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Zhou History and Historiography: Introducing the Bamboo manuscript Xinian

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Abstract

Xinian is a recently published bamboo manuscript from the collection of Qinghua (Tsinghua) University. It is the lengthiest, most detailed historical text unearthed in recent decades. The text narrates major events from the history of the state of Chu, its rivals, and its allies from the beginning of the Western Zhou period to the early fourth century BCE. In this introductory article I argue the following: first, both the language and the content of *Xinian* indicate that this text was based on earlier historical sources from the states of Chu and Jin, in addition to sources from within the Zhou royal domain; second, the authors' utilization of their primary sources differs markedly from those observable in *Zuo zhuan* (with which *Xinian* has many overlapping parts) and in later collections of anecdotes; and third, *Xinian* may represent a heretofore unknown genre of "informative history." In addition, I explore the new perspectives that *Xinian* sheds on early Qin and Chu history.

Résumé

Le *Xinian* est un manuscrit sur bambou récemment publié, appartenant à la collection de l'Université Qinghua (Tsinghua). Il s'agit du texte historique le plus long et le plus détaillé exhumé au cours des dernières décennies, relatant les événements importants de l'histoire de l'État de Chu, de ses rivaux et de ses alliés depuis le début des Zhou Occidentaux jusqu'au début du IVe siècle avant notre ère. Cet article introductif propose les conclusions suivantes: d'abord, la langue comme le contenu du *Xinian* indiquent que le texte est basé sur des sources historiques plus anciennes provenant des États de Chu et de Jin, auxquelles s'ajoutent des sources

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du domaine royal des Zhou ; ensuite, l'usage que font ses auteurs de leurs sources diffère notablement de ce qui peut être observé dans le *Zuo zhuan* (avec lequel le *Xinian* se recoupe en de nombreux endroits) et dans les collections d'anecdotes postérieures ; enfin, le *Xinian* pourrait être représentatif d'un genre jusqu'ici inconnu d'"histoire informative". L'article explore par ailleurs certaines perspectives nouvelles suggérées par le texte sur l'histoire du début du Qin et celle du Chu.

Keywords

Xinian, Qinghua (Tsinghua) bamboo slips, *Zuo zhuan*, historiography, Qin, Chu, Western Zhou, Springs-and-Autumns (Chunqiu) period , anecdotes

Recent paleographic discoveries have profoundly reshaped the field of early Chinese studies; yet their impact differs from one subfield to another. Our understanding of early Chinese administrative, legal, and religious history has been revolutionized. Research in intellectual history has been substantially influenced. The impact of paleographic materials on the study of early Chinese historiography, however, remains miniscule. In contrast to earlier, consequential discoveries such as the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年), looted in 280 CE from the tomb of King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318–296 BCE),[1] most twentieth-century discoveries appear disappointing from a historiographic point of view. Until recently, only a few unearthed manuscripts could be associated with the historical genre, and none of these were very exciting. None required profound rethinking of our understanding of Zhou historiography.[2]

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1) Hereafter all dates are Before Common Era, unless indicated otherwise. The discovery of the *Bamboo Annals* not only allowed correction of a few inaccuracies in the *Shiji* 史記, but, more importantly, contributed toward the emergence of the genre of historical criticism, as exemplified in Liu Zhiji's 劉知幾 (661–721 CE) *Shitong* 史通; see Qiu Feng 邱鋒, "*Zhushu jinian* yu Jin Tang jian de shixue"《竹書紀年》與晉唐間的史學, *Shixue shi yanjiu* 史學史研究 2013.1: 24–32. For studies of the *Bamboo Annals*, see relevant sections of Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2006); cf. David S. Nivison, *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals* (Taipei: Airiti, 2009).

2) Among recent discoveries, one can mention short collections of historical anecdotes, such as the *Chunqiu shiyu* 春秋事語 and the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* 戰國縱橫家書 silk manuscripts from Tomb 3, Mawangdui 馬王堆, Changsha 長沙 (Hunan) (for the first of these, see Pines, "History as a Guide to the Netherworld: Rethinking the *Chunqiu shiyu*," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 31 [2003]: 101–26). The anecdotal genre is represented also by the badly damaged text from Tomb 36 at Shibancun 石板村, Cili 慈利 county (Hunan), which parallels the "Wu yu" 吳語 section of the *Guoyu* 國語 (see Zhang Chunlong 張春龍, "Cili

This situation recently began to change. A few of the texts published in the twenty-first century are very promising in terms of the new light they shed on early stages of Chinese history-writing and historical thinking. Of these texts, perhaps the most significant was published in 2011 as the second volume of the bamboo manuscripts now owned by Qinghua 清華 (Tsinghua) University in Beijing. The text, named *Xinian* 繫年 by its editors, is the largest and best preserved pre-imperial historical text yet discovered. It is rich in new historical information, and, most interestingly, differs from any transmitted or unearthed historical texts in terms of its composition and the nature of its narrative. Three aspects of this text merit particular attention. First, it allows us to fill in important lacunae in understanding events from Zhou history, especially from the periods not covered by the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 narrative (i.e., prior to 722 and after 453 BCE). Second, those parts—the bulk of the text—that overlap with *Zuo zhuan* may add to our understanding of the nature, dating, and reliability of the latter, by far the single most important and most debated text of the pre-imperial historical genre.[3] Lastly, *Xinian*

Chujian gaishu" 慈利楚簡概述, in *Xinchu jianbo yanjiu* 新出簡帛研究, ed. Ai Lan 艾蘭 [Sarah Allan] and Xing Wen 邢文 [Beijing: Wenwu, 2004], 4–11), and by the equally badly damaged collection of anecdotes from Tomb 1, Shuanggudui 雙古堆, Fuyang 阜陽 (Anhui) (see Hu Pingsheng 胡平生, "Fuyang Shuanggudui Han jian 'Shuolei zashi' yanjiu" 阜陽雙古堆漢簡〈說類雜事〉研究, in *Chutu cailiao yu xin shiye* 出土材料與新視野, ed. Li Zongkun 李宗焜 [Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 2013], 613–667), as well as by many individual anecdotes from the Shanghai Museum collection. A brief annalistic genre is represented by the so-called *Annals* (*Biannian ji* 編年記) from Tomb 11, Shuihudi 睡虎地, Yunmeng 雲夢 (Hubei) (see Achim Mittag, "The Qin *Bamboo Annals* of Shuihudi: A Random Note from the Perspective of Chinese Historiography," *Monumenta Serica* 51 [2003]: 543–70); although this text may be closer to the genre of personal calendars of tomb occupants (*shiri* 視日) rather than to historical texts per se. Another "Annals" discovered at Tomb 1, Shuanggudui, was too damaged to allow meaningful reconstruction (see Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 [trans. Deborah Porter], "Some Notes on the Organization of the Han Dynasty Bamboo 'Annals' Found at Fuyang," *Early China* 14 [1989]: 1–25). For a systematic (even if by now outdated) discussion of historical texts among recently unearthed paleographic materials, see Li Ling 李零, *Jianbo gushu yu xueshu yuanliu* 簡帛古書與學術源流 (Beijing: Sanlian, 2004), 260–80. One should also mention an extract from the *Zuo zhuan* in the possession of Zhejiang University. This extract is widely suspected to be a forgery; for a minority view, see Asano Yūichi 浅野裕一 and Ozawa Kenji 小澤賢二, *Sekkodai Saden shingi kō* 浙江大『左傳』真偽考 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2013), who argue in favor of its authenticity.

3) For debates about *Zuo zhuan*, its nature, dating and reliability, see three complementary studies: David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2001); Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 BCE* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i

offers new insights into the frequently overlooked heterogeneity of Zhou historiography.

Xinian: Introduction

Xinian in its published form occupies the entire second volume of the Qinghua bamboo manuscripts collection.[4] It is a medium-sized text of slightly more than 5,000 characters, written on 138 bamboo slips of 44.6–45 cm length. The text is divided into twenty-three sections (*zhang* 章). Each slip (except the last) is numbered on its verso, and every section starts on a separate slip. The slips are generally well preserved and only in section 13 are parts of slips 63–65 missing. Unfortunately, we have no idea of the text's original context: like all of the Qinghua manuscripts that were purchased on the Hong Kong antiquities market after having been looted from the mainland, it lacks clear provenance. Conventional wisdom holds that because all the Qinghua texts are written in what is usually called "Chu script," they might have been taken from a Chu tomb. Both the orthography and Qinghua University's own radiocarbon analysis of one of the collected slips suggest a date of around 300, roughly contemporaneous with Guodian 郭店 Tomb 1 and with the manuscripts in the Shanghai Museum collection also of unknown provenance.

For the purpose of the present discussion, which focuses on the relations between *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan*, the twenty-three sections of *Xinian* can be conveniently divided into three parts. Part 1 (sections 1–3) deals primarily with the affairs of the Western Zhou 西周 period (ca. 1046–771): section 1 discusses the rise and decline of the Zhou house from the overthrow of the Shang to a major defeat of the Zhou armies at the hands of their Rong 戎 enemies in 789; sections 2–3 focus on the rise of major regional states, their narratives continuing to the early years of

Press, 2002); and Li Wai-yee, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2007); see also secondary studies cited in these monographs.

4) Li Xueqin 李學勤, ed., *Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡 vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi, 2011), hereafter *Qinghua 2*. For an introduction to *Xinian*, see Li Xueqin, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* ji youguan gushi wenti" 清華簡《繫年》及有關古史問題, *Wenwu* 文物 2011.3: 70–74.

the Springs-and-Autumns period (Chunqiu 春秋, 770–453). Part 2 (sections 4–19) covers the Springs-and-Autumns period except for the opening phrases of section 4 which deal with Western Zhou affairs. These sections overlap with parts of *Zuo zhuan*, and the relationship between the two texts will be discussed below. Part 3 (sections 20–23) deals with affairs of the mid-fifth to early fourth centuries except for the opening phrases of section 20, which narrate Springs-and-Autumns period history. This part, exceptionally rich in information, has no parallel in either received or unearthed texts. The individual sections differ considerably in size: the shortest (10 and 12) comprise two bamboo slips only, while the longest (15 and 23) are written on eleven and thirteen slips, respectively. The difference in terms of time covered is even more pronounced: a few sections deal with the events of a single year, while others cover three and even four centuries.

Table 1 indicates some of the notable differences between *Xinian* and other pre-imperial historical texts. *Xinian* is neither arranged chronologically, as the Lu 魯 *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Springs-and-Autumns Annals*) and its commentaries, nor is it a collection of anecdotes akin to *Guoyu* 國語 or *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, nor, *pace* Li Xueqin's 李學勤 arguments, does it appear to be related to the *Bamboo Annals*.[5] Rather, each of *Xinian*'s twenty-three sections deals with a sequence of events that shaped the "geopolitical" situation in the Zhou world; the narrative may be short or long, but its topic is either the rise or fall of a territorial state, or changes in the patterns of conflicts and alliances among major contemporaneous powers. As noticed by several scholars, this curiously resembles the *jishi benmo* 紀事本末 ("topical arrangement") style that did not flourish until the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE); indeed, on a few occasions the text surprisingly resembles the topical arrangement of *Zuo zhuan* by Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645–1704) two millennia later (see an example of section 15 below).[6]

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5) Li Xueqin, "Qinghua jian *Xinian*," 70; Li defended his argument in favor of *Xinian*'s similarity with the *Bamboo Annals* in his "You Qinghua jian *Xinian* lun *Jinian* de tili" 由清華簡《繫年》論《紀年》的體例, *Shenzhen daxue xuebao* (*renwen shehuikexue ban*) 深圳大學學報 (人文社會科學版) 2012.2: 42–44.

