ARGUMENTS BY WOMEN IN EARLY CHINESE TEXTS*

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Abstract

A corpus of ethical and political arguments specifically attributed to women in Warring States and Han texts are philosophically comparable to the arguments of the Masters texts, but are not associated with teaching lineages. These hierarchical persuasions and instructive arguments cannot be attributed to ministers. They suggest new perspectives on contemporary discussions of the nature of philosophical debate, adversariality, and authority in Warring States China.

Ever since Plato positioned the truths of the philosopher against the persuasions of the poet, rhetor, or sophist, the Western philosophical tradition has had a second-order debate about argumentation. In contrast, the Warring States Chinese philosophical landscape presents no clear division between "philosophy" and "persuasion." By "philosophy" I mean simply study of or reflection on the concepts and presuppositions by which we approach the world, knowledge of it, and action within it, or, more colloquially, "thought about thought."1 As is well known, Chinese "philosophy" prominently included reflection on, and debates about, the ethics of social and political life. There were a number of terms for such debate, including "rational discourse," discrimination (bian 辨), argumentation (bian 辩), discourse (jun 论), and explanation or persuasion (shuo 说).2 Contem-

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1 I do not use the term to mean systematic thought of a high degree of generality that exclusively and specifically uses reasoning, rather than observation or experience, to justify its claims. See Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, eds. Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 646.

2 Lun had a specific technical meaning of "to judge or evaluate" and "to sentence and condemn" in the Shu hugi legal texts. See “Yunmeng shu hudi Qin mu bianxie

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porary scholarship is divided over whether early Chinese philosophers had explicit notions of epidemic demonstration, a rhetorical art, or even a specific concern with debate.3

We can, however, identify several common features of early Chinese argumentation, especially within the "Masters" (zi 子) classification of Han librarians.4 First, over time, arguments became progressively more structured in form and diverse in content. Second, most were political dialogues in the specific sense of "positive political rhetoric."5 Third, the arguments of the Masters (even the Zhuangzi) were


3 Terms such as epidemic demonstration and rhetoric have no exact Chinese equivalents, although the "Names and Objects" section of the Mohist canon gives brief definitions for shuo ("the means by which one makes plain") and the less tending over claims which are the converse of each other). See Angus C. Graham, Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), sections A 70-75. On epidemic demonstration, see G. E. R. Lloyd, Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into Ancient Greek and Chinese Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Chs. 2 and 4. Rhetoric, per se, is also a Greek invention, coined by Plato (Gorgias 493a6) to distinguish his methods from the sophists (he outlines a "philosophical rhetoric" in Phaedrus 271c). See Jean-Paul Redding, "Light and the Mirror: Elements of Comparative Metaphorology," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Honolulu, Hawai'i, April 11-14, 1996, pp. 1-2). Recent Sinological scholarship has also dealt with the use of "rhetoric" to establish historiographic authority. See Wai-yee Li, "The Idea of Authority in the Shi-shih (Records of the Historian)," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 54.2 (1994).

4 The T'ung-men shih-bu (崔夢道虎帳百經) was written by Ban Gu 門顧 (32-92 CE) based on the description of the Imperial Library established by Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BCE-23 CE) and Liu Xiang 劉向 (78-8 BCE) in the Qi-liu 七略 or Seven Sammaries. See Han Shu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 30:1701. The "Masters" was the third category in the Seven Sammaries. See Han Shu 30:1724-46.

5 This was not true of the Mingjia.

6 For discussion of these three points, see Carine Defoort, The Phoenaep Cap Master (He guyu) : A Rhetorical Reading (New York : State University of New York Press, 1997), 10-24.


9 Defoort, Phoenaep Cap Master, 103-6.

10 Greek philosophy and tragedy provide a number of interesting examples of substantial arguments ascribed to women. These include the speech of Diciana in Plato's Symposium, the arguments of the eponymous heroine of Aristophanes' Lysistrata, the account of fate and how to survive in adversity by Andromache and Hecuba in Euripides' Trojan Women, and Hecuba's appeal to justice and law in Euripides' Hecuba.

11 I have argued elsewhere that in Warring States and Han narratives, women were represented as possessing the same virtues valued in men: moral integrity, intellectual judgment, the ability to admonish a superior, courage, and chastity, in the sense of single-minded loyalty. These Warring States and Han representations of virtuous women probably were composed and redacted by men, yet their narratives consistently emphasize a view that virtue was not gendered. See Lisa Raphall, "Gendered Virtue Reconsidered: Notes from the Warring States and Han," in Ch'eng-ying Li, ed., Confucianism and the Second Sex (LaSalle Ind: Open Court, 2000), 223-257.
The possible implications of that context. These hierarchical arguments, however, were of two kinds: the first, which I call rhetorical persuasion, addressed to a superior, and the second, instructive argument, addressed to an inferior.

The standard version of rhetorical persuasion is the efforts of a minister to persuade a ruler of the merits of a course of action he deems virtuous, efficacious, or pragmatic, or to admonish him against behavior he deems unvirtuous or ill-advised. The dialogues between Mencius and the ministers and rulers he sought to advise fit this pattern, as do the arguments (though not the form) of the Sunzi bingfa 孫子兵法, and the arguments and form of much of the Zhanguo ce 戰國策. It is the difficulties of persuasion in this sense that are addressed in the Shuo nan 說難 (Difficulties in persuasion) chapter of the Han Feizi 韓非子 (The words of Han Feizi).

The standard version of instructive argument is a dialogue between a teacher or sage and a student or disciple who asks questions and receives instruction. Examples include the dialogues between Confucius and his students in the Lunyu 論語, between Huang Di 黃帝和 Qi Bo 喬伯 in the Huang Di neijing 黃帝內經, the “Ten Questions” medical text from Mawangdui, the “Five Regulators” texts from Mawangdui, and the questions of a first-century BCE mathematical work, the Zhoubi suanjing 周髀算經 (Arithmetical classic of the gnomon and the circular paths of Heaven). In all these texts, the student has come seeking knowledge and presumably does not need to be persuaded to take it. Instructive argument texts, however, must persuade a second, indirect audience, the reader, whether a ruler (in the case of a memorial) or a quasi-philosophical interlocutor.

**The Exclusion of Women**

At this point it would seem banal to remark that, since women were neither teachers, students, rulers, nor ministers, we could hardly expect them to appear as agents in or authors of philosophical debates. Even thinkers and moralists who stressed the importance of education for women did not emphasize skill in debate and discrimination. Ban Zhao 班昭, author of what may be the first argument for female literacy in world history, contrasts the admonitions of virtuous men with “womanly virtue” (shude 女德), which “does not require brilliant talent or remarkable difference. Womanly language need not be clever in disputation or sharp in conversation.”

This sentiment came to receive more extreme, and influential, expression by Song and Ming Neo-Confucians, most notably Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). Zhu Xi advocated education for women, but for the purpose of maternal (including prenatal) instruction, within the proper limits of moral tracts, and directed toward assisting a husband. He stressed the dangers of women’s participation in political life and held that women should “never initiate affairs or take action on their own.”

