

CHEN MINZHEN AND YURI PINES

Where is King Ping? The History and Historiography of the Zhou Dynasty's Eastward Relocation

ABSTRACT:

This article introduces new evidence about an important, dramatic event in early Chinese history, namely the fall of the Western Zhou in 771 BC and the subsequent eastward relocation of the dynasty. The recently discovered bamboo manuscript, *Xinian* 繫年, now in the Tsinghua (Qinghua) University collection, presents a new account of the events, most notably the claim that for nine years (749–741 BC) there was no single king on the Zhou throne. This departs considerably from the traditional story preserved in *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記). Facing this contradiction, scholars have opted to reinterpret *Xinian* so as to make it conform to *Shiji*. The present authors analyze the *Xinian* version of events and its reliability; further, we explore the reasons for the disappearance of this version from the subsequent historiographic tradition. It is a point of departure that addresses a broad methodological problem: how to deal with ostensible contradictions between unearthed and transmitted texts.

KEYWORDS:

Zhou, historiography, manuscripts, Shiji, Sima Qian, Western Zhou, Xinian

The fall of the Western Zhou capital in 771 BC and the subsequent relocation of the Zhou 周 dynastic center eastward, to the vicinity of Luoyang 洛陽, was one of the most dramatic events in early Chinese history. It was a point of no return from the period of relative stability under the dominance of the Zhou ruling house to the age of prolonged warfare and aggravating interstate conflicts that lasted for more than five centuries thereafter. Having lost its domain in the Wei River 渭河 basin, the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 BC) was never able to regain its position as an effective leader of regional lords (*zhuhou* 諸侯). King You 周幽王 (r. 781–771 BC), under whose reign the disaster happened, duly joined the line of negative paragons: malevolent, in-

- Chen Minzhen, Ctr. for Excavated Texts, Tsinghua University
- Yuri Pines, Dept. Asian Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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ept, and short-sighted rulers whose inadequacy caused the downfall of their ancestors' enterprise.¹

Its momentous impact notwithstanding, the demise of the Western Zhou and the establishment of the Eastern Zhou are among the least understood events in the dynasty's history. The narrative in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–90 BC) *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) is extremely sketchy, and its inaccuracies were spotted ever since the discovery of the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年) in the third century AD (see below). Many attempts were made to revise Sima Qian's narrative and present a more convincing scenario of the Zhou relocation to the east. These efforts culminated with a very detailed study by Li Feng in his seminal *Landscape and Power in Early China*.²

Coincidentally, just a few years after the publication of Li Feng's book, a newly discovered historical manuscript, apparently looted from a fourth century BC Chu 楚 tomb, was brought to light. The text – named by its editors *Xinian* 繫年 (*String of Years*) – contains an alternative account of the events at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 BC). According to this account, King Ping 周平王 (r. 770–720 BC) seized power not in 770 BC but rather in 741 BC, and it was only in 738 that he relocated his capital to the Luoyang area. Moreover, and most intriguingly, *Xinian* suggests that for nine years before King Ping's enthronement there was not a single accepted king on the Zhou throne.³

¹ See, for instance, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注, annot. Wu Yujiang 吳毓江 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994) j. 2, chap. 9, p. 76 (“Shang xian” 尚賢, *zhong*); j. 6, chap. 25, p. 267 (“Jie zang” 節葬, *xia*); j. 7, chap. 28, p. 320 (“Tian zhi” 天志, *xia*), etc.

² Li Feng, *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou 1045–771 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2006), pp. 193–278. For earlier studies, see, e.g., Wang Yuzhe 王玉哲, “Zhou Pingwang dongqian nai bi Qin fei bi Quanrong shuo” 周平王東遷乃避秦非避犬戎說, *Tianjin shehui kexue* 天津社會科學 3 (1986), pp. 49–52; Yoshimoto Michimasa 吉本道雅, “Shūshitsu tōsen kō” 周室東遷考, *TYGH* 71.3–4 (1990), pp. 33–56; Chao Fulin 晁福林, “Lun Pingwang dongqian” 論平王東遷, *LSYJ* 6 (1991), pp. 8–23. See also a summary of these and other studies in Shim Jae-hoon 沈載勳, “Dui chuanshi wenxian de xin tiaozhan: Qinghua jian *Xinian* suo ji Zhou dongqian shishi kao” 對傳世文獻的新挑戰, 清華簡繫年所記周東遷史事考, in Li Shoukui 李守奎, ed., *Qinghua jian *Xinian* yu gushi xintan* 清華簡繫年與古史新探 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2016), pp. 128–59, esp. pp. 129–38. Yoshimoto Michimasa has updated his account in idem, “Shūshitsu tōsen saikō” 周室東遷再考, *Kyōto daigaku bungakubu kenkyū kiyō* 京都大學文學部研究紀要 56 (2017), pp. 1–58.

³ In this essay, *pace Asia Major* style rules, we capitalize “king” when the title is used in tandem with the posthumous name, because in this case the title becomes an inseparable part of the posthumous name. We would prefer to capitalize titles + posthumous names for the cases of regional lords as well, but we have to yield to the journal's style. Throughout the article we use traditional reign dates for all the kings and regional lords based on the chronology adopted in *Records of the Historian*. This is done as a heuristic convention only: as we argue below in the text, many of these dates, most notably those of King Ping, require revision.

This fascinating account caused heated controversies from the moment of its publication. How reliable is it? How to reconcile it with the traditional story told in *Records of the Historian*? The ongoing debates and attempts to reinterpret *Xinian* so that it will confirm rather than subvert Sima Qian's account highlight the difficulties posed by the paleographic revolution of recent decades. Rather than neatly confirming historical records from the past, it causes us at times to revise fundamental aspects of the previously accepted narratives. Yet more importantly, the newly available documents – especially *Xinian* – allow us also to rethink major issues concerning early Chinese historiography.

In what follows we introduce the *Xinian* story, explain the furor it caused within the scholarly community, and analyze its veracity. We then provide a possible explanation for the disappearance of the story of a “kingless” period in Zhou history from subsequent historical records, and show how historiographic conventions could influence our fundamental understanding of past events. The present study allows us to address broader questions of how historians should treat the new evidence when it seems to radically contradict traditional accounts.

BACKGROUND:

ZHOU'S EASTWARD MOVE IN RECEIVED TEXTS

Only a very few textual sources can be directly related to the story of the fall of the Western Zhou. Several poems of the *Classic of Poems* (*Shi jing* 詩經), most notably “The Alignment in the Tenth Month” 十月之交, “The First Month” 正月, and “Rain without Limit” 雨無正, are clearly related to the dramatic deterioration of the Zhou situation on the eve of its downfall; but none of these was meant to provide a systematic narrative of the related events.⁴ “Decree to Marquis Wen” 文侯之命, a chapter of the *Classic of Documents* (*Shu jing* 書經), is also in all likelihood related to the dynasty's eastward relocation (see below), but this text is even less informative with regard to the events related to its composition. The *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) of the state of Lu 魯, and its major commentary, *Zuozhuan* 左傳 – our primary source for the first centuries of the Eastern Zhou⁵ – start the narrative

⁴ See a detailed discussion of these and related poems by Li, *Landscape and Power*, pp. 203–15 and 237–40.

⁵ The nature of the *Zuozhuan* is discussed in Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg, “Introduction,” in idem, trans., *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2016; hereafter *Zuo Tradition*), pp. xvii–xcv. For debates about *Zuozhuan*, its nature, dating, and reliability, see three complementary studies: David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian*

in 722 BC, that is, half a century after the fall of the western domain. A few important pieces of relevant information appear in *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語, see below), but these do not amount to a systematic narrative. Nor do contemporaneous bronze inscriptions help: this genre, as expected, generally eschews negative events, thus the collapse of the Zhou authority in the west is not discussed in any of the known inscriptions.⁶

This dearth of early narrations of the Zhou downfall means that the major traditional source is the chapter “Basic Annals of Zhou” 周本紀 from *Records of the Historian*. This chapter dedicates approximately 900 characters to the reigns of kings You and Ping. The bulk of this section comprises anecdotes about King You’s malfunctioning, and particularly about his infatuation with *femme fatale*, Bao Si 褒姒, who is portrayed as a malevolent spirit aimed at destroying the Zhou house.⁷ Anecdotes aside, Bao Si’s activities had one clearly negative impact on the Zhou house. Namely, the establishment of her son, Bopan 伯盤 (or Bofu 伯服),⁸ instead of the erstwhile crown prince Yijiu 宜臼, the future King Ping, caused severe turmoil within the Zhou domain. The disgruntled maternal grandfather of Yijiu, the marquis of Shen 申侯, whose daughter was dismissed from her position as the queen for the sake of Baosi, spearheaded resistance to King You. The coalition among Shen, Zeng 繒, and the western tribesmen, the Quanrong 犬戎 (“Canine Belligerents”), attacked King You, killing him and the crown prince Bopan. In the aftermath, regional lords established Yijiu (King Ping) at Shen and the latter then relocated his capital to Luo Settlement 洛邑 (Luoyang) to escape the Quanrong.⁹

Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E. (Honolulu: U. Hawai‘i P., 2002); and Li Wai-ye, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2007); see also secondary studies cited in these monographs.

