

# Anecdotes in Early China

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When the Duke of Xue served as chancellor of the state of Qi, the queen consort of King Wei of Qi died. There were ten young women whom the king esteemed. The Duke of Xue wished to discover whom the king desired to install, so he could implore the king to appoint that particular woman as his new queen consort. If the king heeded his advice, he would win the favor of the king and he would earn the respect of the newly appointed queen consort; but if the king did not heed his advice, he would not be graced with the king's favor and he would be disdained by the newly appointed queen consort. [Therefore] he wished to discover in advance which woman the king desired to appoint in order to encourage the king to appoint that very woman. So subsequently he crafted ten pairs of jade earrings, one of which was more beautiful than the others. He presented them to the king, who then distributed them among the ten young women as gifts. When they all sat together the next day, the duke spied out the whereabouts of the most beautiful pair of earrings and urged the king [that the woman who now wore them] be made the new queen consort.<sup>2</sup>

薛公相齊，齊威王夫人死。有十孺子，皆貴於王，薛公欲知王所欲立，而請置一人以為夫人。王聽之，則是說行於王而重於置夫人也。王不聽，是說不行而輕於置夫人也。欲先知王之所欲置以勸王置之，於是為十玉珥而美其一而獻之，王以賦十孺子。明日坐，視美珥之所在而勸王以為夫人。<sup>3</sup>

This colorful narrative is found in the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (Master Han Fei), a voluminous text that lays out the politico-philosophical views of Han Fei 韓非 (ca. 280–233 BCE). An influential thinker of noble descent, he once served as advisor to the monarch who would be known to the world as the First Emperor of China. The brief narrative recounts an event that supposedly took place in the century before Han Fei's lifetime, when China was divided into various states that battled each other for hegemony. It features two historical figures: Tian Yinqi 田因齊, better known as King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (r. 356–320 BCE), who was one of the most powerful rulers of his day; and his youngest son, Tian Ying 田嬰, who was enfeoffed with Xue 薛 and is also known as Lord Jingguo 靖郭君.<sup>4</sup> The event involving these two men unfolds in the royal palace of the large state of Qi in the period following the passing of the queen consort. It is described succinctly and rather matter-of-factly, even when it details the duke's considerations ("If the king heeded his advice . . ."), and could be read as a factual depiction of a moment in Chinese history. However, brief as it may be, the story also teaches a valuable lesson, namely that clever strategies enable us to discover the hidden inclinations of others, even of those in power, and to use this knowledge to our advantage—a lesson Han Fei was keen to share with his readers. Most readers in his day, but even today, over two thousand years after the story was first committed to writing, would probably admire the duke's clever scheme and agree that as a piece of literature, the story is quite entertaining.

The earrings story bears all the hallmarks of what is generally dubbed an "anecdote," as we shall demonstrate below. Anecdotes similar to the one presented here are part and parcel of the literary tradition of early China, which typically refers to the period from the Zhou Dynasty 周 (ca. 1045–256 BCE), through the Qin Dynasty 秦 (221–206 BCE), to the former half of the Han Dynasty 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE). This formative period in Chinese history is marked by social, political, and economical turmoil as the monarchs of the Zhou house lost their political authority, especially after a disastrous military defeat in 771 BCE forced them to abandon most of the royal domain and move their capital eastwards. This gave rise to centuries of incessant warfare among competing states, which led gradually to the birth of the foundational dynasties of imperial China, the Qin and Han. The disintegration of a unified social order sparked fundamental questions about how to (re)create order in the world, as well as in one's personal life, and it served as a breeding ground for ideas on politics, ethics, society, military, history, and so on. Anecdotes played an important role in the fermentation,

presentation, and transmission of these ideas, and as a result they can be found in a wide array of texts from this period, ranging from those often categorized as historical to works of a more philosophical nature.<sup>5</sup> We find them in commentarial traditions associated with the canonical *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals), such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Commentary) and the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳 (Gongyang Commentary); in philosophical writings such as the *Mozi* 墨子 (Master Mo), *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Master Zhuang), *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan), *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü), and *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (The Master of Huainan); in collections of anecdotes, such as the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (Han's Supplementary Commentary to the Odes), *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Illustrative Examples), *Xinxu* 新序 (Newly Arranged [Anecdotes]), *Zhanguoce* 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States), and *Lienüzhuan* 列女傳 (Biographies of Exemplary Women); and in historical writings such as the *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the States), *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian), and *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the [Former] Han Dynasty). Judging by the sheer number of texts and the wealth of anecdotes they contain, in early China anecdotes constituted a pool of material that anyone could draw upon to ornament and illustrate a speech, a commentary, or a written treatise, and as such they served as powerful building blocks in arguments.

While anecdotes are well known to anyone with even a slight acquaintance with early Chinese literature, they have received surprisingly little scholarly attention as a distinctive form of writing.<sup>6</sup> Scholars in China have been studying early Chinese anecdotes for some time now, resulting in several monographs, anthologies, and academic articles, but interest in other parts of the world only seriously coalesced in the past fifteen years or so.<sup>7</sup> Since then, anecdotes have featured in the important and groundbreaking monographs by Wai-ye Li, Yuri Pines, and David Schaberg, which focus on their rhetorical functions in the *Zuozhuan* commentary to the *Chunqiu*.<sup>8</sup> Anecdotes are also the subject of a handful of published academic articles by Albert Galvany, Jens Østergård Petersen, Sarah A. Queen, David Schaberg, Paul van Els, Kai Vogelsang, and others, several of which explore the relationship between anecdotal narrative and philosophical argumentation.<sup>9</sup> Most recently, Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg have published an edited volume titled *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China*, which provides a wonderful complement to the present volume as it picks up where this volume leaves off historically, to address anecdotes in Chinese history after the era we here identify as early China.<sup>10</sup>

The present volume is the first English-language book-length study to focus on the rhetorical function of anecdotal narratives across several literary genres of early China. In this volume we seek to clarify the nature and function of early Chinese anecdotes by raising the following questions: What are their characteristic features? What are their generic boundaries, that is to say, how do they relate to other types of narrative? What degree of historical authenticity do they display? How malleable were the stories? What different framing techniques did authors use to fit stock anecdotes into larger narrative contexts? What was the rhetorical power of anecdotes when used in argumentation? How does the early Chinese preference for using anecdotes in argumentation differ from modes of argumentation preferred in other eras and cultures? In addressing these and other questions, this book will advance the idea that anecdotes were an essential rhetorical tool that early Chinese writers used effectively to persuade their audience of one or another point of view.

### Characteristic Features of Anecdotes

What is an anecdote? The word is used frequently and casually, for instance in utterings such as “they like to tell anecdotes about . . .” or “there is anecdotal evidence that . . .,” but a clear definition is not as evident as it may seem. Scholars have analyzed characteristic features of anecdotes for several decades now, predominantly on the basis of anecdotes in German, English, and other European languages, and their findings have made their way to dictionaries, encyclopedias of literature, and so on. This section discusses what anecdotes are, and what they are not, according to the literature. The next section will discuss how anecdotes in the Chinese tradition correspond to, and differ from, the more general understanding of anecdotes.

In their bare essence, anecdotes are brief narrations of events. They are created whenever and wherever people gather and talk—at dinner tables, in taverns, and so on.<sup>11</sup> Someone witnessed an event, or heard about it, and tells others about it.<sup>12</sup> Relating events to others is part of the human experience, which is why anecdotes have been around for the longest of times. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the term *anecdote* remains ill-defined to this day, as Lionel Gossman notes in his seminal paper on the topic.<sup>13</sup> The term finds its roots in the Greek word ἀνέκδοτα, meaning “things not given out,” which is to say, “things unpublished.” It was used as the title of a posthumous collection of unpublished writings by

the historian Procopius of Caesarea (6th century), who had in his lifetime published a number of official histories in which he spoke favorably of the contemporaneous Byzantine emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565). In stark contrast, his unpublished writings reveal in great detail—and with much contempt—numerous scandalous doings of the emperor, his wife, and their entourage. Here is an example of the alleged depravity of emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora:

There was in Constantinople a man by the name of Zeno, grandson of that Anthamius who had formerly been Emperor of the West. This man they appointed, with malice aforethought, Governor of Egypt, and commanded his immediate departure. But he delayed his voyage long enough to load his ship with his most valuable effects; for he had a countless amount of silver and gold plate inlaid with pearls, emeralds and other such precious stones. Whereupon they bribed some of his most trusted servants to remove these valuables from the ship as fast as they could carry them, set fire to the interior of the vessel, and inform Zeno that his ship had burst into flames of spontaneous combustion, with the loss of all his property. Later, when Zeno died suddenly, they took possession of his estate immediately as his legal heirs; for they produced a will, which it is whispered, he did not really make.<sup>14</sup>

Passages such as these would assuredly infuriate the powers that be, which was why, for fear of retribution, Procopius did not include them in his published histories, though they were eventually published after his death.<sup>15</sup>

During the Renaissance, following the rise of cities, a true leisure class, and the cult of the individual, anecdotes began to shake off their “association with the merely scandalous,” as Clifton Fadiman notes, and they no longer remained unpublished.<sup>16</sup> As a result, in the centuries that followed the meaning of the term gradually broadened to amusing trivialities about people’s lives, which eventually led the *Oxford English Dictionary* to define *anecdote* as “the narrative of a detached incident, or of a single event, told as being in itself interesting or striking.”<sup>17</sup>

As accounts of single events, anecdotes are marked by brevity, or rather, by a lack of complexity, as they do not contain complex storylines, character developments, etcetera. The event related in the anecdote unfolds in a limited setting of time and space, and typically involves no more than

a handful of actual persons, mostly prominent figures in society: rulers, statesmen, authors, actors, artists, athletes, and so on. Here is an example of a modern anecdote that describes a remarkable event in the life of Ansel Adams (1902–1984), the famous American landscape photographer:

