chéng (成); 9: Xiāng (襄); 10: Zhāo (昭); 11: Dìng (定); 12: Āi (哀).

Figure 4 (Godfathers in Lù 魯): A: Zhòng-fù (眾父 = gōng-zǐ Yì-shī 公子益師); B: Bì Qīn-fù (費彥父); C: Yǔ-fù (羽父 = gōng-zǐ Huī 公子翬); D: Shī-fù (施父); E: gōng-zǐ Qīng-fù (公子慶父); F: Jì-sūn Hàng-fù (季孫行父); G: gōng-sūn Guī-fù (公孫歸父); H: Céng Gǔ-fù (鄩鼓父); I: Mǐn Mǎ-fù (閔馬父); J: Gōng-liǎn Chù-fù (公斂處父); K: Guǎn Zhōu-fù (管周父); L: Kǒng Ní-fù (Ní-fù from the lineage of the Kǒng) (尼父 = Confucius). Identifiable family ministerials (*jiā chén*) with the name-element *fù*: Zhǎn Wáng-fù (展王父), and Qín Jīn-fù (秦堇父).

Figure 5 (Godfathers in Jīn 晉): A: Jiā-fù (嘉父); B: Pān-fù (潘父); C: Pī Zhèng-fù (丕鄭父); D: Xún Lín-fù (荀林父); E: Yáng Chù-fù (陽處父); F: Jī Zhèng-fù (箕鄭父); G: Xū Jiǎ-fù (胥甲父); H: Hé Zǔ-fù (和組父); I: Jiā-fù, the baron of Wú-zhōng (無終子嘉父); J: Hú-fù (狐父); K: Jí-fù (籍父); L: Liáng Yīng-fù (梁嬰父); M: Zhì-fù (from the lineage of the Zhào) (趙志父).

Figure 6 (Reign periods of the Dukes of Jīn 晉): Wén 文公: Xī 僖 25 (634) – Xī 33 (626); Xiāng 襄: Wén 文 1 (625) – Wén 6 (620); Líng 靈: Wén 文 7 (619) – Xuān 宣 2 (606); Chéng 成: Xuān 宣 3 (605) – Xuān 9 (599); Jǐng 景: Xuān 宣 10 (598) – Chéng 成 10 (580); Lì 厲: Chéng 成 11 (579) – Chéng 18 (572); Dào 悼: Xiāng 襄 1 (571) – Xiāng 15 (557).

GLOSSARY

- Āi-gōng wèn 哀公問  
Āi-gōng wèn zhèng 哀公問政  
bó 伯  
bǔ zhāo fù 卜招父  
bǔ tú fù 卜徒父  
*Chūn Qiū* 春秋  
*Chūn Qiū, Zuǒ Zhuàn Cídiǎn* 春秋左傳詞典  
Féng Chǒu-fù 逢丑父  
fǔ 甫  
fù, fǔ 父  
Fù-fù 富父  
fù xiōng 父兄  
gōng 公  
gōng-sūn 公孫  
Gǒng-zhòng 共仲  
gōng-zǐ Huī 公子翬  
gōng-zǐ jì-Yǒu 公子季友  
gōng-zǐ Qīng-fù 公子慶父  
gōng-zǐ shū-Yá 公子叔牙  
gōng-zǐ Zhǎn 公子展  
Guǎn Yí-wú 管夷吾  
Guǎn Zhōu-fù 管周父  
*Hánfēizǐ* 韓非子  
Jī (clan) 姬  
jiā chén 家臣  
Jiāng (clan) 姜  
Kǒng-fù Jiā 孔父嘉  
Kǒng zǐ (Confucius) 孔子  
*Kǒng Zǐ Jiā Yǔ* 孔子家語  
*Lǐ Jì* 禮記  
Lǚ Huán-gōng 魯桓公  
Lǚ Huì-gōng 魯惠公  
Lǚ Mǐn-gōng 魯閔公  
Lǚ Xiào-gōng 魯孝公  
Lǚ Yīn-gōng 魯隱公  
Lǚ Zhuāng-gōng 魯莊公  
mèng 孟  
Mèng zǐ (Mencius) 孟子  
Mín 民  
Míng 名  
Ní-fù 尼父  
qí fù 圻父

qīng 卿  
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Shuō Yuǎn 說苑  
Tāng 湯  
Téng Dìng-gōng 滕定公  
Téng Wén-gōng 滕文公  
Xún Lín-fù 荀林父  
Yáng Bójùn 楊伯峻  
Yī Yīn 伊尹  
yú-fū 漁夫  
yú-fù 漁父  
Zāng Xī-bó 臧僖伯  
Zhēng-kǎo-fù 正考父, 正考甫  
zhòng-fù 仲父  
Zhū Fēnghàn 朱凤瀚  
zhū fù 諸父  
zhū xiōng 諸兄  
zǐ (term of address) 子  
Zǐ (clan) 子  
zǐ-Bān 子般  
zōng 宗  
zú 族  
Zuǒ Zhuàn 左傳  
zú rén 族人