⁶ For the genre of bronze inscriptions, including their tendency to eschew negative news, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *EC* 18 (1993), pp. 139–95, esp. 152. For an attempt to relate two vessels – Wu Hu 吳虎-*ding* and Yi 伊-*gui* to the aftermath of the Zhou downfall, see Wang Zhankui 王占奎, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* suizha: Wen Hou Qiu sha Xiewang yu Pingwang, Xiewang jinian” 清華簡繫年隨札, 文侯仇殺携王與平王·携王紀年, *Gudai wenming* 古代文明 10 (2016), p. 211.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of these sections, see Li, *Landscape and Power*, pp. 198–203.

⁸ Both characters 盤 and 服 were written (since Western Zhou times) with the same 舟 radical, which may explain the confusion between them. Note that from the Shang to at least the Springs-and-Autumns period, a graph transcribed as 般 was commonly used to note words written since the Warring States period as 盤. Hence, the original confusion therefore should have concerned 般 and 服, which are even closer than 盤 and 服. We are grateful for an anonymous reviewer’s drawing our attention to this phenomenon. Note that *Xinian* and *Bamboo Annals* call King You’s son Bopan, while *Discourses of the States* and *Records of the Historian* record him as Bofu.

⁹ Sima Qian 司馬遷 et al., *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997; hereafter, *SJ*) 4, p. 149.

The narrative in Sima Qian's "Basic Annals of Zhou" neatly summarizes much of the discussions about the downfall of the Western Zhou in the sources that he utilized – the Zhou, Jin 晉, and Zheng 鄭 sections of *Discourses of the States* and a brief Bao Si-related anecdote from *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋.¹⁰ Sima Qian supplements the above account with a few more sentences in the chapters titled "Basic Annals of Qin" 秦本紀 and "Hereditary House of Wei" 衛世家. From these additional passages we learn that King Ping's enthronement, his fight against the Rong, and his relocation were supported by lord Xiang of Qin 秦襄公 (r. 777–766 BC) (whose role is mentioned in *Lüshi chunqiu* as well) and by lord Wu of Wei 衛武公 (r. 812–758 BC). Both were lavishly rewarded: lord Xiang was recognized as a regional lord, and lord Wu was elevated from the position of "marquis" (*hou* 侯) to that of a "duke" (*gong* 公).¹¹ The enfeoffment of Qin was considered particularly noteworthy by Sima Qian, as it is mentioned side-by-side with the fall of Western Zhou in almost every other "Hereditary House" chapter. Oddly, however, Sima Qian remains silent about the assistance to King Ping given by two other regional lords, lord Wu of Zheng 鄭武公 (r. 770–744 BC) and marquis Wen of Jin 晉文侯 (r. 780–746 BC), whose contribution is mentioned in the Jin section of the *Discourses of the States*, is hinted at in *Zuo zhuan*, and, with regard to marquis Wen, is mentioned also in *Lüshi chunqiu*.¹² When we combine all this information it turns out that the restoration of King Ping was supported by a most impressive coalition of rulers – those of Qin, Jin, Wei, and Zheng (aside from his earlier supporters such as Shen and Zeng). Below, we shall see how the new evidence contradicts this picture.

From the sketchy comparison of the accounts about the Zhou's downfall in *Records of the Historian* and other received texts, one may get an impression that Sima Qian faithfully assembled most of the scanty references to this event. Yet there is one major piece of evidence from *Zuo zhuan* that he apparently preferred to gloss over. It appears in a

¹⁰ *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解, comp. Xu Yuangao 徐元誥, coll. Wang Shumin 王樹民 and Shen Changyun 沈長雲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002; hereafter, *GY*), *j.* 1, sect. 10, pp. 26–27 ("Zhou yu" 周語 1); *j.* 7, sect. 1, pp. 250–51 ("Jin yu 晉語 1"); *j.* 16, sect. 1, pp. 460–77 ("Zheng yu" 鄭語); *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, comp. and annot. Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1990), *j.* 22, sect. 3, p. 1497 ("Yi si" 疑似).

¹¹ *SY*, *j.* 5, p. 179; and *j.* 37, p. 1591. Our usage of European parallels to Chinese aristocratic titles is done for the sake of heuristic convenience only. Note that we normally refer to *gong* as a neutral "lord" (since the *gong* title was posthumously applied to regional lords disregarding their original rank). We do refer to it as "duke" when it is distinguished from "marquis" (*hou*).

¹² *GY*, *j.* 10, sect. 1, p. 330 ("Jin yu" 晉語 4); *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, annot. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990; hereafter *Zuo*), Xuan 12, entry 2, p. 733; *Lüshi chunqiu* (cited n. 10, above), *j.* 22, sect. 3, p. 1497.

letter sent by prince Zhao 王子朝 of Zhou to regional lords in 516 BC. From 521 BC on, the prince was engaged in the devastating fratricidal struggle in the Zhou royal domain, at the end of which he was defeated because of the intervention of the major power, the state of Jin. In a letter sent from his exile in Chu 楚, Zhao bitterly complained against the perfidy of regional lords, contrasting it with the habitual positive interventions of the lords in previous succession struggles in the Zhou royal house. In the letter, one of the most eloquent pieces of political rhetoric in the entire *Zuo zhuan*,¹³ Zhao mentions the story about King Ping, saying:

When it came to the reign of King You, Heaven was ruthless to Zhou: the king was benighted and incompetent and therefore lost his place. King Xie usurped the mandate, but the princes put him aside, setting up a successor to the king and moving him to Jiaru (i.e., Luoyang). This, then, is how brothers can exert themselves on behalf of the royal house.¹⁴ 至于幽王, 天不弔周, 王昏不若, 用愆厥位。攜王奸命, 諸侯替之, 而建王嗣, 用遷郝鄴。則是兄弟之能用力於王室也。

Who was King Xie who usurped the Mandate? His name never appears in *Records of the Historian*. Du Yu 杜預 (222–285), the great commentator of *Zuo zhuan*, opined that this was the title of crown prince Bopan. Yet the subcommentary of Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) corrects this misunderstanding. Kong cites the *Bamboo Annals*, the text unearthed by grave robbers in 279 or 280 AD from the tomb identified as that of King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318–296 BC) at Ji 汲 commandery, in Henan:¹⁵

The *Annals*, a book from the Ji Tomb, says that King Ping fled to Western Shen, and [King You] established Bopan as crown prince. [Bopan] together with King You died at Xi. Before that, marquis of Shen, marquis of Lu (should be Zeng), and lord Wen of Xu established King Ping at Shen. Since he was originally the crown prince, he is named “Heavenly King.” When King You died, Han,

¹³ See Li, *Readability of the Past*, pp. 389–93.

¹⁴ We slightly modify the translation in *Zuo Tradition*, p. 1665. Unless stated otherwise, as here, all translations are ours.

¹⁵ For the nature of the *Bamboo Annals*, see the indispensable study by Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: SUNY P., 2006), pp. 131–256; compare Cheng Pingshan 程平山, *Zhushu jinian yu chutu wenxian yanjiu zhi yi: Zhushu jinian kao* 竹書紀年與出土文獻研究之一, 竹書紀年考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), and David S. Nivison, *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals* (Taipei: Airiti, 2009). For the discovery of the *Bamboo Annals* and related texts, and for the political context of their reconstruction and early studies, see Howard L. Goodman, *Xun Xu and the Politics of Precision in Third-Century AD China* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 290–349.

the lord of Guo, established prince Yuchen at Xie, so that two kings of Zhou were established simultaneously. In the twenty-first year,¹⁶ King Xie was killed by marquis Wen of Jin. Because originally he was not the proper successor, he is named “King Xie” [“King of Discord”].¹⁷ 汲冢書“紀年”云：平王奔西申，而立伯盤以爲太子，與幽王俱死於戲。先是，申侯、魯（鄆？）侯及許文公立平王於申，以本太子，故稱天王。幽王既死，而虢公翰又立王子余臣於攜。周二王並立。二十一年，攜王爲晉文公所殺。以本非適。故稱攜王。

This story had not been noticed centuries earlier by Du Yu (who reviewed the discovered *Bamboo Annals* themselves soon after their discovery and incorporated several insights about them in the “Epilogue” 後序 to his edition of the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* with the *Zuozhuan* commentary).¹⁸ It provides an entirely new understanding of the dynamics of the early years of the Eastern Zhou: not a smooth transmission to the east but a prolonged struggle between two candidates to the throne, two Sons of Heaven. That this story is not attested in the transmitted texts (aside from a single phrase in *Zuozhuan*) is revealing. It shows at the very least that some substantial aspects of the Zhou transition to the east were not known to those Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國)-period (453–221 BC) authors whose narratives served Sima Qian in his reconstruction of early-Zhou history. It was the accidental discovery of the *Bamboo Annals* in 280 AD that provided the first major blow to the traditional narrative.¹⁹ Now, after more than seventeen centuries, a second accidental discovery has dealt this narrative a new blow.

¹⁶ The twenty-first year is commonly understood as the twenty-first year of the parallel reign of King Ping and King Xie (750 BC). A minority view considers this as referring to the twenty-first year of the reign of marquis Wen of Jin (traditionally understood to be 760 BC). See the discussion of the dating problems of these events in the section “The *Xinian* Version: A Kingless Zhou?” below.

¹⁷ *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (Shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji 十三經注疏附校勘記 edn. [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991]), j. 52, p. 2114. Note that this interpretation considers Xie both as a place name and as a derogatory designation of Yuchen (“King of Discord”).

