Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Anecdotes in Early China 1
Paul van Els and Sarah A. Queen

PART I
ANECDOTES, ARGUMENTATION, AND DEBATE

1. Non-deductive Argumentation in Early Chinese Philosophy 41
Paul R. Goldin

2. The Frontier between Chen and Cai: Anecdote, Narrative,
and Philosophical Argumentation in Early China 63
Andrew Seth Meyer

3. Mori as a Daoist Sage? An Intertextual Analysis of the
"Chuangchu" Anecdote in the Mici
Ting-mien Lee 93

4. Anecdotal Barbarians in Early China 113
Wu-ying Li

PART II
ANECDOΤΕΔΣ ΑΝΙ TΗΤΗΛΙΑ FORMATION

5. Anecdote Collections as Argumentative Texts: The Composition
of the Shuowen
Christian Schwämmle 147
CONTENTS

6. From Villains Outwitted to Pedants Out-Wrangled: The Function of Anecdotes in the Shifting Rhetoric of the Han Feizi
   Heng Du

7. The Limits of Praise and Blame: The Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in the Gongyangzhuan
   Sarah A. Queen

PART III
ANECDOTES AND HISTORY

8. History without Anecdotes: Between the Zuozhuan and the Xinian Manuscript
   Yuri Pines

9. Cultural Memory and Excavated Anecdotes in "Documentary" Narrative: Mediating Generic Tensions in the Baoxun Manuscript
   Rens Koolman

10. Old Stories No Longer Told: The End of the Anecdotes Tradition of Early China
    Paul van Els

Contributors

Index

Acknowledgments

The book is the outcome of a delightful workshop that took place on May 30 and June 1, 2013, in the Blue Room of City Hotel Nieuw Minerva, which is located in an authentic sixteenth-century warehouse along one of the many canals in Leiden, The Netherlands. During two intensive days, more than a dozen scholars from a variety of nations and affiliations presented and discussed the various functions of anecdotes in early Chinese literature. Heng Du, Paul R. Goldin, Lisa Indraccolo, Rens Koolman, Ping-mien Lee, Wai-ye Li, Andrew Seth Meyer, Jens Østergård Madsen, Yuri Pines, Sarah A. Queen, Elisa Sabattini, Christian Schwemmer, and both Ann Van Auken and Paul van Els. The audience included scholars from places near and far, such as Ivana Buljan, Xi Hu, Simon Härkönen, and Burchard Mansvelt Beck, as well as many Leiden University students. We thank all those who were present for their comments and questions, which enriched the workshop and helped shape the present volume in significant ways.

We are also profoundly grateful to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for sponsoring the workshop and some of the research that has led to this book. We are especially indebted to Nancy Twardowski, History Department Assistant at Connecticut College, who generously contributed her time and expertise to prepare the manuscript for compilation and publication.

Finally, we are thankful to Roger T. Ames, Jenn Bennett, Michael Cunningham, Nancy Ellegate, and other staff at SUNY Press, for their help in our project and their help in materializing the present book, and to the anonymous reviewers who painstakingly scrutinized each chapter, as well as the book as a whole.
History without Anecdotes

Between the Zuo zhuan and the Xinian Manuscript

YURI PINES

The importance of anecdotes in pre-imperial and early imperial historiography is self-evident. They permeate most of the texts later classified as histories (shi 史), such as Guoyu 誠語 (Discourses of the States) and Zhanguoce 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States), as well as many of the masters (zi 子) texts, such as Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan), Lushi chunqiu 劉氏春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Li), or significant portions of Han Feizi 蘭非子 (Master Han Fei); and they dominate even some of the canons (jing 經), e.g., the Zuo zhuan 左傳 (Zuo Commentary). In addition, anecdotes frequently surface in collections of unearthed manuscripts, most notably that of the Shanghai Museum. Indeed, David Schaberg may be close to the point in his assertion that the anecdotes formed "the basic form of historical narrative—and therefore the basic stuff of historical knowledge itself." The recent spur in the interest in anecdotes, demonstrated by the present volume, comes then as no surprise.

That said, a word of caution is needed. Our understanding of early Chinese historiography may be significantly skewed due to the low rate of survival of pre-imperial historical texts. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–90 BCE) famously lamented the destruction of scibal records (shiji 史記) of the Warring States Period 戰國 (453–221 BCE) by the Qin Dynasty 秦 (221–206 BCE). Yet Qin biblioclasm aside, more texts might have been lost due to the lackluster interest in their content by members of educated elite. It may be plausibly assumed that as for those historical texts that were
purely informative, and lacked either entertaining or didactic qualities, or, alternatively, canonical status (as did the Chunqiu 春秋 [Spring and Autumn Annals] of the state of Lu 鲁 and its commentaries), the possibility that they would be cherished enough to be transmitted for generations was minuscule indeed.5

In this chapter I want to explore the somewhat neglected non-anecdotal strand of early Chinese historiography. I believe that only through proper understanding of this strand will we be able to contextualize the anecdotes within the corpus of pre-imperial and early imperial historical and quasi-historical writings. By speaking of non-anecdotal historiography, I plan to focus not on the lacunar annalistic tradition represented by the Lu Chunqiu (and, possibly, a few related texts, such as the Zhushu jinian 竹書紀年 [Bamboo Annals]),6 but rather on longer narratives which lack the essential characteristics of the anecdotes, as depicted by Schaberg in his seminal paper. I shall start my discussion with the Zuo zhuan, which may be considered a fountainhead of many of the historical anecdotes scattered in the texts from the Warring States and well into the Western Han Dynasty 西漢 (202 BCE-9 CE). I want to demonstrate that aside from individual anecdotes or "chains of anecdotes," insightfully analyzed by Schaberg, the Zuo zhuan contains lengthy narratives that are more informative and much less entertaining or moralistic than the anecdotes, and that these narratives and the anecdotes may have targeted different audiences. Then, I shall shift to the newly published historical text from the Qinghua (Tsinghua) University 清華大學 collection, naming Xinian 欣年 (Sequence of Years) by its present-day editors. I shall show that, like significant segments of the Zuo zhuan, the Xinian does not target the educated elite as a whole but provides working historical knowledge for policymakers, and that it may be representative of an important yet neglected genre of informative and non-didactic history. By analyzing the Xinian, its possible audience, and the reasons for its disappearance, I hope to highlight the diversity of early Chinese historiographic traditions, and to fine-tune our understanding of the anecdotes and their role in pre-imperial historical lore.

The Riddle of Boredom: Non-anecdotal Narratives in the Zuo zhuan

The Zuo zhuan is the single largest pre-imperial historical text, and it can be rightly considered the fountainhead of traditional Chinese historiography. The text purportedly comments on the canonical Chunqiu annals, but instead of focusing on discerning the "subtle message" of the Chunqiu, it aims to provide a broader historical context for the lacunar entries of the latter. There is no doubt that the Zuo zhuan incorporated abundant materials from earlier historical texts prepared in the major polities of the Spring and Autumn Period 春秋 (770-453 BCE); but the precise nature of these early texts and the degree of the editorial intervention by the Zuo zhuan author(s) are still very much debated.7 My goal here is to not to address these debates (in which I have taken part in the past), but to focus on some of the less frequently discussed segments of the Zuo zhuan.

As is well known, the Zuo zhuan comprises many hundreds of narrative segments: some are very brief (just a few dozen graphs), while others are quite complex and span many years of the narrative.8 These building blocks of the Zuo zhuan had a highly different afterlife. Some were incorporated into later collections of anecdotes and retold many times; others were all but forgotten. One of the possible reasons for the marked differences in their circulation, is the literary qualities of these narratives. Some are highly engaging and easily catch the eye of either the traditional or modern reader;9 others are quite boring and, except for a few experts and professional exegetes, are rarely noticed at all. Yet it is to these boring stories I want to turn now, as I believe that they can provide more clues about early Chinese historiography.