6) The earliest *jishi benmo* compilation was that of the Song historian Yuan Shu 袁樞 (1130–1205), who prepared a topically arranged version of *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒. For a very good analysis of the *jishi benmo* style of *Xinian*, see Xu Zhaochang 許兆昌 and Qi Dandan 齊丹丹, "Shilun Qinghua jian *Xinian* de bianzuan tedian" 試論清華簡《繫年》的編纂特點,

Table 1. Contents of Xinian

Section	Slips	Time span	Chronology	Focus (state)	Content (summary)
1	1–4	ca. 1046–789	Zhou	Zhou	Rise and decline of Western Zhou
2	5–12	ca. 780–678	Zhou	Zhou, Jin, Zheng	Rise of Jin and Chu
3	13–16	ca. 1042–770	(Zhou)	Qin	Rise of Qin
4	17–22	ca. 1040–629	Zhou	Wei 衛	Wei history
5	23–30	684–680	(Chu)	Chu	Start of Chu's northward expansion
6	31–40	660–635	Jin	Jin	Jin domestic crises and formation of Jin-Qin alliance
7	41–44	633–632	Jin	Jin	Jin struggle against Chu
8	45–49	630–627	Jin	Jin	Dissolution of Jin-Qin alliance
9	50–53	620	Jin	Jin	Jin domestic crisis and increasing alienation from Qin
10	54–55	620–615	Jin	Jin	Jin-Qin struggle
11	56–60	617–594	Chu	Chu	Chu conflict with Song
12	61–62	600	Chu	Chu	Chu-Zheng-Jin struggle
13	[63–65]	597	Chu	Chu	Chu-Zheng-Jin struggle
14	66–73	592–589	Jin	Jin	Jin-Qi conflict
15	74–84	599–505	Chu	Chu	Chu conflict with Wu
16	85–90	584–574	Chu	Chu, Jin	Failure of Chu-Jin peace treaty
17	91–95	557–548	Jin	Jin	Jin-Qi conflict

Table 1. Continued.

Section	Slips	Time span	Chronology	Focus (state)	Content (summary)
18	96–103	546–491	Chu, Jin	Jin, Chu	Chu-Jin relations, and Jin's weakening
19	104–107	541–493	Chu	Chu	Chu-Wu conflict
20	108–113	585–430	Jin	Jin	Jin-Wu alliance and formation of the Jin-Yue alliance against Qi
21	114–118	ca. 421–420	Chu	Chu	Chu-Jin conflict
22	119–125	404–403	Chu	Jin, Yue, Qi	Jin and Yue conflict with Qi
23	126–138	ca. 400–396	Chu	Chu	Chu wars with Jin and Zheng

As the table shows, *Xinian* applies three different chronologies—the Zhou kings' for its earliest entries, the Jin lords' and/or the Chu kings' for the rest of the narrative. This suggests incorporation of primary materials from Zhou, Jin, and Chu sources. The possible heterogeneity of the text's sources is indicated also by the distribution of a few grammatical particles in *Xinian*. Chen Minzhen 陳民鎮 was the first to notice some grammatical peculiarities in the text.[7] For instance, Chu manuscripts do not normally use the word *ji* 及 in the meaning of "with" or "and," preferring *yu* 與 instead; on the other hand, *ji* predominates in Qin

Gudai wenming 古代文明 2012.6: 60–66; for a similar assessment, see Liao Mingchun 廖名春, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* guankui" 清華簡《繫年》管窺, *Shenzhen daxue xuebao* (*renwen shehuikexue ban*) 深圳大學學報（人文社會科學版）2012.3: 51. Other scholars propose alternative genres for *Xinian*: Chen Minzhen 陳民鎮 ("*Xinian* 'gu zhi' shuo—Qinghua jian *Xinian* xingzhi ji zhuanzuo beijing chuyi"《繫年》"故志"說 — 清華簡《繫年》性質及撰作背景芻議, *Handan xueyuan xuebao* 邯鄲學院學報 2012.2: 49–57, 100) affiliated it with the so-called *zhi* 志 histories; Chen Wei 陳偉 speculated that it may be related to the now lost *Subtleties of Mr. Duo* 鐸氏微, a text from circa 340 by Duo Jiao 鐸椒 ("Qinghua daxue cang zhushu *Xinian* de wenxianxue kaocha" 清華大學藏竹書《繫年》的文獻學考察, *Shilin* 史林 2013.1: 48).

7) Chen Minzhen, "*Xinian* 'gu zhi' shuo."

manuscripts.[8] In *Xinian* both particles are used in the meaning of "with" or "and" with similar frequency (15 *yu* vs. 14 *ji*) which is curiously closer to *Zuo zhuan* (187 *yu* vs. 105 *ji*) or *Guoyu* (69 *yu* vs. 27 *ji*) than to any other excavated or transmitted text.[9] Yet the particles are unevenly divided among the different sections of *Xinian*. In what follows I tentatively divide the *Xinian* section into four geographical segments, based primarily on the chronology used in each section, and, to a lesser degree, on its content. Sections 1–4 will be called the Zhou sections; sections 6–10, 14, 17, and 20 are called Jin sections; sections 5, 11–13, 15–16, 19, and 21–23 are called Chu sections. Section 18 will be called "Jin-Chu," because it is likely that it incorporated materials from both states. The distribution of the *ji* and *yu* particles in the meaning of "with" and "and" is as follows:

Leaving aside the mixed "Jin-Chu" section in which the origins of the *Xinian* sources cannot be clearly established, we find that nine of eleven cases of *ji* come from the Jin sections, while eleven out of fifteen cases of *yu* come from the Chu sources. The similarity to the preponderance of *yu* in unearthed Chu manuscripts becomes obvious. It is highly likely that this peculiarity preserves to some extent the grammatical preferences of the sources.

Another notable peculiarity of *Xinian*'s language is the usage of the two particles *nai* 乃 and *sui* 遂 synonymously in the meaning of "then." Here again, the usage of *nai* is related to the geographical provenance of each section:

Once again the differences are marked. Leaving aside the mixed "Jin-Chu" section, we find that of thirty-one *nai* particles, twenty-eight are used in the Zhou and Jin sections. In contrast, the *sui* particle is evenly distributed. Yet the different usage of both particles may be less related to the geographic provenance of the source materials and more related to their dating. *Nai* dominates early sections of *Xinian*; all but two of its

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8) In Chu manuscripts *ji* appears as "with" only in six cases while *yu* is used in ninety-nine cases (or 127 cases if Zeng 曾 manuscripts are added); in Qin manuscripts, by contrast, *yu* is used only four times, while *ji* appears 313 times; see Zhang Yujin 張玉金, *Chutu Zhanguo wenxian xuci yanjiu* 出土戰國文獻虛詞研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2011), 251–81.

9) My calculations are based on Chen Yingdi 陳迎娣, "*Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* (*er*) xuci zhengli" 《清華大學藏戰國竹簡（貳）》虛詞整理, http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1846. For slightly different statistics, see Chen Minzhen, "*Xinian* 'gu zhi' shuo," 52–53. For the distribution of *yu* and *ji* in the texts from the Warring States period, see Zhang Yujin, *Chutu Zhanguo wenxian*, 648–52.

Table 2. Distribution of ji and yu particles in Xinian

	Zhou	Jin	Jin-Chu	Chu
ji 及	1	9	3	1
yu 與	1	3	–	11

Table 3. Distribution of nai and sui particles in Xinian

	Zhou	Jin	Jin-Chu	Chu
nai 乃	14	14	1	3
sui 遂	1	5	2	7

appearances are in the first nine sections of the text, which deal with the events of the seventh century and earlier. In contrast, *sui* appears only four times in these sections; eleven of its usages come from the narratives of the year 600 and later. This is possibly indicative of a replacement of *nai* with *sui* as a standard term for "then" over the course of the Eastern Zhou 東周 (770–256) period.[10] In any case, the distribution of the particles in *Xinian* does not appear to be haphazard.

An interesting example of uneven temporal distribution of particles is the usage of locative *yu* 于 / 於 particles in the text. In what resembles *Zuo zhuan*, the *Xinian* transcribes the locative *yu* both with a "solemn" 于 and with a more "colloquial" 於 (80 vs. 54 times).[11] This again distinguishes *Xinian* markedly from both excavated Warring States manuscripts and transmitted texts of that period, which overwhelmingly prefer the "newer" 於.[12] Yet the most interesting aspect of these particles'

10) I am not aware of any study about the interchangeability of *nai* and *sui* in early texts. Wolfgang Behr (personal communication) suggests the following scenario: since 乃 *nˤə(ŋ) ʔ and 而 *nə are etymologically related and thus sometimes mixed up, it is possible that earlier functions of 乃 were taken over by 而 which was then used as both the conjunction "and, but" and a general marker of adverbialization of the preceding subordinated verb. Thus, a new word had to be found which did not carry this ambiguity, and that was 遂.

11) This is based on my personal count. Chen Yingdi 陳迎娣, "*Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian*," counts 70 于 and 50 於.

12) For the usage of *yu* 于 / 於 particles in *Zuo zhuan* and comparison to other pre-imperial texts, see He Leshi 何樂士, *Zuo zhuan xuci yanjiu* 左傳虛詞研究, rev. ed. (Beijing: Shangwu chubanshe, 2004), 81–122; cf. Zhao Daming 趙大明, *Zuo zhuan jieci yanjiu* 《左傳》介詞

distribution is that in a notable resemblance to *Zuo zhuan*, the "older" *yu* 于 predominates in earlier sections of *Xinian* (28 于 versus one 於 in sections 1–4 that deal with the Western Zhou, twenty-two slips), while the "newer" 於 is much more visible in the later part of the text (19 於 versus five 于 in the last three sections of altogether twenty-five slips). Notably, the substitution takes place in grammatically identical structures such as "do battle at" (戰于/於) or "make a covenant at" (盟于 / 於); thus, the distinction between the two particles is clearly temporal.[13]

Preliminary as they inevitably are, these findings raise two important issues related to the nature of *Xinian*. First, they strongly suggest that the authors of *Xinian* composed their narrative through utilization of earlier sources, which were written at different times and at different locations in the Zhou world. While the authors conceivably unified the language of their sources to conform to contemporaneous norms, they may have left it unchanged whenever two or more usages were acceptable. The differences in the particles' distribution suggest furthermore that *Xinian* was composed primarily from written sources. Although the text did incorporate oral materials as well (see below), written transmission should have predominated; otherwise such peculiarities as temporal changes in identically used *yu* particles would be difficult to explain.[14]

A second conclusion from the differences in the distribution of grammatical particles in *Xinian* is that these support the authenticity of the text. I do not intend to address the discussions about the possibility of the Qinghua manuscripts being a forgery, nor do I intend to question the ethics of working with looted manuscripts.[15] Putting these broader

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研究 (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2007), 34–158; Pines, *Foundations*, 217–20; for their usage in paleographic materials from the Warring States period, see Zhang Yujin, *Chutu Zhanguo wenxian*, 61–106.

13) It is worth mentioning that the usage of solemn 于 in the last sections is confined to the reports that appear to have been extracted from the Chu court chronicle, which may be akin to the *Chunqiu* of Lu. See more in Pines, "History without Anecdotes: Between the *Zuo zhuan* and the *Xinian* Manuscript," in *Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in Early China*, ed. Paul van Els and Sarah A. Queen (forthcoming).