¹⁸ Reproduced in *ibid.*, j. 60, pp. 2187–88.

¹⁹ We do not discuss here the parallel narration of the downfall of Western Zhou in the so-called *Current Bamboo Annals* 今本竹書紀年 because its reliability is flawed. Many scholars (e.g. Cheng, *Zhushu jinian*) consider it outright forgery. Shaughnessy (*Rewriting*) has many good points against this simplistic conclusion, proposing an alternative scenario according to which the rearrangement of the original bamboo slips into something akin to the *Current* version was actually undertaken by Western Jin 西晉 (266–316) scholars soon after the *Bamboo Annals* discovery. Whoever introduced these revisions, the *Current* version does not reflect the original *Bamboo Annals* and cannot be considered a primary source of Zhou history.

THE *XINIAN* VERSION: A KINGLESS ZHOU?

Xinian 繫年 is one of several bamboo manuscripts that were allegedly looted from an unidentified tomb in mainland China, then smuggled to Hong Kong, and then purchased there and repatriated to Tsinghua (Qinghua) University by a donor.²⁰ It is the lengthiest and most detailed historical text unearthed in recent decades. The text is divided into twenty-three sections that narrate 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 BC. Since the text's structure, its dating, its potential audience, and the question of its authenticity have been discussed elsewhere in scholarly literature, here we present only a brief summary of our – and our colleagues' – findings and then turn to *Xinian*'s treatment of the fall of Western Zhou.²¹

Since *Xinian* was not properly excavated, any discussion of it cannot avoid the thorny question of the text's authenticity. Luckily, in this case we have very solid indications that the text is indeed authentic. First, its peculiar usage of grammatical particles evidently reflects geographic and temporal differences in its source materials. For instance, the particle *ji* 及 in the meaning of “with” or “and” appears primarily in the Zhou and Jin 晉 segments, while those sections that come from the state of Chu use *yu* 與 instead. This distribution is reflective of a similar peculiarity in other Chu manuscripts, which overwhelmingly use *yu* rather than *ji*. Or, speaking of temporal differences: early segments of *Xinian* overwhelmingly use an older and more “solemn” particle *yu* 于, while later segments markedly prefer a newer and more “colloquial” *yu* 於. These patterns are highly unlikely to have been produced by a forger.²²

²⁰ For the details about the purchase of Tsinghua manuscripts, see Liu Guozhong, *Introduction to the Tsinghua Bamboo-strip Manuscripts*, trans. Christopher J. Foster and William N. French (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

²¹ For *Xinian*, see Li Xueqin 李學勤, ed., *Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學藏戰國竹簡, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2011; hereafter, *Qinghua 2011*). In China this manuscript has merited already no less than twelve monographic studies and countless articles. For the overview of its nature and discussion of its authenticity, see, e.g., 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 2 (2012), pp. 49–57, 100; Yuri Pines, “Zhou History and Historiography: Introducing the Bamboo Manuscript *Xinian*,” *TP* 100.4–5 (2014), pp. 287–324. Further references to secondary studies are given below.

²² For our early treatment of the particles' distribution in *Xinian*, see Chen, “*Xinian* ‘gu zhi’ shuo,” and Pines, “Zhou History and Historiography.” For our later, updated, research, see Chen Minzhen, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* xuci chutan” 清華簡繫年虛詞初探, *Chutu wenxian yuyan yanjiu* 出土文獻語言研究 2 (2015), pp. 38–59; You Rui 尤銳 (Yuri Pines), “Cong *Xinian* xuci de yongfa lun qi wenben de kekaoxing: jian chutan *Xinian* yuanshi ziliao de lai yuan” 從

Another very strong indicator in favor of *Xinian* authenticity is the existence of verso lines on the slips. These were continuous lines cut by a knife on the verso of the slips to indicate their original position as part of the bamboo culm segment from which the manuscript was produced. *Xinian* is divided into seven sets of slips from the same culm, as indicated by those lines. The verso lines phenomenon, which was noticed by paleographers only in 2011, could not have been known to a forger; hence, again, it proves that *Xinian* is an authentic material. These two points suffice to dispel suspicions about *Xinian*'s provenance and allow us to turn to the text.²³

Xinian is written in what is identified as “Chu script” and it is likely that it comes from a Chu tomb. Judging from its content, the text was composed no later than ca. 370 BC, and this observation is supported by the analysis of its orthography.²⁴ The text is clearly related to the state of Chu in terms of the focus of its historical coverage and also in terms of certain conventions that suggest Chu editing,²⁵ but it is not a pure Chu text. Rather, individual sections were incorporated from a variety of primary sources composed elsewhere. Sections differ in terms of the chronology that they employ (Western Zhou, Jin, and Chu chronologies, that is, the use of reign-dates according to a specific court); and as mentioned above there are also subtle linguistic differences among them. In what follows we focus on the Western Zhou segments of the text, that is sections 1–4, which deal with the events from Western Zhou to early Springs-and-Autumns (Chunqiu 春秋) period (770–453 BC). The most significant for our discussion is section 2, which narrates the Western Zhou's downfall. It states:

繫年虛詞的用法論其文本的可靠性，兼初探繫年原始資料的來源，in Li, ed., *Qinghua jian Xinian yu gushi xintan*, pp. 215–33. For an additional useful study, see Li Meiyang 李美妍, “Lun Qinghua jian *Xinian* zhong chengjie guanxi ci ‘nai’ he ‘yan’” 論清華簡繫年中承接關係詞“乃”和“焉”，*Chutu wenxian* 出土文獻 11 (2017), pp. 156–64.

²³ For the verso lines and their importance, see Thies Staack, “Identifying Codicological Sub-units in Bamboo Manuscripts: Verso Lines Revisited,” *Manuscript Cultures* 8 (2015), pp. 157–86. For additional observations regarding verso lines in the *Xinian* ms, see Wei Cide 魏慈德, “*Xinian* de jianbei xingzhi tanji ji qi jishi guandian yu *Zuozhuan* yitong liju” 繫年的簡背形制探究及其記事觀點與左傳異同例舉，in Li, ed., *Qinghua jian Xinian yu gushi xintan*, pp. 329–40 (especially pp. 329–32).

²⁴ For the study of the text's orthography, see Guo Yongbing 郭永秉, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* chaoxie shidai zhi guce: jian cong wenzi xingti jiaodu kan Zhanguo Chu wenzi quyuxing tezheng xingcheng de fuza guocheng” 清華簡繫年抄寫時代之估測，兼從文字形體角度看戰國楚文字區域性特徵形成的複雜過程，*Wen shi* 文史 3 (2016), pp. 5–42. The only scholar who dates *Xinian* to the second half of the fourth century BC is Yoshimoto Michimasa, “Seika kan Keinen kō” 清華簡繫年考，*Kyōtō daigaku bungakubu kenkyū kiyō* 京都大學文學部研究紀要 52 (2013), pp. 1–94. Yoshimoto's dating is based on his supposition that *Xinian* is based on *Zuozhuan*, which Yoshimoto elsewhere dated to the mid-fourth century BC.

²⁵ See Chen Wei 陳偉, “Qinghua daxue cang zhushu *Xinian* de wenxianxue kaocha” 清

King You of Zhou married a lady from Western Shen, who gave birth to King Ping.²⁶ He also married a daughter of the men of Bao, who was Bao Si. She gave birth to Bopan. Bao Si was favored by the king; the king and Bopan expelled King Ping, and King Ping fled to Western Shen. King You mobilized an army and encircled King Ping at Western Shen, but the Shen people did not hand him [King Ping] over. The people of Zeng then deferentially requested assistance²⁷ from the Western Rong, therewith attacking King You. King You and Bopan both were killed, and Zhou was destroyed.

The rulers of the states and various officials thereupon established the younger brother of King You, Yuchen, at Guo: this was King Hui from Xie.²⁸ Twenty-one years after his establishment (750 BC), marquis Wen of Jin named Qiu killed King Hui at Guo. For nine years (749–741 BC) Zhou was without a king,²⁹ and the rulers of the states and regional lords³⁰ then for the first time ceased attending the Zhou court. Thereupon, marquis Wen of Jin greeted King Ping at Shao'e and established him at the royal capital.³¹ After three years (738 BC) he relocated eastward, stopping at Chengzhou (i.e. Luoyang).

華大學藏竹書繫年的文獻學考察, *Shilin* 史林 1 (2013), pp. 43–48 (pp. 44–45); Pines, “Zhou History,” pp. 297–98.

²⁶ Note that *Xinian* refers to the future King Ping by his royal title from the moment of his birth.

²⁷ Literally “submitted” (*xiang* 降). The character *xiang* caused considerable polemics (summarized by Wang Hui 王輝, “Ye tan Qinghua jian *Xinian* ‘xiang Xi Rong’ de shidu” 也談清華簡繫年“降西戎”的釋讀, in Li, ed., *Qinghua jian Xinian yu gushi xintan*, pp. 487–93). Following the parallel with *GI*, j. 2, sect. 1, p. 46 (“Zhou yu zhong”) we read it as “behaving deferentially to request military assistance.”

²⁸ We tentatively read Xie as a place name under Guo jurisdiction, although this location is not identified. See also n. 17, above.