Let us take, for instance, the story of the rebellion of Hua 華 and Xiang 向, two major ministerial lineages from the state of Song 宋. Both were branch lines of the Song ruling lineage; yet as it often happened in the Spring and Autumn Period, the increasing tension between them and Duke Yuan of Song 宋元公 (r. 531-517 BCE) pushed them to a violent insurrection. The rebellion spanned three years (522-520 BCE), and became one of the most spectacular events in the history of the late Spring and Autumn Period. First, it profoundly shattered the state of Song, starting with the massacre of many of its princes, and ending with the partial extermination and partial expulsion of both rebellious lineages, the members of which for generations constituted the crème de la crème of the Song elite. Second, this rebellion had strong ramifications across the borders of Song, causing military or diplomatic intervention from most of the powerful states of that age, including Jin 晉, Chu 楚, Qi 齊, and Wu 吳. In addition to Song's tiny neighbors, Gao 高 and Wei 魏. Third, the rebellion had a fascinating plot, with intermittent successes of each of the fighting parties and spectacular displays of largesse and treachery, cowardice and courage. Fourth, it
generated immense personal dramas, including most notably that of Hua Feisui, the Grand Marshal of Song who first assisted Duke Yuan in quelling the rebellion, driving one of his own sons into exile, but then was forced to join the rebels almost against his will, because of a fratricidal struggle between two of his remaining sons. In short, the story of the Hua and Xiang rebellion could easily become a literary masterpiece of—let me exaggerate a little—quasi-Shakespearean proportions.

In light of all this, it is perplexing to discover how indifferent the authors of later texts appear to the turmoil in Song. I have not discovered a single reference to the Hua and Xiang revolt in any of the collections of anecdotes from the Warring States and Han periods. The drama seems to have been lost almost completely, never evoking much interest. Why? Was it because of Song's relative marginality in the late Spring and Autumn Period and thereafter? I doubt this: after all, numerous anecdotes from the lives of comparable polities, such as Zheng, Wei, and Wei, permeate contemporaneous texts. Was it perhaps because the Song events lacked a clear didactic value? I doubt this too. The Zuozhuan carefully conveys its negative judgment of both parties: the future head of Hua rebels is derided, eight years before the rebellion, for his lack of decorum, whereas the lord of Song is criticized as "lacking trustworthiness and abundantly relying on his private [henchmen]." While the narrative is too complex to be reduced to the simplistic "good guys vs. bad guys" dichotomy, this is a feature of many other stories in the Zuozhuan, as Wai-kee Li has shown. Then why was the story of the Song rebellion all but forgotten?

I think the answer should be sought in certain features of the Zuozhuan narrative. Despite my praise of the story's plot, one cannot but feel that in purely literary terms it is not sufficiently engaging. The reason is not just its dispersal among other contemporaneous dramas, which are thickly covered in the Duke Zhao of Lu section of the Zuozhuan, but primarily the abundance of minor details that do not help the reader to focus on the narrative and come at the expense of other, more engaging stories. Much of the narrative is dedicated to information that, for a later reader, might have been all but irrelevant: the date of every major encounter between the rebels and the loyalists is recorded, and so are the names of the otherwise unknown persons who participated in related intrigues and battles; we are also told of every minor location in or near the Song capital which was attacked, besieged, or conquered by one side or the other. What we miss are thicker depictions of the drama. The mass murder of the lord's closest kin at the start of the rebellion and the subsequent murder of the Hua and Xiang hostages by the treacherous Duke Yuan are reported, but there are no traces of intense feelings that these actions could have elicited; Hua Feisui's willingness to sacrifice his kin out of political loyalty is narrated, but the reasons for his ultimate siding with his fratricidal son against the lord a year later are not given; we are duly informed of the names of military leaders of different polities who intervened on Song's behalf, but so little additional information is given that we cannot really estimate how important this intervention was from the point of view of contemporaneous interstate order. The lack of any summary—by a participant, a wise observer, or the Zuozhuan narrator (the gentleman [junzi 君子])—makes us feel that the story is "incomplete," that it was not sufficiently polished when incorporated into the Zuozhuan. Perhaps for this reason it was abandoned by later anecdote-seekers for the sake of other, less dramatic but better narrated events.

A very similar feeling of a "missed drama" is generated by the Zuozhuan account of another major turmoil, the rebellion of Prince Zhao 王子朝 in the Zhou 周 royal domain from 521 to 516 BCE (incidentally, the narration of this rebellion starts immediately after the last entry related to the Song revolt). Once again we find all the components of a good drama: a major turmoil which devastated the already crippled royal domain and was quelled only thanks to the intervention by the principal power of that age (Jin); bloody rivalry among royal scions; coalitions of nobles who supported each of the candidates; the murder of an incumbent king; multiple intrigues, treachery, and assassinations; and many others. Prince Zhao's rebellion is duly preceded by several predictions and omens; speeches by participants and foreign observers allow us to assess the reasons for Zhao's failure, and the story ends with a lengthy and eloquently written letter from Prince Zhao, in which he complains bitterly against Jin's decision to support his rivals, and which, in turn, is dismissed by a wise observer from Lu. Yet once again, the story remains largely unnoticed in later texts, and, most oddly, even the Zhou sections of the Guoyu, which narrate events from the life of the royal domain in great detail, omit it entirely. And, again, the reason may be the very non-engaging form of much of the Zuozhuan narration. To illustrate my point, below is a section from the narrative of the rebellion from its last year, 516:

Fourth month. The Duke of Shan arrived at Jin to report urgency. The fifth month, on wuxu [day 5 of the gengzi cycle], forces of the Li [lineage] defeated the army of Wangcheng [of Prince
Way of presentation remains exceptional in the entire lore of pre-imperial historical or quasi-historical texts, is not trivial. It indicates a different kind of audience from that of the rest of the anecdotes.

In my eyes, the identity of this audience is not difficult to guess. Only one group would be really interested in these intense details: statesmen from the polity whose history is narrated. For Song aristocrats, any information about the downfall of the Hua and Xiang lineages and their replacement by the members of the Yue lineage and by others of Duke Yuan's relatives would have been highly meaningful; ditto for the successors of the Liu, Shan, and other noble lineages of the Zhou royal domain, who participated in quelling Prince Zhao's revolt. For outsiders in need of a short résumé of the drama, these details are meaningless, but for insiders they are highly valuable. For the sake of comparison we may look at domestic and foreign accounts of parliamentary elections in country X. For a foreign audience, the main issue would be that party A defeated party B, because B was corrupt, detached from the masses, and full of mediocrity, while A was young, determined to improve the people's standard of living, and so on. For insiders, it may be much more important that A received more votes in district Y because of local grievances against the B party representative, while in district Z the B party lost just because of the switch of a local power-holder from one party to another. These details, which would bore the average newspaper reader, are of vital importance to local political analysts who want to gain an in-depth understanding of the political processes in the immediate past of their country.

If my guess is correct, that many of the Zuozhuan narratives were initially prepared for local consumption (i.e., for a small group of hereditary political practitioners) and only later incorporated into the Zuozhuan and immortalized there, this would also explain the ambiguity of the moral message of many of these stories. For an outsider, what is needed from an anecdote is some didactic content: in Schaberg's definition, "substantiating arguments about the workings of the world, particularly the political world." For an insider, the accumulation of details may make a simplistic "good-bad" dichotomy less feasible. For an outsider, historical details matter only "as a complement to rhetorical aims."16 For an insider they are much more important because they provide crucial clues as to what (supposedly) really happened. Yet an abundance of details dilutes the moral message of an anecdote, just as detailed knowledge of political events in the contemporary world may undermine some of the political clichés promulgated in the mass
media. I think this is the major reason why the *Zuo zhuan* anecdotes are amenable to multiple interpretations, as noticed by Li Wai-yee.

It should be clarified here that an “informative history” as represented in the above narratives was not necessarily devoid of didactic goals. Its authors could manipulate their information through omissions or embellishments, through tendentious arrangement of the sequence of events or through highlighting certain personalities at the expense of others. Moreover, as readers of the dullest annalistic history—the *Chung ju*—know, even a smallest substitution of a word may well be indicative of hidden “praise or blame.” Yet these subtle means of delivering one’s message differ fundamentally from those used in the historical anecdotes. The message of the latter is explicit and it can be grasped by an educated person even centuries after the historical context of an anecdote lost its importance. Messages hidden in informative non-ancestral histories, in distinction, can be fully appreciated only by an insider: a person with intimate knowledge of narrated events. As such an “informative history” has much shorter life span than an anecdotal one, as I shall clarify below.

Going back to the *Zuo zhuan*, the above examples suffice to show how some of the *Zuo zhuan* narratives differ from the moralizing histories of the Warring States and later periods. Being detailed to the point of boredom on the one hand, and lacking a clear-cut moral message on the other, these narratives make sense only insofar as they were written for the immediate use of local statesmen, and that their incidental incorporation into the *Zuo zhuan* dislocated them from their normal surroundings, affording the reader a glimpse of the long-gone genre of early historical works, works of the age when the confluence of history and philosophy was much less evident than in the Warring States period.