During his early years Adams studied the piano and showed marked talent. At one party (he recalls it as “*very liquid*”) he played Chopin’s F Major Nocturne. “In some strange way my right hand started off in F-sharp major while my left hand behaved well in F major. I could not bring them together. I went through the entire nocturne with the hands separated by a half-step.” The next day a fellow guest complimented him on his performance, “You never missed a wrong note!”<sup>18</sup>

As can be seen from this example, anecdotes are “directly pointed towards or rooted in the real,” as Joel Fineman puts it.<sup>19</sup> They generally relate real events involving actual people, mostly of some renown, whether from the past or still alive. This is not to say that the events actually happened as described, because anecdotes may have been “passed around by word of mouth or borrowed by one writer from another.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, they may very well have been invented in the first place. The historicity of anecdotes is therefore often somewhat doubtful, as their veracity may be difficult to determine.<sup>21</sup> For example, Ansel Adams’s story can only be verified by those who attended the bacchanalian party (and stayed sober enough to remember the event), and Procopius’s revelations are even more doubtful. In the passage on Zeno’s ship, we find it “whispered” that the imperial couple forged the governor’s will, and in the same chapter it is reported that “one man said” he witnessed Justinian walking to and fro with his head detached, whereas “another” said he was there when the emperor’s face all of a sudden changed into a shapeless mass of flesh. Reliable historical writings require more than just a few dubious eyewitness accounts before portraying the emperor as a headless zombie, so to speak, and it is therefore understandable that anecdotes are sometimes dismissed as mere hearsay, rumor, or gossip.<sup>22</sup>

These concerns hardly matter for those who produce and consume anecdotes. They value anecdotes not primarily as *historically accurate* depictions of events, but as *literary* depictions of events. Although anecdotes are somehow pointed toward or rooted in the real, they have something literary about them, Fineman notes, something that distinguishes them from other, non-literary ways to refer to the real.<sup>23</sup> One present-day anecdote-monger

goes so far as to write that anecdotes are “not about facts,” adding that “with anecdotes, story is everything.”<sup>24</sup> As cleverly crafted stories, no matter how brief, anecdotes have a beginning (situation or exposition), middle (encounter or crisis), and end (resolution).<sup>25</sup> In the Ansel Adams anecdote, for example, the beginning describes the situation by mentioning the time (“his early years”) and place (“at one party”) of the event; the middle part describes the out-of-the-ordinary event; and the closing sentence delivers a witty punchline.

The punchline indicates that anecdotes such as this one aim for a smile on the reader’s face. Indeed, humor is an important function of anecdotes, and humorous anecdotes are known to spread most widely. This is not to say that all anecdotes are humorous, as “there is plenty of room for the quieter anecdote whose value lies in the illumination of character or the inculcation of a moral lesson.”<sup>26</sup> Whether anecdotes prompt delectation or contemplation, an important function—broadly speaking—is diversion, as anecdotes are somehow considered interesting or amusing.<sup>27</sup>

Although anecdotes are understood as detached and freestanding narratives, they often do not occur on their own but as part of larger narrative contexts, such as biographies, histories, speeches, and essays. Indeed, “the anecdote appears to be both sufficient to itself and yet to gesture to its incompleteness, always invoking a larger whole into which it needs to be inserted. Anecdotes are memorable, often personal narratives that open up something beyond them, and they are capable of uncovering the neglected, the strange, or the unfamiliar that lies within a more familiar narrative.”<sup>28</sup>

In sum, anecdotes can be described as short, freestanding accounts of particular events in the lives of actual persons, most of whom are of some renown.<sup>29</sup> The accounts are rooted in reality, but their historicity may be doubtful. They should be seen as literary constructs, often with a tripartite structure. With a didactic message or a witty punchline, they are narrated as being somehow interesting or entertaining. They rarely stand on their own, but often form part of larger narrative structures.

## Anecdotes in Early Chinese Texts

The characteristic features of anecdotes outlined in the previous section are developed by scholars who worked primarily on the European and American literary traditions, not on the literary tradition of early China. Interestingly, the brief narratives that pervade early Chinese literature share many of these

features, but also diverge from them in important ways. We shall now turn our attention to the early Chinese anecdote. By defining its characteristic features, we hope to contribute to a fuller understanding of the rich potential of anecdotes as a distinct literary form.

### Time, Place, and Protagonists

Early Chinese anecdotes can also be described as short, freestanding accounts of single events. The time frame of the anecdote typically corresponds to the duration of the event, possibly with brief references to the lead-up and the outcome of the event. The locales tend to fall within common stereotypes that provide a discrete context (a royal court, battlefield, gateway, river-bank, bridge), though idiosyncratic settings occasionally appear. The *dramatis personae* that participate in the event are few. In the earrings anecdote, translated above, the two main characters are the powerful king and his clever son, both clearly identified to add context and status to the anecdote, with the deceased queen consort and the court ladies as nameless supporting cast. Other anecdotes feature well-known figures from China's extensive past, such as the Duke of Zhou 周公 (r. 1042–1036 BCE), Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公 (r. 636–628 BCE), King Fuchai of Wu 吳王夫差 (r. 495–473 BCE), King Goujian of Yue 越王勾踐 (r. 496–465 BCE), Kongzi 孔子 (551–479 BCE), better known to Western readers as Confucius, and Sunzi 孫子 (ca. 545–470 BCE), also known as Sun Tzu. These actual historical persons fascinated the creators of anecdotes, as well as their readers, all of whom belonged to the literate upper echelons of society. Occasionally the main characters are clearly fictionalized, such as the Confucius character in the *Zhuangzi*, who in some passages espouses teachings that are obviously at odds with how he is portrayed in other texts. In addition to anecdotes about prominent figures, and in stark contrast to anecdotes in other traditions (outlined in the previous section), early Chinese texts also contain numerous anecdotes featuring people who remain unnamed. In most cases, the anecdotes merely characterize the unnamed protagonists and identify the state where they were from. For example, “in Chu there was someone who was skilled at being a thief” 楚有善為偷者 or “among the inhabitants of Song there was one who had obtained jade” 宋人有得玉者. In addition to unnamed people, and in even starker contrast to anecdotes in other traditions, early Chinese anecdotes occasionally portray fictional entities, such as the talking animals, trees, skulls, and personified abstractions (e.g., Bright Dazzlement 光曜 and Non-Existence 無有) made famous in the *Zhuangzi*. In form and function,

anecdotes involving unnamed or even nonhuman protagonists are similar to those involving prominent historical figures. For example, the *Han Feizi* presents an anecdote about an unnamed man of wealth in the state of Song right after an anecdote involving Duke Wu of Zheng 鄭武公 (r. 771–744 BCE), and the text explicitly uses both to exemplify the dangers of speaking ones mind.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the *Huainanzi* sandwiches an anecdote featuring the anthropomorphized entities Gaptooth 齧缺 and Ragbag 被衣 between anecdotes featuring well-known rulers of the state of Zhao 趙 in the fifth century BCE, and it links all three anecdotes to an enigmatic canonical scripture.<sup>31</sup> In other words, early Chinese authors use one and the same narrative form for short stories involving historical persons, unnamed persons, animals, objects, abstractions, and so on. Just because the main character is not a famous person, or not even a human being at all, does not seem to disqualify these short stories as anecdotes in early Chinese literature. In terms of the *dramatis personae*, early Chinese anecdotes appear to be somewhat more accommodating than their counterparts in other literary traditions, where short stories about unnamed people, animals, and so on, are more likely to be categorized as jokes, fables, and so on, than as anecdotes.

### Length

As depictions of single events, depictions that are short enough to be committed to memory and recited aloud in conversation or debate, early Chinese anecdotes tend to be brief. This means that they generally contain no more than a few dozen Chinese graphs, although longer exemplars also exist. Interestingly, even different versions of the same anecdote can range widely in length. For example, the Chinese text of the earrings anecdote related above contains just over a hundred graphs. An alternative version of the same anecdote, presented below, consists of about eighty graphs, while another version presented below, runs less than forty graphs. Importantly, the main story line remains the same across the different accounts, which are clearly recognizable as distinct accounts of one and the same event.

In spite of their relative brevity, early Chinese anecdotes, much like their counterparts in other literary traditions, often have an identifiable beginning (situation or exposition); middle (encounter or crisis), and end (resolution). In the earrings anecdote, for example, the main characters and the problem of finding a new queen consort are introduced at the beginning; the duke's scheme is explained in the middle; and the final part suggests how he successfully gained influence with the king.

Some anecdotes may have been so well-known that even a brief reference was all that was necessary to call up the narrative. A simple reference to Lady Boji of Song 宋伯姬 (6th century BCE), for instance, would call to the minds of an educated audience the tale of a noble widow who chose to die in a fire rather than commit the ritual impropriety of leaving her palace without a proper escort, thus providing an opportunity to debate the deeper moral implications of her actions.<sup>32</sup> Should Lady Boji be remembered as a misguided matron who failed to correctly prioritize conflicting moral obligations or should she be commemorated as an exemplary martyr who was willing to die to preserve her purity? Many anecdotes similar to the one about Lady Boji achieved an almost proverbial status, and even today, numerous Chinese sayings typically consisting of four graphs each (such as “the King of Qi spared an ox” 齊王舍牛) function as a shorthand for anecdotes from early China, which truly bespeak their lasting popularity.