²⁹ In Warring States Chu mss., and in particular in *Xinian*, the character wáng < *maŋ 亡 can appear either in its literal meaning of “to be destroyed,” “lose,” “perish” (as in the above 周乃亡), or, as frequently, in the meaning of “not have/exist” (which in non-Chu texts is usually rendered by the word wú < *ma 無). In the sentence 周亡王九年, the latter meaning appears as more fitting. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to the peculiarity of Chu manuscript preference for 亡 rather than 無.

³⁰ Yoshimoto (“Shūshitsu tōsen saikō,” p. 23) suggests that “rulers of the states” (*bang jun* 邦君) should refer to the enfeoffed nobles from within the Zhou royal domain, while “regional lords” refers to the outsiders. For this interpretation of *bang jun*, see also Chen Yingjie 陳英傑, “Jinwen zhong ‘jun’ zi zhi yi ji xiangguan wenti tanxi” 金文中“君”字之意義及相關問題探析, *Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字 33 (2007), pp. 107–52 (pp. 119–21).

³¹ The royal capital (*jingshi* 京師) here clearly refers to the original Western Zhou capital, or, more precisely, to the cultic center in which enthronements of the new kings took place. See Mizuno Taku 水野卓, “Ōi no keishō kara mita Shū no tōsen: Seika kan *Keinen* o tegakari to shite” 王位の継承から見た周の東遷, 清華簡繫年を手がかりとして, in Fujita Katsuhisa 藤田勝久 and Sekio Shiro 關尾史郎, eds., *Kandoku ga kaku Chūgoku kodai no seiji to shakai* 簡牘が描く中国古代の政治と社会 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoin, 2017), pp. 29–50.

The people of Jin thereupon opened [lands] in the area of the royal capital.³² Lord Wu of Zheng also rectified³³ the regional lords in the east. When lord Wu passed away, lord Zhuang [of Zheng 鄭莊公, r. 743–701 BC] ascended the throne; when lord Zhuang passed away, lord Zhao [of Zheng 鄭昭公, r. 696–695 BC] ascended the throne.³⁴ His noble, Qumi of Gao killed lord Zhao and established his [lord Zhao's] younger brother Meishou.³⁵ Lord Xiang of Qi [齊襄公, r. 697–686 BC] assembled the regional lords at Shouzhi;³⁶ he killed the heir Meishou and tore apart Qumi of Gao by chariots. He replaced [Meishou] and established lord Li [of Zheng 鄭厲公, r. 700–697 and 679–673 BC].³⁷ Then Zheng started to be stabilized. King Wen of Chu [楚文王, r. 689–677 BC] used this to open up lands to the north of the Han River.

周幽王取妻于西申，生平王，王或（又）取褒人之女，是褒姒，生伯盤。褒姒嬖于王，王【5】與伯盤逐平王，平王走西申。幽王起師，回（圍）平王于西申，申人弗界。曾（繒）人乃降西戎，以【6】攻幽王，幽王及伯盤乃滅，周乃亡。邦君諸正乃立幽王之弟余臣于虢，是攜惠王。【7】立廿又一年，晉文侯仇乃殺惠王于虢。周亡王九年，邦君諸侯焉始不朝于周，【8】晉文侯乃逆平王于少鄂，立之于京師。三年，乃東徙，止于成周。晉人焉始啓【9】于京師，鄭武公亦正東方之諸侯。武公即世，莊公即位；莊公即世，昭公即位。【10】其大夫高之渠彌殺昭公而立其弟子眉壽。齊襄公會諸侯于首止，殺子【11】眉壽，車轅高之渠彌，改立厲公，鄭以始正（定）。楚文王以啓于漢陽。【12】³⁸

³² This sentence implies Jin's expansion into the heart of the Wei River basin, which is not attested to elsewhere. Some scholars proposed to interpret the term *jingshi* here as referring to Jin's capital, but this does not make much sense: surely to develop their domain's own lands, the Jin leaders did not wait until Zhou's downfall! See summary of the discussions in Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳翰, "Qinghua jian *Xinian* 'Zhou wu wang jiu nian' zaiyi" 清華簡繫年“周無王九年”再議, *Jilin daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 吉林大學社會科學學報 56.4 (2016), pp. 177–82 (see 180–81).

³³ The character *zheng* 正 here can be read also as 征, “to invade.” See Li Songru 李松儒, *Qinghua jian Xinian jishi* 清華簡繫年集釋 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2015), p. 70.

³⁴ According to the *Zuozhuan* account, the enthronement of lord Zhao was unsuccessful: he was expelled by his half-brother, lord Li 鄭厲公 (r. 700–697 and 679–673 BC). In 697 BC, lord Li fled his state due to the quarrel with the powerful minister Zhai Zhong 祭仲, and lord Zhao returned to power. *Xinian* abridges these events.

³⁵ This assassination occurred in 695 BC; Meishou 眉壽 appears in *Zuozhuan* under the name Ziwei 子蕞. Using possessive *zhi* 之 between one's lineage name and personal name (i.e. Qumi of Gao 高之渠彌 rather than Gao Qumi 高渠彌 as in *Zuozhuan*) is a common feature in *Xinian*.

³⁶ For the details of this assembly, see *Zuo*, Huan 18, entry 2, p. 153.

³⁷ According to *Zuozhuan*, the replacer of Ziwei/Meishou was prince Ying 公子嬰 (r. 693–680 BC); only in 680 BC lord Li returned to his state and assassinated Ying. Again, *Xinian* abridges this.

³⁸ *Qinghua* 2011, p. 138; slip numbers appear in the Chinese in bold square brackets. Whenever we cite unearthed texts, we use the slip numbering according to that proposed by the original publisher; and characters are written in their modern forms as per the suggestions of the editors or other modern scholars.

The *Xinian* account can be conveniently divided into three parts (indicated by the three paragraphs of the above quotation). The first part deals with the events that caused the downfall of the Western Zhou. This segment parallels the accounts in other texts, such as the *Bamboo Annals* cited above. The closest parallel is perhaps the “Zheng yu” section of *Discourses of the States*. In the latter, a prescient scribe Bo 史伯 of Zhou “predicts” the future course of events that will lead to the Zhou’s downfall:

As the king wants to kill the crown prince (future King Ping) so as to accomplish [the succession of] Bofu (Bopan), he will surely require him from Shen. Shen will not hand him over, so [the king] will surely invade them. If he invades Shen, then Zeng and the Western Rong will invade Zhou, and Zhou will not be protected!³⁹ 王欲殺太子以成伯服，必求之申，申人弗畀，必伐之。若伐申，而繒與西戎會以伐周，周不守矣！

The “Zheng yu” narrative is very close to that in *Xinian*. Actually, there is partial overlap between the two, especially the identical phrase “Shen will not hand him over 申人弗畀,” which may even suggest that both authors utilized a common third source. In any case, the narrative in the first segment of *Xinian 2* does not alter our current understanding of the Zhou downfall.

Before we go to the second part of *Xinian 2* – the focal point of our discussion – we should briefly mention the third part of the narrative that provides a broad overview of geopolitical changes in the aftermath of the collapse of Western Zhou. Most of this subsection focuses on the central and eastern parts of the Zhou realm (the fate of the western lands, divided between Qin and Jin, is discussed in the end of section 3 of *Xinian*, which we shall briefly address later). *Xinian 2* shows how the downfall of the Zhou benefited the states of Jin and Zheng, especially the latter, which used this situation to “rectify” (*zheng* 正, or “govern” *zheng* 政, or “invade” *zheng* 征) the eastern parts of the Zhou realm. However, because Zheng was weakened by the prolonged domestic turmoil during the first quarter of the seventh century BC, this allowed the state of Chu to start its expansion into the northern Han River valley. The last sentence, which introduces the state of Chu, is probably the most important for the narrators: the entire discussion serves as a backdrop for the rise of Chu to the position of a significant power.

Let us move now to the second part, which departs most significantly from the narratives known heretofore. It shows that the restora-

³⁹ *GY*, j. 16, sect. 1, p. 475.

tion of the Zhou dynasty under King Ping was a lengthy and bumpy process. Rather than being endorsed by a broad coalition of regional lords, as is hinted in *Discourses of the States* and *Records of the Historian*, King Ping seems to have been abandoned by the “rulers of the states and various officials,” who instead supported his uncle, Yuchen. The latter reigned for a full twenty-one years as King Hui from Xie (hereafter called King Xie),⁴⁰ during which the future King Ping was presumably in exile in the otherwise unknown location of Shao’e.⁴¹ In 750 BC, marquis Wen of Jin killed King Xie, but this did not bring an immediate enthronement of the new incumbent. The text plainly states that “for nine years (749–741 BC) Zhou was without a king, and the rulers of the states and regional lords then for the first time ceased attending the Zhou court.” It is perhaps out of concern for the void of legitimate power that marquis Wen acted again, first reinstating the king at the royal capital and then relocating him to Luoyang in 738 BC.