14) For the observation that Warring States period copyists were careful in reproducing distinct *yu* particles even when their grammatical usage was identical, see Feng Yicheng 風儀誠 (Olivier Venture), "Zhanguo liang Han 'yu', 'yu' er zi de yongfa yu gushu de chuanxie xiguan" 戰國兩漢 '于' 、'於' 二字的用法與古書的傳寫習慣, *Jianbo* 2 (2007): 81–95.

15) In the years following the first publication of Qinghua manuscripts, many doubts about their authenticity were expressed orally, but only rarely and exceptionally was this done in

issues aside and focusing on this single text, I would suggest that it is inconceivable that a forger—sophisticated as he may be—would be able to reconstruct linguistic changes or barely noticeable geographic differences in the Zhou language. This, in addition to the abundance of new historical information in *Xinian*, which is also unlikely to come from a forger's hands (see below), convinces me of the authenticity of *Xinian*.

Returning to the composition of *Xinian*: despite the text's incorporation of Zhou and Jin materials it is clear that it was composed and probably edited in the state of Chu. Several textual features demonstrate its Chu origins with certainty. First, each section of the text, except for the first which narrates exclusively Western Zhou affairs, deals with the state of Chu either directly or through discussing its primary rivals or allies, such as the state of Jin. Second, the geographical perspective of *Xinian* is obviously biased toward the western part of the Zhou world. For instance, the state of Qin 秦—an important ally of Chu during much of the period under discussion—is covered much more expansively than in other contemporaneous texts,[16] while eastern states, such as Qi and Lu which played a lesser role in Chu history, are less prominent; thus, the exploits of Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643), which occupy pride of place in *Zuo zhuan*, are given only marginal attention. Third, the Chu affiliation becomes more pronounced in the last sections of the text, which—uncharacteristically for the rest of *Xinian*—adopt the Chu chronology even when the narrative deals with Jin. Fourth, while the text readily acknowledges Chu military defeats (see below), it avoids any direct reference to the domestic turmoil, for instance the

writing. For a most recent example, see an article by Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝 and Fu Zan 付贊, "Qinghua jian 'Yin gao' xianyi" 清華簡〈尹誥〉獻疑 published in *Hunan daxue xuebao* 湖南大學學報 2014.3; according to Jiang's on-line statement (http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4a04113d0101thy7.html, accessed June 26, 2014) the publication was initially accepted by a "prestigious Beijing journal" but then was blocked. (For polemics against Jiang's and Fu's views, see Wang Ning 王寧, "'Qinghua jian 'Yin gao' xianyi' zhi yi" 《清華簡〈尹誥〉獻疑》之疑, http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=2298#_edn1). For ethical issues in dealing with looted documents, see Paul R. Goldin, "*Heng xian* and the Problem of Studying Looted Artifacts," *Dao* 13 (2013): 153–60.

16) For coverage of Qin in pre-imperial texts, see Pines, "Reassessing Textual Sources for Pre-Imperial Qin History," in *Sinologi Mira k Iubileiu Stanislava Kuczery: Sobranie Trudov*, ed. Sergej Dmitriev and Maxim Korolkov (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniia RAN, 2013), 236–63.

coups that first catapulted King Ling 楚靈王 (r. 540–529) into power and then caused his fall.[17] This distinguishes Chu from other states, where domestic turmoil is not concealed. Fifth, there are ritual indications of the text's respect toward the Chu kings: their deaths are invariably recorded as solemnly "passing away" 即世. This courtesy is not uniformly observed with regard to other regional lords.[18] All this suggests that the text was produced in Chu, although it clearly incorporated non-Chu materials.

Most scholars think that *Xinian* was produced shortly after the reign of King Dao of Chu 楚悼王 (ca. 401–381), whose posthumous name is recorded in section 23, and whose early years on the throne are the last narrated.[19] There are other indications of the compilation's proximity to Lord Dao's age. For instance, the last two sections of the text are more detailed than the earlier ones, perhaps because the events of the recent past mattered more to the compilers. These sections refer to several foreign rulers by their personal names (*ming* 名) rather than their posthumous names (*shi* 謚). This suggests that these sections were composed either during those rulers' lifetime or shortly after they passed away, a time when their private names had not yet been replaced by the posthumous ones. As a working hypothesis, I shall treat the text, then, as a Chu product of circa 370.[20]

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17) *Xinian* reports the death of every Chu king as a "passing away." Only in section 18 (slip 99) is King Ling's death referred to as having "encountered misfortune" (*jian huo* 見禍) (*Qinghua 2*, 180).

18) See Chen Wei, "Qinghua daxue cang zhushu *Xinian*," 44–45.

19) A major exception to this view is Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, "Seika kan keinen kō" 清華簡繫年考, *Kyōto daigaku bungakubu kenkyū kiyō* 京都大學文學部研究紀要 52 (2013): 1–94. Yoshimoto dates *Xinian* to the second half of the fourth century BCE, because he presupposes that this text is based on *Zuo zhuan*, and because his earlier research postulated the mid-fourth century dating of the latter.

20) This dating makes *Xinian* roughly contemporary with another Chu quasi-historical text from the Qinghua collection, *Chu ju* 楚居, for which see a brief introduction by Asano Yūichi 淺野裕一, "Qinghua jian *Chu ju* chutan" 清華簡《楚居》初探, *Qinghua jian yanjiu* 清華簡研究 1 (2012): 242–47.

Early Zhou History and the Rise of Qin

Each of the three Western Zhou period sections of *Xinian* sheds new light on events of early Zhou history. One of the most relevatory is the third section, which deals with the origins of the state of Qin. It reads:

> After King Wu of Zhou had overcome Yin (Shang), he established three supervisors in Yin. When King Wu ascended [to Heaven], the Shang settlement rose in revolt, killing the three supervisors and establishing Luzi Geng (Sheng?).[21] King Cheng [of Zhou] again invaded the Shang settlement and killed Luzi Geng. Feilian fled eastward to the [settlement of] the Shanggai (Shangyan?) lineage;[22] King Cheng attacked Shanggai, killed Feilian and transferred the Shanggai people westward to Zhuyu, in order to repel the Nucuo(?) Rong:[23] these were the Qin ancestors who for generations acted as protectors of Zhou. When the house of Zhou declined and King Ping relocated to the East, stopping at Chengzhou (770), Qin Zhong thereupon [moved] eastward, occupying the Zhou lands, in order to preserve the Zhou cemeteries.[24] This was how Qin began to be great.
> 周武王既克殷，乃設三監于殷。武王陟，商邑興反，殺三監而立祿子耿（聖？）。成【13】王屎（繼？）伐商邑，殺祿子耿。飛廉東逃于商蓋（奄？）氏，成王伐商蓋，殺飛廉，西遷 商【14】蓋（奄）之民于朱  （圉），以御奴  （虐？）之戎，是秦之先，世作周屏（幹？）。周室既卑，平王東遷，止于成【15】周，秦仲焉東居周地，以守周之墳墓，秦以始大。【16】[25]

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21) For reading Luzi Geng 祿子耿 as Luzi Sheng 祿子聖, see Li Xueqin, "Qinghua jian *Xinian*," 72–73.

22) Feilian is usually identified as one of the close associates of the last Shang king, Zhouxin 紂辛; the *Shiji* identifies him as one of Qin's ancestors. Shanggai (or Shanghe) 商蓋 is read by the editors of *Qinghua 2* volume (p. 142n8) as Shangyan 商奄 (alternatively transcribed 商閹), a major Shang stronghold in Shandong, near which the future Lu capital, Qufu 曲阜, was constructed. See more in *Qinghua er*, 168–72.

23) For preliminary discussion about the Nucuo (?) Rong, see Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* 'Nucuo zhi Rong' shi kao" 清華簡《繫年》"奴之戎" 試考, *Shehuikexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線 2011.12: 27–28; for more guesses about their identity, see *Qinghua er*, 180–83.

24) The *Shiji* presents a different picture: Qin Zhong (r. 845–822) was the first Qin leader to be enfeoffed by the Zhou king as a ranked noble; the occupation of the Western Zhou territories in the aftermath of the Zhou relocation to the East was carried out by Qin Zhong's grandson, Lord Xiang 秦襄公 (r. 777–766). The editors of the *Qinghua 2* volume (143n15) opined that Qin Zhong 秦仲 (literally, "the second-born Qin scion") can refer to Lord Xiang, who was indeed second-born (*Shiji* 史記 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997] 5.178). In my opinion, this identification is not persuasive (see note 34 below).

25) *Qinghua 2*, 141; slip numbers appear in Chinese in bold square brackets. In working on the *Xinian* text I have utilized, aside from the *Qinghua 2* volume, also the annotations by Xiaohu 小狐, "Du *Xinian* yizha" 讀《繫年》臆札, published on the Fudan University web-

This piece of text provides new information on several points, two of which are particularly noteworthy. The first relates to the "three supervisors" 三監, whom the Zhou conquerors imposed on the recently subjugated population of Yin, the Shang capital. Traditional historians and commentators are divided on both the number of the supervisors (two or three) and their identity, with the majority identifying them as the rebellious brothers of the Duke of Zhou 周公, Guanshu Xian 管叔鮮 and Caishu Du 蔡叔度, in addition to the scion of the Shang royal house, Wugeng 武庚, who is identified in *Xinian* as Luzi Geng 祿子耿 (or Sheng 聖).[26] From *Xinian* it is clear that Wugeng was not a member of the trio; many scholars consequently assume that the "three supervisors" refer to Guanshu, Caishu and their third brother, Huoshu 霍叔.[27] Yet how to reconcile this identification with the fact that *Xinian* clearly states that the three supervisors were murdered at the start of the rebellion? Does it mean that the millennia-old narrative, fixed in the *Shiji* 史記 and elsewhere, according to which Guanshu and Caishu (and, possibly, Huoshu), allied with rebellious Wugeng, is wrong? Or should we dismiss the *Xinian* story? A possible reconciliation of *Xinian* and *Shiji* would be adopting Lu Yihan's 路懿菡 proposal to distinguish the unnamed "three supervisors" from the rebellious brothers of the Duke of Zhou, who are, after all, not referred to as "supervisors" in the *Shiji*.[28]

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site (http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=1766); notes by Ziju 子居 in a series on the Qinghua University website http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/lanmu2/jianbo.htm; and the partial annotation by Huadong shifan daxue zhongwenxi Zhanguo jian dushu xiaozu 華東師範大學中文系戰國簡讀書小組 published on the Wuhan University website http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1609. While revising this article, I have consulted also the *magnum opus* by Su Jianzhou 蘇建州, Wu Wenwen 吳雯雯, and Lai Yixuan 賴怡璇, *Qinghua er 'Xinian' jijie* 清華二《繫年》集解 (Taibei: Wanjuan lou, 2013; hereafter *Qinghua er*). For additional sources, see notes below.

26) For Wugeng's numerous names in the early Zhou sources, and for the link between Luzi Geng 祿子耿 of the *Xinian* manuscript and Wugeng, see Lu Yihan 路懿菡, "Cong Qinghua jian *Xinian* kan 'Wugeng zhi luan'" 從清華簡《繫年》看 "武庚之亂," *Qilu xuekan* 2013.5: 51–52.

27) See, for instance, Xing Wen 邢文, "Qinghua jian *Jinteng* yu sanjian" 清華簡《金縢》與三監, *Shenzhen daxue xuebao* (*renwen shehuikexue ban*) 深圳大學學報（人文社會科學版） 2013.1: 68–71.