Until recently, my argument about the need to look beyond the pure didacticism of the Warring States period anecdotes and to analyze early sources of the *Zuo zhuan* as reflecting an “informative” and not just a “moralizing” trend in early Chinese historiography faced the impediment of having to demonstrate examples of such an informative history outside the *Zuo zhuan* narrative. Now, although I still lack direct evidence for the primary sources of the *Zuo zhuan*, fortunately there exists an example of another piece of non-moralizing history that possibly dates from a time not far removed from that of the *Zuo zhuan*’s compilation (ca. fifth c. BCE). In what follows, by analyzing the *Xinian* narrative, I hope to demonstrate the significance of non-moralizing historiography in early China.

The *Xinian*: Introduction

The *Xinian* is one of the dozens of allegedly Warring States Period manuscripts, which were purchased by Qinghua University at the Hong Kong antiquity market. In its published form the *Xinian* occupies the entire second volume of the Qinghua bamboo manuscript collection. With just over 5,000 graphs, the *Xinian* is a relatively short text. It is divided into twenty-three sections (zheng) and written on 138 bamboo slips of 44.6 cm to 45 cm in length. Each slip is numbered on its verso, and every section starts on a new slip (that is to say: if a section ends before the end of a bamboo slip, the remainder of that slip is left empty). The slips are generally well-preserved; only in section thirteen parts of slips 63 through 65 are missing. Unfortunately, we have no idea of the text’s original mortuary setting; like all Qinghua manuscripts that had supposedly been looted from the mainland, it lacks clear provenance. Conventional wisdom assumes that since all Qinghua texts are written in what is usually called a “Chu script,” they might have been looted from a Chu tomb; both the orthography and the radiocarbon analysis of one of the Qinghua slips suggest a date of around 300 BCE, which would make it roughly contemporaneous with the hoard of manuscripts discovered in 1993 at Tomb 1, Guodian 郢店 (Hubei) and the manuscripts in the possession of Shanghai Museum.

The twenty-three sections of the *Xinian* can be divided into three groups according to the different chronologies employed. The first four sections (most of which deal with the Western Zhou 西周 [ca. 1045–771 BCE] period) employ the chronology of the Zhou kings. Of the later nineteen sections, which cover the events from the seventh to the early fourth century BCE, eight date events according to the reigning years of the lords of Jin, ten use the chronology based on the reigning years of the kings of Chu, and one uses both Jin and Chu chronology. Conceivably, these sections came from, respectively, Zhou, Jin, and Chu local histories. That is, like *Zuo zhuan* and *Guoyu*, the *Xinian* is based on incorporation of earlier materials; it was not written from scratch.

Scrutiny of the *Xinian’s* language strengthens the above observation. While the editors probably unified the language of their sources, they may have left it unchanged whenever two or more usages were acceptable. For instance, the preposition “with” or “and” can be transcribed as either ji 之 or yu 与 (or). The former appears ten times in the Zhou and Jin sections, and only once in a Chu section. The latter appears eleven times in Chu
sections and only four in those of Zhou and Jin. This geographic difference corresponds to the preponderance of *yu* in Chu manuscripts, which almost never employ *ji*. Clearly it reflects the original linguistic differences in the source materials. Elsewhere, the differences are not geographic but temporal. Thus, the *Xinian* transcribes the locative *yu* (**at**) particle both with the “solemn” graph ㅂ (which is more common in early Zhou texts) and with the more “colloquial” graph 萇 (which predominates the texts of the Warring States period). In the *Xinian* temporal distribution of both particles is highly visible: the “older” *yu* 萇 predominates in earlier sections (28 *yu* 萇 versus 1 *yu* 萇 in the first four sections, that deal with the Western Zhou, 22 slips), while the “newer” *yu* 萇 is much more frequently used in the later part of the text (19 *yu* 萇 versus 5 *yu* 萇 in the last three sections, 25 slips). This latter pattern strongly resembles the *Zuo zhuan*, which also evidently incorporated different *yu* particles from its original sources without unifying their transcription.

These linguistic differences between sections of the *Xinian* allow two major conclusions. First, they corroborate our earlier suggestion that the *Xinian* is based on incorporation of earlier sources, and these were clearly written sources (otherwise such differences as in transcription of *yu* 萇/萇 particles would be difficult to explain). Second, it seems highly likely that the *Xinian* is not a forgery but an authentic text. It is inconceivable that forgers—sophisticated as they 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, which is also unlikely to come from a forger’s hands, convinces me of the authenticity of the *Xinian*.22

Differences in its source materials aside, it is clear that the *Xinian* was composed (and not just transcribed) in the state of Chu. Several features of the text demonstrate its Chu origins with certainty. First, each section of the text (except for the first section, which narrates exclusively Western Zhou affairs) deals with the state of Chu either directly or indirectly, through discussing its primary rivals or allies. Most notable is the state of Jin, whose struggle with Chu occupies the core of the *Xinian*. Second, the geographical perspective of the *Xinian* is obviously biased toward the western part of the Zhou world. For instance, the state of Qin (an important ally of Chu during much of the period under discussion) is covered much more “thickly” than in other contemporaneous texts, while external states, such as Qi and Lu (which played a lesser role in Chu history) are less prominent. The exploits of Duke Huan of Qi 杞桓公 (*685–643 BCE*) in particular, which occupy pride of place in the *Zuo zhuan*, are all but ignored. Third, the Chu affiliation becomes more pronounced in the last sections of the text. For instance, while in earlier sections years are counted intermittently by the reign years of the rulers of Zhou, Chu, or Jin, in the last three sections only Chu dating is employed, even when the narrative deals with Jin. Fourth, while the text readily acknowledges Chu military defeats (see below), it avoids any direct reference to domestic turmoil in the state of Chu, such as the coup that first catapulted King Ling 落 deriving (*540–529 BCE*) to the throne and then accompanied his downfall.23 Fifth, there are ritual indications of the text’s respect toward the Chu kings: their deaths are invariably recorded as “passing away” (ji 庶), while this courtesy is not observed with regard to other regional lords. All this suggests that the text was produced in Chu, although it clearly incorporates non-Chu materials.

As for the dating of the text, here the majority view is that it was produced slightly after the reign of King Dao of Chu 楚悼 (*401–381 BCE*), whose posthumous name is recorded in section 23, and whose early years on the throne are the last to be narrated.24 There are further indications of an early fourth century BCE date: e.g., employment of the personal name (ming 名) rather than the posthumous name (shi 謚) for several rulers mentioned in the last two sections, which suggests that these sections were composed either during those rulers’ lifetime or shortly after they passed away, when their private name had not yet been obliterated by the posthumous one (see further below). As a working hypothesis, I shall treat the text, then, as a Chu product of circa 370 BCE.25

The publication of the *Xinian* excited scholars and led to an explosion of studies of the text in China and to a lesser extent in Japan. Many focused on the information that the *Xinian* provides regarding different lacunae in the Zhou history; others explored the text’s genre affiliation. With regard to the latter, Li Xueqin’s 李學勤 initial assessment that the *Xinian* is “very close to the Zuo zhuan jinian”26 has been rejected by scholars who have pointed out the *Xinian*’s non-chronological structure, which clearly distinguishes it from the annalistic tradition. The twenty-three sections of the *Xinian* are arranged in a roughly chronological order, yet since the narrative in some of them spans a few generations and even a few centuries, the narration in the text runs back and forth in time, which would not be the case in an annalistic text. Actually, the genre of the *Xinian* has no ready parallels among the pre-imperial historical texts. Curiously, it most closely resembles the “topical arrangement” style (zhishi benmu 事節本末) texts from the late imperial era. Each of the *Xinian’s* twenty-three sections deals with a sequence of events that shaped...
the “geopolitical” situation in the Zhou world, and each is a narrative unit in its own right. As I shall try to demonstrate, this topical arrangement of the Xinian not only distinguishes it from other pre-imperial historical texts but is also directly related to its non-anecdotal nature.