The narrative itself is plain enough, is written in easily understandable characters, contains no signs of textual corruption and, due to its strict chronological structuring in the first two parts, appears quite unequivocal. Nonetheless, the above reading was outright rejected by the text’s editors and by a significant number of other scholars. The reasons for this rejection are not difficult to discover. First, the *Xinian* 2 version is at odds with *Records of the Historian* and, more broadly, with the entire textual tradition which contains no hints about a kingless situation in the aftermath of the fall of Western Zhou. Second, the sequence of the events depicted in *Xinian* contradicts some of the chronological information in *Records of the Historian*. For instance, if the eastward relocation occurred only in 738 BC, then surely neither lord Xiang of Qin (who died in 766 BC), nor lord Wu of Wei (died in 758 BC) could assist King Ping. More substantially, marquis Wen of Jin is presumed to have died in 746 BC, which means that he could neither enthrone King Ping in 741 BC, nor relocate him eastward three years thereafter. Third, the *Xinian* narrative which denies King Ping’s rule before 741 BC contradicts the *Bamboo Annals*’ claim that “two kings” coexisted together until ca. 750 BC. How to reconcile the new information and that in the received and previously unearthed (*Bamboo Annals*) texts?

⁴⁰ Judging from *Xinian* and *Bamboo Annals*, the more likely designation of this king would be King Hui from Xie; but since most sources refer to him as King Xie (reading Xie as King Hui’s designation rather than the place-name of his capital), we follow this convention.

⁴¹ Shim Jae-hoon makes strong arguments in favor of identifying this location in the Nanyang 南陽 basin, southeast of the Western Zhou capital. See his “Dui chuanshi wenxian de xin tiaozhan,” pp. 141–45; and idem, “The Eastward Relocation of the Zhou Royal House in the *Xinian* Manuscript: Chronological and Geographical Aspects,” *AO* 85 (2017), pp. 67–98.

Facing the ostensible contradiction between our traditional understanding and the newly unearthed text many scholars tried to resolve it by reinterpreting the content of the latter. The editorial team led by Li Xueqin 李學勤 set the tone by arguing that the phrase 周亡王九年 does not mean “for nine years Zhou was without a king,” but, rather, “nine years after Zhou lost the king,” that is 762 BC. Other scholars read the sentence as “the ninth year of the king who lost [the Zhou; alternatively, “the demised king”],” that is the ninth year of King You (i.e., 772 BC). In that case, the relocation to the east should have occurred exactly in the year 770 BC, favored by Sima Qian.⁴² Yet another possible rearrangement will be putting a period after *wang* 亡, and reading the sentence: “Zhou had been lost. In the king’s ninth year... 周亡. 王九年...,” in which case the relocation again occurred in 762 or 761 BC.⁴³ Another possibility would be to read the disputed sentence as we did it, but to argue that “twenty-one years,” after which King Hui from Xie was assassinated, refers to the twenty-first year of marquis Wen of Jin, i.e., 760 BC, in which case the events would match marquis Wen’s chronology.⁴⁴ On the other hand, not a few scholars did accept the reading of *Xinian* as in the above translation.⁴⁵ The debates continue, as is evident from a series of new articles on the topic published in 2016.⁴⁶

The formidable opposition to our interpretation of *Xinian* 2 notwithstanding, we believe that it is easily defensible insofar as *Xinian*’s text itself is concerned. First, parts 1–2 of the *Xinian* 2 narrative follow

⁴² For two representative articles that propose these views, see Xu Shaohua 徐少華, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* ‘Zhou wu wang jiu nian’ qianyi” 清華簡繫年“周無王九年”淺議, *Jilin daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 吉林大學社會科學學報 56.4 (2016), pp. 183–87, and Li Ling 李零, “Du jian biji: Qinghua Chu jian *Xinian* di yi zhi si zhang” 讀簡筆記, 清華楚簡繫年第一至四章, *ibid.*, pp. 168–76.

⁴³ See Wei Dong 魏棟, “Qinghua jian *Xinian* ‘Zhou wang wang jiu nian’ ji liang Zhou zhiji xiangguan wenti xintan” 清華簡繫年“周亡王九年”及兩周之際相關問題新探, in Luo Yunhuan 羅運環, ed., *Chu jian Chu wenhua yu xian Qin lishi wenhua guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 楚簡楚文化與先秦歷史文化國際學術研討會論文集 (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013), pp. 109–21.

⁴⁴ Zhu, “Qinghua jian *Xinian*.”

⁴⁵ See Su Jianzhou 蘇建洲, Wu Wenwen 吳雯雯 and Lai Yixuan 賴怡璇, eds., *Qinghua er ‘Xinian’ jijie* 清華二繫年集解 (Taipei: Wanjuan lou, 2013); this study collects early debates about this phrase and the summary covers pp. 77–102. In addition to the scholars cited in *Qinghua er*, a plain reading of the text that has the date of the relocation as 738 BC is supported by Yoshimoto, “Seika kan,” p. 16, n. 18 (this dating supports Yoshimoto’s early study “Shūshitsu tōsen”); see also Wang Hui 王暉, “Chunqiu zaoqi wangshi wangwei shixi bianju kaoyi: jianshuo Qinghua *Xinian* ‘Zhou wu wang jiu nian’” 春秋早期周王室王位世襲變局考異, 兼說清華簡繫年“周無王九年”, *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌 5 (2013), pp. 75–81; and Shim, “Dui chuanshi wenxian de xin tiaozhan.”

⁴⁶ See Li, “Du jian biji”; Zhu, “Qinghua jian”; Xu, “Qinghua jian.” For a recent summary of these debates, see Yang Bo 楊博, “*Xinian* ‘Zhou wang wang jiu nian’ zhushuo zongxi” 繫年“周亡王九年”諸說綜析, *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao* 中國社會科學報 5 (Feb 27, 2018).

a rigid chronological sequence; to assume that the narrative jumps back from 750 BC (the year when King Hui of Xie was assassinated by marquis Wen of Jin) to the events of 770s or 760s BC would be odd. Nor does the reading of *wang wang* 亡王 as a reference to King You make sense; while in other contexts this epithet (“a demised” or “a losing” king) could be applicable for him, this would not be the case when a king is referred to purely for the sake of counting years. In this latter case the king should be referred to either by his posthumous title (*shi* 諡) or as a “current king”; but surely not as a “demised king.”

From reading a series of articles concerning *Xinian* 2, we have a strong feeling that the only reason for alternative parsing and interpreting of the disputed sentence is the desire to reconcile *Xinian* information with that from the received sources, primarily *Records of the Historian*. This approach is understandable, but it is methodologically problematic. It supposes a priori the accuracy of Sima Qian’s account and presumes its superiority over any alternative narrative. It would be much more fruitful in our eyes to recognize the substantial differences between the two accounts and to resolve the riddle of King Ping’s early career by carefully reassessing the reliability and accuracy of each of the competing sources, including both *Xinian* and *Records of the Historian*.

THE XINIAN NARRATIVE: A QUESTION OF PLAUSIBILITY

Before we discuss relative reliability of *Xinian* versus *Records of the Historian* the reader should be reminded that both texts were far removed from the events accompanying the downfall of the Western Zhou: *Xinian* postdates these by four centuries, while *Records of the Historian* by more than six. In reconstructing the events of the past, the authors had to rely on earlier materials, the reliability of which can be at times quite questionable. Even if accurate historical records from the years of King You and his successors survived, they could have been tampered with by later transmitters and editors eager to either bolster legitimacy of certain claimants to the Zhou throne, or to promote appropriate moral and political values. Moreover, through centuries of transmission, many materials were inevitably lost; others may have suffered from partial damage, scribal errors, and the like. If – as may be reasonably assumed – more than one account of these dramatic events existed, the authors had to select from among conflicting narratives what they considered a more plausible one or the one that would fit better their own perceptions of history. That manifold mistakes and

inaccuracies were incorporated in the depictions of long bygone events comes as no surprise.

Let us look at *Records of the Historian* first. Sima Qian famously lamented the loss of the historical records from the competing Warring States, which left him to rely on sketchy Qin records that lacked proper chronological information.⁴⁷ Actually, the dearth of reliable records is even more palpable in the historian's narration of the events that preceded (or immediately postdated) the detailed *Zuozhuan* narratives. The data assembled in the first century of the "Chronological Tables of Twelve Regional Lords" (chapter 14 of *Records of the Historian*, covering events from 841 to 477 BC) provides the reader with very scanty information aside from the ascendancy of regional lords and their reign years. This stands in strong contrast with the much more informative accounts once we enter the period covered by *Zuozhuan*.⁴⁸ Nor do chapters from the Basic Annals and Hereditary Houses sections of Sima's work provide substantially richer information for the century under discussion, their incorporation of a few anecdotes from *Discourses of the States* and other Warring States-period sources notwithstanding. The only exception is the coverage of Qin's preimperial history. It is likely that Qin records, sketchy and chronologically impaired as they may have been, provided Sima Qian with precious – even if at times inaccurate – information about the early history of this state.⁴⁹

When we scrutinize Sima Qian's knowledge of late-Western Zhou history, its inadequacy becomes immediately observable. Suffice it to look at his narration of an earlier Western Zhou drama: the rebellion against King Li 周厲王, who was ousted from his capital in 841 BC. Sima Qian argues that King Li was replaced by the duumvirate of the Duke of Zhou 周公 and the Duke of Shao 召公, whose joint reign was dubbed the age of "commonality and harmony (*gonghe* 共和)." The fallacy of this interpretation was demonstrated by the *Bamboo Annals*, which clearly states that after the ousting of King Li the reins of power were held by He, the Elder of the Gong lineage 共伯和 who ruled for fourteen years until the enthronement of King Li's son, King Xuan 周宣王 (r. 827–782 BC). This version is fully corroborated by the account in *Xinian* 1 as

⁴⁷ *SJ* 15, p. 686.