28) See Lu Yihan 路懿菡, "Cong Qinghua jian *Xinian* kan Zhou chu de 'san jian'" 從清華簡《繫年》看周初的 "三監," *Liaoning shifan daxue xuebao* (*shehuikexue ban*) 遼寧師範大學學報（社會科學版） 2013.6: 924–28.

Whatever the answer, it is clear that *Xinian* requires rethinking of some well-established narratives related to early Zhou history.

The second surprise of the *Xinian* narrative concerns the origins of the state of Qin. The "Qin Basic Annals" 秦本紀 chapter in the *Shiji* provides a confusing picture of the origins of the Qin ruling lineage: some statements strongly connect it to the Shang polity in the east, while other statements emphasize its proximity to the Western Rong 西戎, the major tribal group in the west. The riddle of the Qin origins perplexes archeologists as well, with much effort being invested in identifying "eastern" versus "western" customs among early Qin burials. Lothar von Falkenhausen notes that an attempt to fix "the origins of Qin" is methodologically problematic from an archeological point of view, because it conflates material culture and sociological (ethnic identity) categories. Yet this discussion may become meaningful if we dispose of the idea of a single "Qin entity" or a biologically defined "Qin ethnicity" and consider the possibility that one segment of the Qin ruling elite came from the east. This may explain both the emergence of conflicting dynastic legends, reflected in the *Shiji*, and also the abundance of Shang-related burial patterns observable in the earliest known Qin tombs, for example, those from the Liya 李崖 site in Qingshui 清水 County, Gansu.[29]

The *Xinian* narrative indeed seems to provide a solution to the riddle of the Qin origins: that Qin's ancestors came from among the Shang (i.e. "eastern") subjects who were relocated westwards by the Zhou rulers in the aftermath of the failed anti-Zhou rebellion. This story is not a pure invention: it does contain some genuine information about the early

[29] For a critical summary of debates about Qin's origins, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Les origines ethniques des Qin: Perspectives historiques et archéologiques," in *Les Soldats de l'éternité: L'armée de Xi'an*, ed. Alain Thote and Lothar von Falkenhausen (Paris: Pinacothèque de Paris, 2008), 47–54; Lothar von Falkenhausen with Gideon Shelach, "Introduction: Archaeological Perspectives on the Qin 'Unification' of China" in *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*, ed. Yuri Pines, Gideon Shelach, Lothar von Falkenhausen, and Robin D.S. Yates (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 2014), 37–52, esp. 40–41. For a more conventional approach, see, e.g., Tian Xudong 田旭東, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* yu Qin ren xiqian xintan" 清華簡《繫年》與秦人西遷新探, *Qin Han yanjiu* 秦漢研究 6 (2012): 36–41. For certain Shang-related material traits in the most recently discovered early Qin burials, see, e.g., Zaoqi Qin wenhua lianhe kaogudui 早期秦文化聯合考古隊, "Gansu Qingshui Liya yizhi kaogu fajue huode zhongda tupo" 甘肅清水李崖遺址考古發掘獲得重大突破, *Zhongguo wenwu bao* 中國文物報 8 (20 January 2012) (http://big5.cntv.cn/gate/big5/kejiao.cntv.cn/20120202/100142.shtml).

movements of the Qin ruling lineage, traces of which can be found in other texts.[30] The Zhuyu 朱圉 location to which, according to *Xinian*, the Qin ancestors were transferred, is not only attested in later texts, but may be identified with one of the earliest sites associated with Qin culture in eastern Gansu, namely the Maojiaping 毛家坪 settlement in Gangu 甘谷 county. As noted by Li Xueqin, Maojiaping is situated very close to the modern Zhuyu township 朱圉鄉.[31] Significantly, archeological excavations at Maojiaping indicate the coexistence of two distinct cultural (ethnic?) groups in the same settlement,[32] suggesting that one segment of the Maojiaping residents were migrants from elsewhere. This evidence seems to add plausibility to the *Xinian* record.

Xinian's value for historians of the Qin dynasty is undeniable; but it would be advisable not to follow Wu Wenwen 吳雯雯 and others who argue that *Xinian* is the final proof of the "eastern origin" of Qin.[33] First, one should not blindly privilege *Xinian* over other sources. In the identification of Qin Zhong 秦仲 as the Qin leader who occupied the Zhou

30) One of the interesting hints regarding Qin ancestors' relation to the Shangyan settlement is a statement attributed to the famous diplomat Su Qin 蘇秦 (d. ca. 284). In the fifth anecdote in the *Zhanguo zonghengjia shu* manuscript from Mawangdui, Su Qin is cited as telling the king of Yan 燕王: "Should one be satisfied with what one has … Qin would not depart from Shangyan" 自復不足……秦將不出商闕 (Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu 馬王堆漢墓帛書整理小組, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* (*san*) 馬王堆漢墓帛書 (叁) [Beijing: Wenwu, 1983], 32). The editors of the manuscript originally believed that Shangyan refers to Shangyu 商於, a locality in the easternmost part of the Wei 渭 River basin (33n19); similarly, a parallel statement in the received *Zhanguo ce* version speaks of "Qin would not depart from [its eastern stronghold,] the Yao pass" 秦不出殽塞 (He Jianzhang 何建章, annot., *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 戰國策注釋 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991], "Yan ce 燕策 1" 29.14, 1122). In light of the *Xinian* narrative, it seems that Shangyan in Su Qin's anecdote represents an ancestral locality of the Qin ruling lineage, which corroborates the *Xinian* version.

31) See Li Xueqin, "Tan Qinren chu ju 'Zhuwu' de dili weizhi" 談秦人初居 "邾吾" 的地理位置, *Chutu wenxian* 出土文獻 2 (2011): 1–5.

32) Teng Mingyu, "From Vassal State to Empire: An Archaeological Examination of Qin Culture," in *Birth of an Empire*, 71–112, esp. p. 80–82. The evidence of two coexisting cultures comes only from the middle period of Maojiaping settlement (ca. sixth-fifth century BCE), but it is likely that the producers of the so-called Maojiaping B type pottery occupied the settlement from the beginning, yet their early remnants cannot be found because they practiced different burial customs from those of Maojiaping A (Zhou-related, probably Qin) settlers.

33) See Wu's gloss in *Qinghua er*, 184–186.

heartland after 771, the *Xinian* text is patently wrong.[34] Second, the story of Feilian's struggle against the Zhou house and subsequent relocation of his supporters westward should in any case be read not as a "fact" but as yet another variant of a Qin dynastic legend, hereto unknown. It is highly probable that this legend contains more than a kernel of historical truth, but even in that case, the migrants from the East may have formed just one segment of the future Qin elite; Qin can not be simply equated with "eastern" culture. The *Xinian* text may fill in some lacunae of early Qin history, but the text per se is not sufficient for providing definitive answers to ongoing scholarly research about early Qin's cultural trajectory.

Xinian and *Zuo zhuan* compared

Since the bulk of *Xinian* overlaps with *Zuo zhuan*, the precise relation between the two texts is one of the crucial topics in analyzing *Xinian*. One scenario that can be easily ruled out is that *Zuo zhuan* is secondary to *Xinian*: it would be highly implausible that its authors relied on *Xinian*'s brief accounts to create a detailed narrative with hundreds of dates, personal and place names, official titles and the like, none of which exist in *Xinian*. But does it mean that *Xinian* is an abridgement of the *Zuo zhuan* narrative, as the first impression suggests? Or should we speak of an overlap of original sources? Which aspects of the *Zuo zhuan* (or its sources') narratives does *Xinian* preserve, and which other narratives are sacrificed? How should we understand minor discrepancies between the two texts? And what can we learn from this comparison about the nature and dating of *Zuo zhuan*?

To answer these questions, I shall translate and analyze two sections from the middle part of *Xinian*. Both offer parallels with *Zuo zhuan*, but

34) As noted in note 24 above, the proper sequence of the Qin rulers—narrated in chapter 5 and in an addendum to chapter 6 of the *Shiji* and indirectly corroborated by the inscriptions on the Qin-*bo* 秦鎛 and Qin-*gui* 秦簋 (see Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000], 64–80)—is that the occupation of the Zhou heartland was performed by Lord Xiang, the grandson of Qin Zhong. In my opinion, it is likely that the *Xinian* editors simply conflated Qin Zhong—the first enfeoffed Qin ruler—with his grandson under whom Qin commenced its eastward expansion.

also differ from it in details. The comparison will help elucidate the nature of *Xinian* and also deepen our understanding of *Zuo zhuan*. I shall start with section 5, the first of those that focus on the state of Chu.

Lord Ai of Cai (r. 694–675) took a wife from Chen; the Lord of Xi also took a wife from Chen, who was Xi Gui. When Xi Gui was en route back to Xi, she passed through Cai. Lord Ai of Cai ordered her to be stopped, saying: "Since she is from the same family [as my wife], she must enter [the city]." Xi Gui then entered into Cai, and Lord Ai of Cai "wived" her.[35] The Lord of Xi considered [Lord Ai] incompliant;[36] then he sent a messenger to King Wen of Chu (r. 689–677), saying: "My lord should come and attack us; we shall seek help from Cai, and you can thereupon defeat them." King Wen raised the army and attacked Xi, and Lord Ai of Cai led his army to save Xi. King Wen defeated him at Shen, and captured Lord Ai of Cai, returning with him.

King Wen was a guest at Xi, and the Lord of Cai accompanied him. The Lord of Xi was serving ale to King Wen. The Lord of Cai knew that he had been lured by the Lord of Xi; hence he told King Wen: "The wife of the Lord of Xi is extraordinarily beautiful; my lord must order to see her." King Wen ordered to see her. The Lord of Xi refused, but the King insistently ordered to see her. Having seen her, he went back [to Chu]. The next year, he raised an army and invaded Xi. He overpowered it, killed the Lord of Xi, and took Xi Gui with him to return. She [eventually] gave birth to Du'ao and [the future] King Cheng.

Thanks to this, King Wen opened lands northward beyond Fangcheng, expanded to the Ru River, trained his armies near Chen, and acquired Dun so as to overawe the lord of Chen.

蔡哀侯取妻於陳，息侯亦取妻於陳，是息嬀。息嬀將歸于息，過蔡，蔡哀侯命止之，【23】曰："以同姓之故，必入。"息嬀乃入于蔡，蔡哀侯妻之。息侯弗順，乃使人于楚文王【24】曰："君來伐我，我將求救於蔡，君焉敗之。"文王起師伐息，息侯求救於蔡，蔡哀侯率師【25】以救息，文王敗之於莘，獲哀侯以歸。

文王爲客於息，蔡侯與從，息侯以文【26】王飲酒，蔡侯知息侯之誘己也，亦告文王曰："息侯之妻甚美，君必命見之。"文【27】王命見之，息侯辭，王固命見之。既見之，還。明歲，起師伐息，克

35) "To wife" 妻 is glossed by Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1302 CE) as "to commit adultery with a married woman" (私他人婦女), and this gloss fits perfectly here. See Cheng Wei 程薇, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* yu Xi Gui shiji" 清華簡《繫年》與息嬀事跡， *Wenshi zhishi* 文史知識 2012.4: 45–48 and Chen Wei 陳偉, "Du Qinghua jian *Xinian* zhaji" 讀清華簡《繫年》札記, *Jianghan kaogu* 江漢考古 2012.3: 118. See also *Qinghua er*, 276–77.

36) I read *shun* 順 in 弗順 as a putative verb; this usage ("to consider somebody incompliant," or, more precisely, "to bear a grudge against somebody") is peculiar to *Xinian* (see also section 15 and note 45 below).