Non-moralizing History: 
The Xinian vs. Zuo zhuan Narratives

Of the twenty-three sections of the Xinian, the narrative in seventeen sections (from the second part of section 4 to the first part of section 20) overlaps partly or fully with that in the Zuo zhuan. What is the precise relation between the two texts? One scenario that can be easily ruled out is that Zuo zhuan is secondary to the Xinian. It would be highly implausible that its authors relied on the Xinian’s brief accounts so as to create a detailed narrative with hundreds of dates, personal names, place names, official titles, and so on, none of which exist in the Xinian. An alternative scenario—that the Xinian, conversely, abridges the Zuo zhuan narrative—is what the first impression suggests; but I think this is wrong too. Despite considerable overlap between the two texts, the Xinian—as I shall demonstrate below—contains enough independent information to rule out its being merely a Zuo zhuan abridgement. Moreover, the fact that the Xinian never employs the chronology of the state of Lu, which dominates the Zuo zhuan, is further suggestive of its independent origin. In what follows my working hypothesis is that the both texts shared common primary sources, which I tentatively identify as “scribal records” prepared by Jin and Chu scribes. By comparing the utilization of these sources in both texts, I hope to show that the Xinian deliberately omitted moralizing and entertaining aspects of the narratives, while preserving the essence of historical information. This selection distinguishes it not only from the Zuo zhuan, but, more essentially, from later historical anecdotes. For the sake of comparison, I have selected one short section of the Xinian, section 5 which deals with events of 684-680 BCE, and a lengthy section 15, the narrative of which spans the entire sixth century BCE.

Section 5

Marquis Ai of Cai took a wife from Chen; the Marquis of Xi also took a wife from Chen, who was Xi Gui. When Xi Gui was on route back to Xi, she passed through Cai. Marquis 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 Marquis Ai of Cai “wived” her. The Marquis of Xi considered [Marquis Ai] incompliant, then he sent a messenger to King Wen of Chu, saying, “My lord should come and attack us; we shall seek help from Cai, and you can thereupon defeat them.” King Wen raised an army and attacked Xi, and Marquis Ai of Cai led his army to save Xi. King Wen defeated him at Shen, and captured Marquis Ai of Cai, returning with him.

King Wen was a guest at Xi, and the Marquis of Cai accompanied him. The Marquis of Xi was serving ale to King Wen. The Marquis of Cai knew that he had been lured by the Marquis of Xi; hence he told King Wen, “The wife of the Marquis of Xi is extraordinarily beautiful; my lord must command to see her.” King Wen ordered to see her. The Marquis 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 Marquis 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 thereupon acquired Dun so as to frighten the Marquis of Chen.

The narrative of the Xinian is very close to that of the Zuo zhuan, where it is divided into two separate anecdotes recorded under the years 684 and
680 BCE. The first of these appears as a comment on the entry in the Chunaqiu, which records Chu’s victory over Cai. 40 This anecdote is reproduced in the Xinian very closely, except for a clearer indication that the Duke of Cai “wived,” i.e., committed adultery with his sister-in-law (in the Zuoqian it is substituted with a euphemism that the Duke of Cai “did not treat her appropriately as a guest” [ju bin 弥賓]). The second anecdote in the Zuoqian is related to another entry of the Chunaqiu, according to which the Chu army entered the Cai capital in the seventh month of 680 BCE. 41 This anecdote is relatively sophisticated. It starts with the story of the Duke 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 the Liehizhuan 列女傳 [Biographies of Exemplary Women]), 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, the Zuoqian explains that after King Wen heeded the suggestion of the Duke of Cai and invaded Xi, he followed with an attack on Cai itself. Finally, the concluding remark by the “gentleman” criticizes Duke Ai of Cai for his malevolent manipulations that brought disaster to his own state.

It is with regard to this second anecdote that the difference between the Xinian and the Zuoqian becomes more pronounced. First, the sequence of events in the 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 BCE, three years before the Chu incursion into Cai in 680 BCE. This slight change—if not a mistake—may suggest that the Xinian author(s) were better informed about the annihilation of Xi than the Zuoqian author(s). Alternatively, it is possible that the Zuoqian transmitted the story of the elimination of Xi to the year 680 so as to strengthen the connection between it and the incursion into Cai on 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 a second and more substantial one. The Xinian authors eliminate all the moralizing aspects of the Zuoqian story: Xi Gui’s chastity, or the 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 the Zuoqian and evidently reflects a distinctive Chu perspective): the Cai-Xi intrigue served as a springboard for Chu’s expansion beyond the Fangchong 方城 line into the Ru 河 river valley. 42 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 the Xinian. An event—or a chain of events, as shown below—is discussed primarily as background material to explain changes in Chu’s geostategic situation. The emphasis may shift from Chu’s own actions to those 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 with regard 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 the Zuoqian, not to say in later texts that reproduce the same anecdote, such as, in the case of section 5, the Liehizhuan. 43

Let us now move to a longer narrative which incorporates several series of anecdote chains that appear in the Zuoqian, namely section 15. In view of its length, I have divided it into two parts. The section states:

When King Zhuang of Chu ascended the throne [613 BCE], Wu was submissive to Chu. Prince Zhengshu of Chen took as wife a daughter of Duke Mu of Zheng named Shao Kong. 44 In the eleventh year of King Zhuang [559 BCE], the Prince Zhengshu of Chen killed his lord, Duke Ling. King Zhuang led an army and laid siege to Chen. The King ordered the Duke 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 Duke of Shen. Lianyin Xiang the Elder contended with [the Duke of Shen] and seized Shao Kong. 45 When Lianyin Xiang the Elder was captured at Heyong, 46 his son, Heiyou, also married Shao Kong. When King Zhuang passed away and King Gong ascended the throne [590 BCE], Heiyou died, and Marshal Zifan contended with the Duke of Shen for Shao Kong. 47 The Duke of Shen said: “This is the wife I was given [by King Zhuang],” and married her. The Marshal considered the Duke of Shen incommensurate. 48 When the king ordered the Duke of Shen to go to a visit to Qi, the Duke of Shen secretly carried Shao Kong off and left. From Qi he theretofore 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.
This lengthy narrative incorporates several accounts, the detailed version of which is present in the Zuo zhuan. The first section deals with the ultimate femme fatale of the Zuo zhuan, Xia Ji (in the Xinian she is named Shao Kong, as explained in the relevant note above), who “has killed three husbands, one ruler, and one son, and has brought one state and two high ministers to their destruction.” According to the Zuo zhuan account, Xia Ji had illicit relations with Duke Ling of Chen and with two of his high ministers, which infuriated her son (or, in the 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 struggle caused one of the most gifted Chu statesmen, Qu Wu (or Wuchen, Wu), the Duke of Shen, to flee his state; later, as his enemies massed his family, Qu Wu avenged their death by fostering the Jin-Wu alliance directed against Chu. These complex narratives, full of intricate digressions, are compressed in the Xinian into slightly more than two hundred words, diminishing thereby 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 entertaining—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, into an arch-enemy of his native state, contributing to a major setback in Chu’s strategic position. Yet the true significance for the authors is clearly not Qu Wu’s personal case (hence, the story of the massacre of his family is omitted), but, rather, the consequences of his actions: the rise of Wu, which becomes the main subject of the narrative in its second part.

Coming to time of King Ling of Chu, King Ling invaded Wu. He made the Nanhuai expedition, seized Prince Youyou of Wu, and thereafter Wu again submitted to Chu. When King Ling passed away, King Jingping (aka King Ping, r. 528–516 BCE) ascended the throne (528 BCE). Junior Preceptor Fei Wuji slandered Fanjin (Wu) to and had him killed. She’s sons, Wu Yun and Ji of Wu (Wu Ji) fled and submitted to Wu. Wu Ji led the men of Wu to lay siege to Zhouhai, digging a lengthy moat and filling it with water so as to defeat the Chu army; this is the Moat of Ji’s Father. When King Jingping passed away, King Zhao ascended the throne (516 BCE). Wu Yun became the chief minister (tai shi) of Wu; he taught Wu how to cause uprisings among the regional lords (alleged with) Chu; thus he defeated the Chu army at Boji and thereby entered Ying, [the Chu capital], King Zhao returned to Sui; and he fought the Wu forces at Xi (Yi). Prince Zhen 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.

The Zuo zhuan tells in great detail about the brief hegemony of King Ling of Chu (540–529 BCE), who overshadowed his neighbors and humiliated Wu by repeated incursions; about the coup against King Ling, the ensuing turmoil, and the subsequent decline in Chu’s prestige; about the intrigues of the infamous Chu plotter, Fei Wuji, who caused the downfall of the Wu lineage; and about Wu Yun’s (i.e., Wu Zixu’s [Wu Shide] subsequent flight to Wu, where he started preparing revenge against Chu, eventually bringing his native country to the verge of annihilation. All these affairs, in addition to the dramatic flight of King Zhao from his capital in 506 BCE and the no less dramatic recovery of his fortunes, are absent from the Xinian 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 simple thread of the narrative: explaining how the
Wu-Chu conflict unfolded until it peaked with the stunning occupation of the Chu capital by the invading Wu armies in 506 BCE.