⁴⁸ See more in Xu Jianwei 徐建委, "Shiji 'Shier zhuhou nianbiao' yu guben *Zuozhuan* kao-lun" 史記十二諸侯年表與古本左傳考論, *Guoxue yanjiu* 國學研究 36 (2015), pp. 73–114.

⁴⁹ For the complexity of Qin records and their impact on Sima Qian's narrative, see Yoshimoto Michimasa, "Shin shi kenkyū josetsu" 秦史研究序說, *SR* 78.3 (1995), pp. 34–67; see Fujita Katsuhisa 藤田勝久, *Shiki Sengoku shiryō no kenkyū* 史記戰國史料の研究 (Tokyo: Tokyo U.P., 1997), pp. 227–78; Yuri Pines, "Biases and Their Sources: Qin History in the *Shiji*," *OE* 45 (2005–2006), pp. 10–34.

well.⁵⁰ Sima Qian not only misinterpreted the reign of Gong He, but also erroneously identified this personality with lord Wu of Wei 衛武公 and his elder brother (see more, below). Judging from this gross mistake alone we should be doubly cautious in accepting Sima Qian's version of the late-Western Zhou history. Surely an a priori favoring of it over *Xinian* is methodologically untenable.

When we look at *Xinian* it should be immediately emphasized that it is also not a primary source but a compilation of earlier materials, and that it naturally has its weaknesses. Some of its narratives contain factual mistakes that in all likelihood derive from misunderstandings of earlier sources or from uncritical incorporation of oral accounts of the past; others were modified to serve the authors' ideological agendas.⁵¹ Yet when we turn to *Xinian 2*, two important observations should be made. First, the precise chronology employed in the second part of the text (what can be called the 770–738 BC segment) strongly suggests utilization of a relatively detailed and chronologically accurate primary source. We do not know the nature of this source, but its reliability is corroborated at the very least by the date of assassination of King Xie, which is identical to the date provided by *Bamboo Annals*. Second, the account in *Xinian 2* appears ideologically neutral. It neither endorses King Ping, nor outright rejects his legitimacy. It is not concerned with moral lessons that could be drawn from the depicted events, nor is interested in blaming villains or hailing heroes. Actually, the narrative's goal, as we suggested above, is to provide the backdrop for the ascendancy of Jin, Zheng, and, most significantly, Chu. As such the narrative seems to be free of ideological tampering.

Yet before we endorse *Xinian* we should consider the major problem of its narrative – that of chronology. How can we reconcile the sequence of events outlined in *Xinian* with the claims in *Records of the Historian* and elsewhere that King Ping's transfer to the east was assisted by lord Xiang of Qin, lord Wu of Wei, and lord Wu of Zheng, all of whom were dead in 738 BC? And second, how to reconcile this chronology with the dates of marquis Wen of Jin who is supposed to be dead in 746 BC, in other words, *before* he could enthrone King Ping? The answer to these questions requires detailed analysis of each of the four cases.

⁵⁰ See *SJ* 4, p. 144, and the *Bamboo Annals* cited in Sima Zhen's 司馬貞 (7th c. AD) commentary there. For *Xinian*, see section 1, slip 3 at *Qinghua 2011*, p. 136, and discussions in Su et al., *Qinghua er*, pp. 23–28. For a detailed study of the *gonghe* misunderstanding, see Satō Shinya, “Rekishu hyōka to shite no Kyōhakuwa” 歴史評価としての共伯和, *Chūgoku kodaishi ronsō* 中國古代史論叢 9 (2017), pp. 1–30.

⁵¹ See more in Pines, “Zhou History.”

Let us start with the easiest one – lord Wu of Wei. Here it seems Sima Qian is off the mark. *Records of Historian* mentions that the lord, whose personal name was He 和, rose to power by murdering his elder brother, the crown prince, who was posthumously named Gong the Elder. This conflation of Gong the Elder and his brother He may be a historian’s attempt to accommodate the scattered information about Gong He from the Warring States-period literature without understanding properly who he was.⁵² Sima Qian effusively hails the fratricidal lord Wu, who is said to have been able to follow in the steps of the founder of the state of Wei, Kangshu 康叔. Thanks to his rule “the hundred clans were harmoniously consolidated 百姓和集.” Lord Wu is said to have fought valiantly for the sake of King Ping against the Rong, and the grateful king granted him then a ducal (*gong* 公) title, elevating therewith the Wei rulers from their hereditary position as “marquises” (*hou* 侯).⁵³

Sima Qian’s endorsement of lord Wu of Wei may well be related to the tradition in the Mao commentary on the *Classic of Poems*, which attributes several poems either to lord Wu directly or to his admirers who praise his virtues.⁵⁴ This, and the confusion between lord Wu and Gong He, may have prompted Sima Qian to attribute to lord Wu an exceptional role in the rescue of the Zhou house. That this is an invention, at least in part, is clear from Sima Qian’s odd claim that the lord was subsequently elevated to ducal status. From the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* we know for sure that Wei rulers were treated as marquises and not as dukes, which suggests that the elevation of lord Wu had never happened. Here Sima Qian is patently wrong.

What about lord Xiang of Qin? Here the testimony of *Records of the Historian* cannot be easily dismissed, since the text incorporated original Qin records. Moreover, lord Xiang’s support for King Ping’s relocation is mentioned in *Lüshi chungju* as well. On the other hand, there is a certain confusion in Sima Qian’s narrative. It tells first that when the Rong attacked the Zhou and killed King You, “Lord Xiang led the army to the rescue of the Zhou and fought very fiercely, acquiring

⁵² A more plausible identification of Gong He would be with a noble from within the Zhou royal domain, e.g., Bo Hefu 伯蘇父, as suggested by Li Feng (“Landscape and Power,” p. 106). Some scholars (e.g., Chao Fulin 晁福林, “Shi lun ‘Gong He xingzheng’ ji qi xiangguan wenti” 試論“共和行政”及其相關問題, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中國史研究 2 [1992]), have opined that Bo Hefu, Gong He, and Lord Wu of Wei are the same person, but this claim is disputable.

⁵³ *SJ* 37, p. 1591.

⁵⁴ See the poems “The Guests Are Taking Their Seats” 賓之初筵 and “Grave” 抑 (Mao 220 and 256, respectively); praise is in the “Little Bay of the Qi” 淇奧 and “Pole-banners” 干旄 (Mao 55 and 53, respectively).

merit.” Then, as the Zhou relocated, “Lord Xiang led his troops to escort King Ping of Zhou. King Ping enfeoffed lord Xiang as regional lord and granted him the land to the west of Mount Qi 岐山.”⁵⁵ A few sentences later, though, the text says that it was only in the sixteenth year of lord Xiang’s son, lord Wen of Qin 秦文公 (r. 765–716 BC, making it 750 BC) that Qin acquired the land and the remnants of the Zhou people to the west of Mount Qi.⁵⁶ To add to the confusion, *Xinian* 3 says:

When the house of Zhou declined and King Ping relocated to the east, stopping at Chengzhou, Qin Zhong thereupon [moved] eastward, occupying the Zhou lands, in order to preserve the Zhou cemeteries. This was how Qin began to be great. 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】⁵⁷

Here an act of occupation of the Zhou lands is attributed not to lord Xiang, but to his grandfather, Qin Zhong 秦仲 (r. 845–822 BC), who, according to *Records of the Historian*, was the first Qin leader to be enfeoffed by the Zhou king as a ranked noble.⁵⁸ It is not our goal to resolve this puzzle; suffice it to say that in all likelihood the sketchiness of early-Qin records (or contradictions in a Qin dynastic legend incorporated into *Xinian* 3),⁵⁹ may have confused later historians, who knew of Qin’s role as Zhou’s ally and the major beneficiary from the Zhou relocation to the east, but did not know exactly who among the Qin rulers should be credited with these achievements. Following Shim Jae-hoon, we consider the current evidence about lord Xiang of Qin too inconclusive to either corroborate or refute *Xinian*.⁶⁰

Moving to marquis Wen of Jin, who, according to *Xinian* 2, played the crucial role in King Ping’s enthronement, we face a different problem. Here, *Records of the Historian* remains silent: even the canonical “Decree to Marquis Wen” 文侯之命 from the *Classic of Documents* is misleadingly claimed by Sima Qian to have been issued to lord Wen of Jin 晉文公 (r. 636–628 BC) rather than to marquis Wen.⁶¹ *Xinian* highlights

⁵⁵ *SJ* 5, p. 179; Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian. Vol. 3: Qin Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Chinese U. Hong Kong, 1993), p. 5.

⁵⁶ *SJ* 5, p. 179.

⁵⁷ *Xinian* 3, slips 15–16; *Qinghua* 2011, p. 141.

⁵⁸ The *Xinian* editorial team opined that Qin Zhong (literally “Second-born”) refers to lord Xiang (who was in fact second-born as well). This supposition seems to us far-fetched: regional lords who possessed posthumous titles are not referred to by their seniority designations.

⁵⁹ For the analysis of this legend, see Pines, “Zhou History,” pp. 299–303.

⁶⁰ Shim, “Dui chuanshi wenxian de xin tiaozhan,” p. 152.