### Historicity and Factuality

Early Chinese anecdotes typically relate historical events, but they were not necessarily intended or understood as relating events that actually occurred. The anecdotes lie on a “continuum of historicity” ranging from the generally unexceptionable historical examples to more questionable examples, to parables with no pretense of factuality.<sup>33</sup> It is highly unlikely that readers would have considered stories involving talking trees and skulls as real, and even when the main protagonists are historicized figures who share identities with recorded figures from the historical annals of China’s hoary past, and who imbue the tale with an air of historical authenticity, it is not certain that these anecdotes were taken at face value, or even intended to be taken at face value. Authors in early China had different modes of narration at their disposal, and they opted for a different mode when presenting the reader with factual accounts of events.<sup>34</sup> So it seems that authors and readers expected the anecdotes to be *potentially* historically accurate, even if they did not believe them to be *actually* factually true. Consequently, anecdotes recount events that are either potentially true (such as the earrings story) or obviously false (such as the stories of talking trees and skulls in the *Zhuangzi*). In sum, similar to anecdotes in other literary traditions, historicity is not the main concern of early Chinese anecdotes, as their value resided elsewhere, for example, in their ability to persuade, instruct, or entertain.<sup>35</sup>

## Variations and Valences

Given the appeal of anecdotes, and their rhetorical, didactic, or entertaining powers, it is not surprising that the same basic anecdote, with variations, appears across a number of texts or in some cases, even within a single text. For example, the earrings anecdote appears not only in the *Han Feizi*, but also in the *Zhanguo*, a collection of anecdotes on warfare and political manipulation in and among the various states that divided China in the Warring States Period 戰國 (453–221 BCE). The *Zhanguo* version reads as follows:

The queen consort of the king of Qi died. There were seven young women who were all close to him. The Duke of Xue wished to discover whom the king desired to install, so he presented the king with seven pairs of earrings, of which one was more beautiful than the others. When he observed the whereabouts of the most beautiful pair of earrings the next day, he urged the king to install [the woman who now wore them] as the new queen consort.

齊王夫人死，有七孺子皆近。薛公欲知王所欲立，乃獻七珥，美其一，明日視美珥所在，勸王立為夫人。<sup>36</sup>

There are notable differences with the *Han Feizi* version quoted earlier. Only about a third the length of that version, the *Zhanguo* version is more concise and less detailed, as it does not mention the posthumous name of the king, or spell out the thought process of the duke (“If the king heeded his advice . . .”). In addition, the number of favorite court ladies is listed as seven in the *Zhanguo*, as opposed to ten in the *Han Feizi*. It is unclear how much of this is significant. For instance, the different numbers of court ladies could be meaningful, but it could also be a textual variation of little importance, much in the same way that in our own day and age two accounts of the same event will inevitably differ in the details. Similarly, the relative brevity of this version could be meaningful, but it could also be simply due to different literary preferences, eloquently elaborate versus conveniently concise.

That said, variations in anecdotes very often were *not* simply the result of errors in transmission or mere literary preferences. Instead, they were by

design quite deliberate as they enabled the various transmitters of the tale to highlight different aspects of a core story to serve different arguments. These differences—as we show below, and as several chapters in this volume demonstrate—carried significant intellectual valences. They enabled a given anecdote to speak from multiple perspectives depending on its transmitter who operates in a wider web of intellectual and cultural discourse and debate.

### Framing Techniques

Framing strategies further distinguished similar anecdotes from one another and served to underscore the different purposes they served in a given text or texts. Whether entertaining, moralistic, or deployed for other rhetorical purposes, anecdotes did not stand on their own, but were part of larger structures of meaning, such as a commentary, an essay, or a debate. In these contexts, various framing techniques served to determine particular readings of the anecdote at hand. This framing worked on several levels—both implicit and explicit—and with varying degrees of narrative complexity.

The earrings anecdote from the *Han Feizi*, translated at the beginning of our essay, provides an apposite example. The anecdote occurs in a series of chapters titled “Chushuo” 儲說 (Collection of Illustrative Examples), in which several political “guidelines” (*jing* 經) are explained through “illustrative examples” (*shuo* 說). The latter mostly consist of series of anecdotes.<sup>37</sup> In the case of the earrings anecdote, the chapter is structured as follows:

- Opening statement
- Guideline 1 + references to illustrative examples 1
- Guideline 2 + references to illustrative examples 2
- Guideline 3 + references to illustrative examples 3
- Illustrative examples 1
- Illustrative examples 2
- Illustrative examples 3

The chapter opens with the statement that “there are three methods for a lord to maintain control over his ministers” 君所以治臣者有三。It then briefly outlines these three methods as important guidelines in governance. The second of these guidelines is outlined as follows:

The ruler of humankind is the hub of benefit and harm. The spokes are many, yet they all converge at the ruler. For this reason, if his preferences are revealed, then his subordinates will have a way to get to him, and the ruler will become befuddled; if the words he speaks are circulated widely, then his ministers will challenge his words, and the ruler will no longer be godlike.

人主者，利害之輶轂也。射者眾，故人主共矣。是以好惡見則下有因，而人主惑矣；辭言通則臣難言，而主不神矣。<sup>38</sup>

This guiding principle warns the ruler not to let his feelings or ideas be known, for otherwise his underlings will challenge his directives, or worse, they will use this knowledge to manipulate him. A list of references to relevant anecdotes follows the description of this guiding principle. It includes the following formulation: “I will shed light on this [guideline] with [the illustrative example of] Master Jingguo’s gift of ten pairs of earrings” 明之以靖郭氏之獻十珥也。Master Jingguo is another name for the Duke of Xue, and hence this formulation is an explicit reference to the anecdote that occurs below in the same chapter. The reference makes it easy for the reader to locate the illustrative anecdote further down in the chapter. In sum, in the *Han Feizi* the earrings anecdote is explicitly marked as an illustrative example in a larger argument that warns the ruler against disclosing his thoughts and feelings.

A different and implicit framing structure informs the version of the earring anecdote in the *Zhanguo*. In that text, chapters are organized by state, and each chapter includes numerous anecdotes relevant to the history of its respective state. The earrings anecdote appears in a series of six linked chapters that tell the history of the state of Qi. The specific chapter in which it occurs focuses on the words and deeds of Lord Jingguo and his son. The earrings anecdote adds substance to the chapter by presenting one episode in the history of Qi, namely the event that followed the demise of the queen consort. The framing of the anecdote, as part of a series of historical anecdotes that focus on the two lords, suggests that the main purpose of the earrings anecdote in this text is historical, as it seeks to reveal the manipulative qualities of Lord Jingguo’s character which informed the rise of this powerful courtier in the state of Qi. However, the historicity of the *Zhanguo* has been questioned since the time of its creation, and scholars nowadays generally agree that the *Zhanguo* is “very unreliable as a history book and was probably never intended to serve as one.”<sup>39</sup> Instead, it is often described as a handbook of rhetoric, or a manual of persuasive

speaking.<sup>40</sup> Still, the text lacks fundamental qualities of a textbook, as Paul R. Goldin suggests, and is perhaps best seen as a collection of anecdotes that illustrate the art of intrigue.<sup>41</sup> The underlying idea of the *Zhanguo*, as outlined by the Han Dynasty compiler of the text, is that enlightened rulers in times of peace transform the populace by serving as models of virtuous behavior. This was not the case in the Warring States Period, the era covered by the *Zhanguo*, when rulers allegedly were no beacons of virtue and the slow process of transforming the population by moral education proved inefficacious in the face of the proliferating crises and emergencies. Only short-term strategies and tactics as methods of expedience would help to maintain stability in those trying times. Therein lies the role of the counselors at the courts, who used schemes and stratagems, tailored for specific crises or emergencies, to assist the benighted rulers of their day. Although no handbook in the strict sense of the word, the *Zhanguo* contains anecdotes that illustrate to counselors what to do or to avoid for their schemes and stratagems to work. The first priority for the counselors is to gain access to the ruler. The clever trick with the earrings is instrumental in this regard, as it points Lord Jingguo to the lady that was most beloved by the king. By promoting that particular lady, he demonstrates that he truly understood the king, which increases his chances that the king would turn to him for advice in the future. Thus, in contrast to the *Han Feizi* where the anecdote serves to warn rulers not to display their likes and dislikes to their underlings, in the *Zhanguo* it provides those underlings with the very tool to influence their ruler.

Yet another framing structure informs the version of the story that occurs in chapter 12, “Daoying” 道應 (Responses of the Way) of the *Huainanzi*, an encyclopedic politico-philosophical treatise that was written under the auspices of Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE), the King of Huainan 淮南王. The *Huainanzi* version reads as follows:

The queen consort of the king of Qi died. The king wanted to appoint a new queen consort but had not yet decided who it would be, so he directed his ministers to deliberate the issue. The Duke of Xue, hoping to discover the king’s choice, presented him with ten pairs of earrings, one of which was especially beautiful. The next morning he asked about the whereabouts of the most beautiful pair of earrings and urged that the woman who now had them should be appointed queen consort. The king of Qi

was delighted by this and thereafter respected and valued the Duke of Xue even more.

Thus, if the intentions and desires of the ruler of humankind are visible on the outside, he will fall subject to the control of his subjects.