Each segment of the Xinian narrative is paralleled in the Zuozhuan, with two exceptions: the story of Qu Wu’s mission to Qin to seek support against Chen in 598 BCE, and the exploits of Wu Zixu’s brother, Wu Ji (or, as he is named in the text, Ji of Wu 伍的姬). In both cases I believe, pace the editors of Volume 2 of the Qinghua bamboo slips (hereafter: Qinghua 2), that this information is wrong and is based on 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 eyes, it is likely that the Xinian authors conflated this event with a real request of support from Qin by a Chu messenger, Shen Baoxu 申包胥, against Wu in 506 BCE. Perhaps they were misled by the identity between Shen Baoxu’s lineage name (申) and Qu Wu’s hief of Shen 申, and transposed the story a century backward in time. As for Ji of Wu, I fully accept Ji’s 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 BCE. Ji’s father, which literally means Rooster’s (or Ji’s) Father. The place name, recorded in the Chunqiu, should have existed before the battle of Wu 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 of the late Spring and Autumn Period. Similar carelessness may explain other lapses in the Xinian’s narrative, such as misidentification of Xia Ji’s son, Xia Zhengshu, as her husband and as a prince (gongzi 公子, i.e., a son of one of Chen’s rulers). On the other hand, it is possible that the Xinian is more accurate than Zuozhuan 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.

Let us leave aside for a moment the issue of the Xinian’s historical accuracy and try to understand how the authors utilized their primary sources. As mentioned above, I believe that discrepancies between Xinian and Zuozhuan rule out direct borrowing of the former from the latter (and, of course, vice versa): no [mis]reading of the Zuozhuan would yield such a story as invention of Wu Ji, for instance. On the other hand, the overlap between the two texts is still overwhelming. An easiest explanation would be that both texts shared a common third source, which their authors modified in accordance with their ideological, aesthetic, or other needs. It seems probable that a detailed Zuozhuan narrative retained more of the original source material, while the Xinian authors were more prone to introduce abridgements.

From comparing both versions we can understand how the Xinian authors treated their sources. They compressed the original account, omitted unnecessary details, and also possibly supplemented it with additional information that could have derived from other sources or from oral lore (such as the invention of Wu Ji). In the process, many minor details, such as dates, place names, and official titles, which permeate the Zuozhuan narrative, were reduced to an absolute minimum, with reign periods of the Chu kings serving as the primary chronological tool. Moreover, the Xinian narrative lost most of what should be expected of a chain of anecdotes as analyzed by Schaberg. 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 didactic message are discernible. What remains is a brief and energetic political history. Carelessness regarding minor details should not mislead us: on important matters, the text appears clear and unequivocal. In a few hundred graphs 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 wants to be briefly 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.

Many anecdotal collections of the Warring States Period and beyond utilized the Zuozhuan or its sources, detaching moralizing anecdotes from lengthier annalistic accounts. The Xinian authors likewise abridged the source histories utilized in the Zuozhuan, but in marked distinction from other texts, they omitted most of the didactically important aspects of the Zuozhuan narrative, retaining primarily the factual skeleton of political history. Readers of the Xinian were expected to learn from the text not how to behave, but about what happened in the preceding century or two, and how the past events shape the world in which they are living.

The Xinian and Chu Historiography

Let us move now beyond the temporal span covered by the Zuozhuan, to those Xinian sections which derive in all likelihood from fifth to fourth
The story starts with depicting the epochal struggle of the late fifth century, which engulfs most of contemporaneous polities and which shaped to a large extent the political map of the Warring States era. It continues the narrative in sections 21 and 22, which narrate the formation of two competing axes: Qin’s alliance with southeastern state of Yue, directed primarily against Qi, and Qin’s alliance with Chu, directed primarily against Jin. In 403 BCE, Qi suffered a major defeat, in the aftermath of which the three de facto rulers of Jin, heads of the Wei, Han, and Zhao lineages, were officially granted the position of regional lords by the king of Zhou. The narrative in section 23 starts in the immediate aftermath of this event: the attempt of Chu to solicit support of intermediate states of Song and Zheng; Qin’s supportive (but inconsequential) assault on Jin in the far west, and the formation of Jin-Zheng alliance directed against Chu. In the background of these events stands domestic struggle in the state of Chu, due to which King Sheng was murdered and succeeded by King Dao; the latter had to fight against his brother (or uncle?), Prince Ding. Yet, as is common in the Xinian, domestic troubles of the state of Chu are not narrated in full, and the text’s focus remains purely on the state’s foreign relations.

Let us turn now at the first sentence of section 23. Here (as also in a few phrases of section 22 that narrate the events of 404–403 BCE) the Xinian authors dispense with their convention of identifying rulers of the Zhou polities by their posthumous names added to the ducai (gong 公) title. Rather, the visiting Song and Zheng leaders (Duke Xiu of Song, Song 枚公 [r. ca. 403–385 BCE], and Duke Xu of Zheng, Zheng 鄭紳公 [r. ca. 422–396 BCE]) are identified by their private names and by their ranks in the Zhou system (duke [gong 公] for the ruler of Song, earl [bo 別] for the ruler of Zheng). This usage unmistakably resembles the Lu Chengqi and may reflect a common annalistic tradition that was apparently shared by the Chu court scribes. Yet since this is the one of only a very few unmistakable annalistic records in the Xinian (others are in section 22), it is likely that it was not directly incorporated from the Chu court annals, but from a more detailed historical source that used the annals and expanded upon them, much as the Zhuojuan did to the Lu Chengqi. Editorial efforts of the Xinian editors in this case were minimal. They did change the original language from what should have been “The Duke of Song and the Earl of Zheng attended our court” (宋宋) to “attended the Chu court” (朝于楚), but did not update the names of the visiting leaders, despite the fact that the compilation had obviously been finished after the deaths of both

In the fourth year of King Shengkuan of Chu [a.k.a. King Sheng, r. ca. 407–402 BCE], Tian, the Duke of Song, and Tai, the Earl of Zheng, attended the Chu court. The king ordered the Duke of Song to fortify the Yu Pass, and establish Wuyang [fortress]. Qin forces defeated the Jin army at Luoyin in order to help Chu. When King Sheng passed away, King Dao [a.k.a. King Dao, r. ca. 401–381 BCE] ascended the throne. The Zheng forces assaulted the Yu Pass, and Lord Huanding of Yangcheng led the forces of the Yu Pass and the upper parts of the country to repel them. He fought the [invaders] at Guiling, but the Chu armies did not succeed. Jia of Jing (i.e. Jing Jia) and Shuizi Gong were captured and died [there]. In the next year [400 BCE], Fu of Jin led the Jin and Zheng armies to install Prince Ding. The Duke of Luyang led an army to combat the Jin forces; the Jin forces returned, having failed to install the Prince.
The tit-for-tat attacks between Jin and Chu continued, culminating in the major conflict between the two states circa 396 BCE, the Wuyang campaign:

After two years [396 BCE?], Han Qu and Wei Ji led an army and laid siege to Wuyang, to repay the incursion of Gao. The Duke of Luyang led an army to help Wuyang, and fought the Jin army below the Wuyang walls. The Chu army was greatly defeated. Three lords-possessors of the gui tablet, the Duke of Luyang, Lord Daowu of Pingye and Lord Huangding of Yangcheng, as well as youjin Si of Zhao (Zhao Si) died in that battle; the Chu forces threw away their banners, tents, chariots and weapons, and returned, running like fleeing dogs. The Chen people thereupon rebelled and let Prince Ding back to Chen. Thus the state of Chu lost a lot of walled cities.

When the Chu army was planning to go to rescue Wuyang, the King ordered Lord Daowu of Pingye to dispatch somebody to Chen Hao of Qi to request military help. Chen Jium [of Qi] led one thousand chariots and followed the Chu army to Wuyang. On the day jiaxu [day 11], Jin fought with Chu on bingzi [day 13], the Qi army arrived at Yi and then turned back.