之，殺息侯，取【28】息嬀以歸，是生堵敖及成王。文王以北啓出方城，圾（立）肆（畛？）於汝，改（治？）旅於陳，焉【29】取頓以贛（恐？）陳侯。【30】[37]

The narrative of *Xinian* is very close to that of *Zuo zhuan*, where it is divided into two separate anecdotes from the years 684 and 680. The first of these appears as a comment on the entry recording Chu's victory over Cai in the *Chunqiu*.[38] This anecdote is reproduced in *Xinian* very closely, except for a clearer indication that the Lord of Cai "wived," i.e., committed adultery, with his sister-in-law (in *Zuo zhuan* it is substituted with a euphemism that the Lord of Cai "did not treat her appropriately as a guest" 弗賓). The second anecdote in *Zuo zhuan* is related to another entry in the *Chunqiu*, according to which the Chu army entered the Cai capital in the seventh month of 680 (秋, 七月, 荊入蔡).[39] This anecdote is relatively sophisticated. It starts with the story of the Lord of Cai instigating the Chu attack against Xi, enticing King Wen with the intention of obtaining Xi Gui. Then comes another mini-anecdote (later embellished and modified in *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳), about the tragic life of Xi Gui as a Chu captive: despite winning King Wen's favor, she refused to speak as a self-imposed punishment for serving two husbands. Then, *Zuo zhuan* explains that after King Wen invaded Xi as suggested by the Lord of Cai, he followed this with an attack on Cai itself. The concluding remark by the "superior man" (*junzi* 君子) criticizes Lord Ai of Cai for his manipulations which brought disaster to his own state.

It is with regard to this second anecdote that the difference between *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan* becomes more pronounced. First, the sequence of events in *Xinian* differs slightly: the elimination of Xi occurs one year after the first intervention of King Wen against Cai, which means that (adopting the *Chunqiu* chronology), Xi was eliminated in 683, three years before the Chu incursion into Cai in 680. This slight change—if not a mistake—may suggest that the *Xinian* authors were better informed about the annihilation of Xi than the *Zuo zhuan* authors.

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37) *Qinghua 2*: 147.

38) *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, annot. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, rev. ed. 1990, hereafter *Zuo*), Zhuang 10.3, 184. The *Chunqiu* record (*Zuo*, Zhuang 10.5, 181) is the first appearance of Chu (then named Jing 荊) in the *Chunqiu*.

39) *Zuo*, Zhuang 14.3, 198–99.

Alternatively, it is possible that the *Zuo zhuan* authors deliberately manipulated their sources, transposing the story of the elimination of Xi to the year 680 so as to emphasize its connection with the incursion into Cai during that year, making the two events closely related and thereby strengthening the didactic message, which criticized the Lord of Cai's perfidy. These differences are of little importance; but there is another and more substantial one. The *Xinian* authors eliminated the moralizing aspects of the *Zuo zhuan* story: Xi Gui's chastity or lack thereof is of no interest to them; the machinations of the rulers of Xi and Cai do not merit praise or blame; the focus of the narration clearly lies elsewhere. This focus is fully revealed in the last phrase of the story (which does not exist in *Zuo zhuan* and evidently reflects a distinctive Chu perspective): the Cai-Xi intrigue served as a springboard for Chu's expansion beyond the Fangcheng 方城 line into the Ru 汝 River valley.[40] It is this aspect—and only this aspect—that matters to the *Xinian* authors.

Section 5 may be illustrative of most of the entries in *Xinian*. An event—or a chain of events, as shown below—is discussed primarily as background material to explain changes in Chu's geostrategic situation. The emphasis may shift from Chu's own actions to that of its rivals and allies (Qin, Jin, Qi, Wu 吳, and Yue 越), but the focus always remains on the changing balance of power. The authors appear to be indifferent to other didactic messages that could be deduced from their narrative. The anecdotal nature of the narrative is not obscured entirely, but it becomes much less pronounced than in *Zuo zhuan*, not to say in later texts that reproduce the same anecdote, such as, in the case of section 5, *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and *Lienü zhuan*.[41]

Let us now move to a longer narrative that parallels several series of anecdotal chains from *Zuo zhuan*, namely section 15. In view of its length, I have divided it into two parts. The first states:

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40) The precise identification of Fangcheng is disputed: it is likely that the term referred first to mountain ranges going from the Funiu Moutains 伏牛山 eastward, which served as a natural boundary of the state of Chu; by the fifth century BCE, a long protective wall was built in the area. See Wu Wenwen's discussion in *Qinghua er*, 298–302.

41) For the *Lüshi chunqiu* version see Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋 (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1990), "Chang gong" 長攻 14.5, 991–92; for the *Lienü zhuan* version, see *Gu lienü zhuan* 古列女傳, "Zhen shun zhuan" 貞順傳, e-*Siku quanshu* edition 4, 6–7.

When King Zhuang of Chu ascended the throne (613), Wu was submissive to Chu. Lord's Scion Zhengshu of Chen took as wife a daughter of Lord Mu of Zheng named Shao Kong.[42] In the fifteenth year of King Zhuang (599), Lord's Scion Zhengshu of Chen killed his ruler, Lord Ling. King Zhuang led an army and laid siege to Chen. The King ordered the Lord of Shen, Qu Wu, to go to Qin and ask for troops, and getting the troops, [Qu Wu] returned. The King entered the Chen [capital], killed Zhengshu, took his wife, and gave her to the Lord of Shen. *Lianyin* Xiang the Elder contended with [the Lord of Shen] and seized Shao Kong. When *lianyin* Xiang the Elder was captured at Heyong,[43] his son, Heiyao, also married Shao Kong. When King Zhuang passed away and King Gong ascended the throne (590), Heiyao died, and Marshal Zifan contended with the Lord of Shen for Shao Kong.[44] The Lord of Shen said: "This is the wife I was given [by King Zhuang]," and married her. The Marshal considered the Lord of Shen incompliant.[45] When the King ordered the Lord of Shen to go on a visit to Qi, the Lord of Shen secretly carried Shao Kong off and left. From Qi thereupon he escaped to Jin, from Jin he went to Wu, thereby facilitating routes of communication between Wu and Jin, and teaching the men of Wu to oppose Chu.

楚莊王立，吳人服于楚。陳公子徵舒取妻于鄭穆公，是少孟。莊王立十又五年，【74】陳公子徵舒殺其君靈公，莊王率師圍陳。王命申公屈巫蹔秦求師，得師以【75】來。王入陳，殺徵舒，取其室以予申公。連尹襄老與之爭，抏（奪）之少孟。連尹戡(捷)[46] 於河【76】瀕，其子黑要也或（又）室少孟。莊王即世，共王即位。黑要也死，司馬子反與申【77】公爭少孟，申公曰："是余受妻也。"取以爲妻。司馬不順申公。王命申公聘於齊，申【78】公竊載少孟以行，自齊遂逃蹔晉，自晉蹔吳，焉始通吳晉之路，教吳人反楚。【79】[47]

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42) From *Zuo zhuan* and *Guoyu* it is clear that Zhengshu was not a lord's scion (his grandfather was); here *Xinian* is obviously mistaken. Shao Kong is known in other texts as Xia Ji 夏姬; Shao may be the lineage name of her husband (according to the *Zuo zhuan* version), Yushu 御叔; Kong is her private name (*Qinghua 2*, 171n2). According to *Zuo zhuan*, she was Zhengshu's mother and not wife.

43) *Lianyin* 連尹 is an official title in the Chu hierarchy; "captured at Heyong" apparently refers to capturing Xiang's body after his death in action during the Bi 邲 battle between Chu and Jin in 597 (see *Zuo*, Xuan 12.2, 743); for Heyong's proximity to Bi, see Wu Wenwen's gloss in *Qinghua er*, 555–56.

44) In *Zuo zhuan*, the sequence of events differs: Heiyao was murdered by Marshal Zifan and his accomplices at the same time that Qu Wu's family was massacred; these events occurred after Qu Wu had smuggled Xia Ji (or Shao Kong) out of Chu.

45) See n. 36 above for *shun* 順 in this context as a putative verb: "to consider somebody incompliant," i.e., to bear a grudge against him.

46) For reading the character here as *jie* 捷 (to capture), see Chen Jian's 陳劍 explanations as cited in *Qinghua er*, 554–55.

47) *Qinghua 2*, 170.

This lengthy narrative incorporates several accounts also found in the *Zuo zhuan*. The first impression is that the first part of *Xinian* 15 revolves around the ultimate *femme fatale* of *Zuo zhuan*, Xia Ji (in *Xinian* named Shao Kong), who "killed three husbands, one ruler, and one son, and brought one state and two high ministers to their destruction."[48] According to the *Zuo zhuan* account, Xia Ji had illicit relations with Lord Ling of Chen and with two of his high ministers, which infuriated her son (or, in *Xinian*'s version, her husband), Xia Zhengshu, who then assassinated his ruler, causing the subsequent Chu invasion. Xia Ji remained an apple of discord among the leading Chu ministers; their struggles caused one of the most gifted Chu statesmen, Qu Wu (or Wuchen 巫臣), the Lord of Shen, to flee his state, after which his rivals massacred his family. Later, Qu Wu avenged the massacre of his family by fostering the Jin-Wu alliance against Chu. These complex stories, full of didactic digressions, are compressed in *Xinian* into slightly more than two hundred characters, diminishing their dramatic effect, cutting off substantial details (such as Xia Ji's adultery or the massacre of Qu Wu's family), omitting speeches, and undermining the potential didactic—or entertainment—value of each of the anecdotes involved. What remains is a factual skeleton focusing on a single significant issue: how the course of events turned a member of a Chu royal lineage, Qu Wu,[49] into an arch-enemy of his native state, contributing to a major setback in Chu's strategic position. Yet the authors' true concern are neither Xia Ji nor Qu Wu's personal stories (hence, the massacre of his family is omitted) but the consequences of Qu Wu's actions: the rise of Wu, which becomes the main subject of the narrative in its second part:

> Coming to the time of King Ling [of Chu, r. 540–529], King Ling invaded Wu. He undertook the Nanhuai expedition, seized the Royal Scion Jueyou of Wu, and thereafter the people of Wu again submitted to Chu.[50] When King Ling passed away, King Jingping [a.k.a. King Ping, r. 528–516] ascended the throne (528). Junior Preceptor [Fei] Wuji slandered *lianyin* [Wu 伍] She and had him killed. She's sons,

48) *Zuo*, Zhao 28.2, 1492.
49) The Qu 屈 lineage was the collateral branch of the royal lineage of Chu, descendants of King Wu 楚武王 (r. 740–690).
50) For the invasion of Wu in 537 and the capture of Prince Jueyou, see *Zuo*, Zhao 5.8, 1270–72; from *Zuo zhuan* it is clear that Wu did not submit to Chu in the aftermath of this invasion.

Wu Yun and Ji of Wu [Wu Ji], fled and submitted to Wu 吳.[51] Wu Ji led the men of Wu to lay siege to Zhoulai, digging a lengthy moat and filling it with water so as to defeat the Chu army; this is the Moat of Ji's Father.[52] When King Jingping passed away, King Zhao ascended the throne (516). Wu Yun became the chief minister of Wu; he taught Wu how to cause uprisings among the regional lords [allied with] Chu; thus he defeated the Chu army at Boju and thereupon entered Ying, [the Chu capital].[53] King Zhao returned to Sui; and he fought the Wu forces at Yi. Royal Scion Chen of Wu was about to rebel and make trouble for Wu; King Helu of Wu then had to return, and King Zhao thus recovered his state.