Therefore the *Laozi* says, “Block the openings, shut the doors, and all your life you will not labor.”<sup>42</sup>

齊王后死，王欲置后而未定，使群臣議。薛公欲中王之意，因獻十珥而美其一。旦日，因問美珥之所在，因勸立以為王后。齊王大說，遂尊重薛公。故人主之意欲見於外，則為人臣之所制。故《老子》曰：「塞其兌，閉其門，終身不勤。」<sup>43</sup>

Here, the earrings story is followed by a brief statement in which the meaning of the story, as understood by Liu An and his collaborators, is made explicit (“if the intentions and desires of the ruler of humankind are visible on the outside . . .”), and another brief statement quoted from the *Laozi* 老子 (Old Master), the foundational scripture of Daoism that was a major source of inspiration for those who created the *Huainanzi*. In and of itself, the *Laozi* quotation is rather enigmatic. What does it mean to “block the openings” or “shut the doors,” and why would the result of these actions be that “all your life you will not labor”? By linking this quotation to the earrings anecdote, the *Huainanzi* suggests that blocking openings and shutting doors are figurative ways of encouraging people to keep their preferences to themselves, and that the phrase “all your life you will not labor” is another way of saying that as a ruler you will stay in power and have others work for you. In other words, the *Huainanzi* uses this anecdote to explain the highly enigmatic *Laozi* in a specific way, but at the same time it uses the *Laozi* to read the anecdote in a specific way. Hence, the anecdote is situated within a formal framing structure: a quotation from an authoritative text or person caps the story and suggests a particular reading of both the cautionary tale and the saying attributed to Laozi. On the one hand, the *Huainanzi* shows what particular anecdotes mean by reference to an authoritative text. On the other hand, it bolsters the authority of that authoritative text by showing that the meanings it contains are prefigured in the fabric of events described by the anecdotes. By linking the two—historical anecdote and canonical quotation—Liu An moreover displays his mastery of both Chinese history and canonical literature, thereby presenting himself as an

authority to his readers, most notably the emperor to whom he presented his work in 139 BCE.<sup>44</sup>

In sum, anecdotes were nested in a variety of framing structures that served different rhetorical purposes. They could range from the relatively simple framings discussed above to highly elaborate narrative tapestries.<sup>45</sup> The significance of other framing examples will be taken up by several of the chapters included in this volume. Collectively the chapters demonstrate the fruitfulness of a methodology committed to analyzing anecdotes *in situ*, within the very significant framing structures that determine how they are to be read and understood. As we will see, not only does such a methodology reveal the rhetorical functions of anecdotes within given texts and across texts, it also promises to shed new light on the archeology of early Chinese texts, providing insights into the manner in which texts were formed.

## Genre

Scholars still disagree, writes Gossman, as to “whether the anecdote can properly be considered a particular form or genre, like the novel, the maxim, or the fable.”<sup>46</sup> Genre or not, as basic building blocks in much of the prose writing in early China, anecdotes can be seen as a distinct type of writing that is closely linked to several important forms of historical writing and philosophical argumentation. Occupying the liminal space—replete with their panoply of creative potentialities—between history and philosophy, they complement or contrast with these other types of writings in significant ways. In order to gain a better understanding of early Chinese anecdotes as a “genre,” it may be helpful if we sharpen their boundaries by distinguishing them from related types of historical and philosophical writings.

### Anecdotes and Historical Genres

Anecdotes in early Chinese texts often feature historical figures as they recount events in Chinese history. Even if their historicity is questionable, anecdotes may be seen as a form of historical writing, and they are clearly related to other historical genres. In this respect, early Chinese anecdotes resemble those in other traditions. For instance, Gossmann notes that anecdotes in the European tradition have “always stood in a close relation to the longer, more elaborate narratives of history, sometimes in a supportive role, as examples and illustrations, sometimes in a challenging role, as the repressed of history.”<sup>47</sup> The longer historical narratives, preferred in the Euro-

pean tradition, were interspersed with anecdotes as illustrative examples to throw additional light on people or events. That the source of the anecdotes often could not be verified was part of their appeal, as they added color to the elaborate historical narratives that did meet contemporaneous fact-checking standards. Moreover, coming from unofficial sources, they could present an alternative to the “official” historical narratives that may have been stylized to meet certain (moral) standards. Still, their questionable credibility meant that they were often considered of lesser importance, and sometimes looked down upon as mere gossip or hearsay, which explains why their role in the European historiographical tradition remained ancillary to more exalted historical genres.<sup>48</sup>

Whereas anecdotes were considered of lesser importance in historical writings in the European tradition, they occupied a more central position in early Chinese historical writings. In several of his publications, David Schaberg has called attention to the importance of the anecdote within the Chinese historiographical enterprise, asserting that anecdotes were “the basic form of historical narrative—and therefore the basic stuff of historical knowledge itself.”<sup>49</sup> In Chinese historiography, the anecdote was a very versatile mechanism by which the past could be rendered meaningful. That is to say, alongside other ways of deriving meaning from the past (looking for patterns in long records of events, quantifying developments and trends, etcetera), the “anecdotalization” of historical events and figures made it possible to impregnate each moment in history with discrete meaning. This had both instrumental and normative implications. It was instrumental because it made the past usable as a source of authority (important in an intellectual setting that largely lacked a body of “revealed” precepts). Normative, in that being able to show what the past meant was the chief way of demonstrating control over the past, which in itself had been a touchstone of authority in a Chinese social context since Shang 商 times (ca. 1500–1045 BCE) or before. The *Huainanzi*, as we showed earlier, is a perfect example in that Liu An asserts his authority by linking historical anecdotes to canonical quotations, thereby demonstrating his mastery of both the past and the classics.

As a text that consist mostly of anecdotes strung together without much attention to an overall structure, the *Zhanguo* that we discussed earlier might be taken to contradict the idea that anecdotes never appear gratuitously. But we would assert that this text is another example of how anecdotes were used as primary historiographical tools in making the past meaningful. Each anecdote lends itself to generating an array of meanings for the event it encapsulates, thus taken together they provide the reader

with a means to decipher what the past signified. This, we suggest, is a key norm distinguishing early Chinese historiography from classical European historicism. Early Chinese historiographers were not determined to uniquely recover the past as it was, but rather were worried that the past had not truly been redeemed from oblivion unless one could read some meaning in it. They were not horrified by the prospect that the past could be understood to have multifarious and divergent meanings, as long as it could be demonstrated to have meant *something*.

Given the historiographical significance of anecdotes, it should come as no surprise that they are closely associated with various types of historical writings. A survey of the historical writings of early China presents an interesting mix of historical forms from the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Ancient Documents) and *Chunqiu* to the *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, and later dynastic histories. With their associated anecdotes, each served a particular historical function and fueled a particular dimension of the early Chinese historical and historiographical enterprise as vehicles for historical preservation, reflection, recollection, remembrance, and imagination. As various chapters in this volume demonstrate, distinguishing the different forms and objectives of historical writings provides an important context for clarifying the boundaries between history and anecdote, as well as understanding their differing rhetorical functions.

Arguably the most famous historical treatise of early China is the *Shangshu*, also known as the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of Documents). Revered as one of the Five Classics of Chinese literature, it predominantly narrates the pronouncements of important figures from the (mythical) beginning of Chinese history up to the seventh century BCE. Tradition holds that materials that were not used in the compilation of the *Shangshu* were collected in the *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 (Remaining Zhou Documents), a compendium of documents on the history of the Zhou Dynasty up to the sixth century BCE.<sup>50</sup> These two texts were long seen as the main, if not the only, representations of what we would call a “documentary” (*shu* 書) mode of historical writing. Recently procured bamboo slip manuscripts that date from the Warring States Period, now in the collection of Qinghua (Tsinghua) University 清華大學, contain texts that present-day researchers have identified as resembling the aforementioned texts.<sup>51</sup> It thus appears that this “documentary mode” was not restricted to the *Shangshu* and *Yi Zhou shu*, but employed more widely in early China and may even be seen as a distinct genre of writing. In her seminal article on this topic, Sarah Allan sets out to define this genre as “any text, which claims to be a contemporaneous record

of a speech of an ancient king.”<sup>52</sup> As a contemporaneous record of direct speech, it “demands an acceptance of historical authenticity: this is not a historical record or an interpretation. There is no intermediary: it is what kings and ministers actually said.”<sup>53</sup> It is precisely in this feature of contemporaneousness that documentary narratives differ from other forms of historical writings, including anecdotes: the latter typically make no pretense of being contemporaneous records (as indicated, for instance, by the fact that protagonists in anecdotes are often referred to by their posthumous name). Although documentary and anecdotal types of writing transmit information concerning the past, they do so differently, as the former endeavor to “remember and preserve” while the latter seek to “recollect and reflect,” as Rens Krijgsman observes in his contribution to this volume.

A different type of historical narrative can be found in the *Chunqiu*, another one of the Five Classics of early China. The term *chunqiu* 春秋, which literally means “spring and autumn,” marks the passage of time and was used in the titles of chronicles compiled under the auspices of the rulers of the various states that divided China during the Zhou Dynasty. To date, only the *Chunqiu* from the state of Lu 魯 survives. This *Chunqiu* is a terse court chronicle of events in the state of Lu from 722 to 481 BCE. Its brief chronological entries record a very limited range of significant state events such as military actions, diplomatic meetings and treaties, deaths and funerals in the ruling family and of high officials, rituals and sacrifices, battles, invasions, and events that affected crops such as floods, frost, and pestilence, and astronomical phenomena. No attempt is made to attribute cause or motive, or describe the attitudes, thoughts, or feelings of the historical figures recorded. Moreover, historical figures are mentioned by state and title or kinship to the ruling house devoid of further description.<sup>54</sup> Here is a typical *Chunqiu* entry for the year 668 BCE, or the twenty-sixth year in the reign of Duke Zhuang of Lu 魯莊公 (r. 693–662 BCE) translated in accordance with the *Gongyangzhuan* commentary:

Twenty-sixth year. Spring. The lord attacked the Rong.

Summer. The lord returned from the Rong attack.

Cao put to death its great officers.

Autumn. The lord joined men from Song and men from Qi and attacked Xu.

Winter. Twelfth month. *Guihai* day. First day of the month.  
There was a solar eclipse.