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10. G. E. R. Lloyd (Adversaries and Authorities, 77-92) has recently argued that different loci of debate in China and Greece affected the form of debate. Greek debates were conducted among equals in public assembly. Most Chinese “debates” took the form of persuading a ruler to take a course of action, whether in face-to-face argument with the ruler or an antagonist, or in a written memorial.

11. Examples of Confucius answering direct questions from his disciples and others who occur throughout the Lunyu, in conversations with Zi Gong (1.15, 2.13, 3.17, 5.4, 5.12, 5.15, 6.30, 9.13, 11.16, 12.7, 13.20, 15.10, 15.24, 17.24), Fa-yü Chi (5.3, 6.22, 12.21-22, 13.4, 13.19), Zi You (2.7), Zi Xia (2.8, 3.8), Ji Kangzi (2.20, 11.7, 11.17, 12.19), Zi Zhang (2.23, 5.19, 11.20, 12.6, 15.6, 17.6, 30.2), Yan Hui (9.11, 12.1, 15.11), Zi Lu (11.22, 14.12, 14.22), Ji Ziran (11.24), Sima Nu (12.3-5), and Duke Jing of Qi (12.11). An example of Confucius declining to answer a question appears in 14.5. Citations are according to D. C. Lau, trans., Confucius: The Analects (London: Penguin, 1984).

12. The Huang Di neijing begins with a series of questions by Huang Di to Qi Bo. See Neijing zengwen 內經釋問, Shu beiyao ed., 11b.


16. Ban Zhao (48-116 CE), Neijing jiaoshi, in Hou Hanzhi 後漢志 54 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 2789.

17. Zhu Xi, Xicaoxue jijie 小程朱解, Congshu jicheng ed., 5:118 and 2:35, and Zhu ci yule 朱子語類 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986) 7:127. The Xiaoxue articulated what was to become a standard position on women: “A wife is one who bends
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This tacit and ongoing consensus that philosophical, political, and ethical debate should be conducted by and for men has considerable implications for a wide variety of claims that men and women reason differently, particularly in the nature of their respective capacities for moral reasoning. Variants of this claim are legion. According to the Liji 禮記, fathers judge their children according to merit, mothers according to affection. 20 Freud states that the level of what is ethically normal is different for women and men; women's super- egos are less inexorable, impersonal, and independent of their emotional origins than men's. 21 Feminist philosophers have voiced (and criticized) various claims for a distinct "female ethic." 22 Many more to the will of another and so her rectitude lies in not following her own will" (Xixian 2:66). Zhu Xi's attack on self-willed women (Xixian 5:45) draws on the Yan shi jiaxun 楊氏家訓. In his critique of Ban Zhao's Nu ji, he suggests eight chapter headings of his own, which emphasize familial roles over intellectual and moral judgment. "They are propriety, subordination, filiality, harmony, diligence, frugality, generosity, and learning. For discussion, see Wing-tsit Chan, Chu Hsi: New Studies (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1969), 542 and 546, n.37; and Bettine Birge, "Chu Hsi and Women's Education," in William Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee, eds., Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). For the realities of Neo-Confucian education in Song times, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, The Inner Quarter: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). Two more recent studies are particularly noteworthy for their discussions of very different realities of women's education in late imperial China. See Kai-wing Chow, The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Language Discourse (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and Dorothy Ko, Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

20 "The mother deals with them on the ground of affection and not of showing them honour; the father on the ground of showing them honour and not of affection." Liji, Shisan jing zhuzhu ed. 32, 54:15a-b. For translation, see James Legge, Li chi: Book of Rites, in Sacred Books of the East, Vols. 27 and 28 (1885; reprint, New York: University Books, 1967). Vol. II, 341. The passage then analogizes these traits to the nature of water and fire. Roger Ames argues against the view of water as feminine in the Daozang 箇全編, but does not discuss this passage per se. See Roger Ames, "Taiism and the Androgyne Ideal," in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds., Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship (Youngstown, N.Y.: Philo Press, 1981), 39-41.


examples could be mentioned. Contemporary scholars of Chinese philosophy also have entered the fray. Some argue that "Confucian" ethics, however male-dominated, corresponds more closely to the female ethic than to the hegemonic "male philosophy" of the West. 23 Others argue that Confucian "aesthetics" is preferable to the female ethic because, while sexist, it is nevertheless "androgyneous" in the sense of viewing gender traits as interdependent modalities rather than immutable essences. 24 Chinese rulers portrayed themselves as "father and mother of the people (min zhi fuma 民之父母)." 25 Nonetheless, a corpus of ethical and political arguments specifically ascribed to women appears in the Limii zhuo 列女傳 or (Collected life stories of women; ca. 25 BCE). 26 The Biantong zhuo 辩通傳 or "Skill in argument" chapter contains fifteen persuasions attributed to women whose exemplary virtue explicitly consisted of skill in argument. Some of these women and girls directed their arguments toward husbands and fathers; others tangled with kings and advised them to good effect. The Limii zhuo also contains examples of instructive argument in the chapter titled "Maternal Rectitude" (Muyii zhuo 母儀傳).

I begin with an analysis of five arguments from the Limii zhuo: three rhetorical persuasions from the "Biantong zhuo" and two instructive arguments from the "Muyii zhuo." I show that these are good arguments in several senses, starting with Quintilian's ethical sense. They are also philosophically good arguments in that they are detailed, coherent, persuasive, and logically sound. Most are also good arguments in the pragmatic sense that they succeed. I argue that the Limii zhuo arguments are philosophically comparable to


25 Xunzi zhuan 孫子傳選 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1986) 75/19/110. The phrase first appears in the Shijing 詩經 ode Jiangzhou 江州 (Mao 251). Xunzi uses the couplet as a gloss for the term jianzi 子子, who takes on the role of father and mother of the people.

the arguments of the Masters texts in content, form, and coherence but differ from them in place and in authority. They use the same modes of argument, rhetorical devices, and appeals to authority but are not associated with teaching lineages. Occasionally, both these arguments and the virtues of the women to whom they are attributed are used as examples by male philosophers. Next, I examine the case for attributing the arguments to women, including the claim that the Lienü zhuàn presents the arguments not of women but of ministers. Finally, I reconsider the hierarchical persuasions and instructive arguments of the Lienü zhuàn in the light of recent arguments about the nature of debate, adversarially, and authority in early China.

Rhetorical Persuasion in the Biantong zhuàn

Nine of the fifteen Biantong zhuàn arguments are rhetorical persuasions. (See Appendix 1 for a tabular analysis of these arguments.) Seven are to a ruler on behalf of a father (three cases), a husband (one case), a son (one case), or on behalf of the woman herself (two cases). These women are doubly subordinate: as subjects in the political hierarchy and as women in the gender hierarchy. They have that much more persuading to do.