以至靈王，靈王伐吳，爲南懷（淮？）之行，執吳王子蹶由，吳人焉或（又）服於楚。靈王即世，【80】景平王即位。少師無極讒連尹奢而殺之，其子伍員與伍之雞逃歸吳。伍雞將【81】吳人以圍州來，爲長壑而洎之，以敗楚師，是雞父之洎。景平王即世，昭王即【82】位。伍員爲吳太宰，是教吳人反楚邦之諸侯，以敗楚師于柏舉，遂入郢。昭王歸【83】隨，與吳人戰于析（沂）[54]。吳王子晨將起禍於吳，吳王闔盧乃歸，昭王焉復邦。【84】[55]

In the second part the events unfold even faster, with just a few dozen words dividing one eventful reign of a Chu king from another. *Zuo zhuan* narrates in great detail the brief hegemony of King Ling of Chu 楚靈王, who overawed his neighbors and humiliated Wu by repeated incursions; King Ling's overthrow and the subsequent decline in Chu's prestige; the intrigues of the Chu Iago, Fei Wuji, who caused the downfall of the Wu 伍 lineage; and Wu Yun's (i.e., Wu Zixu's 伍子胥) subsequent flight to Wu 吳, where he started preparing revenge against Chu. All these affairs, in addition to the dramatic flight of King Zhao from his capital and the no less dramatic recovery of his fortunes, are absent or shortened to a few words. Gone are individual dramas, moral dilemmas, malevolence, and benevolence of rulers and ministers. Nothing should distract the reader from the single thread of the narrative: explaining how the Wu-

51) Wu Yun is the famous Wu Zixu 伍子胥; for the evolution of whose story see David Johnson, "Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-Hsü," *Journal of Asian Studies* 40 (1981): 255–71. There is no evidence for Wu She's another son, Ji of Wu, in any other historical source.

52) The *Chunqiu* records Wu's defeat of Chu and its allies in 519 at the location named Ji's Father (or Rooster's Father? 雞父).

53) For these dramatic events of 506, when Chu was on the verge of extinction, see *Zuo*, Ding 4.3, 1542–49.

54) Emending Xi 析 to Yi 沂 following the editors' note (*Qinghua* 2, 173n25).

55) *Qinghua* 2, 170.

Chu conflict unfolded until it peaked with the stunning occupation of the Chu capital by the invading Wu armies in 506.

Each segment of the *Xinian* 15 narrative exists in some form in *Zuo zhuan*, with two exceptions: the story of Qu Wu's mission to Qin to seek support against Chen in 598, and the exploits of Wu Zixu's brother, Wu Ji (or, as he is named in the text, Ji of Wu 伍之雞).[56] In both cases I believe, *pace* the editors of the *Qinghua 2* volume, that this information is wrong, stemming from the *Xinian* authors' carelessness. In the first case, it is highly improbable that Chu would seek Qin's assistance against Chen, not only because Chen's location is distant from Qin, but mostly because Chu's invasion of Chen was ultimately unopposed and did not require significant coalition-building. In my opinion, it is likely that the authors of *Xinian* conflated this event with a real request of support from Qin by a Chu messenger, Shen Baoxu 申包胥, against Wu in 506.[57] Perhaps they were misled by the identity between Shen Baoxu's lineage name (Shen 申) and Qu Wu's fief of Shen 申, and transposed the story a century backward in time. As for Ji of Wu, I fully accept Ziju's 子居 assertion that this name is based on a popular etymology of the name of the battlefield where Chu armies were defeated by their Wu adversaries in 519, 雞父 Rooster's (or Ji's) Father.[58] The place name, recorded in the *Chunqiu*,[59] should have existed before the Wu battle against Chu, but later it might have become associated with Wu Zixu's revenge for his father's death in Chu custody. Since the place name could not be meaningfully associated with Zixu himself, his new brother was invented. It is highly unlikely that such an important personage, if he ever existed, would have evaded the attention of countless historians and literati who retold Wu Zixu's story, turning it into one of the best-known narratives

56) *Xinian* often adds the possessive particle *zhi* 之 between an individual's lineage name (surname) and his personal name. This feature figures prominently also in the alleged Warring States period Chu extract from the *Zuo zhuan*, a part of the Zhejiang University collection.

57) For Shen Baoxu's heroic mission to Qin to request assistance against Wu, see *Zuo*, Ding 4.3, 1547–49; Ding 5.5, 1551. This mission is mentioned (without mentioning Shen's name) in section 19 of *Xinian*.

58) See Ziju, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* 12–15 zhang jiexi" 清華簡《繫年》12 ～ 15 章解析 (http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=5413). "Rooster" may be just a river's name (Ji 雞).

59) *Zuo*, Zhao 23.7, 1440.

from the late Springs-and-Autumns period.[60] Similar carelessness may explain other lapses in *Xinian*'s narrative, such as the misidentification of Xia Ji's son, Xia Zhengshu, as her husband and as a scion of Chen's ruling lineage. On the other hand, it is possible that *Xinian* is more accurate than *Zuo zhuan* in identifying Xia Zhengshu as Xia Ji's husband and not son, because in terms of Xia Ji's age it is highly improbable that back in 598 she already had an adult son.[61]

Let us leave aside for a moment the issue of *Xinian*'s historical accuracy and try to clarify first its relation to *Zuo zhuan* and, second, its authors' utilization of their primary sources. With regard to the first question it is very tempting to assume that the *Xinian* authors had utilized the *Zuo zhuan* narrative, compressing it to present a focused account on the events that interested them. Should this observation be correct, it would help in dating *Zuo zhuan*, but I doubt its veracity. The facts that *Xinian* incorporated different regional sources, and that it never used the Lu chronology applied by *Zuo zhuan*, indicate that direct borrowing from *Zuo zhuan* is unlikely. It is much more plausible that the *Xinian* authors used local histories prepared by Jin, Chu, and possibly Zhou scribes, which were also utilized by the *Zuo zhuan* authors. Thus, both texts may share common primary sources instead of being directly related. This observation is significant, in turn, for deepening our understanding of *Zuo zhuan*.

For many centuries, scholarly discussions of *Zuo zhuan* focused on the questions of dating and authorship, with a huge number of conflicting scenarios tracing it to any personality from Confucius' (551–479) alleged contemporary, Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, to the Han archivist Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BCE–23 CE). Nowadays, speculations about the text's authorship are no longer popular, while the question of its dating remains difficult to resolve unless we decide whether by "dating" we mean the first stage of the text's compilation or the time of its finalization in a form close to the received version. For scholars interested in *Zuo zhuan*'s

60) See Johnson, "Epic and History."

61) See Wei Cide 魏慈德 ("*Qinghua jian Xinian* yu *Zuo zhuan* zhong de Chu shi yitong"《清華簡・繫年》與《左傳》中的楚史異同, *Donghua Hanxue* 東華漢學 17 (2013): 25. If the manipulation was performed in the *Zuo zhuan*, then making Xia Ji into a mother of Xia Zhengshu could have been done to stress her role as an ultimate age-defying *femme fatale*. I am grateful to Li Wai-yee for this observation.

historical reliability, what should matter more is to which degree its narrative derives from earlier sources, rather than from the authors' imagination, and what the nature and reliability of these sources might be.[62] Answers to these questions remain difficult, because none of the *Zuo zhuan* source materials have been preserved, and until recently their nature could be inferred only from the analysis of the *Zuo zhuan* narrative itself. It is from this perspective that the discovery of *Xinian* may become invaluable.

From the two sections translated above (which are representative of other *Xinian* segments that parallel *Zuo zhuan*), we can discern two types of source materials incorporated into both texts. One, represented by *Xinian* 5, is a historical anecdote (in this case, two combined anecdotes). The anecdote's time span is limited; the narrative is focused on a single event or a series of closely related events; and it is peppered with moralizing speeches (which are present in full in the *Zuo zhuan* version of the story). Anecdotes were important building blocks of both *Xinian* and the *Zuo zhuan*; later, the anecdotal genre prospered well until the end of the Former Han 前漢 (206/202 BCE–9 CE).[63] However, as we shall see below, *Xinian* appears to be singularly different from the anecdotal collections of the Warring States and later periods.

The second type of source material is represented by *Xinian* 15 and a few other similarly lengthy narratives (including the one discussed in the next section). Their temporal span is longer, and the narrative is much more complex. These narratives may incorporate individual anecdotes (as can be inferred from *Zuo zhuan*), but their length and complexity do not allow them, in my opinion, to be reduced to a mere "chain of anecdotes."[64] Rather, it seems that the goal of these narratives was the

62) See n. 3 above for further discussions on these topics.

63) David Schaberg discussed the anecdotes in *Zuo zhuan* in his *A Patterned Past*; for a detailed analysis of the anecdotal genre, see Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. I: *Beginnings to AD 600*, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 394–414. The role of anecdotes in pre-imperial and early imperial historiography is due to be explored in full in *Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in Early China*. For the observation that the anecdotes lost their popularity after the end of the Former Han, see van Els, "Old Stories No Longer Told: The End of the Anecdotes Tradition in Early China," in *Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in Early China*, forthcoming.

64) For viewing *Zuo zhuan* as comprised primarily of "chains of anecdotes," see Schaberg's works mentioned in the previous note.

systematic introduction to the polity's history. In *Zuo zhuan* these individual histories of different polities became intertwined, blurring their original form; but from comparison between *Xinian* 15 and *Zuo zhuan*, their nature can be understood with greater clarity. It seems that a Chu history utilized by both texts was quite detailed with regard to both domestic and foreign affairs; *Zuo zhuan* preserved many of these details, or perhaps added more from other sources or from the authors' imagination, while the *Xinian* authors abridged them and preserved the factual skeleton with the focus on external relations. Yet the fact that this skeleton is almost identical to the one we can create by abridging relevant sections of *Zuo zhuan* indicates that both texts worked with the same source material.[65]

It is likely then that aside from individual anecdotes, the major building blocks of both *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan* were local histories of Chu and Jin (in *Zuo zhuan* they were supplemented with similar histories from Lu, Qi, Zheng 鄭, Song 宋, and Wei 衛, which were not utilized by the *Xinian* compilers). These local histories may be related to the "historical records" (*shiji* 史記) of the vanquished Warring States, which were purportedly destroyed in the aftermath of the Qin unification of 221 BCE.[66] Conceivably, these histories themselves were compilations based on earlier chronicles, anecdotes, and other source materials, oral and written alike. Possibly these histories were periodically edited and updated, and it is likely that different versions circulated simultaneously. This in turn may explain minor discrepancies between *Zuo zhuan* and *Xinian*.

If my analysis is correct, then it lends further credibility to both the *Xinian* and the *Zuo zhuan* accounts. That two distinct texts extracted from their original sources very similar presentations of both individual events (e.g., *Xinian* 5) and lengthy historical narratives (e.g., *Xinian* 15) suggests that neither introduced major modifications to their source

65) As mentioned above, there are only two major discrepancies between the two texts: the mission of Qu Wu to the state of Qin, and the story of Wu Zixu's putative brother, Wu Ji. In addition, there are minor discrepancies, such as the identity of Xia Zhengshu, the sequence of the transfers of Xia Ji from one contender to another, and *Xinian*'s claim that Wu was submissive to Chu during the reign of King Ling. All other details of *Xinian* story are paralleled in *Zuo zhuan*, which, however, is far more detailed.