The lengthy struggle with the successor states of Jin ended in a disaster for Chu. Around 396 BCE its army suffered a crushing defeat, which was aggravated by the domestic rebellion of supporters of the ousted Prince Ding of Chu. The text does not conceal the scope of the defeat, nor does it display any leniency toward Chu's international prestige, adding that the "Chu forces throw away their banners, tents, chariots and weapons, and returned, running like fleeing dogs." This frank acknowledgment of Chu's humiliation stays in sharp contrast to the continuous concealment of domestic troubles,
such as the regicide of King Sheng and details of Prince Ding’s rebellion. It seems that the Xinian was not much concerned with Chu’s “national” pride.

The ending sentences of section 23 are quite exceptional in the text. This appendix breaks the chronological framework of the narrative and goes back to the events that directly preceded the crushing defeat of the Chu armies at Wuyang. The addition might have been done to avoid a pessimistic ending of the text with a defeat that caused Chu soldiers to flee “like dogs” from the battlefield, and which resulted in the “loss of many walled cities” by the Chu side. Yet the appendix was not properly edited; hence it contains two dates of the sexagenary gangbi 干支 (Stems and Branches) cycle, which appear to be transmitted from a lengthier Chu history without being properly edited. Normally, as is well demonstrable in the Zuozhuan, the gangbi dates are meaningful only when a month is provided; otherwise they do not allow to date an event. It is technically possible of course that the two dates in the final slip were meant to show that the Qi army missed the battle by two days, but this goal could easily have been achieved without adding the gangbi dating. It is more likely that the editors just transposed the dating from a Chu historical source without modifying it (in that case, the month could have been mentioned in one of the earlier phrases, abridged by the Xinian author(s)). This carelessness is a blessing for us: it shows that meticulous dating of events, characteristic of the Zuozhuan and its sources, was the rule in Chu court histories as well.

Let us summarize now section 23 of the Xinian. The discussion here (as in the preceding section 22) differs from most of the earlier sections, as it is much more intensive. Almost every year in the ca. 403–396 BCE span covered in this section merits a special entry, and while the dating remains very rough (no months or days are provided), we have more details about the names of the participants and places than is usual in the Xinian.

Clearly, the abridgment of the original sources was less radical in this case than in earlier sections of the text, perhaps because the events were not too far removed from the date of the Xinian’s composition, and details still mattered.

Section 23 in the Xinian provides abundant information about battles, alliances, and movements of forces; but it does not contain anything akin to an anecdote. No speeches, no evaluation of the participants’ motivations, of their mistakes, of heroism or cowardice, wisdom or folly. Having no Zuozhuan-style background, we lack any clue about the reasons for Zheng’s break with Chu around 403 BCE or about the role of the fugitive Prince Ding of Chu in this country’s conflicts with its neighbors; we know nothing about the reasons for Chu’s lenient treatment of Zheng captives; we do not even know who—if anyone at all—should be blamed for Chu’s eventual defeat. This kind of information would be promptly supplied in the majority of the Zuozhuan narratives, and it would be essential in any of the later anecdotes. In the Xinian it is simply omitted. The authors wanted to inform their readers of military and diplomatic developments that resulted in Chu’s debacle, but they were interested neither in teaching a moral lesson, nor in entertaining the reader. If the text contains didactic messages, these are so well hidden that I could not discover them. In my eyes, the text aims simply at providing essential information about events that changed the balance of power between Chu and its adversaries. This is achieved without any visible didacticism.

Summary: Non-anecdotal Historiography

The Xinian differs in form from the Zuozhuan; it differs from the narrative histories that evidently served as the building blocks of the Zuozhuan, and it also differs from collections of anecdotes from the pre-imperial and early imperial ages, which often borrow from the Zuozhuan or from its source histories. It represents a different type of history: a narrative devoid of moralizing stories, a narrative with much less pronounced didacticism, a narrative the focus of which is on informing the reader of the evolution of interstate relations in recent centuries.

Who was the audience of the Xinian? I would imagine a very limited group of persons: probably leading policymakers, the ruler and his closest advisors, who were in need of working knowledge of the historical background for the current balance of power. This material could particularly benefit them during diplomatic encounters with representatives of other states. In a recent study David Schaberg explored the speeches of the messengers (shí 史) and disclosed their common ground with the scribes (shí 史); both shared similar training, which “encompassed both ritual formulas and more substantial knowledge of history and official practice.” How was “substantial knowledge of history” attained? Some might have studied history in earnest; but many others might have been in need of a brief résumé of major geopolitical shifts in the past rather than of detailed narrative. Such résumés can be compared to modern briefings for a traveling 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 such a summary prepared nowadays may be similar to the Xinian.\textsuperscript{7}

Following Schaberg's parallel, I may assert that the Xinian was a useful asset for a Chu messenger (shi 士), but it was probably prepared by professional scribes (shi 尋). Evidently, the authors extracted their information from much longer narrative histories, which might have been utilized by the Zuo zhuan composers as well. Judging from the Zuo zhuan, these histories tried both to inform and to educate or entertain; they probably comprised both detailed accounts of events and moralizing digressions. These latter became particularly significant for later readers, who valued the didactic potential of historical narratives rather than pure information; hence, 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 manipulation: through tendentious accounts of history, authors could convince the audience of the advantages of their political recipes. Didacticism prevailed, details were sacrificed, and obvious distortions of history became the rule throughout the Warring States Period and well into the early Han.\textsuperscript{79}

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

The pervasive position of anecdotes in the historical and quasi-historical lore of the Warring States period has created a wrong impression that they are the "all" in early Chinese history writing. Recent discoveries require a reconsideration of this assertion. Thus, another major quasi-historical work from the Shanghai Museum collection, the Rongchengshi 容城氏, demonstrates that an ideological agenda could be served not only by anecdotes but by preparing a "comprehensive" history of the ruling dynasties of legendary and semi-legendary past.\textsuperscript{7} The Xinian presents another alternative: a brief informative history with minimal, if any, didactic or ideological emphases. Future discoveries may reveal more filiations of early historical genres. Events of the past were recorded, memorized, narrated, embellished, or invented for a variety of political, ideological, and esthetic needs. New discoveries liberate us from the excessive dependence on the ideological production of the Warring States thinkers and from the narrow prism of Han redactors, and allow us to come to terms gradually with immense variety of early Chinese historiography.

Notes

1. This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant No. 240/15) and by the Michael William Lipson Chair in Chinese Studies. I am grateful to the participants of the Anecdotes Workshop in Leiden (2013), in particular to Paul R. Goldin, and to the volume's editors and anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

2. The Shanghai Museum collection comprises several dozen manuscripts allegedly smuggled from the Mainland to Hong Kong antiquities market and purchased by Shanghai Museum in 1994. To date nine volumes have been published: these include more than two dozen individual anecdotes.


5. Sima Qian indeed notes that, in distinction from canonical "odes" (shī 詩) and "documents" (zhū 史), "scribal records" were not stored by private individuals (Shi ji 14.408ff).


9. A very convenient tool of tracing these large segments is the topical arrangement of the Zhubu jinian, undertaken by Gao Shiji 高士季 (1645–1704) in *Zhubu jinian jishu benmo* 佐傳記事本末 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979).

10. The appeal of the Zhubu jinian anecdotes is visible in Burton Watson’s focus on these in his *The Tao chuan: Selections from China’s Oldest Narrative History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). Watson’s translation serves, due to its high readability, as the basic introduction to the Zhubu for undergraduate students around the Anglophone world. I expect that the new translation of the Zhubu by Stephen Durant, Wei-ye Li, and David Schaberg (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016) will profoundly change the situation in the field.


12. Li, *The Readability*.


14. *Guoyu* is a heterogeneous compilation of anecdotes, some of which may derive from the same sources that served the compiler of the Zhubu jinian. There are several indications that *Guoyu* is overall composed later than the Zhubu jinian, and underwent heavier editorial intervention. See Yuri 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), 207–13.

15. The *genabi* cycle will be explained below.


19. The dating of the Zhubu composition is very much disputed, particularly because of a lengthy time that may have passed between its initial compilation and the text’s fixation in a form close to the current version. In Pines, *Foundations*, I discuss various approaches toward the text’s dating and the problem of manifold interpolations into the text during the lengthy period of its transmission.


23. The three groups mentioned in this paragraph are those that use Zhou chronology, Jin chronology, and Chu chronology. As is clear from this paragraph, an additional subgroup uses a mixture of Jin and Chu chronology.