The Wife of the Bow-maker of Jin

The wife of the bow-maker of Jin (LNZ 6.3) intercedes with Duke Ping of Jin 興平公 when her husband is condemned for making a bow which the duke cannot shoot straight.21 She asks to speak with the duke and argues that the fault is with him, not with the bow:

In wood grew on [Mt.] Tai Shan, and in a single day it was [repeatedly] exposed three times to the yin and three times to the yang. Its horn came from an ox from Yan, it was bound with the sinews of an elk from Jing [Chu] and glued with glue from the fish from the river. These four things are the most select in the world. If My Lord cannot use them to shoot an arrow through one

The scale of armour, it can only be because My Lord does not know how to shoot, but nonetheless wishes to kill my husband. How could that be right? I have heard something of the way of archery. Make your left hand as if pushing away a stone and your right hand as if leaning on a branch. The right hand lets fly and the left hand does not know [remains firm]. This is the way of archery.22

The duke’s shooting improves, and he rewards her husband.

The bow-maker’s wife argues that Duke Ping stands to compound a fault of skill with a fault of ethics by killing an innocent man. Her archery lesson provides a face-saving solution to the real cause of his difficulty. This passage is also of incidental interest because of her detailed knowledge of archery and because it is one of the few places in the Lienü zhuàn where yin and yang are mentioned.

Duke Ping’s argument that the bow-maker deserves death is logically valid (by both modus ponens and modus tollens; analytical summaries of these arguments are given in Appendix 2). It is, however, unsound because it lacks a necessary element to describe the situation. This element is the ruler’s skill in archery, which figures in the counter-argument of the bow-maker’s wife. Her argument also lacks the same necessary element, namely an account of her husband’s skill in his own craft, which may have left something to be desired. The bow-maker’s wife never disputes Duke Ping’s implicit claim that if the bow is not well made, the bow-maker deserves death, though the ethical status of this judgment is dubious to say the least. Does her not challenging the king’s ethics directly indicate that this a case of realpolitik, saving face, or something else?

The gist of her admonition is that Duke Ping has erred because he has omitted an essential condition. The duke assumes that a well-made bow means the ruler will shoot straight. She questions this link between bow and accuracy, and adds the requirement that the ruler be a skillful archer. Next, she argues that the duke stands to turn an error of understanding (of causality) into an ethical error by killing an innocent man. Her argument is logically valid (if unsound) on the same grounds as Duke Ping’s. At this point, she might

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21 The table of contents of the Lienü zhuàn names the daughter, 興弓工女 with the comment “should be wife.” The Hanshi wazōchūn 韩詩外傳 version attributes the argument to the wife of the bow-maker. See Han Ying 韩婴 (first century BCE), Hanshi wazōchūn, Sibu congkan, ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai yinduhuan, 1919-36). For translation, see James R. Hightower, Han Shi Wai Chuan, Han Ying’s Illustration of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952). I use Hightower’s numbering for ease of reference.
22 LNZ 6:3a, Joseph Needham and Robin D. S. Yates, Science and Civilization in China. Vol. 5, Chemistry and Chemical Technology Part 6, Military Technology and Missile Seiges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 111. Needham and Yates read the passage as satirical: that the bow-maker was inept and that the duke was open to argument only because the bow-maker’s wife was the daughter of an official. Her lineage may well have emboldened her to act and made the duke more receptive toward her, but it does not affect the reasonableness of her argument.
be said to have won the argument. Her additional offer of instruction in archery offers Duke Ping a face-saving remedy for the real cause of his difficulty. The archery lesson’s combination of explanation and action is valid, sound, and pragmatic; her goal is to save her husband, not to win an argument! In summary, she combines a well-articulated ethical argument with careful attention to the self-interest of the ruler.  

Xuwu of Qi

The life story of Xuwu of Qi 齊女徐吾 (LNZ 6.14) shows skill in argument in the quotidian interactions of commoners. Xuwu was a poor woman of Donghaishang in Qi. She belonged to her neighbor Liwu’s 李吾 association of women who met at night to weave by candlelight. Xuwu was so poor she could not bring her share of candles. This is an argument made by a woman to other women, a group of her approximate peers:

Liwu said to the other members: “Xuwu is not bringing enough candles; please do not share light with her.”

Xuwu replied: “I am poor and cannot bring my share of candles. Yet I always rise early and retire late; I wash, sweep, arrange your mats, and wait on you. I always sit in the lowest place, all because I am poor and cannot bring my share of candles. Yet the light of a single candle in the center of the room is not diminished by adding one more person, and the light is no brighter for one person less.”

Liwu could not respond, so in the end, she came back and there was nothing more to be said.

According to the eulogy (song 飴) at the end of the account, Xuwu “explained herself in eloquent language with deep distinctions,” and when she spoke no one could answer her.

Xuwu does not dispute her obligation to bring the candles or that she has failed to do so. Her persuasion takes the form of a twofold demonstration that she should not be excluded from her neighbors’ association. She shows that her presence has positive consequences: she tidies their rooms and arranges the mats so as to reaffirm their higher social status and her own position at the bottom of the social hierarchy. She also shows that her presence has no negative consequences and her failure to bring her share of candles causes no harm to the association. Her presence does not diminish the light.

The story of Xuwu of Qi is a persuasion among quasi-equals on a matter that has little ethical purchase. Xuwu desires to be included in the association and persuades Liwu and the rest to admit her, despite her deficient contribution, by direct and indirect appeals to self-interest. At worst her presence diminishes no light, and at best it benefits them. Xuwu persuades the others to include her by eloquence, not by appeals to any specific ethical virtue or by any claim that excluding her would be “wrong.” The rhetorical point is that the “generous” benefactor is in fact the beneficiary.

Ti Ying of Qi

Other stories in the “Biantong zhuan” portray young girls who successfully intercede with rulers and win ethical arguments by eloquence of speech. The story of the persuasion of the daughter of the Granary Master of Qi 齊太倉女 (LNZ 6.15), the physician Chunyu Yi 春于意, appears in the Lienü zhuang, the Shiji 史記, and the Han shu. When relatives of people he has refused to treat denounced him to Emperor Xiao Wen, Chunyu Yi is transferred to Chang’an for mutilating punishment. His youngest daughter Ti Ying 廖榮 follows him to Chang’an and offers the following petition:

Your servant's father is an official. In the kingdom of Qi he is known for his integrity and justice. Now he has fallen into the hands of the law and awaits punishment. Your servant is deeply afflicted by the fact that those who die [as a result of punishment] cannot return to life and those who are punished [by mutilation] cannot recover their [physical] integrity. Then when we desire to correct errors, there is no longer a way to do so, and in the end we cannot succeed. I wish to enter the ranks of female slaves in order to redeem my father’s corporal punishment; this will allow him to change his conduct and reform himself.

29 The bow-maker’s wife also appears in the Han shu wo zhuang (8.27, 73b). The Tai ping yulan 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, 347:8b and 746:1b) refers back to the Lienü zhuang.