⁶¹ *SJ* 39, pp. 1666–67. *Xinian* clearly resolves the confusion about the attribution of this document. See Li Xueqin 李學勤, “You Qinghua jian *Xinian* lun *Wenhou zhi ming*” 由清華簡繫年論文侯之命, *Yangzhou daxue xuebao (renwen shehuikexue ban)* 揚州大學學報 (人文社會科學版) 17.2 (2013), pp. 49–51.

the exceptional role of marquis Wen in the enthronement of King Ping: the marquis first annihilated the rival King Xie, then established King Ping, and finally escorted him eastward. The importance of marquis Wen in King Ping's relocation is corroborated by the *Bamboo Annals* and is hinted at in *Discourses of the States*, *Zuo zhuan*, and *Lüshi chunqiu*, as mentioned above. However, how to reconcile the dates in *Xinian* with those of marquis Wen's rule, as recorded in *Records of the Historian*?

A possible solution has been proposed by Cheng Pingshan, who suggests that Sima Qian's miscalculation of marquis Wen's years was based on a scribal error in the *Zuo zhuan* account of early-Jin history: if the year of one of the domestic clashes in Jin mentioned there is not the "thirtieth" but "fortieth" (of lord Hui of Lu 魯惠公 [r. 768–723 BC]), then the reign years of marquis Wen should be shifted by ten years onward (that is, reigning 771–736 BC and not 781–746 BC). Cheng's reconstruction is speculative, but its advantage is not just that it fits the *Xinian* narrative but also that it resolves other puzzles of early-Jin chronology.⁶² As such, we may cautiously accept it as a tentative solution, even if not a definitive one.⁶³

The least resolvable problem posed by *Xinian* chronology concerns lord Wu of Zheng, whom the text duly mentions as one of the major beneficiaries of Zhou's turmoil. Sima Qian remains silent about this lord's role in Zhou history, but *Discourses of the States* cites a Zheng statesman who reminds his lord: "Our former ruler, lord Wu, combined his efforts and unified his heart with those of marquis Wen of Jin, acting as limbs of the Zhou house and supporting King Ping."⁶⁴ According to that text, both lords were rewarded by King Ping. Yet insofar as lord Wu died in 744 BC, before King Ping's enthronement, how would he possibly have been rewarded?

A possible solution would be that lord Wu (just like, possibly, lord Xiang of Qin and marquis Wen of Jin) rendered his support to King Ping at an early stage of the king's career, when the majority of regional lords established an alternative King Xie, whereas King Ping had to stay in exile in Shao'e. Surely, during the three decades separat-

⁶² Cheng Pingshan 程平山, "Tang Shu Yu zhi Jin Wugong niandai shiji kao" 唐叔虞至晉武公年代事蹟考, *Wen shi* 3 (2015), pp. 5–23. Note that a single correction of the date (which could be easily confused because of the similarity between 3 三 and 4 四, as written in early texts) would resolve the problems of marquis Wen's reign years without further amendments proposed by Cheng.

⁶³ An alternative explanation would be that originally the source text of *Xinian* was speaking of an anonymous "Marquis of Jin" 晉侯, and the posthumous name Wen was added by *Xinian* authors (or by the editors/transmitters of their earlier source document).

⁶⁴ *GY* 10.1, p. 330 ("Jin yu" 4).

ing the death of his father, King You, and his own enthronement, King Ping had to be protected by a few regional lords. It is possible that this protection (including escorting King Ping to exile outside the reach of his uncle, King Xie) was confused in later generations with the support of King Ping's eastward relocation that took place three decades later. Speculative as it is, this supposition allows reconciling *Xinian* with the majority of other sources for early-Eastern Zhou history.

One final point to be considered here is the ostensible discrepancy between *Xinian*'s depiction of the kingless Zhou and the *Bamboo Annals*' claim (in Kong Yingda's gloss cited above, under "Background") that two kings, Xie and Ping, ruled simultaneously for twenty-one years. Here the solution may be simpler than it seems. Li Feng noticed already that Kong Yingda's statement may contain not only an entry from the *Bamboo Annals* but also a later commentary.⁶⁵ Indeed, insofar as the *Bamboo Annals* was stylistically similar to the canonical *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* (an observation made by Du Yu, who reviewed the actual *Bamboo Annals* slips in their preedited version),⁶⁶ then the sentence starting with the words "prior to that 先是" should be considered Kong Yingda's (or his predecessors') gloss. It is possible of course that King Ping was indeed enthroned in the tumultuous year 770 BC, but it is equally likely that, as *Xinian 2* suggests, the majority of regional lords opted to support his uncle, King Xie. Facing the information about King Xie's reign without a reference to King Ping, the editors or early commentators working on the *Bamboo Annals* would have tried to reconcile the traditional narrative that presumed King Ping's uninterrupted reign from 770 BC with the new information about King Xie by alleging that the two kings ruled simultaneously. In light of this, it is more likely that the "two kings" story is an editorial comment on the text of the *Bamboo Annals* rather than the original content of that text.

To summarize: our analysis of *Xinian 2* narrative in comparison with other pieces of historical data regarding the Western Zhou downfall shows that the contradictions between *Xinian* and previously known versions of these events are less acute than the first impression suggested. It is possible that *Xinian* is wrong with regard to certain details of the narrated events; yet overall its narrative appears to be more plausible than that in *Records of the Historian*. Surely, there is no need to radically revise the content of *Xinian 2*, as proposed by several colleagues.

⁶⁵ Li, *Landscape and Power*, p. 349.

⁶⁶ *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* (cited n. 17, above) 60, p. 2187.

Moreover, as supporters of *Xinian* chronology were quick to notice, there is one previously ignored piece of information in a received text that lends further credibility to the *Xinian* version of events. Under the year 638 BC *Zuo zhuan* states:

Earlier, when King Ping had moved the capital to the east, Xin You had gone to Yichuan⁶⁷ and, upon seeing someone with unbound hair offering a sacrifice in the countryside, he said: “Within one hundred years this likely will be the Rong’s! Ritual propriety had been lost already!” In autumn, Qin and Jin moved the Rong of Luhun to Yichuan.⁶⁸ 初,平王之東遷也,辛有適伊川,見被髮而祭於野者,曰:“不及百年,此其戎乎,其禮先亡矣。”秋,秦晉遷陸渾之戎于伊川。

Xin You’s prophecy that the Rong would occupy Yichuan “within one hundred years” was fulfilled in 638 BC, which means that it was made in 738 BC. This date had greatly puzzled the *Zuo zhuan*’s commentators. Recall that in *Zuo zhuan*, prophecies play an important role in the narrative, and they are never made randomly. Normally, they are very precise. In exceptional cases that they are not, this is explained either by discrepancies between calendars used by different countries (for example, a Jin prediction made about an event happening within a certain year may be wrong from a point of view of the Lu calendar, which started the new year two months earlier than did Jin); alternatively, wrong predictions refer to events that postdate the *Zuo zhuan*’s composition.⁶⁹ Neither applies to Xin You’s prediction, and the commentators could not grasp why it presupposes the Zhou relocation in 738 BC rather than in the commonly accepted 770 BC. With the publication of *Xinian* the puzzle was finally resolved. As pointed by several colleagues, Xin You’s prediction implies that by the time of *Zuo zhuan*’s compilation Zhou’s relocation date was still thought to be 738 BC. This is the strongest support for *Xinian* chronology.⁷⁰

We do not want to create an impression that each and every chronological problem posed by *Xinian* is easily resolvable: this is not the case. The accuracy of *Xinian* narrative will surely continue to be questioned.

⁶⁷ An area near the Yi River 伊河, which meets with the Luo River in the vicinity of the Zhou eastern capital at Luoyang.

⁶⁸ *Zuo zhuan*, Xi 22, entry 4, pp. 393–94; *Zuo Tradition*, p. 353.

⁶⁹ For the usage of predictions in *Zuo zhuan* narratives, see Schaberg, *Patterned Past*; for the predictions’ precision (and occasional lack thereof), see Wang He 王和, “Lun *Zuo zhuan* yuyan” 論左傳預言, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 6 (1984), pp. 13–18.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Liu Guozhong 劉國忠, “Cong Qinghua jian *Xinian* kan Zhou Pingwang dongqian de xiangguan shishi” 從清華簡繫年看周平王東遷的相關史實, in Chen Zhi 陳致, ed., *Jianbo, jingdian, gushi* 簡帛, 經典, 古史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), pp. 173–79 (see 178).

Yet this article has demonstrated that at the very least the text's version of the events cannot be dismissed. At the minimum, the discovery of this text justifies profound revision of Sima Qian's version of early-Eastern Zhou history and of related chronology.

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY:
WHY WAS SIMA QIAN WRONG?

Our discussion would not be complete without addressing the reasons for the disappearance of *Xinian's* version of the Western Zhou downfall from subsequent historical memory. As the above discussion has demonstrated, aside from a few barely noticeable traces scattered in *Zuo zhuan* (Xin You's prediction and Prince Zhao's letter), the *Xinian* version of these events disappeared from the transmitted sources in its entirety. The closest to *Xinian's* depiction of the collapse of Western Zhou is the one given in another entombed and accidentally discovered text, the *Bamboo Annals*, which tells of the enthronement of King Xie. Yet it is likely that by the time of Sima Qian the story of King Xie and the turmoil accompanying the establishment of King Ping was all but forgotten. What are the reasons for this historical amnesia?