二十有六年，春，公伐戎。夏，公至自伐戎。曹殺其大夫。秋，公會宋人，齊人，伐徐。冬，十有二月，癸亥，朔，日有食之。<sup>55</sup>

As this example shows, entries in the *Chunqiu* are extremely terse. Events that must have had a dramatic impact in real life, such as the invasion of another state, are here compressed into single sentences, one after the other without explanation or illustration. Such terse statements are not exclusive to the *Chunqiu* from the state of Lu. For instance, Mengzi 孟子 (Mencius) remarks that the states of Jin 晉 and Chu 楚 had texts similar to the *Chunqiu* from Lu.<sup>56</sup> These texts did not survive, but several early Chinese manuscripts that have recently surfaced, such as the *Biannianji* 編年記 (Record of Sequential Years) and the *Xinian* 繫年 (Sequence of Years), contain similar terse annalistic statements, which means that we can probably speak of an “annalistic” (*chunqiu* 春秋) mode of historical writing.<sup>57</sup> The historical aims of the dry and formulaic annalistic mode differed markedly from the documentary mode discussed above. Whereas documentary narratives purport to be contemporaneous accounts of speeches by kings, annalistic records contain no speech and do not purport to be contemporaneous. The latter also differs markedly from the anecdotal type of narrative. Annalistic histories have no identifiable didactic or literary value—salient features of anecdotes—and reading the terse chronicle entries “is no more intellectually or esthetically engaging than reading a telephone book,” as Yuri Pines wittily remarks in his contribution to this volume. Although anecdotes can be sharply distinguished from annalistic records, they do play a role in the three famous commentaries associated with the *Chunqiu*, as the *Zuo*, *Gongyang*, and *Guliang* commentarial traditions all deploy anecdotes as a hermeneutic strategy to reflect upon the meaning and significance of the historical events and figures at hand. Indeed, the richly textured anecdote constituted a literary form well-adapted to fill out the terse and laconic entries of the *Chunqiu*, as Sarah A. Queen demonstrates in her contribution to this volume. In fact, these commentaries, particularly the *Zuozhuan*, which stands as the most important source of many later anecdotes, can be said to form the beginning of the Chinese anecdotal tradition.

The distinct historical aims and literary forms of writings in the documentary and annalistic modes clearly set them apart not only from each other, but also from later historical writings such as the biographies (*zhuan*

傳) of Sima Qian's *Shiji* and Ban Gu's *Hanshu*, which interweave anecdotes into their historical narratives to such an extent that the boundaries between historical and anecdotal narrative becomes indistinguishable. Indeed, these later historical productions may very well represent the Han dynasty culmination of a long historical process of experimentation beginning in the Warring States in which certain types of historical writings were combined with anecdotes while others abandoned such efforts, setting the pattern for the writing of official histories in the dynasties that followed. We will see in the chapters below, how anecdotes were incorporated into the narratives and commentaries of historical writings during the Warring States and Han periods in seemingly deliberate and self-conscious ways to further the attendant historiographical enterprises they encompassed and how during the Han their popularity waned to give rise to new stories that would vivify historical discussions of the post-Han period, as Paul van Els demonstrates in his contribution to this volume.

### Anecdotes and Philosophical Genres

The “pro meaning bias” in historiography discussed above has its corollary in philosophy, which is to say that early Chinese thinkers privileged the notion that abstract, universal truths were often contingent upon and could only be known through particular actualizing contexts.<sup>58</sup> In other words, in the same way that early Chinese historiographers often insisted that the past must be meaningful, early Chinese philosophers sometimes insisted that meaning must be in some sense historical. Anecdotes—those compact, powerful, malleable, and often pleasurable miniature historical narratives—were ideally suited to their purposes. Hence, anecdotes almost never appear gratuitously or purely for entertainment value in early Chinese philosophical texts. Rather, they either serve to register particular meanings or are set into larger frameworks that use commentary, structure, and context to derive particular meanings from them. One could say that in early Chinese writings, anecdotes help to solve philosophical problems, as the authors come to the solution via the medium of narrative.

The intimate relationship between historical anecdote and philosophical argumentation abounds in the *Yanzi chunqiu*, *Lüshi chunqiu*, *Han Feizi*, *Hanshi waizhuan*, *Huainanzi*, and numerous other texts. Many chapters in these texts contain anecdotes, or consist entirely of collections of anecdotes, framed in various ways to yield a cohesive philosophical point. For example, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, compiled around 239 BCE under the auspices of Lü

Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE), chancellor of the state of Qin, is a rich collection of anecdotes arranged thematically into twenty-six books that begins with a brief philosophical essay followed by a series of anecdotes that illustrate the claims of its respective opening passage. The *Lüshi chunqiu* is neither simply an anecdote collection nor a collection of philosophical essays but lies somewhere between the two genres.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the distinct mix that abides in this text exhibits a salient characteristic of early Chinese philosophical argumentation more generally: it tended to be highly contextualized, moralized, and politicized, and the anecdote, moreover, provided a richly textured and multivalent medium through which to illustrate its views. Other early Chinese philosophical texts exhibit a similarly intimate relationship between anecdote and philosophical argumentation as in the *Lüshi chunqiu*.

Across early Chinese texts, anecdotes are most closely related to a form of argumentation that these texts refer to with the graph 說.<sup>60</sup> This graph has a number of distinct readings and meanings, two of which concern us most.<sup>61</sup> Read as *shuo* (OC \*lhot) it broadly means “to speak, to discuss, to explain” as a verb and “explanation” as a noun.<sup>62</sup> Read as *shui* (OC \*lhots) it broadly means “to exhort, to persuade” as a verb and “exhortation, persuasion” as a noun. We find the graph 說, with these distinct readings and related connotations as *shuo* and *shui*, in the titles of several early Chinese texts and chapters. Given the fact that the two readings are related, and both are written with the same graph, it is not always easy to determine which reading is meant in each context.

In some contexts the graph 說 is probably best read as *shui*, “persuasion,” which refers to a recorded conversation or exchange in which the chief speaker tries to persuade the listener to accept a particular point of view or policy position, as Sarah A. Queen has argued in an earlier publication.<sup>63</sup> To persuade others obviously requires skills and tact, and early Chinese texts display full awareness of that. The *Han Feizi*, for instance, contains a chapter titled “Shuinan” 說難 (The Difficulties of Persuasion) that “discusses the principal challenges that might impede a successful persuasion,” as Queen suggests.<sup>64</sup> The greatest difficulty, according to the *Han Feizi*, is “to know the mind of the one to be persuaded, so as to match our persuasion to it” 知所說之心，可以吾說當之。<sup>65</sup> Some individuals in early China proved to be exceptionally skilled at persuasion, as can be seen from a number of outstanding persuasions collected in the “Shanshui” 善說 (Skilled at Persuasion) chapter of the *Shuoyuan*.

The graph 說 is also used in the titles of texts and chapters that consist mostly if not entirely of anecdotes, aphorisms, and other textual materials,

which could be used to explain, or illustrate, certain politico-philosophical ideas. In these contexts the graph might be best read as *shuo*, and translated as “illustrations” or “illustrative examples.” For instance, as we have shown above in the context of the earrings anecdote, the *Han Feizi* contains several chapters titled “Chushuo” 儲說 (Collection of Illustrative Examples), which consist of so-called “guidelines” (*jing* 經) that are illustrated by series of illustrative anecdotes (*shuo* 說). The same text also includes two chapters titled “Shuolin” 說林 (Forest of Illustrative Examples). The word forest (*lin* 林) here indicates a large number of textual materials, in other words a “collection,” and when we look at the kind of textual materials contained in these collections, we find mostly anecdotes, but also a few aphoristic observations about animals or objects. For example:

Among the various worms there is a kind of tapeworm with one body and two heads that bite at one another when fighting for food. When the one head killed the other head, it thereby killed itself as well. Ministers fighting with one another over various matters and thereby losing the state, are similar to those tapeworms.

蟲有蠃者，一身兩口，爭食相齧，遂相殺也。人臣之爭事而亡其國者，皆蠃類也。<sup>66</sup>

One can easily imagine that someone would call up this example of self-destructing worms when arguing that ministers should focus on the state, not on their own agendas, and the *Han Feizi* clearly subsumes both historical anecdotes and aphoristic observations under the heading of 說, which probably should be read *shuo* “illustrative examples” here. The *Huainanzi* likewise contains two chapters that resemble these two *Han Feizi* chapters in title and content, except that in the *Huainanzi*, the number of aphorisms (such as “only when the boat overturns do we see who are the skilled swimmers; only when the horses bolt do we see who are the good charioteers” 舟覆乃見善游，馬奔乃見良御) far outweigh the number of anecdotes.<sup>67</sup> Finally, there are the numerous anecdotes collected in Liu Xiang’s work *Shuoyuan* (Garden of Illustrative Examples).<sup>68</sup> What the *Shuoyuan* and the various chapters in the *Han Feizi* and *Huainanzi* have in common, is that they consist mostly of brief textual narratives, ranging from aphorisms to anecdotes, which are referred to in the title with the graph 說. Thus, the graph is often read *shuo*, as these anecdotes and aphorisms themselves were not “persuasions,”

but they served as the main ingredient out of which persuasions could be built. In these contexts, anecdotes were deployed to encourage the audience to reflect on the validity of the argument, or adopt a particular perspective as they were most often worked into the body of longer persuasions using various techniques of contextualization and rhetorical framing. Thus, we also find that some scholars have read the graph as *shui*, yielding titles such as “Chushui,” “Shuilin,” and *Shuiyuan*, to emphasize this important dimension of the materials they preserve.<sup>69</sup>

### Anecdotes in this Volume

This volume endeavors to clarify the boundaries between and relationships among anecdotes and these various forms of historical and philosophical writings from early China. As we will see, several chapters in the volume speak to this distinction while underscoring the close association between anecdotes and forms of historical writings on the one hand, and philosophical argumentation on the other by asking: What are the rhetorical functions and forms of early Chinese anecdotes? For whom were they written, and circulated? What is the importance of the anecdotes? Why are they so omnipresent in early Chinese literature? We wish to sharpen our definition of anecdotes through an analysis of their rhetorical functions, the organizing theme of the chapters described below.