30 LNZ 6.13a-b.

31 自列辭語甚詳. LNZ 6.13b.
It is not clear precisely what crime Chunyu is alleged to have committed. The *Hanshu* merely states that he had committed “a crime deserving of mutilating punishment.” Ti Ying does not deny her father’s fault and indeed offers to redeem it herself. She admonishes the emperor indirectly for his promulgation of laws that make it impossible for a man convicted of a crime to redress his fault or improve his conduct. In arguing that punishment by death or mutilation leaves no opportunity for the correction of faults, she shows that the emperor’s ends are inconsistent with his means. She herself presents the written document. Her clarity of expression (and reasoning) persuades the emperor to change his laws and reject corporal punishment.

Hearing her request, the emperor was moved by her intention, and that year he rescinded the law on corporal punishment.\textsuperscript{36}

The eulogy remarks that the petition submitted by Ti Ying was “most complete in literary refinement. The young girl’s words stirred the mind of the ruler.”\textsuperscript{37}

Ti Ying effectively persuades the emperor to adopt a corrective theory of punishment in lieu of a retributive theory. This is what underlies her claim that his ends (justice) are inconsistent with his means (mutilating punishments). She never disputes that Chunyu Yi is at fault. Rather she tries to show that condemning Chunyu Yi to death or mutilation in the name of justice contravenes the emperor’s broad intentions.

As in the case of the bow-maker’s wife, the ethical status of the emperor’s actions comes into immediate question. On what basis does Ti Ying assume that the emperor desires justice to prevail in the empire? While she emphasizes her father’s reputation for justice and integrity, she mentions no such specific reputation on the part of the emperor. What she does do is transform an “ought” into an “is.” Instead of saying that the emperor should desire justice, she states that he does. Why? By tacitly praising him for doing what he

\textsuperscript{35} *Hanshu* 23:1097.


\textsuperscript{37} 文雅著稱, 小女之言, 乃誠詳意. LNZ 6:14a-b.

has not done, and presenting him with a way to do it (accepting the payment of her own person), she offers an admonition that is face-saving, practical, and self-defending. Her arguments and actions—she herself presents the written document—persuade the emperor not only to spare her father but to alter the laws on corporal punishment. In both cases, the facts of political power constrain the choice of argument. Ti Ying’s father may well have been innocent of the charge, but Ti Ying herself lacks the power to contend with those who denounced him. Similarly, the bow-maker’s wife, although the wife of an official, lacks the actual power to contend directly with a king.

The persuasions of the wife of the bow-maker of Jin and the daughter of the granary master of Qi differ from Xuwu’s for three reasons. First, they are more hierarchically polarized. Xuwu is a woman persuading another woman of only slightly higher social status; the bow-maker’s wife and the (granary master) physician’s daughter are persuading men who are emperors or rulers of states. Second, the stakes are higher; in the stories of these two women, their “self-interest” is in the survival of a husband and a father. Third, their arguments appeal only indirectly to the self-interest of the ruler; rather, they appeal to the ruler’s presumed sense of righteousness. These stories show women using persuasion and argument for more explicitly ethical purposes: to reprimand rulers’ negligence in the form of unjust laws or policies. Sometimes they save a husband or a father, sometimes themselves.

Strategic approaches that combine an ethical argument with an appeal to the self-interest of a ruler typify many of the arguments attributed to Warring States Masters and Han dynasty historians. Han Fei’s systematic summary of the difficulties of persuasion (Shuoman) points out that they tend to involve not knowledge of persuasion (zhishuo 知說), skill in argument (bianming 辯明), or daring (gan 敢), but rather “knowing the heart I am speaking to [persuading] so I can meet it when I am speaking.”\textsuperscript{38}

The *Bian tong zhuang* also contains six instruction pieces. Four are addressed to rulers who use marriage to incorporate the wisdom of these (exceptionally ugly) women into the state. These pieces are interesting for many reasons, but they do not present detailed argu-

ments. They are similar in context to rhetorical persuasions because of the double subordination of the woman (as subject and as wife). For these reasons, I do not examine them here. All these arguments to a hierarchical superior address this problem of "knowing the heart I am persuading," described by Han Fei.

Instructive Arguments in the Muyi zhuan

Several arguments from the Muyi zhuan chapter of the Lienü zhuan depict the instructive arguments of mothers to their sons. (The mothers were hierarchically inferior in gender but hierarchically superior by virtue of age and parental status.) Two use particularly detailed arguments and analogies: Jing Jiang of the Ji of Lu 鲁季敬姜, the mother of the minister Gongfu Wenbo 公夫文伯, of Lu, and Meng Mu 孟母, the mother of Mencius.39

Jing Jiang of the Ji of Lu

The story of Jing Jiang of the Ji of Lu (Li Ji Jing Jiang) (LNZ 1.9) is the longest in the Lienü zhuan and consists of five narratives with close parallels in the Guoyu 國語.40 Jing Jiang was the wife of Gongfu Mubo 公夫穆伯, the mother of Gongfu Wenbo, and the paternal grandaunt of Ji Kangzi 季康子 (d. 479).41 Widowed young, she

39 Zhu Xi cites the Lienü zhuan accounts of both as examples of maternal instruction (Xiaoxue 4:1-2 and 4:28). He uses Jing Jiang, whom he calls "the aunt of Ji Kangzi," as a model of separate spheres, the separation of men and women.

40 The Guoyu (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1988) contains eight separate stories about her, all in the second book of Lu (Guoyu 5.10-17). They are her discourse to Ji Kangzi on humility (5.10); her admonition to Wenbo regarding a feast of undersized turtles (5.11); her discourse to Ji Kangzi on the inner and outer court (5.12); her discourse to Wenbo on work and self-indulgence (5.13); her discourse to Ji Kangzi on the id of men and women (5.14); her plans for Wenbo's marriage (5.15); three discourses concerning death: her instructions to Wenbo's concubines after his death, her refusal to weep at his funeral, and her remarks at the occasion of the funeral of Ji Kangzi's mother (5.16); and her discourse to the concubines of Wenbo on mourning (5.17).

41 According to the Lienü zhuan, Jing Jiang was the wife of the younger brother of Ji Kangzi's paternal grandfather (his cong congzhuan 従戎佐母, LNZ 1.6b). Her husband Gongfu Mubo thus would be a younger brother of Ji Pingzi 季平子 (Jiun Yiru 季平哀如, Yiru Zhuan, d. 505 BCE), the son of Ji Daozi 季悼子 (d. 529). This genealogy would make Ji Daozi the grandfather of Wenbo and the great-grandfather of Ji Kangzi. It is consistent with commentaries that refer to Ji

raised and instructed her son as well as her paternal grandnephew and her son's concubines. Though she does not appear in the Analects, in other sources Confucius repeatedly praises her expertise in the rites.42 A striking example of her style of instruction is a detailed analogy between government office and the apparatus of weaving.43 She uses the analogy to instruct her grown son Wenbo, Minister of Lu, on how to rule a kingdom and manage others:

When Wenbo was minister in Lu, Jing Jiang said to him: "I will inform you about what is important in governing a country; it is entirely in the warp [jie 织]. The selvage [the straight border of woven cloth, ju 织] is the means by which you straighten what is twisted and crooked. It must be strong; therefore the selvage can be considered as the General [tian 天]. The pattern [hua 花] even is what is uneven and reconciles what is not adjusted.44 Therefore the

Daozi as Jing Jiang's father-in-law and Ji Kangzi's great-grandfather (cf. LNZ 1.8b and Guoyu Lu 5.10, p. 202, n.1 and 5.14, 210, n.4) Thus we might estimate her birth as circa 540 BCE, and the birth of Wenbo some time between 525 and 515.