66) The destruction of historical records of the Warring States in the aftermath of the Qin unification is lamented in *Shiji* 15.686.

materials. Differences of emphasis do exist, and they will be analyzed separately in the next section; but overall the existence of a common factual skeleton in both cases proves that both the spirit and often even the wording of the original source was faithfully preserved.

With this supposition in mind, let us check how the *Xinian* authors reworked their source materials. They compressed the narrative of their sources, eliminated minor details, but possibly also added some information that could have derived from other texts or from oral lore (such as the invention of Wu Ji). In the process, such details as dates, place names, and official titles, which permeate the *Zuo zhuan* narrative, were reduced to an absolute minimum, with reign periods of the Chu kings serving as the primary chronological tool. Moreover, the *Xinian* narration lost most of what should be expected of an anecdotes' chain, as analyzed in Schaberg's seminal study.[67] Because of this compression, the narrative cannot be divided into "single events" with a clear "beginning, middle, and end"; gone are the speeches; and no clear means of conveying a didactic message are discernible.[68] What remains is a brief and energetic political narrative. Carelessness regarding minor details should not mislead us: on important matters, the text appears clear and unequivocal. In a few hundred characters it tells in a nutshell the story of Chu's conflict with Wu; this story is told not for its moral or entertaining qualities but in order to provide working knowledge for a reader who wanted to be quickly informed about historical changes in Chu's geostrategic situation. This account is highly informative, and, insofar as we can judge from other sources, fairly accurate.

It should be reiterated at this point that *Zuo zhuan* itself is an immensely rich and also highly heterogenic historical text. It incorporated multiple materials from both written and oral sources, and segments of it differ considerably from one another. Some of its accounts are highly informative; yet while they overwhelm the reader with minute details of bygone events, they also remain very dry and lack any observable

67) Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," 395–96.

68) An alternative scenario would be that speeches and other means of conveying didactic messages, such as predictions, were not part of the original histories but were added by the *Zuo zhuan* authors to their sources. Yet as I have tried to demonstrate in my *Foundations*, at least a significant proportion of the speeches and other didactic means appear too well-integrated into their original source materials to be considered a later interpolation.

moralizing or entertaining qualities.[69] Other segments, in contrast, are full of didactic digressions, are literally appealing and entertaining; they contain lengthy speeches, witty remonstrance, stories of ghosts and deities, prophetic dreams, and the like.[70] These latter segments of *Zuo zhuan* were immensely influential in the Warring States period and later historical literature, having been incorporated—either directly from *Zuo zhuan* itself, or from its source histories, or from other intermediary texts—into multiple anecdotal collections. In distinction, purely informative accounts appear to be much less popular; actually, not a single text prior to *Shiji* can be compared to *Zuo zhuan* in its fondness for historical detail.[71] Thus, *Xinian*'s proximity to these informative accounts distinguishes it from all other known texts that show significant overlap with *Zuo zhuan*.

Aside from similarities between *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan*, differences between the two are also highly pronounced. The *Xinian* authors retained only a factual skeleton of political history. The reader of *Xinian* was expected to learn from the text not how to behave, but what happened in the preceding century or two, and how past events have shaped the present. In the final section of my discussion, I shall return to this observation and its implications for understanding *Xinian*.

A Chu perspective? The Chu-Jin conflict in *Zuo zhuan* and *Xinian*

In both traditional and modern scholarship, Chu is often imagined as the cultural "Other" of the Zhou world. The abundance of pejorative remarks against Chu's alleged "barbarianism" in the texts from the Warring States and later periods, the highly peculiar style of some of Chu's mortuary objects, and the increasing awareness of the heterogeneity of Chinese civilization—all these encourage scholars to emphasize Chu's distinctiveness. The common narrative, which was popular

69) For examples of such accounts, see Pines, "History without Anecdotes."

70) For the best discussions of literally appealing segments of *Zuo zhuan*, see Schaberg, *A Patterned Past*, and Li Wai-yee, *Readability*.

71) To demonstrate the latter point: almost no received text from the Warring States period contains such basic historical information as the event's precise dating; actually the usage of *ganzhi* 干支 dates, which is so prominent in *Zuo zhuan*, almost never recurs in received pre-imperial texts, aside from a few sections of *Guoyu* 國語.

until recently among both Chinese and Western scholars, was that of Chu as a separate cultural entity which was eventually subjugated to and submerged within northern Chinese civilization. Accordingly, some scholars decry a "northern bias" in traditional and modern historiography; for instance, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 90) was accused of "describing Chu in the imperialist terms of a northerner."[72]

Recent studies, particularly archeological explorations that demonstrate intrinsic links between the Chu and Zhou cultural realms, have re-charted the trajectory of Chu cultural development: it appears now that this state originally was part of the Zhou civilization and developed its distinct cultural and political identity only at a later stage of its development, beginning in the late Springs-and-Autumns period.[73] Yet this understanding does not diminish the possibility that the anti-Chu "northern bias" did exist in historical sources. Insofar as the absolute majority of received pre-imperial texts that deal with Chu history were produced either in the states of Qi and Lu or in the state of Jin, they may indeed be expected to present a negative image of the southerners.[74] It is in light of this that *Xinian*, the first known Chu historical text that narrates the dynamics of interstate relations during the centuries of Chu's rise from a minor southern polity to a major power of the Zhou world, deserves utmost attention.

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72) See Constance A. Cook and Barry B. Blakeley, "Introduction," in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Early China*, ed. Constance A. Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 2. For pejorative remarks about Chu's alleged barbarianism, see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), "Teng Wen Gong, shang" 滕文公上 5.4, 125; Liu Shangci 劉尚慈, *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan yizhu* 春秋公羊傳譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), Zhuang 10, 130; Xi 4, 203; Xi 21, 241. For the fascination with the "flamboyant" style of certain Chu mortuary objects as a hallmark of Chu's distinctiveness, see Paul R. Goldin, "Representations of Regional Diversity during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty," in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); cf. Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archeology and Univ. of California Press, 2006), 264ff.

73) For details, see Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society*, and the essays in Cook and Major, *Defining Chu*. Chu's cultural trajectory curiously resembles that of another major pre-imperial polity, the state of Qin (for which see the contributions to *Birth of an Empire*, ed. Pines et al.).

74) *Chunqiu* and its commentaries originated in the states of Lu and Qi, and are usually read as biased against Chu (see more below). In *Guoyu* the Jin-Chu struggle is narrated primarily in the "Jin yu" 晉語 section, the sources of which come from the state of Jin. The "Chu yu" 楚語 chapters of *Guoyu* do not correct the "Jin yu" bias, because they focus primarily on Chu's domestic issues and relations with Wu.

History writing—in China and elsewhere—can serve as an excellent means of strengthening local identity; and the reader of *Xinian* may expect radical revision of the received texts' perspectives on the rise of Chu and its epic struggle against Jin and other northern foes. This does not happen though; those who expect the suppressed southern narrative to transpire fully in the *Xinian* will be bitterly disappointed. The overwhelming majority of its stories, as shown in the sections translated above, closely parallel the *Zuo zhuan* narrative, with only minor and negligible discrepancies. Oddly, even the exploits of the singularly successful Chu leader, King Zhuang 楚莊王 (r. 613–591), are emphasized in *Xinian* less than in *Zuo zhuan*. The major peculiarity of *Xinian* is its consistent concealment of domestic troubles in the state of Chu;[75] yet insofar as interstate relations are concerned, it presents largely the same picture as *Zuo zhuan*.

Before I try to explain this seeming oddity, I want to focus on a single Springs-and-Autumns period section in *Xinian*, which clearly adopts a perspective distinct from that of *Zuo zhuan*, namely, section 16. From analyzing similarities and differences between its narrative and that of *Zuo zhuan*, I hope to address some aspects of the Chu presentation in the latter, and argue that the existence of a radically distinct Chu historical narrative is generally unlikely.

> In the seventh year of King Gong of Chu (r. 590–560, i.e. in 584), prime minister Zizhong invaded Zheng, instigating the Fan campaign.[76] Lord Jing of Jin (r. 599–581) assembled the regional lords to rescue Zheng. The people of Zheng captured [a Chu officer] Yi, the Lord of Yun, and presented him to Lord Jing. Lord Jing returned [to Jin] taking [Yi] with him. [After?] one year (582?),[77] Lord Jing wanted to establish amicable relations with Chu; hence, he released the Lord of Yun, and let him go back and seek peace. King Gong of Chu dispatched the Lord of Yun for an official visit to Jin and approved the peace. Lord Jing dispatched Fa of Ji (Ji Fa) for

75) This concealment reminds one of the Lu *Chunqiu*, which never reports directly about major domestic troubles in the state of Lu, while admitting, infrequently, Lu military defeats.
76) This campaign took place in 584; the river is identified as Fan, following *Zuo zhuan*. For debates about this identification, see *Qinghua er*, 639–44.
77) It is not clear what is referred to by "one year" 一年; Yoshimoto ("Seika kan," 63), notices that this term does not normally occur in historical texts. The dating inserted by me here follows *Zuo zhuan*. Su Jianzhou (*Qinghua er*, 646) proposes reading 一 as mistake for 二 and interprets the phrase as "after two years."

an official visit to Chu, renewing peace. Before [Ji Fa] returned, [Lord Jing] died, and Lord Li (r. 580–574) was established.

King Gong dispatched Royal Scion Chen for an official visit to Jin and also renewed peace. The King also sent the Song commander-of-the-right, Huasun Yuan [Hua Yuan] to arrange peaceful relations between Jin and Chu. The next year (579), Royal Scion Ba of Chu met Wenzi Xie (i.e., Shi Xie 士燮, a.k.a. Shi Wenzi 士文子) of Jin and nobles of regional lords, and made a covenant at Song, saying: "Put to rest armor and weapons of All-under-Heaven." The next year (578), Lord Li [of Jin] was the first to raise an army and lead the regional lords to invade Qin, reaching the Jing River. King Gong also led an army, laying siege at Zheng. Lord Li came to rescue Zheng and defeated the Chu army at Yan.[78] Lord Li also encountered misfortune, and died leaving no posterity.[79]

楚共王立七年，令尹子重伐鄭，爲　泏（氾？）之師。晉景公會諸侯以救鄭，鄭人止鄢公儀，獻【85】諸景公，景公以歸。一年，景公欲與楚人爲好，乃脫鄢公，使歸求成，共王使鄢公聘於【86】晉，且許成。景公使鑊之莅聘於楚，且修成，未還，景公卒，厲公即位。共王使王【87】子辰聘於晉，又修成，王又使宋右師華孫元行晉楚之成。明歲，楚王子罷會晉文【88】子燮及諸侯之大夫，盟於宋，曰："爾（弭）天下之甲兵。"明歲，厲公先起兵，率師會諸侯以伐【89】秦，至于涇。共王亦率師圍鄭，厲公救鄭，敗楚師於鄢。厲公亦見禍以死，亡（無）後。【90】[80]

This narrative focuses on the first attempt to establish a lasting peace between Chu and Jin—the peace conference in the state of Song in 579—and the rapid breakup of amicable relations between the two parties thereafter. I shall not focus here on the very minor discrepancies between the *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan* narratives. What matters is the core of the story: who was responsible for the breakup of the first attempt to reconcile two rival powers?

The events depicted in *Xinian* are narrated in great detail in *Zuo zhuan*, and the two sources agree on the basic facts. What differs, though, is the nature of the peace conference in 579, and the reasons for its failure. In *Zuo zhuan*, the conference was attended by just two parties, Jin

78) The narrative here deviates from the chronological precision of the previous years. Actually, Chu's invasion of Zheng occurred in 576, full two years after Jin's attack on Qin; and the battle of Yan took place a year later, in 575.

