
Preface

In the 1990s, when working on my dissertation on the intellectual contents of *Zuo zhuan* 左傳—the major historical text from China’s preimperial period—I became engaged in manifold scholarly controversies concerning that text’s nature, date of composition, and historical reliability. Whereas those debates and the colleagues’ subsequent publications caused me to modify some of my views, I did not feel it appropriate to engage anew the topic on which so much has already been written. Recently, however, the publication of a series of newly discovered historical and quasi-historical texts—most notably *Xinian* 繫年 from the Tsinghua (Qinghua) University collection of bamboo slips—spurred a renewed interest in the origins of China’s historiographic tradition and its immense complexity. My new understandings are presented in this monograph.

In preparing this book I have benefited immensely from discussions with colleagues and friends, whose views helped me tremendously in modifying my conclusions and avoiding some embarrassing mistakes. I want to thank first and foremost Chen Minzhen, Steve Durrant, Paul R. Goldin, Martin Kern, Li Wai-ye, Edward L. Shaughnessy, and the reviewers of the manuscript and of my earlier related articles. I want to thank also the participants of the May 2019 symposium “Rethinking Early Chinese Historiography” (Institute for Advanced Study, Hebrew

University of Jerusalem), whose ideas were particularly enriching. Needless to say, any lingering mistakes and inaccuracies are mine.

In undertaking the research for this book, I was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (Grant 240/15) and the Michael William Lipson Chair in Chinese Studies. This work was published with the support of the Israel Science Foundation (Grant 6/20).