44 Another difficulty involves the dating of the passage. The incident would appear to be set in the late Spring and Autumn period, but the passage may be a later interpolation and may refer to later types of looms and official titles. A third problem is the anachronism introduced by later accounts of weaving technology, particularly the seventeenth-century Tiangong Kaiwu 天工開物 of Song Yingxing 宋應星 (hereafter TGKW; Taibei: Zhonghua, 1935). For translation, see E-tu Zen Sun and Shiou-Chuan Sun, Song Ying-hsing: Chinese Technology in the Seventeenth Century, (Tiangong Kaiwu) (1966; reprint, Dover, 1997).

45 According to the commentary, the pattern is that which one relies on (bang or bang 旃) and probably refers to some kind of pattern or painted design copied onto the cloth. In the seventeenth-century looms described in the Tiaogan kaiwu, a design was painted in color onto paper (hua 花), which was copied into a pattern hung in the figure tower (huatou 花頭) of the loom (TGKW 64; Zen Sun and Sun, Chinese Technology, 56), but there were no figure towers in Spring and Autumn or Han looms (Kuhn, "Silk Weaving," 95).
comb can be the Royal Annalist [neishi 内史]. The one who can fill an important office, travel a long road, and is upright, genuine, and firm is the cloth beam [zhou 轸]. The cloth beam can be deemed Minister [xiang 相]. The one that is inessential in unfolding is the warp beam [zhai 營]. The warp beam can be the Three Dukes [sangong 三公]. Wenbo bowed to her repeatedly and received her instruction.

This passage makes a detailed and coherent analogy between eight offices and eight parts of a loom. It begins with the General, who determines the edge and shape of the fabric and keeps it in formation. The Director sets the overall shape of the weaving. The analogy is to the pattern or painted design that determines the design. The Prefect imposes order on disorder and governs "wild" areas as well as the city. The Director of Messengers sends envoys back and forth without interruption or damage, like the shuttle. In the Han meaning of the title, the Regional Mentor of Guanwei, a liaison officer, ensures that the way is clear, like the heddle, which separates the sections of the warp through which the shuttle will pass. The Royal Annalist "regulates the numbers of great and small" by accurately recording royal eids. The Minister, like the cloth beam, is responsible, enduring, upright, and firm and guides the kingdom by these qualities. This was Wenbo's own position at the time. The Three Dukes, like the warp beam, are endless in their virtue and

50 During the Zhou, the neishi was a "Royal Annalist," a member of the Ministry of Rites, who prepared all royal documents (Hucker, Dictionary, 286, following Smelik, Zhou). During the Qin, the neishi was a Minister of Agriculture, under the Department of Finance (Hsiunue, Ch’In Law, section A, p. 30, n. 225 and n. 232.)

51 I take zhou 軸 as yuanzhou 原軸, or "cloth beam," following Dieter Kuhn, Science and Civilization in China, Vol. 5, Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 9 Textile Technology: Spinning and Reeling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 200. Alternatively, reading zhou 軸 as 綢, it could be translated "round beams." See Kuhn, "Silk Weaving," 100. Kuhn names three "round beams": the warp beam (綾), in the back roller, and in the cloth beam (緯). The context of the passage clearly requires one type of beam, not three. The warp beam is used later in the passage.

52 Liang Duan's commentary glosses zhai 營 as sheng 色, warp beam (LNZ 1:7b), and adds that being able to unfold [stretch] without limit is an example of the virtue (道德) of the san gong. For discussion of the drawloom, see Sun Yutang, "Zhanguo Qin-Han shida shangyi jishu de jihua", 155, and TGKW 63-64, (translated in Zen Sun and Sun, Chinese Technology, 35).

53 LNZ 1:7a-b.

54 In this case, there is a significant difference between the Zhou and Qin offices. In a Qin reading of the analogy, the Minister of Agriculture would " regulate the numbers of great and small" by the management of government agricultural inventories and record-keeping. See YMSHJ slips 83-87, 90, 102-3, 135-53, 178-79, 241-43, and 253-63; Hsiunue, Ch’In Law, sections A 9, 20, 25, 47, 61, 87, and 97-107.
ability. The warp beam gathers up the unused warp and holds it evenly in place.

In this passage, Jing Jiang claims an analogy between government and weaving. There are two bases for the similarity. First, government is the primary activity of men and weaving of women. Second, each activity consists of component functions, all of which must be performed adequately and correctly for the overall activity to succeed. The requisites for each component activity are particular and specialized. For cloth to be woven effectively, the component parts of the loom must adequately fulfill their various functions, which are quite different from each other and demand different qualities. For example, the reed comb must be notched finely enough to separate hundreds of threads; the warp beam must be strong enough to bear the tension of all of the threads wound around it. A reed comb would make a terrible warp beam and vice versa. Similarly, if a state is to be governed effectively, the component offices must be staffed by men whose qualities are those required by the specialized tasks of the offices.

Implicit in this narrative is the claim that her son does not understand government and that Jing Jiang herself is competent to instruct him in the appointment of officials. When Wenbo bows and accepts her teaching, he also presumably accepts her premises. It is noteworthy that neither the text nor its various commentaries remark on where she learned to understand the analogy so well.

Although we might not expect a man to use a loom in such an analogy, Jing Jiang’s instruction to her son is entirely consistent in tone with a variety of teacher-student discourses on technique, including Confucius’s advice to Wen Hui in the Analects and Qi Bo’s answers to the questions of Huang Di in the Huang Di neijing. We also can situate this passage within a range of classifications of offices and types of individual and ability in Warring States, Han, and Six Dynasties texts. Descriptions of offices appear in the Xunzi and Zhoubi. Xunzi’s “Regulations of a King” (Wang zhi) describes the hypothetical or ideal duties of a range of offices. The Zhoubi, an ostensible description of the government and administrative structures of the Zhou state, simply lists a range of offices and duties. Neither text contains explanations, analogies, or discussion of the particular abilities suitable for each office. Descriptions of types of individuals, but not linked to specific office, first appear in the Analects and resurface in the Shuyuan 説苑, the Hanshu, the Renwu zhi 人物志, and Tanshi jiaxun. None of these passages contains the kind of analogy we find in the voice of Jing Jiang.