One possible hint can be seen in a short entry in *Zuo zhuan* according to which prince Zhao, having been defeated in 516 BC by the interventionist Jin army, "fled to Chu carrying with him Zhou canonical documents."⁷¹ The nature of these documents is not known, but they may well have included historical writings. Indeed, a few commentators opined that this plunder of the Zhou archives explains the subsequent dearth of reliable materials concerning early-Zhou history.⁷² If this supposition is correct and the materials plundered by prince Zhao ended up in the state of Chu, it may explain why it was in a Chu historical work that traces of the Zhou past were preserved more accurately than elsewhere.

Yet another – and possibly a more important – reason for the disappearance of the story of a kingless period from accounts of Zhou history is a historiographical one, namely the question of year counting. In the Zhou era, years were normally counted by the reigning years of the local sovereign (whether a Zhou Son of Heaven or a regional lord).⁷³ But what happened when a ruler was overthrown? It seems that in the

⁷¹ *Zuo*, Zhao 26, entry 9, p. 1475; *Zuo Tradition*, p. 1663.

⁷² See the gloss in *Zuo Tradition*, pp. 1662–63, n. 1083.

⁷³ The major exception to this rule was the habit to refer to recent years according to the most notable event of the year under discussion. Such records are ubiquitous, for instance, in

Western Zhou it was possible to count years according to the actual situation even if this departed from the norms of dynastic legitimacy. This explains, for instance, why *Records of the Historian* preserves a separate chronology for Gong He's reign rather than continuing to count the years by the reign of an exiled King Li: for early-Zhou scribes it was acceptable to use a "usurper's" reign years as if he was an enthroned king. Similarly, the authors of the source history from which *Xinian* compilers had absorbed their account about the Zhou downfall truthfully recorded the years according to the real situation on the ground, even when there was no legitimate occupant of the throne at all.

This habit of preserving truthful chronology rather than maintaining the semblance of legitimate rule even if there was none, was in all likelihood abandoned in history writing during the Springs-and-Autumns period. Insofar as we can judge from the Lu *Annals*, the chronology of a legitimate ruler was retained even when his rule was a fiction. Thus, the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* continues to count the years 517–510 BC as the reigning years of lord Zhao of Lu 魯昭公 (r. 541–510 BC), even though he was ousted from his country in 517 BC and eventually died in exile. Preserving the fiction of a legitimate ruler's continuity may reflect an ideological choice of the *Annals*' composers, but it could be also a matter of mere convenience: given the frequency of coups and counter-coups in most of the states, preserving a stable chronology was probably more important for the Springs-and-Autumns-period scribes than preserving historiographic veracity.

We do not know why and how the reign of King Ping was extended to encompass the entire period since the Western Zhou downfall until King Ping's death fifty-one years later. Whether or not King Ping was enthroned in reality in the tumultuous years preceding or following the killing of his father, King You, and his half-brother Bopan is unverifiable. What is clear is that at a certain point between the Springs-and-Autumns and the Warring States periods, Zhou historians decided to count years according to King Ping's reign, starting with 770 BC. Initially this was perhaps a mere historiographic convention (much like the counting of lord Zhao's late years in the Lu *Annals*) but, in the absence of detailed sources about the events of King Ping's life-time, the convention gradually became history. By Sima Qian's times alternative scenarios of King Ping's rule were all but forgotten.

the Chu divination and legal manuscripts from Tomb 2, Baoshan, Jingmen 荊門包山 (Hubei), from Tomb 1, Wangshan, Jiangling 江陵望山 (Hubei), from Tomb 1 at Geling, Xincai 新蔡葛陵 (Henan), and the like. Traces of this system can be seen in *Zuozhuan* as well (e.g., *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 7, entry 9, p. 1291).

This may explain why Sima Qian opted to ignore the *Zuo* information about King Xie. How could a single passage, coming as it was only from a letter penned by a defeated contender for the Zhou throne, be allowed to challenge common knowledge? It was easier to gloss over this alternative information. Lacking any reliable source, Sima Qian simply preferred to skip the first decades after the Western Zhou downfall, jumping directly from the 770s BC to the latter years of King Ping, for which the *Springs-and-Autumns Annals* and *Zuo* provided him with sufficiently detailed data. The authoritative version of the past was therewith finalized.

Allow us to speculate now about an earlier piece of a suddenly unearthed manuscript, the *Bamboo Annals*. We do not know how the original *Bamboo Annals* reported on the events surrounding King Ping's reign. Maybe, as a text that reflected the Jin state's standpoint, *Bamboo Annals* considered marquis Wen's protégé, King Ping, as a legitimate ruler ever since King You's death, notwithstanding King Xie's ascendancy. But what if this had not been the case? Would then the late-third century AD editors of the *Bamboo Annals* have reproduced the alternative information truthfully? Or would they have considered it too inauspicious to report on the previously unknown kingless era in the Zhou dynasty? For these editors, who worked during a brief decade of stability that separated one long age of political fragmentation (the Three Kingdoms period, 220–280) from an even longer age of disintegration that started soon after the death of emperor Wu of Jin 晉武帝 (r. 266–290), this was not an idle question. They might have well considered the story of a kingless Zhou as an instance of “weird and absurd” information that “cannot be properly explained 怪妄不可訓.”⁷⁴ It would be safer then to gloss it over. By the time of the Ji Tomb discovery, the issue of perpetual existence of a single legitimate Son of Heaven was no longer a matter of a historiographic convention only. It was the core idea of the imperial political system.⁷⁵ An accidental discovery of a few bamboo slips would never be allowed to jeopardize it.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Du Yu's observation regarding some of the Ji Tomb texts, *Chunqiu Zuo* zhuan zhengyi, j. 60, p. 2187.

⁷⁵ See Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: Traditional Chinese Political Culture and Its Enduring Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2012), pp. 11–43.

⁷⁶ Needless to say, our speculation cannot be substantiated. Howard L. Goodman (cited at n. 15, above) opines (in a personal communication) that it is unlikely that Xun Xu 荀勗, the editor of *Bamboo Annals*, would deliberately hide/excise sensitive information from the texts which he edited. Possibly he would not. But rearranging or reinterpreting what Xun himself called “un-canonical 不典” statements in the manuscripts under his control would be a legitimate means for a cautious scholar to deal with highly sensitive issues.

EPILOGUE: NEW SOURCES AND
THE UNDERSTANDING OF ANTIQUITY

In his seminal study of the *Bamboo Annals*, Edward L. Shaughnessy demonstrated how the editors of this text tried to rearrange and revise it so as to fit whenever possible the accepted narrative known from *Records of the Historian*. Shaughnessy concluded his discussion with an observation: “If the *Bamboo Annals*, or a text anything like it, were discovered in a tomb tomorrow, it would be regarded as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, single paleographic discovery in China’s long literary tradition.”⁷⁷ It happened so that a few years after the publication of Shaughnessy’s *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts*, a historical text like that was in fact discovered, although, regrettably, was another of those many manuscripts that have been looted and not properly excavated. *Xintian* is surely one of the greatest paleographic discoveries of recent decades. However, as we have seen, its impact on our understanding of the Zhou past is more complex than simply showing us that we are ready to “leave behind the era of ‘Doubting Antiquity’.”⁷⁸ The text not only confirms many of the narratives in extant, received works, but it also challenges them and at times requires profound rethinking of the traditional wisdom’s correctness.

We agree with Shaughnessy: the discoveries of recent years should lead us beyond the question of either a priori “doubting” or a priori “believing” antiquity. Our goal in the current exercise, which has compared the narrative in a newly discovered text with those in transmitted texts, was to show that by weighing the available evidence we may rechart our understanding of the past without either fully accepting or disparaging *Records of the Historian* or other transmitted texts. Sima Qian, who faced a gargantuan task of restoring Zhou history from among disparate, sketchy, and quite often biased sources, and facing a dearth of reliable and accurate accounts, did a remarkable job. His successes are most admirable; but they should not blind us to his failures, which resulted in manifold inaccuracies in *Records of the Historian*. When facing a contradiction between the newly available evidence and a traditional account we should not adopt any of them as intrinsically superior to the other. Only through a systematic analysis of each of the relevant

⁷⁷ Shaughnessy, *Rewriting*, pp. 185–256, citation at p. 254.

⁷⁸ The phrase “Leaving the ‘Doubting Antiquity’ age 走出疑古時代” was a slogan put forward by Li Xueqin in the early 1990s; by now it represents an important current in Chinese scholarship. See, e.g., Li Xueqin, *Zouchu yigu shidai 走出疑古時代* (Changchun: Changchun chubanshe, 2007); see also a discussion in Shaughnessy, *Rewriting*, pp. 257–58.

narratives, their sources, their possible biases, and the reasons for the inevitable inaccuracies therein should we be able to advance one step further toward a clearer picture of the immensely complex trajectories of China's preimperial history.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>GY</i> | Xu Yuangao 徐元誥 et al., <i>Guoyu jijie</i> 國語集解 |
| <i>Qinghua 2011</i> | Li Xueqin 李學勤, ed., <i>Qinghua daxue cang Zhanguo zhujian</i> 清華大學藏戰國竹簡 |
| <i>SJ</i> | Sima Qian 司馬遷 et al., <i>Shiji</i> 史記 |
| <i>Zuo</i> | Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, annot., <i>Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu</i> 春秋左 傳注 |
| <i>Zuo Tradition</i> | Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, trans., <i>Zuo Tradition; Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"</i> |