#### Part I: Anecdotes, Argumentation, and Debate

The chapters in part I highlight the important rhetorical function of anecdotes as rich repositories for philosophical, political, historical, and cultural argumentation and debate in early China. Through intertextual analyses, these chapters show how anecdotes were created, adapted, and framed in certain ways to support specific argumentative positions. For instance, someone who wished to promote an ethic of inconspicuously achieving results, as opposed to overtly singing one’s own praises, could tailor an anecdote about a well-known historical figure in such a way that this person becomes a model for the desired behavior. In this way, early Chinese philosophical writings differ from texts in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition where—with a few notable exceptions—appeal to anecdote plays a much less significant role.<sup>70</sup>

In chapter 1, “Non-deductive Argumentation in Early Chinese Philosophy,” Paul R. Goldin shows that early Chinese thinkers, while familiar with the principles of deductive reasoning, a kind of reasoning that was favored by their counterparts in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, preferred crafting non-deductive arguments instead. The strong interest in anecdotes as a “genre” of philosophical literature in early China, he argues, can be understood as a by-product of the non-deductive nature of most early Chinese philosophical reasoning. One longstanding criticism of Chinese philosophy is that it is not truly “philosophical” because it lacks viable protocols of argumentation. Confucius, for example, might provide valuable guidance, or thoughtful epigrams to ponder, but nothing in the way of formal reasoning that would permit his audience to reconstruct and reconsider his arguments in any conceivable context. Goldin argues that this criticism stands only if one accepts the premise that satisfactory argumentation must be deductive. Many famous Chinese philosophical statements, however, are patently non-deductive. Surveying different types of non-deductive argumentation commonly found in Chinese philosophy, Goldin contends that one of the most prolific types is appeal to example, and that this includes appeal to anecdote. The anecdote is intended to furnish an instructive example highlighting the particular philosophical issue under debate. The inferences gleaned from it are never deductive. One consequence is that Chinese philosophy tends to demand a high level of interpretive participation from its audience. An audience presented with a non-deductive statement must ponder it sympathetically, or else derive little, if any, benefit from it. Chinese philosophy—like literature, painting, or music—requires connoisseurship. If we lack the taste, or if we exempt ourselves from the task of developing it, we will miss most of what Chinese philosophy has to offer. Whether these observations are sufficient to rescue Chinese thought from the wilderness of “wisdom” and enshrine it in the halls of “philosophy” will be left for the reader to decide, but a conception of “philosophy” that can account for Chinese thought, Goldin argues, is more interesting than one that cannot.

In chapter 2, “The Frontier Between Chen and Cai: Anecdote, Narrative, and Philosophical Argumentation in Early China,” Andrew Seth Meyer explores the philosophical use of anecdotes through the study of one particular anecdote that occurs—in different forms and with different appraisals—in a variety of early Chinese texts. Building on the insights of Goldin in the previous chapter, Meyer provides an intertextual analysis of

the story of Confucius's sojourn and near-starvation between the southern states of Chen and Cai, as it appears in the *Lunyu*, *Mozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, *Lüshi chunqiu*, and other transmitted texts. Meyer demonstrates that early Chinese thinkers used anecdotes to formulate logical arguments concerning ethics, politics, cosmology, and so on, in ways that differ from the logical methods and worldviews of Greco-Roman philosophy. As Meyer points out, in many versions of this story Confucius is portrayed as a sage teacher and an inspirational leader, in others he is cast as a hypocrite, a coward, or a fool. The multiple recurrences of this story across so many texts provide an excellent case for the study of the role of anecdote in early Chinese writing and thought. In this chapter, Meyer explores the intriguing recurrence and malleability of the "Chen and Cai" narrative, demonstrating that what is at stake in these appropriations and alterations is more than the mere reputation of Confucius himself. Examining the permutations of the narrative from text to text, Meyer reconstructs the parameters of a sophisticated logical debate engaging issues of politics, morality, human efficacy, and cosmology. Taken together, Meyer argues, the variant versions of the story illustrate fundamental points of contention between the latter-day disciples of Confucius and their opponents. Using these anecdotes to reconstruct debate, Meyer concludes, we can learn about the distinctive nature of early Chinese intellectual culture. Anecdotal topoi such as the sojourn between Chen and Cai were not exclusively rhetorical, but implements in an evolving discursive tradition that intensely utilized the logical potential of narrative. Properly understanding this dimension of early Chinese writing and argumentation is necessary to fully access the potential meanings encoded in early Chinese texts, and to fully appreciate the logical sophistication of early Chinese thought.

In chapter 3, "Mozi as a Daoist Sage? An Intertextual Analysis of the 'Gongshu' Anecdote in the *Mozi*," Ting-mien Lee, much like Andrew Seth Meyer in the previous chapter, explores the occurrence of a single anecdote across different textual landscapes to understand their broader rhetorical aims. In the anecdote, the main protagonist, Mozi, manages to avert a war through adroit argumentation. Given that the *Mozi*, the text in which the anecdote occurs, argues that great merit leads to fame, one would expect that the protagonist Mozi, following his incredible achievement of averting a war, would be pictured as a famous hero. Instead, the anecdote's ending curiously portrays Mozi as an unrecognized hero whose achievement went unnoticed by others. This intriguing ending, Lee argues, creates tension not only within the anecdote but also within the *Mozi* as a whole. Whereas the ending contradicts the *Mozi's* view that great merit

leads to fame, it corresponds to the view—expressed in Daoist texts such as *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*—that a great man operates invisibly, like the spirits, and hence avoids fame. In sum, while the body of the anecdote portrays Mozi as a typical Mohist sage who detests wars and promotes caring for the people's well-being instead, the ending of the anecdote portrays Mozi as an unrecognized—perhaps even Daoist—sage who manages affairs in an inconspicuous manner (after all, he averted a war that had not yet taken place) and therefore lacks public recognition. Lee's chapter highlights the importance of an intertextual reading strategy for early Chinese anecdotes, whose true meaning sometimes can only be understood through an understanding of related passages in other texts.

In chapter 4, "Anecdotal Barbarians in Early China," Wai-ye Li discusses anecdotes that feature non-Chinese tribes, or "barbarians," in a variety of early Chinese texts. She shows how the anecdotes reveal different historical attitudes towards barbarians (for example, they can be represented as deplorably unsophisticated or admirably unadulterated), and suggests that some of the anecdotes may have even been created and transmitted as a way to engage in these debates, which could have broad political and cultural implications. In addition to revealing possible historical attitudes toward non-Chinese groups, Li also demonstrates that the anecdotes address major concerns in early Chinese thought, such as different perspectives on cultural refinement (*wen* 文) and substance (*zhi* 質), tradition and transformation, and the rhetorical contexts of policy arguments and diplomatic confrontations. Thus, Li deepens the discussion of anecdotes and argumentation by considering different anecdotes that address a shared topic across different genres of literature, some which are identified as historical and some of which are identified as philosophical. As with the preceding chapters, she emphasizes that authors used anecdotes to articulate philosophical arguments and shape cultural attitudes in conversation with others that positioned them on a spectrum in broader intellectual debates. She also shows that their rhetorical function transcends generic boundaries.

## Part II: Anecdotes and Textual Formation

The chapters in part II confirm the findings of part I with regard to the rhetorical functions of anecdotes but they do so through an intratextual reading of anecdotes in the *Shuoyuan*, *Han Feizi*, and *Gongyangzhuan*, respectively. In doing so, these chapters reveal not only how such a methodology serves to highlight the defining characteristics of anecdotes and

the variety of rhetorical functions they served along the broad spectrum of early Chinese literature from philosophy to history, but also how it can be utilized to understand more clearly the textual archaeology of these early Chinese texts. In other words, an analysis of multiple anecdotes within a single text helps us understand not only what a particular text is trying to say—the philosophical, historiographical, didactic messages it wishes to convey—but also how that text came to be created and the different rhetorical contexts it embodies. This is a particularly promising methodology to consider when attempting to better understand the accretional nature of early Chinese texts.

In chapter 5, “Anecdote Collections as Argumentative Texts: The Composition of the *Shuoyuan*,” Christian Schwermann analyzes a Han Dynasty collection of anecdotes. Such collections were (and still are) often dismissed as mere pastiches of borrowed stories, but Schwermann convincingly shows how Liu Xiang, who is traditionally considered the editor or compiler of the *Shuoyuan*, combined the anecdotes in this collection to form an elaborate tapestry of argumentation in support of various propositions. He also demonstrates how Liu Xiang borrowed anecdotes from earlier sources and adapted them to a new argumentative context to make for a more persuasive text. More specifically, Schwermann contends that the anecdotes that constitute this collection were deliberately edited, arranged, revised, and even specifically composed in order to support a particular proposition or argument, and that this level of contribution requires us to consider Liu Xiang the author of the *Shuoyuan*, and not just its editor or compiler.

In chapter 6, “From Villains Outwitted to Pedants Out-Wrangled: The Function of Anecdotes in the Shifting Rhetoric of the *Han Feizi*,” through a close reading of anecdotes within a single early Chinese text much like Christian Schwermann in the previous chapter, Heng Du discusses the creation of that text, and demonstrates that it is far more systematic than scholars previously held. Specifically, Du analyzes the numerous and contradictory anecdotal portrayals of Confucius in the *Han Feizi*, identifying systematic shifts in rhetorical situation and strategy as factors behind the apparent inconsistencies. She argues that the first half of the *Han Feizi* is a didactic, univocal presentation of its core teachings that revolve around the struggle between the ruler and ministers. Materials and ideas from competing traditions are only first introduced in the anecdote collections in the middle of the text, namely the outer “Chushuo” and “Nan” chapters. These chapters lead the transition into the intense engagement with rival teachings that characterizes the rest of the compilation. The close association between

the anecdote chapters and complex polemical argumentations suggests the under-explored functions performed by anecdotal writings, beyond simple illustrations to arguments. They also contain a wealth of evidence for the emergence of intellectual identities and affiliations over the course of the *Han Feizi's* compilation. In her chapter, Du seeks to understand how and why multiple and contradictory anecdotal narratives devoted to a single historical figure often appear together in a single text, raising our critical awareness of how context and rhetorical aim shape the manner in which anecdotes are deployed within a single text.