In the Liunü zhiuan, Confucius praises “the woman of the Ji clan” for admonishing Wenbo (as evidenced by the discourse on weaving) when he was alive and for “brightening” his virtue by refusing to mourn him at the time of his death. He also praises her understanding of ritual and hierarchy, as demonstrated by her continuing to mourn both husband and son after their deaths. At the heart of all this praise are her relentless efforts at “improvement,” specifically, the improvement of her son. In his admonitions to his disciples and in his statements about himself, Confucius constantly emphasizes that self-cultivation is a necessary prerequisite for the instruction of others. Yet Confucius shows a curious lack of interest in this woman’s efforts at self-cultivation; his praise is confined to her in-


57 Confucius classified individuals into four types: those born with wisdom, those who acquire it by study, those who learn despite limitations, and those who have ability but do not learn (Lanyu 16.9, as well as 5.16, 6.28, 7.33, and 17.3). The chapter headings of Liu Xiang’s Shuyuan combine occupation and activity in a quasi-classification of human behavior, for example: (1) the way of the ruler, (2) the arts of the minister, (9) straightforward remonstrance, (13) wily plots, and (15) pointers on the martial. The “Table of Ancient and Modern Persons,” which comprises Hanshu 20, classifies some two thousand individuals from legendary times to the Qin dynasty, based at least in part on the four types described by Confucius. Liu Shao’s 里事 (ca. 240-250) Renwu zhi organizes officials into twelve types of ability, with historical examples and assessments of the most suitable occupation for each. The “Managing Practical Affairs” chapter of the Tanshi jiaxun lists six types of official position, reflecting six kinds of talent. See Yan Zhitui 颜之推 (531-591), Tanshi jiaxun (Zhuxi jicheng ed.), 11:24. For translation, see Teng Ssu-yü, Family Instructions for the Ten Clans: Ten-shih chiao-lun (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 114-15. For further discussion of classificatory schemata, see Lisa Raphals, Knowing Words: Wisdom and Cunning in the Classical Traditions of China and Greece (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 20-25.

58 It is worth noting that, unlike most of the Shuyuan and other stories about “the mother of Wenbo,” this passage is unique to the Liunü zhiuan. That fact, and the description of the loom therein, may suggest that this passage was added to the life story well after the date of the original composition ascribed to Liu Xiang (ca. 25 BCE). Its affinities with typologies of offices and types of individuals and ability may also suggest a Han, Later Han, or even Six Dynasties provenance.
struction of her son. The implication is that women are capable of effective teaching without explicit self-cultivation—an extraordinary gendering of virtue!

Meng Mu

The most eminent sage whose female relative’s life story appears in the Lienü zhuan is Mencius or Mengzi 孟子. His mother Meng Mu 孟母 (LNZ 1.11) uses the example of her own work in another analogy, this time between weaving and livelihood, to instruct her son:

When Mengzi was small, he had just come back from studying, and his mother was weaving. She asked him: “How did the studying go?” He said: “So-so.” Mengzi's mother took a knife and cut her weaving. Mengzi was frightened and asked the reason. She said: “Your neglecting your studies is like my cutting this weaving. The junzi studies in order to establish his name and investigates in order to make his knowledge vast. Therefore if you sit still you will be peaceful, if you are active you will keep harm afar. If you now neglect your studies you will not avoid becoming a lackey, and you will not have the means to escape from calamity. Just as if a woman neglects that by which she eats, if a man is negligent in the cultivation of virtue, then if he does not become a thief or a robber he will become a captive or a corvee laborer.” Mengzi was afraid, and morning and night he did not cease to be diligent in his studies. He served his teacher Zi Si and consequently became the most celebrated Ru of the empire.

Meng Mu’s use of the analogy focuses not on the skill of weaving but on weaving as livelihood. It is her teaching, we are told, that causes her son to become foremost of the Ru.

Meng Mu’s argument is that men’s study and self-cultivation is like women’s weaving. The story at least implies that, by cutting her weaving, she is making the young Mencius pay for his negligence in hunger now to avoid paying for it in later misfortune. We are not specifically told whether they went hungry that night. If they did, she completes her analogy by a wonderful demonstration of the power of persuasive action, insofar as she deliberately brings about the consequences of a woman neglecting her work. Hungry or not, he learns the lesson.

According to the eulogy, Meng Mu’s teaching was exhaustive in every detail. She made her son understand the importance of learning, and as a result he perfected his virtue (chengde 成德) and gained eminence within his generation. Meng Mu appears in accounts of these incidents in both Warring States accounts and later compendia. The biography of Mencius in Shiji 74, by contrast, does not mention her.

Both Jing Jiang and Meng Mu make analogies between the activities of women and of men, but the analogies are very different. Meng Mu’s is the simpler; it merely claims that two activities correspond, so that the fruits of inactivity will also correspond. Jing Jiang posits a detailed correspondence between whole and parts.

The use of a particular craft or skill as an analogy for sagacity, or good government, is a common feature of Warring States philosophy. Scattered through the Lanyu, Mengzi, and Zhaungzi in particular, we find many stories in which some aspect of wisdom is compared to skills and arts such as: archery, butchery, cooking, engineering or technological innovation, farming, hunting and trapping (more properly, catching cicadas), military strategy (offensive and defensive), music (creation and interpretation), and wheel-making. Comparisons of this kind are particularly prominent in the Mengzi and Zhaungzi, as a few examples from the domains of archery, cooking, and agriculture demonstrate. These stories take several forms: (1) Wisdom is like X. For example, in Mengzi 5B1, Mencius compares wisdom to skill and sagacity to strength using an analogy based on archery. (2) Wisdom/skill in A is like (craft) B; for example, the

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59 The story consists of four narrative elements: (1) her repeated changes of abode in order to provide an appropriate environment for her son; (2) her successful exhortation to the young Meng Ke 孟珂 to diligent study, by equating his study and her weaving; (3) her reprimand to him for criticizing his wife when he himself has failed to knock on her private door; and (4) her definition of their respective roles (by encouraging his desire to travel, despite her age).

60 LNZ 1.108.

61 She appears in the versions of the story in the Mengzi (1A12) and Hua hu wu ch'iu shu (9.1 and 9.17, pp. 76a and 80a) and later compendia, such as the Wen xuan 文選 and Taiping yulan 太平御覽. See Xiao Yong 姜永 (501-51), Wen xuan (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1987) 11:531, and Taiping yulan 511:14b, 517:5ab, and 826:20-3a.

62 I explore some of these in Lisa Raphals, “Weaving and Archery: Craft Analogies in Early Chinese Argumentation” (paper presented to the Premodern China Seminar, Harvard University, April 29, 1996). The subject warrants a separate study.