24. In Chu manuscripts *ji* appears as “with” only in six cases while *yu* in 99 cases (or 127 cases if *zeng* 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, *Chubu Xianjian xiuji yanjiu* 出土戰國文獻補釋研究 (Beijing: Renmin chu ban she, 2011), 251–81. For a recent study of the *ji* particle in the *Chubu* and its commentaries, see the contributors’ difficulty to understand *ji* in its meaning as “with,” and, “see Newell Aan Van Aukon, *Spring and Autumn Use of Ji* and Its Interpretation in the *Gongcheng and Guling Commentaries*, in *Studies in Chinese and Sino-Tibetan Linguistics: Dialect, Phonology, Transcription and Text*, eds. Richard Van Ness Simmons and Newell Aan Van Aukon (Taipei: Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, 2014), 429–56. For a detailed discussion of *ji* and *yu* in the *Xinian*, see Chen Minzheng 陳民正, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* xiju chubu” 清華簡《織年》獻簡初探, *Chubu wenxian yu yanjiu* 出土文獻語言研究 2 (2015): 50–51.

25. For the usage of *yu* particles in Zhubu jinian and comparison to other pre-imperial texts, see He Leishi 何樂士, *Zhubu jinian xiju yanjiu* 左傳與織年研究 (Beijing: Shangwu chu ban she, rev. ed. 2004), 81–123; cf. Zhao Daming 趙大明, *Zhubu jiejian yanjiu* 《左傳》介詞研究 (Beijing: Shoudu shifan da xu chu ban she, 2007), 34–158; Pines, *Foundations*, 217–70; for their usage in paleographic materials from the Warring States period, see Zhang Yujin, *Chubu Xianjian xiuji* (2011), 106. For the observation that Warring States Period copyists were careful in reproducing distinct *yu* particles even when their grammatical usage was identical, see Chiu Yihui 崔毅辉 (2013), *Zhongguo baji Han ji* “漢代古書法語”，*Zhongguo baji Han ji* “漢代古書法語，*zh* de

26. For yet another example of these differences, (possible) substitution of *nai* 攻 participle in the meaning of "then," "thereupon" with *mai* 習, see Pines, "Zhou History and Historiography," 295.

27. One notable piece of previously unknown and highly reliable information provided by the *Xianian* concerns the origins of the Qin ruling lineage (see detailed discussion in Pines, "Zhou History and Historiography," 299–303). Another potential indication of the reliability of the *Xianian* is its reference (section 18, slip 100) to the 桶王 *tu o* (桶王) ruler of the 桶王 (*Tu o*), which was 既有 504 BCE, the ruler of a tiny polity of the *Tu o* 桶王. In the *Chuangzi* and the *Zuo zhuan* this ruler is identified as Si 斯江. However, a Xu Zi Tuo 晓子他 腾 vessel unearthed in 2003 at Nanyang, Henan, in the vicinity of the *Tu o* 桶王's new capital, *Rongcheng* 既有. Identifies this ruler by the same name (桶王) as recorded in the *Xianian*. Since the identification of the Xu ruler’s name as 桶王 was tentative and was not widely known in the scholarly community, it is almost unbelievable that a forger would use this graph instead of the name 斯江 recorded in the canonical text. See detailed discussion in Huang Jinqian 翁金倩, "Xu Zi Tuo 邵子他 的*Tu o* 腾 親, "Xu Zi Tuo 寶: jian Qin guo *Tu o* 外交政策" 言論, *Qin jin* 既有, 2012: 17–53. Other scholars propose alternative identification of the *Xianian* text: Chen Minzhao 陳民超, "Xianian 慶在季君" *Qin jin* 既有, 2012: 51–70. Other scholars propose alternative identification of the *Xianian* text: Chen Minzhao 陳民超, "Xianian 慶在季君" *Qin jin* 既有, 2012: 51–70.


29. The *Xianian* routinely reports about every slain Chu king that he had simply "passed away"; only in section 18 (slip 99) King Ling’s death is referred to as having "encountered misfortune" 悸 país (*Qinghua* 2: 180).


31. A major exception to this view is Yoshimine Michimasa’s 吉見知男 吉見知男 吉見知男, *Shi li* 史例 (1933), 1–94. Yoshimine dates the *Xianian* to the latter half of the fourth century BCE, because he presumes that this text is based on the *Zuo zhuan*, and because his earlier research postulated the mid-fourth-century dating of the latter. Recently Guo Yongbing 郭永兵, put forward additional evidence in favor of the *Xianian*’s dating to the early decades of the fourth century BCE on the basis of the shape of some of its characters in the context of the evolution of the so-called Chu script. See Guo’s "Qinghua jianian xiaozhe zhi guo: jian cong wenzhu xingxi jiaoyu kan Zhanggao Chu wenzhu quyu xunzheng xingzhen* de fuzi quzheng" 華大文獻研究書: 譽文記研究, *Zhejiang* 浙江, 2012: 117–21. See also *Qinghua* 既有, 2012: 276–77.


35. I read *shu* 书 as a transitive verb; this usage "to consider somebody his minion" is peculiar to the *Xianian* (see also section 15, note 48 below).
94. For reading the graph here as jia 捕 (to capture), see Chen Jian's 豆剑 explanations, as cited in Qinghua 2, 554–55.
95. Qinghua 2: 170.
96. For the invasion of Wu in 537 BCE and the capture of Prince Jueyou, see Zuo, Zhao 5.8: 1270–72; from the Zuo zhuan it is clear that Wu did not submit to Chu in the aftermath of this invasion.
97. In other texts, this king is known by just one posthumous name, King Ping 春平王 (r. 528–516 BCE).
99. The Chunqiu records Wu's defeat of Chu and its allies in 519 BCE at the location named Ji's Father (or Rooster's Father) 話公父.
100. These are dramatic events of 506 BCE, when the state of Chu was on the verge of extinction; see Zuo, Ding 4.3: 1542–49.
102. The Xinian often adds possessive particle shi 之 between an individual's lineage name (surname) and his personal name. This feature figures prominently also in the Warring States Period Chu extract from the Zuo zhuan, a part of the Zhejiang University collection.
103. For Shen Baohou's heroic mission to Qin to request assistance against Wu, see Zuo, Ding 4.3: 1547–49; Ding 5.5: 1551. This mission is referred to (without mentioning Shen's name) in section 19 of the Xinian.
105. Zuo, Zhao 23.7: 1440.
106. See Johnson, "Epic and History."
107. See Wei Chieh 魏慈禧, "Qinghua jian Xinian yu Zuo zhuan de Chu shi yi" 清華簡《繫年》與《左傳》中的楚史異同, Donghua University 東華大學 17 (2013): 25. If the manipulation was performed in the Zuo zhuan, then making Xia Ji into a mother rather than wife of Xia Zhenggu could have been done to stress her role as an ultimate age-defying femme fatale. I am grateful to Wai-ye Li for this observation.
108. It may worth reminding at this point that seven Xinian sections do not overlap with the Zuo zhuan at all, and that even overlapping sections may propose radically different interpretation of certain events; see more in Pines, "Zhou History and Historiography." 315–21.
66. This period is covered neither in the Zuozhuan nor in Guoyu (both end their narrative with the year 453 BCE); while the Shi ji account for ca. 450–380 BCE is sketchy and fairly inaccurate. Therefore, the only significant additional source for the second half of the fifth century BCE history was the Zhoubu jinian, fragments of which survived in manifold early citations; in addition a few pieces of information are found in the Meizi 墨子 and in several bronze inscriptions, such as the Piaoqiang-sheng 翟上殼 先秦 青銅器.

67. The dates of the late fifth century BCE Chu kings are not entirely clear according to the reconstruction proposed by Li Rui 李锐 (You Qinghua jian Xinian Fan Zhangguo chu shi nian de wei de) 中华善書《繁年》及楚國初戰史年代的問題. Shuwenyi yanjiu 史學史研究 no. 2 [2013], 100–104). King Sheng reigned between 404–401, and King Dao ascended the throne in the year 400. Yet since this reconstruction remains somewhat speculative, I do not adopt it here.

68. Yu Pass 禹閭 is a strategic point halfway between the capital of Zheng and Daliang 大梁 (now Kaifeng), the would-be capital of the state of Wei 魏. The location of Wuyang is disputed, but it is likely to be located not far from Yu Pass and not far from the Song territory, perhaps in the borders of the current Henan and Shandong provinces.

69. Luoyin is located to the west of the Yellow River near its confluence with the Wei 沃 River; during the period under discussion it was the westernmost part of Jin territory. According to the Shi ji 40: 1720, King Sheng was assassinated. As is common in the Xinian, dramas from the domestic life of Chu are glossed over.