In chapter 7, “The Limits of Praise and Blame: The Rhetorical Uses of Anecdotes in the *Gongyangzhuan*,” Sarah A. Queen draws our attention to this often overlooked collection of stories. Like Schwermann and Du in the previous chapters, Queen focuses on the creation of this one text. While it is true, she maintains, that the bulk of the *Gongyangzhuan* consists of formulaic questions and answers that parse the chronicle sentence-by-sentence, phrase-by-phrase, and word-by-word, it also deploys numerous anecdotes to lend support to the formulaic questions and terse answers concerning the formal composition and syntactical rules embedded in the *Chunqiu*, the main strategy for decoding Confucius’s intentions. Queen offers several exemplary tales to consider the rhetorical uses of anecdotes as an important literary “genre” within the *Gongyangzhuan*, as distinct from other types of literary composition that comprise the commentary, most notably the judgments that are part and parcel of the *Gongyangzhuan*. Although the two are structurally distinct, they clearly work in tandem, as the anecdotes add flesh to the bones of the judgments, leaving no doubt of their didactic message. The chapter by Queen has much in common with the preceding chapters by Schwermann and Du, as all three read anecdotes within a single text as a key to understanding a particular text’s rhetorical aims and how it came to exist as a textual unit. Queen’s chapter also anticipates the following chapters by Pines and Krijgsman, as it contrasts anecdotes with other kinds of historical narratives—the annalistic records of the *Chunqiu*—within the context of a single text, thereby helping us to delineate more clearly the distinctive yet close relationship that abides between anecdotes and various subgenres of historical writings. Thus Queen’s chapter serves as a bridge to part III.

### Part III: Anecdotes and History

The chapters in part III focus on the historical aspect of anecdotes. They address intriguing questions such as: Why do some texts discuss historical

events through the use of anecdotes, whereas others seem to deliberately eschew them? What is the critical difference between anecdotal histories and non-anecdotal histories? What motivated authors to bring together these two originally distinct genres of writing? How did authors overcome the generic tensions between these two modes of public memory? Why were anecdotes appealing to some historical and historiographical endeavors, and why not to others? Why did certain groups of anecdotes prevail in certain periods of Chinese history, but lose their appeal afterwards?

In chapter 8, “History without Anecdotes: Between the *Zuozhuan* and the *Xinian* Manuscript,” Yuri Pines explores the tension between historical writing and anecdotal narratives through his study of the *Xinian*, a recently unearthed text from the Qinghua University collection. While Queen in the previous chapter argues implicitly that in the case of the *Gongyangzhuan*, anecdotes were instrumental in repackaging and updating the terse and laconic messages of the *Chunqiu* to broadcast the *Gongyangzhuan*’s moral agenda for a new age, Pines points out that the *Xinian* stands out as one of a handful of early historical records that lacks an identifiable moralizing agenda and the requisite anecdotes that typically relate such didactic historiographical messages. By examining this peculiar case and relating it to non-anecdotal strands of narrative in the *Zuozhuan*, Pines considers the nature, goals, and potential audience of non-anecdotal historical writings, clarifying differences between the non-moralizing strand of early Chinese historiography and the vast majority of historiographical texts that deploy anecdotes to judge historical events. Pines also explores the reasons why non-anecdotal narratives had a much shorter life span than the entertaining and philosophically engaging anecdotes.

In chapter 9, “Cultural Memory and Excavated Anecdotes in ‘Documentary’ Narrative: Mediating Generic Tensions in the *Baoxun* Manuscript,” Rens Krijgsman distinguishes between “anecdotal” and “documentary” modes of historiography as two distinct types of narratives. Both types narrate historical events, even some of the same events in Chinese history, but in using different textual strategies they represent the past in fundamentally different ways. An important representative of the latter type, the *Shangshu* has historically been read as if it authentically preserves the actual actions and words and deeds of ancient sage kings. Providing vital information about these figures, the documentary narrative in that text is thus considered culturally important and many of them have been canonized. In his chapter, Krijgsman focuses on the *Baoxun* 保訓 (Treasured Instructions), a recently unearthed manuscript that, similar to the one studied by Pines in the previous chapter, comes

from the Qinghua University collection. Krijgsman translates the *Baoxun* in full, discusses what it means for the text to be understood as a documentary narrative, and how this structures its narration of the past. This mode of narration is juxtaposed with an anecdotal mode of narration. Krijgsman argues that there is a fundamental tension between these two modes of representing the past due to the different types of claims they make in constructing cultural memory, the former predicative and the latter attributive. The *Baoxun* employs several textual strategies to mediate this tension, such as the use of formulas, framing, and structuring devices. He concludes by arguing that the incorporation of two distinct modes of narrating the past should be seen in light of changes in textual culture in the history of early China.

In chapter 10, “Old Stories No Longer Told: The End of the Anecdotes Tradition of Early China,” Paul van Els brings our volume to a conclusion. He demonstrates that, although anecdotes occur across historical periods and literary genres, the specific anecdotes that were omnipresent in philosophical argumentation in early China were hardly deployed in later texts. More specifically, he shows that texts from the Zhou Dynasty to the Western Han Dynasty 西漢 (202 BCE–9 CE) use and re-use historical anecdotes, and that many of these anecdotes occur in more than one text. For example, the *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, *Zhanguoce*, *Zhuangzi*, *Han Feizi*, *Lüshi chungiu*, *Hanshi waizhuan*, *Huainanzi*, *Shuoyuan*, *Xinxu*, and other texts share anecdotes involving Bao Shuya, Sunshu Ao, Wang Shou, Zhao Jianzi, and other historical figures. The wording of the anecdotes may differ from text to text, and each text may use the anecdotes for a different rhetorical purpose, but the basic accounts of the events remain the same. After the Western Han Dynasty, as van Els contends, the use of these anecdotes significantly decreases. As the Western Han Dynasty came to an end, so did a long tradition of discussing and arguing through a specific corpus of historical anecdotes. At the dawn of the Eastern Han Dynasty 東漢 (25–220 CE) a new history was created, with little room for these ancient stories. This chapter analyzes the end of this distinct anecdotal tradition and the new types of stories that replaced it.

## Notes

1. We would like to thank Paul R. Goldin, John Major, Andrew Seth Meyer, Yuri Pines, Gabe van Beijeren, and the anonymous reviewers for reading and critiquing earlier drafts of this Introduction. We have found their insights and criticisms to be invaluable.

2. Translation by Paul van Els and Sarah A. Queen. Translations in each chapter of this volume are by the chapter's author, unless otherwise specified.

3. *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解, ed. Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), chap. 34, 319.

4. Names and titles of people in early China can be confusing. Not only are people referred to by different names, sometimes even in the same text, but some titles can also mean more than one thing. For instance, the word *gong* 公 is the designation of an official title normally translated as “duke” in English, but it is also used to refer to rulers who did not carry the title “duke,” in which case “lord” would be a more appropriate translation. To avoid confusion, throughout this volume we conventionally translate *wang* 王 as “king,” *gong* 公 as “duke,” *hou* 侯 as “marquis,” and *bo* 伯 as “earl.” Note that it is not our intention to discuss the appropriateness of European aristocratic nomenclature to early China; we merely apply European ranks as a matter of heuristic convenience. For more on the problematic translation of *gong* as “duke,” see C. N. Tay, “On the Interpretation of *Kung* (Duke?) in the *Tso-chuan*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, no. 4 (1973): 550–55.

5. We use the word “philosophy” (and its various forms such as “philosophical”) throughout this volume, and even in its title, in full awareness that this word is not unproblematic, as demonstrated by the scholarly debate on the question as to whether or not China even had something that can be called “philosophy.” Our reasoning is simple: we think that the way in which early Chinese thinkers employed the various rhetorical functions of anecdotes may enrich our understanding of the possibilities of philosophical activities. As Paul R. Goldin argues in his contribution to the volume: a conception of “philosophy” that can account for Chinese thought, is more interesting than one that cannot. For more on the thorny issue of Chinese “philosophy,” see Goldin’s chapter in this volume. Other relevant academic publications in English include, in chronological order: Tongqi Lin, Henry Rosemont, Jr., and Roger T. Ames, “Chinese Philosophy: A Philosophical Essay on the ‘State-of-the-Art,’” *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 3 (1995): 727–58, esp. 746ff; Xiao-ming Wu, “Philosophy, Philosophia, and Zhe-xue,” *Philosophy East and West* 48, no. 3 (1998): 406–52; and Carine Defoort, “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit Debate,” *Philosophy East and West* 51, no. 3 (2001): 393–413; idem, “Is ‘Chinese Philosophy’ a Proper Name?: A Response to Rein Raud,” *Philosophy East and West* 56, no. 4 (2006): 625–60; Wiebke Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), esp. 11–18.

6. This also holds true for other literary traditions. Writing about the relation between anecdotes and history, and basing himself mostly on anecdotes in European languages, Lionel Gossman notes that “scholarly literature on the topic [. . .] is scattered and fairly thin, as though the anecdote were thought to be too trivial a form to deserve serious consideration.” Lionel Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 147.

7. The Chinese language contains several terms that overlap in some respect with the English word “anecdote,” such as *diangu* 典故, which denotes any kind of literary allusion, *zhangu* 掌故, which typically refers to more colloquial stories of the past, and *yuyan* 寓言, which covers a wide range of narrative types, including those that would be called “anecdotes,” “allegories,” and “parables” in English. None of these terms was used consistently in any kind of premodern Chinese literary theory. In modern Chinese scholarship, the term used most often to discuss the kind of stories we would identify as “anecdotes,” is *yuyan*. This term is borrowed from a chapter in the *Zhuangzi*, where it has a much broader meaning. Relevant publications on *yuyan* include, in chronological order: Wang Huanbiao 王煥鑣, *Xian-Qin yuyan yanjiu* 先秦寓言研究 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957); Chen Puqing 陳蒲清, *Zhongguo gudai yuyan shi* 中國古代寓言史 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1983); Gong Mu 公木, *Xian-Qin yuyan gailun* 先秦寓言概論 (Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 1984); and Bai Bensong 白本松, *Xian-Qin yuyan shi* 先秦寓言史 (Kaifeng: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2001).