63 “Wisdom (chí) is like skill (piao), shall I say, while sagacity is like strength. It is like shooting from beyond a hundred paces. It is due to your strength that the arrow reaches the target, but it is not due to your strength that it hits the mark” (5B1). Mengzi 6A20 stresses the central role of naturalness (ziran 自然) in the teaching of the expert archer and the intuitive learning of the student. The Guanzi 管子 (Sibu bieyou ed., Xiong cheng 11) compares the intuitive knowledge of the craftsman using ax and zhi and Archer Yi’s use of bow and arrow. Other accounts of archery center on ambivalent portrayals of Archer Yi, both as a savior of humankind and a neglectful ruler. See Shanhaijing jiaozhu 山海經校注 (Shanghai: Guji
story of the cook Pao Ding 割丁 butchering oxen in Zhuangzi 3 and the statement in the Doudjíng 60 that “governing a large state is like cooking a small fish.” (3) Acquiring wisdom is like X, for example, the Mencian analogy of the four sprouts: the origins of virtues correspond to the growth of young sprouts, which mature if tended and die if they are neglected or happen to fall on arid soil (Mengzi 2A6).

The Lienü zhuan Arguments

These arguments concern the “outer” sphere of public life: ethics, statecraft, and political rectitude. These examples also show that the arguments attributed to women in the Lienü zhuan closely parallel the form and logic of other arguments used by men in what are generally considered philosophical works of the Warring States and Han. Christoph Harbsmeier has shown that modus tollens (p implies q, not q, therefore not p) was particularly popular in ancient China, as was modus ponens (p implies q, p, ergo q), to a lesser extent.64

Arguments from the Bianqiong zhuan clearly fall within the spectrum of styles and modes of argument used by ministers in rhetorical persuasion to a hierarchical superior. Similarly, the instructive arguments of the Muji zhuan parallel the instruction by masters to disciples within a range of Masters texts. At this point it is tempting to make two fairly radical assertions: (1) that the Warring States and Han textual record represents women as engaging in much the same kind of philosophical argument as has been attributed to men, and (2) that these texts present women as using the same kind of moral reasoning as their male counterparts; in other words, that the early Chinese philosophical tradition did not “gender” moral reasoning.


ARGUMENTS BY WOMEN IN EARLY CHINESE TEXTS

Women or Ministers

One interesting counter-argument to this approach draws on the striking resemblance between Lienü zhuan arguments and the arguments of ministers in the texts of the Masters. In this view, the Lienü zhuan represents (and defends) not women but their “structural” hierarchical equivalent, ministers.

Most of what we consider Chinese scientific and philosophical arguments were made by ministers, either by men who held specific office (for example, Liu Buwei 刘不韡 and Han Fei) or by individuals who were trying to assume the role of minister (for example, Confucius, Mencius, and most other Warring States thinkers, with the notable exception of Zhuangzi). When we turn to ministers whose arguments were purely political and arguably outside of philosophical and scientific discourse, we still find a wide range of appeals to the past and a general avoidance of explicit adversariness, combined with a general willingness to take the risk of admonition. These appeals to the authority of the past included textual authority, such as quotation from the Odes or from Confucius, and appeals to the precedents of history, for example, the actions of the sage kings. Other political persuasions, however, are more pragmatic, in the sense that they appeal to logic or practical reasoning. Examples include much of the bingfa tradition and works of fictionalized history such as the Zhangwuce.

In a recent study, Catherine Gipoulon suggests that while the Lienü zhuan appears to be a defense of women, it may in reality be a defense of ministers against the potentially tyrannous authority of rulers.65 She stresses the analogous roles of wives and ministers in the family and the state.66

La fonction d’épouse est par analogie avec celle de ministre. L’épouse assume dans la famille la même fonction que le ministre dans le gouvernement de l’état.


ARGUMENTS BY WOMEN IN EARLY CHINESE TEXTS

All the passages in Gipoulon’s discussion come from the first five chapters of the Lienü zhuan.\(^{21}\) The omission of the arguments of the Biantong zhuan is significant because most are attributed to unmarried girls or widows, who fall outside the wife-minister analogy. The bow-maker’s wife and Ti Ying resemble ministers in their use of persuasion and psychological subtlety, but their persuasions are addressed directly to rulers, not to husbands. Xuwu’s persuasion is addressed to another woman of only slightly higher status than herself. (Her wealthier neighbors are members of the same association.) Xuwu resembles not so much a minister persuading a ruler as an official persuading colleagues of equal rank to a common position or course of action.

In summary, these accounts of philosophical debate as hierarchical persuasion leave out the possibility that women contributed to the repertoire of early Chinese arguments about ethics, statecraft, and realpolitik. In one case, women disappear from the picture; in the other, they never enter it.

Female Subjectivity

An ostensibly feminist reading might hold that these arguments cannot represent the moral reasoning of women because they were compiled by male authors; they cannot represent the views of female subjects because they do not display “female subjectivity.” Gipoulon’s account of the Lienü zhuan also relies on unstated assumptions about femininity or female subjectivity that bear further scrutiny. First is the claim that the women in the Lienü zhuan are not “feminine” enough (and therefore must be men), in part, because of the absence of jealousy in the stories.\(^{72}\) An opposite conclusion is also possible: that the Biantong zhuan portrayed women as using the same kind of persuasion and moral reasoning as men. In the Lienü zhuan, Xuwu persuades her colleagues to retain her despite her poverty; in the Zhangmoo, Gan Mao 甘茂 uses the same argument to gain protection from Su Qin 蘇秦.\(^{73}\) In this view, women who engage in political argument underscore the similarity of the intellectual and...
moral sensibility attributed to sagacious individuals, male and female.\textsuperscript{74}

Finally, scholars of Chinese philosophy have a history of separating an essentialized “feminine” (which is praised) from actual female persons (who are ignored), often in order to argue for the “feminism” of Confucian thought through its praise or reification of the “feminine.”\textsuperscript{75} Gipoulon locates moral exhortation in the realm of the feminine; on the other hand, she denies \textit{prima facie} that actual women might be the authors of effective persuasions.

\textit{Ti Ying and the Question of Historical Plausibility}

Like so many of the \textit{Lienü zhuàn} arguments set within a family residence, the arguments ascribed to Xuwu, Meng Mu, the wife of the bow-maker of Jin, and Jing Jiang cannot be verified independently, however much they may be repeated from text to text. Xuwu’s argument is an appeal for goodwill on the basis of self-interest; such appeals pervade the pages of the \textit{Zhangwu}. Does the story of Meng Mu come from the memory (or invention) of the grown Mencius, or is it a later invention by another? No annals record the argument ascribed to the wife of the bow-maker of Jin in the court of Duke Ping; an almost identical version of the story appears in the \textit{Hanshu wushizhuàn}, but it is equally didactic in tone.