70. Lord of Yangcheng, just as lords of Luyang, Jiang, and Pingye mentioned below were senior enfeoffed nobles of Chu, whose fiefs were located in the Huai 淮 River valley. See more about Chu enfeoffed lords in note 89 below.

71. Sheng guo 上國, "upper parts of the country" (i.e., of Chu) refer to western areas of Chu which were upstream the rivers that flow through the country. See Du Yü 古韻 (222-85) gloss on this term in the Zuozhuan (Zuo, Zhao 14:3: 1365).

72. Guiling is located to the north of the Yellow River, in present day Changyun 長垣 County, Henan. That the battle was waged there means that the Chu armies invaded deeply into the Jin territory.

73. For the reading of the name of a Jin commander as Fu 鳳 [鳳], see Su Jianzhong 馥潤瞳, “Qinghua daxue cong Zhanguo zhi jian (er) Xianian laoshi si ze” 清華大學與戰國文字 西周-秦簡, 紙本 (2012), 7: 73-74.

74. Prince Ding, possibly King Sheng's son, fled Chu and contested the throne from King Dao.

75. Qinghua 2: 196.

76. It is not my intention here to discuss the appropriateness of European aristocratic nomenclature to the Zhou China; I apply European ranks just as a matter of heuristic convenience.

77. The annalistic source of this sentence is further buttressed by its usage of an older and more "revered" 且子 particle, while elsewhere section 23 invariably uses 而. See more in You Rui 尤瑞 (Yuri Pines), "Cong Xinian xia ci de yongfa lun qi wenben de kekou yin ji chu xian Xinian yuanshi ziliao de laiyuan" 從《繁年》論其用法反觀其文本的可靠性—兼初探《繁年》原始資料的來源, Qinghua jian Xinian yu gushi xianian 慶華簡《繁年》與古典時期, ed. Li Shoukui 李守奎 (Shanghai: Zhongguo shuju, 2016), 224–27.

79. There is much uncertainty regarding precise dates of the rulers of Chu and Song at the turn of the fifth century (see Li Rui, "You Qinghua jian?"), but it is sure that King Dao of Chu, whose posthumous name is mentioned in the last section of the Xinian died in 381 BCE, and this date should be later than the deaths of Duke Xi of Song (r. ca. 403–385 BCE) and Lord Xu of Zheng (ca. 396 BCE). For the complexity of the usage of rulers' names in the annalistic sections of the Xinian, see You Rui (Yuri Pines), "Cong Xinian xia ci," 227–28.

80. Mengzi mentions the Sheng of Jin and Taowin of Chu as identical with the Lu Chunqiu. See Mengzi yishu 孟子詁疏, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯俊 (Beijing: Zhongguo shuju, [1960] 1988), "Li lou, xia" 8.21: 192. See also the Introduction to this volume.

81. Lang 蘭 was identified by Dong Shuan 董善 as Liang 梁, a city in the Ru 濱 River valley, on Chu's northern frontier. See Ma Nan 馬楠, Qinghua jian Xinian jisheng 慶華簡《繁年》校譯 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2015), 472n4.

82. Ziyang 子洋 was the most powerful Zheng state man of the time; his elimination by taiji 藤甲 appears to be a critical step toward Zheng's weakening en route to its elimination at the hands of the state of Han in 375 BCE. For debates about Ziyang's death and its consequences, see Qinghua er, 903–07.

83. The location of both these fortresses is unclear; the identification proposed by the editors of Qinghua 2 (p. 159, n. 19) does not make sense geographically, placing Liu in the westernmost part of Chu, while Changling in the Huai 淮 River valley. As Su Jianzhong correctly notices, it is highly unlikely that the Jin armies would penetrate so deeply into Chu's hinterland (Qinghua er, 908).

84. Lords of Pingye belonged to a collateral branch of the Chu royal lineage, enfeoffed at Pingye in southern Ru 沛 River valley. Su Jianzhong (Qinghua er, 908–09) identifies Lord Daozu as a son of another lord of Pingye, who was the occupant of Xincai 慶財, excavated in 1994. For lords of Pingye, see more in Zheng Wei 鄭斐, Qinghua fengjian yanjiu 慶華封簡研究 (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2012), 115–18.

85. The state of Teng 彗 was conquered by Yue 越 ca. 420 BCE (see Zhoubu jinian information from the gloss to Shi ji 41: 1747); it is not clear whether by 398 BCE it had already regained its independence, or whether Lord Shejian was a Yue governor of Teng.

86. Qinghua 2: 196.
87. The precise reading of 昔年 is contested; it may refer to “the next year” or “after two years.” See more in Qinghua er, 912–16.

88. Han Qu is Marquis Lie of Han 韓烈侯 (r. 399–387 BCE), Wei Ji is Marquis Wu of Wei 魏武侯 (r. 395–370 BCE). It is not clear whether at the time of the incursion Marquis Wu had already ascended the throne or did he act on behalf of his ailing father, Marquis Wen of Wei 魏文侯 (r. 445–396 BCE). Notably, despite the official elevation of the marquises of Han and Wei to the status of regional lords (zhujiang 諸侯) in 403 BCE, the Xinjian treats them here as military leaders of the unified state of Jin. This is not a consistent ideological stance, though section 22 does recognize the “marquis” (hau 吳) title of Marquis Wen of Wei.

89. Possession of the gui 墙 tablet marked the highest degree of authority in Chu; the ducal position of an enfeoffed noble. See Chen Yingfei 謝應飛, “Chu Daowang chuqi de da zhan yu Chu fenggung: Qinghua jian Xinian zhi qi yi” 趙悼王初期的大戰與楚封君: 清華簡《新安》札記之一, Wenzi zhiyi 文史知識 5 (2012): 106. For the exceptional power of the group of enfeoffed nobles in Chu, see Zheng Wei, Chuqu fenggung yanjiu. Zhao Si 昭姬 was another important noble; probably a descendant of King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (r. 516–489 BCE).

90. Originally, the text’s editors identified Chen in this sentence as a reference to the state of Qi, which was already ruled (de facto if not de jure) by the Chen 沈 lineage (Qinghua 2, 200n.28). Later, this understanding was challenged; it is likely that Chen here refers to a Chu dependency, a former state of Chen 沈 which was annexed by Chu in 534 BCE, regained independence in 529, and was annexed again in 478 BCE. Little is known of its management thereafter; but it is possible that the former Chen territory, which served as a springboard of dynastic coup in 529 BCE, played a similar role in attempts of the ousted Prince Ding to regain power in Chu. See also Qinghua er, 923–24.

91. This sentence shifts the narrative back to the moment before Chu’s defeat at Wuyang.

92. Qinghua 2: 196.

93. The ganashi 60-days cycle was unrelated to the month counting; and in any case in every month only a half of the ganashi dates could occur. Without a month, the ganashi date does not provide an adequate chronological information.

94. There are only very few instances of the ganashi dating in the anecdotes from the Warring States and the Han period (a section of the Guoyu “Jin yu 4” is the major exception); and when the ganashi do appear they may be a result of a careless incorporation of earlier annalistic materials. For instance, in one of the Han Feizi anecdotes, an otherwise meaningless ganashi date appears due to its incorporation from the Zuozihuang (cf. Han Feizi ji ies 韓非子集解, annotated by Wang Xianwen 王先慎 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998], “Nan 端 4” 39: 384 vs. Zuo, Huan 17.8: 150 and discussion in Pines, Foundations, 29–30).

95. As mentioned in note 67 above, the precise dating of the Chu kings’ reign periods from the late fifth early fourth centuries BCE is still much disputed; hence the dating of the events depicted in Xinjian 23 remains approximate. It is possible, albeit not much probable, that the narrative “jumped” a few years without mentioning it; in this case, the last events, i.e., the Wuyang campaign, should have taken place in 394 BCE and not in 396 BCE as in my estimate. See Xinjian er, 917–21.


97. For a similar supposition, see also Huang Xinyong 黃新勇, “Lun Qinghua jian Xinian de xingzi” 清華簡《新安》的性質, Qinghua jian yuanji 清華簡研究 2 (2015): 248–49.

98. I analyze some of these obvious distortions and the resultant loss of argumentative power of historical anecdotes in Pines, “Speeches.” For the importance of the anecdotes in ideological debates of the Warring States Period see other chapters in this volume.