79) Lord Li of Jin attempted in 574 to eliminate powerful ministerial lineages; he succeeded in wiping out the major one—the Xi 郤 lineage—but was overpowered by the Luan 欒 lineage; he was murdered and humiliatingly buried as a lowly noble, and succeeded by a scion of another branch of the Jin ruling lineage.

80) *Qinghua* 2, 174.

and Chu; and the covenant (the content of which is cited) focused on establishing amicable relations between the two parties only. In *Xinian*, in distinction, the meeting was attended also by the "nobles of regional lords" (i.e., was multilateral), and the covenant's goal was attaining peace in "All-under-Heaven," similar to the later multilateral peace conferences of 546 and 541.[81] On this point, *Zuo zhuan* appears more reliable: should a 579 peace conference be attended by more parties, it is likely that this would be reflected in the *Chunqiu* as well, which is not the case. It is more plausible that the *Xinian* authors (or the authors of their source) conflated the agreements of 546 and 541 with that of 579.

What happened after the agreement? *Zuo zhuan* insists that Chu was perfidious: soon after the covenant was sealed, the Chu *lingyin* 令尹 (prime minister) warned the visiting Jin colleague that the two rulers, if they ever met, would only exchange arrows and not ceremonial greetings.[82] The subsequent Jin assault on Qin in 578 is presented as unrelated to the Jin-Chu peace agreement and as fully justifiable in light of Qin's anti-Jin machinations. It is Chu's attack on Zheng in 576 which violates the covenant with Jin; *Zuo zhuan* repeatedly cites pronouncements of Chu and Jin dignitaries, who blame the Chu leadership for violating the peace and leading to the disastrous (for Chu) battle of Yanling 鄢陵 in 575. Only at the depiction of the battle itself, the *Zuo zhuan* narration shifts toward a more critical stance toward Jin: its success is presented as a Pyrrhic victory, leading soon to domestic turmoil.

Xinian's interpretation of these events differs radically. The Jin assault against Qin is viewed as a violation of an agreement to establish "universal" peace; Chu's assault on Zheng appears as a retaliatory measure. Moreover, the *Xinian* authors are manipulative in their account: by dispensing with precise chronology after 578, they present all the events that spanned five years (Chu's attack on Zheng, Jin's retaliation, the Yanling battle, and the coup against Lord Li of Jin) as happening immediately one after another in the direct aftermath of Jin's anti-Qin aggression. The blame for the collapse of peace is placed squarely on Lord Li of Jin,

81) For the latter conferences, see a detailed analysis in Kōno Osamu 河野收, "Chūgoku kodai no aru hibusō heiwa undō" 中國古代の或る非武裝平和運動, *Gunji shigaku* 軍事史學 13 (1978): 64–74.
82) *Zuo*, Cheng 12, 857–58.

whose violent death a year after the Yanling battle may be seen as divine retaliation for his perfidy. Chu was the victim; and while it was defeated militarily, the perpetrator, Lord Li, was punished by a humiliating death.

There is no doubt that we have here two radically different interpretations of the same chain of events: the predominantly pro-Jin narrative of *Zuo zhuan* versus the unequivocally pro-Chu version of *Xinian*. Yet we should notice immediately that in terms of facts both narratives do not differ substantially (except for the precise content of the 579 covenant). And while each account is manipulative, neither appears to abandon the basic factual framework. This observation confirms the claim made in the previous section, that the historical accounts of both *Xinian* and *Zuo zhuan* are fundamentally reliable—minor embellishments, mistakes, and manipulations notwithstanding.

This leads us to the question asked above: why do we not encounter a distinctive "Chu perspective" of the Springs-and-Autumns period history in *Xinian*? The answer, I think, is that this perspective is simply a part of *Zuo zhuan* account itself. While some scholars consider the *Zuo zhuan* treatment of Chu tendentious and negative, a systematic investigation of Chu-related narratives in the text calls for a different conclusion. There are instances of highly negative treatment of Chu leaders and statesmen in *Zuo zhuan* (such as in its version of the 579 events or in the narration of the hegemony of King Ling of Chu); but those are balanced with more laudable accounts of other Chu leaders, such as King Zhuang. *Zuo zhuan* lauds some of Chu's victories, such as the Bi 邲 battle of the 597, and hails wise Chu statesmen such as Shen Shushi 申叔時 (d. 575) and Shen Wuyu 申無宇 (fl. 540s–530s).

A few pejorative remarks notwithstanding, the *Zuo zhuan* treatment of Chu does not differ fundamentally from its treatment of other major polities. *Zuo zhuan* alternately lauds and bitterly criticizes Jin, for example. In fact, imperial literati, most notably Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 CE), found *Zuo zhuan* so much a "pro-Chu" text that they even alleged the author might be a Chu person.[83] The reality is probably more prosaic: having incorporated both Chu and non-Chu materials, *Zuo zhuan* presents a multifaceted picture of the southern polity. Insofar as these

[83] See *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, comp. Li Jingde 黎靖德 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996) 93.2153.

materials already contain the Chu view, it is pointless to search for an exceptional Chu perspective elsewhere.

Conclusion: *Xinian* and early Chinese historiography

Limitations of space prevent me from exploring the last sections of *Xinian*, which are most unusual in terms of their historical information. What I want to focus on here is the novelty of the text's genre. Until very recently, pre-imperial historiography was associated with two major historical genres: laconic chronicles, represented by the Lu *Chunqiu*, and didactic anecdotes, which permeate the entire corpus of early texts, including those later classified as "Histories" (*shi* 史) and "Masters" (*zi* 子). *Zuo zhuan* remained a major exception insofar as it combined both genres, in addition to certain segments that cannot be meaningfully associated with either of these.[84] *Xinian* represents yet another historical genre. It is neither an annalistic history nor a collection of anecdotes; and as my above comparison shows, it differs in certain important aspects from both *Zuo zhuan* and the narrative histories that evidently served as the building blocks of *Zuo zhuan* and *Xinian* itself. *Xinian*'s major peculiarity is its minimizing of didacticism and moralization, which are far more muted here than in any other known pre-imperial historical text.

What was the goal of the *Xinian* compilation, and who were its readers? I would imagine a relatively small group of high officials who needed to know the historical background for the current balance of power. This knowledge would benefit them particularly during diplomatic encounters with representatives of other states. In a recent study David Schaberg has explored the speeches of the messengers (*shi* 使) in *Zuo zhuan* and analyzed the messengers' common ground with the scribes (*shi* 史): both shared similar training, which "encompassed both ritual formulas and more substantial knowledge of history and official practice."[85] How was "substantial knowledge of history" attained? Some

84) I analyze the non-anecdotal segments of *Zuo zhuan* in my "History without Anecdotes."
85) Schaberg, "Functionary Speech: On the Work of *shi* 使 and *shi* 史," in *Facing the Monarch: Modes of Advice in the Early Chinese Court*, ed. Garret P.S. Olberding (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center 2013), 40.

might have studied history in earnest; but many others might have needed a brief résumé of major geopolitical shifts in the past. Such résumés can be compared to modern briefings for a travelling head of the state: not an extensive narrative with plenty of dates, names, and events, but a brief summary which presents the most essential information that can be utilized during the diplomatic encounter. I suppose that such a summary prepared nowadays may be similar to *Xinian*. Actually, some of the messengers' speeches cited in *Zuo zhuan* disclose a very similar degree of historical knowledge to what will be achieved by the reader of *Xinian*. The most vivid example is the Jin messenger Lü Xiang's 呂相 memorandum about the breaking of relations with Qin in 578; but other examples abound.[86]

The peculiar audience of *Xinian* explains why its authors treated their sources differently, compared to the authors of *Zuo zhuan*. The latter preserved detailed accounts of events, peppered them with a few entertaining details, and paid particular attention to preserving moralizing digressions, further expanding those through adding post-factum comments by the narrator ("superior man") and by Confucius.[87] Actually, for the overwhelming majority of later readers of *Zuo zhuan* or of its source histories these digressions mattered more than the pure narration of events. These readers were less in need of detailed information about occurrences in the remote past but valued much the didactic potential of historical narratives. In due time, didactic segments were extracted from earlier narratives and became the core of the anecdote genre. In the age of intense intellectual polemics of the Warring States period, historical anecdotes became indispensable for ideological manipulations: through tendentious accounts of history, authors could convince their audience of the advantages of their political recipes. Didacticism prevailed, details were sacrificed, and the obvious distortions of history became the rule throughout the Warring States period and well into the early Han.[88]

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86) For Lü Xiang's memorandum, see *Zuo*, Cheng 13.3, 861–65; for similar examples, see, e.g., *Zuo*, Xiang 14.1, 1005–07; Xiang 25.10, 1104–06; Zhao 26.9, 1475–79. Only exceptionally could a messenger display a real in-depth knowledge of the past; see *Zuo*, Ding 4.1, 1535–42.

87) See more in Eric Henry, "'Junzi yue' and 'Zhongni yue' in *Zuozhuan*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59 (1999): 125–61.

88) I analyze some of these obvious distortions and the resultant loss of argumentative

Informative histories had a much shorter lifespan than moralizing anecdotes. As time passed, details of struggles and intrigues among the bygone polities and lineages became increasingly irrelevant for the educated audience. *Xinian* itself, for instance, would surely be considered anachronistic by about 300, as the state of Jin became a distant memory akin to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in our day, while Chu became engaged in a bitter struggle with its once-ally, the state of Qin. Perhaps long before the Qin biblioclasm of 213—especially the destruction of historical records—delivered the *coup de grâce* to the historical narratives of the vanquished Warring States, such documents as *Xinian* were most likely already out of circulation. Having outlived their usefulness, they would have perished from memory, or, what is more likely, were replaced by newer, updated texts, which also probably disappeared in due time. It took the grand project of the Sima 司馬 family under Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87) to revive intellectual interest in informative history. Their success, like the success of the earlier *Zuo zhuan*, derived in no small measure from their ability to use historical narrative simultaneously for ideological, entertainment, and informative purposes.

The pervasive presence of anecdotes in the historical and quasi-historical lore of the Warring States period has created the wrong impression that they define all early Chinese historical writing.[89] Recent discoveries require a reconsideration of this assertion. Thus, another major quasi-historical work from the Shanghai Museum collection, *Rong Cheng shi* 容成氏, demonstrates that an ideological agenda could be served not only by anecdotes but by preparing a "comprehensive" history of the ruling dynasties of the legendary and semi-legendary past.[90] *Xinian* presents another alternative: a brief informative history with limited didactic and ideological emphasis. Future discoveries may reveal more filiations of early historical genres. Events of the past were

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power of historical anecdotes in Pines, "Speeches and the Question of Authenticity in Ancient Chinese Historical Records," in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, Achim Mittag, and Jörn Rüsen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 195–224. The importance of anecdotes in ideological debates of the Warring States period will be treated in several chapters of *Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in Early China*.

89) Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," 394–95.

90) See Pines, "Political Mythology and Dynastic Legitimacy in the *Rong Cheng shi* Manuscript," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Asian Studies* 73 (2010): 503–29.

recorded, memorized, narrated, embellished, or invented for a variety of political, ideological, and aesthetic needs. New discoveries liberate us from the excessive dependence on the ideological products of Warring States thinkers and on the narrow prism of Han redactors, and allow us to come to terms with the immense variety of early Chinese historiography.