8. Wai-ye Li, *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period 722–453 B.C.E.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

9. Albert Galvany, “Philosophy, Biography, and Anecdote: On the Portrait of Sun Wu,” *Philosophy East & West* 61, no. 4 (2011): 630–46; Jens Østergård Petersen, “The *Zuozhuan* Account of the Death of King Zhao of Chu and Its Sources,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 159 (2005): 1–47; idem, “The *Zuozhuan* Story about Qi Xi’s Recommendations and Its Sources,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 255 (2015): 1–50; Sarah A. Queen, “The Creation and Domestication of the Techniques of Lao-Zhuang: Anecdotal Narrative and Philosophical Argumentation in *Huainanzi* 12,” *Asia Major* (Third Series) 21, no. 1 (2008): 201–49; David Schaberg, “Chinese History and Philosophy,” in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 1: Beginnings to AD 600*, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 394–414; Paul van Els, “Tilting Vessels and Collapsing Walls: On the Rhetorical Function of Anecdotes in Early Chinese Texts,” *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 34 (2012): 141–66; Kai Vogelsang, “From Anecdote to History: Observations on the Composition of the *Zuozhuan*,” *Oriens Extremus* 50 (2011): 99–124.

10. Jack W. Chen and David Schaberg, eds., *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

11. Richard Friedenthal, “Vom Nutzen und Wert der Anekdote,” in *Sprache und Politik: Festgabe für Dolf Sternberger zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Carl-Joachim Friedrich and Benno Reifenberg (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1968), 63.

12. Heinz Grothe, *Anekdote* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971), 14–16.

13. Gossman, "Anecdote and History," 143.
14. Translation by Richard Atwater, *Secret History of Procopius* (Chicago: P. Covici, 1927), 127–28.
15. The book containing Procopius's anecdotal writings is now popularly known as *Secret History* (after the Latin title *Historia Arcana*). For more on Procopius, his world, and his writings, see Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1985), particularly chapter 4, "Procopius and the Secret History."
16. Clifton Fadiman, ed., *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), xiii.
17. "Anecdote, n.," OED Online, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://www.oed.com>.
18. Fadiman, *Book of Anecdotes*, 5.
19. Joel Fineman, "The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 57.
20. Gossman, "Anecdote and History," 159.
21. See Atwater, *Secret History*, 132–33.
22. The sense of gossip in relation to anecdotes is also noted by Schaberg ("Chinese History and Philosophy," 395), whose co-edited volume even carries the subtitle *Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China*.
23. Fineman, "History of the Anecdote," 56–57.
24. In his collection of movie anecdotes, Peter Hay writes: "The genre is not about facts or history, [. . .] With anecdotes, story is everything, and in this respect there is a happy coincidence with the craft of the scenarist. The material of life—most of it immaterial or antithetical to drama—has to be chopped up and fashioned into something that will hold large numbers of people entertained or in suspense. Facts and research become background; characters and episodes are transposed, eliminated, or invented; key moments, especially the ending, often changed. The best screenwriters and filmmakers know that reality on the screen must be manufactured, not out of arbitrary judgment, but in order to serve the story. There is no pretense at objectivity; as with the camera, point of view creates the picture." Peter Hay, *Movie Anecdotes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xiv.
25. Gossman, "Anecdote and History," 149.
26. Fadiman, *Book of Anecdotes*, xvi.
27. This diversionary aspect is made explicit in many anecdote collections. For instance, in the preface to her collection of dance anecdotes, Mindy Aloff puts it as follows: "I wanted to put together the kind of collection that one might pick up in a country inn on a rainy day and while away an hour browsing through." Mindy Aloff, *Dance Anecdotes: Stories from the Worlds of Ballet, Broadway, the Ballroom, and Modern Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
28. Michael Ryan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 752.

29. Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” 143.

30. For a translation of these anecdotes, see Burton Watson, trans., *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 77–78.

31. For Sarah A. Queen’s translation of these anecdotes, see John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, trans. and eds., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 443–45.

32. For an in-depth study of Lady Boji and her family, as depicted in anecdotes in the *Zuozhuan*, see Anne Behnke Kinney, “A Spring and Autumn Family,” *The Chinese Historical Review* 20, no. 2 (2013): 113–37. See also Sarah A. Queen, “Beyond Liu Xiang’s Gaze: Debating Womanly Virtue in Early China,” *Asia Major*, Third Series, 29, no. 2 (2016): 7–46.

33. See the chapter by Paul R. Goldin in this volume.

34. See the chapter by Rens Krijgsman in this volume.

35. For more on this, see Paul R. Goldin, “Appeals to History in Early Chinese Philosophy and Rhetoric,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2008): 79–96.

36. *Zhanguoce* 戰國策, comp. Liu Xiang 劉向 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), “Qi ce” 齊冊, 3.372.

37. See the chapter by Heng Du in this volume.

38. *Han Feizi jijie*, 310.

39. Paul R. Goldin, “Rhetoric and Machination in *Stratagems of the Warring States*,” in *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 76.

40. See the outline of this text by Tsuen-hsuei Tsien in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley, CA: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993). See also the introductions in James Crump, Jr., trans., *Chan-kuo ts’i* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) and *Legends of the Warring States: Persuasions, Romances, and Stories from Chan-Kuo Tse* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1998).

41. Goldin, “Rhetoric and Machination,” 89.

42. See Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 470.

43. *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, ed. He Ning 何寧, *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), chap. 12, 880–81.

44. For more on this, see Paul van Els, “Tilting Vessels,” 161–62.

45. One example of a highly elaborate narrative tapestry is *Huainanzi* chapter 18, “Renjian xun” 人間訓 (Among Others). See Andrew Seth Meyer’s elucidating analysis of the complex framing structure of this chapter in Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 714–15.

46. Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” 147.

47. Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” 143.

48. Schaberg, “Chinese History and Philosophy,” 395, also makes this point.

49. Schaberg, “Chinese History and Philosophy,” 394.

50. Edward L. Shaughnessy, “*I Chou shu* 逸周書 (*Chou shu*),” in Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 229–33.

51. Sarah Allan points out that eight out of nine manuscripts contained in the first volume of the Qinghua collection are designated *shu*. See Sarah Allan, “On *Shu* 書 (Documents) and the Origin of the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Ancient Documents) in Light of Recently Discovered Bamboo Slip Manuscripts,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 3 (2012): 547–57 (particularly note 3 on page 548).

52. Allan, “On *Shu*,” 557.

53. Allan, “On *Shu*,” 556.

54. As Newell Ann Van Auken has demonstrated, records were written according to regular rules that governed which types of events could be recorded and in what form. Newell Ann Van Auken, “A Formal Analysis of the *Chuenchiou* (Spring and Autumn Classic)” (PhD Diss., University of Washington, 2006), 1–2.

55. *Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokanji* 十三經注疏附校勘記, comp. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), Zhuang 26, 2238–39.

56. See *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, [1960] 1988), “Li lou, xia” 8.21: 192.

57. For more on the *Biannianji* manuscript and annals as a distinct genre, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “The Qin *Biannian ji* 編年記 and the Beginnings of Historical Writing in China,” in *Beyond the First Emperor’s Mausoleum: New Perspectives on Qin Art*, ed. Liu Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015): 114–36. For more on the *Xinian*, see Yuri Pines “Zhou History and Historiography: Introducing the Bamboo manuscript *Xinian*,” *T’oung Pao* 100, no. 4–5 (2014): 287–324, as well as his chapter in the present volume.

58. See the chapters by Andrew Seth Meyer and Sarah A. Queen in this volume.

59. Schaberg, “Chinese History and Philosophy,” 403, also makes this point.

60. For a more extensive discussion of this graph, see the chapter by Christian Schwermann in this volume.

61. The various readings and meanings of 說 became clearly distinguished only from the sixth century CE onwards, as Martin Kern demonstrates in his “‘Persuasion’ or ‘Treatise’? The Prose Genres *Shui* 說 and *Shuo* 說 in the Light of the *Guwenzi leizuan* of 1779,” in *Ad Seres et Tungusos: Festschrift für Martin Gimm zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 25. Mai 1995*, eds. Lutz Bieg, Erling von Mende, and Martina Siebert (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 221–43.

62. The OC (Old Chinese) reconstructions here and in the following are according to Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009).

63. Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 618.

64. Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 619. For a detailed study of this *Han Feizi* chapter, see Michael Hunter, “The Difficulty with ‘The Difficulties of Persuasion’ (‘Shuinan’ 說難),” in *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*, ed. Paul R. Goldin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 169–95.

65. *Han Feizi jijie*, 86.

66. *Han Feizi jijie*, 189–90. The main text in this edition (unlike other editions) leaves out the phrase “it thereby killed itself as well” 因自殺, which is essential to the argument.

67. See Sarah A. Queen’s translation of these chapters in Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 617–711.

68. For more on this title, see the chapter by Christian Schwermann in this volume.

69. For example: Queen (in Major et al., *The Huainanzi*, 617–711) renders the *Huainanzi* chapter titles 說山 and 說林 as “A Mountain of Persuasions” (*Shuishan*) and “A Forest of Persuasions” (*Shuilin*); Schaberg (“Chinese History and Philosophy,” 400) renders the 儲說 chapters in the *Han Feizi* as “Stockpiled Persuasions” (*Chushui*); and Hunter (“Difficulty,” 198) reads 說苑 as “Garden of Persuasions” (*Shuiyuan*).

70. Some philosophers (such as Cicero) do intersperse their writings with anecdotes, whereas the philosophical stunts of others (such as Diogenes) gave rise to numerous anecdotes.