Jing Jiang’s case is more complicated because she is mentioned extensively in the \textit{Guoyu} and other Warring States texts.\textsuperscript{76} One possible reason that Jing Jiang receives so much attention in these texts is a direct association with Confucius and his disciples. The \textit{Hanshi wushizhuàn} and \textit{Zhangwu} indicate that Wenbo was a student of Confucius, that he was sent to Confucius by his mother, and that he was wanting in his behavior toward his teacher.\textsuperscript{77} In the \textit{Lienü zhuàn} account, Confucius respects Jing Jiang enough to use her as an example to instruct his disciples.\textsuperscript{78}

By contrast, the story of Ti Ying’s intervention on her father’s behalf is less easy to dismiss because Sima Qian underscores her importance in repeated references to her actions in his account of her in the postface to the \textit{Shiji}. Both the \textit{Lienü zhuàn} and \textit{Shiji} agree that the argument of Ti Ying was advanced in the court of Emperor Xiao Wen, and identical versions of the argument appear in both texts and in the \textit{Hanshu}. Ti Ying’s petition and records of the event may have been preserved in court documents. Whatever Sima’s sources for this story—and his inclusion of the physician’s cases raises many questions in this regard—the postface to \textit{Shiji} 105 makes it clear he has more than a little interest in the story of Ti Ying’s defense, which bears indirectly on his own circumstances.

... Bian Que suffered calamity because of his art, and the Master of the Granary [Chunyu Yi], although he hid his traces and kept himself secret, still was bound for punishment. It was only because Ti Ying sent forward a document of petition that her father was able live out his days in peace.\textsuperscript{79}

The passage ends with the puzzling statement that the Master of the Granary “could be said to come close” (\textit{ke wei jin zhi yi 可謂近之矣}) to Bian Que. This is the apparent reason for including these two life stories in the chapter. Chunyu Yi “comes close” to Bian Que in two senses: in his medical skill and in his experience of judicial persecution. Bian Que perishes; and, for all his secrecy and precautions, Chunyu Yi is spared only because of the intervention of Ti Ying. Sima’s reference to her by name rather than simply as “the daughter of Chunyu Yi” underscores her agency in her father’s happier fate.\textsuperscript{80}

Sima Qian may have felt sharply the contrast between Ti Ying’s intervention and Chunyu Yi’s memorial and his own personal fate.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Hanshi wushizhuàn} 1.19, 6b-7a and \textit{Zhangwu} 20 (Zhao 3), 692-99. Here, Lou Huan of Qin uses the story to justify giving advice to the King of Zhao about Zhao’s prospects after a defeat by Qin. In this version, Wenbo’s [former] wet nurse asks Ji how she can forbear to mourn for her son.

\textsuperscript{78} For detailed discussion of textual sources for Jing Jiang and her possible connection with Confucius, see Raphals, “A Woman Who Understood the Rites.”

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Shiji} 105:2817.

\textsuperscript{80} A similar example comes from the biography of the assassin Nie Zheng 倪政 (d. 397) and subsequent self-sacrifice of his elder sister to complete his honor by public recognition (\textit{Shiji} 86:2525). Sima Qian refers to her by name as Nie Rong 倪榮 and declares her to be a \textit{lienü} 粤女 or “virtuous woman”; indeed, this story
The defense and explanations offered in Chunyu Yi’s memorial apparently give satisfaction, especially since there is no account of any subsequent action against him. In Sima’s letter to Shao Qing, included in Ban Gu’s biography in Han Shu 62, he repeatedly states that he was unable to give a satisfactory account of himself. In his attempted defense of the disgraced general Li Ling 李陵, he was “unable to clarify matters fully” (wei neng jin ming 未能盡明), the emperor “did not perceive [the situation] fully” (bu shen xiao 不深曉); he was put in prison and was “unable to explain himself” (bu neng zi lie 不能自列) or make clear his loyalty. The comparison between the two cases is amplified later in the same passage, where Sima describes mutilation as the worst disgrace, second only to castration. Even allowing for the facts of Chunyu Yi’s higher office, nobler family, and less extreme judicial circumstances, Sima modestly presents himself as lacking the rhetorical skills to plead his own innocence when given an opportunity to do so! An even harsher contrast emerges between Ti Ying and Sima Qian’s own friends and associates:

My family was poor and our wealth was insufficient to commute the punishment. Of those nearest to me, no one sought to help and none of the officials near to the throne spoke a single word for me.

In the case of Ti Ying, Sima Qian’s repeated and explicit references to her by name and his contrast between her and his own friends and relatives strongly suggest that he, at least, believed that these events had actually taken place, presumably less than a century before.

The point of the foregoing lengthy discussion is a simple one. Virtually all commentators on the subject have not considered, or have dismissed outright, the possibility that the Lienü zhuan arguments represent ethical reflection by women. I have argued to the contrary: (1) that some degree of female authorship may be attributed to the arguments in the Lienü zhuan, despite its compilation and transmission by men; and (2) that these arguments cannot be dismissed as arguments in defense of, or by, ministers; and (3) that claims for the presence or absence of female subjectivity make assumptions in advance of the evidence.

**Archaeological Evidence of Arguments by Women**

Another approach to the verisimilitude of the arguments and persuasions of the Bianliang zhuan is to contrast them to actual accounts of either persuasion or legal argument. Such evidence would be particularly valuable in the case of arguments among commoners, such as the example of Qi Wu, for whom so little independent evidence is available.

The tomb excavations from Shuihudi, dated 217 BCE, contain over six hundred bamboo strips of legal documents. These include digests of Qin legal codes, instructions to officials, and a section titled “Models for scaling and investigating” (Fengzhen shi), a compendium of brief digests of twenty-five summary reports of actual legal cases on ninety-eight strips. Several of these deal with the treatment of male and female slaves (chen 臣 and jie 奴, respectively), who were privately owned, and male and female bondservants (lichen 隸臣 and lige 隸奴), who were held by the government. For example, the section “Eighteen Qin Statutes” 秦律十八種, specifies that bondwomen can be lent to commoners and held responsible for the cost of lost government tools. This section discusses the redemption of male and female bondservants but specifically proscribes the redemption of (skilled) female bondservants engaged in embroidery and clothing work. It also sets relative rates for the value of the labor of male and female bondservants: the performance of one (male) artisan was set as equivalent to two bondwomen. With skilled female workers, however, the situation changed; in the case of a seamstress (a skilled female laborer) and an artisan, one woman was equivalent to one man. Three cases in the Fengzhen shi section specifically deal with the treatment of slaves and bondwomen and permit contrast with the treatment of women and men.
men under Qin law. One account of the sealing of a house registers both a male and a female slave as sealed property. Others summarize the punishment of both male and female slaves at the request of their owners. Several concern the activities and status of women, including the mention that a slave woman assisted in a police enquiry.

Most interesting for purposes of the present discussion is one commoner woman's denunciation (gao 告) of another for causing her to miscarry:

I had been pregnant for six months. Yesterday, in the daytime, I fought with the adult woman C of the same village. I and C grabbed each other by the hair. C threw me over and drove me back. A fellow-villager, the gongshi 公士 D, came to the rescue and separated C and me. As soon as I had reached my house, I felt ill and my belly hurt; yesterday evening the child miscarried. Now I have wrapped up the child and I have come to bring it, and to denounce myself and to denounce C.[34]

The report adds that the presiding official ordered the arrest of C, examined the dead baby (and placenta), brought in a bondwoman who had experience of childbirth to examine both mother and child, and had the complainant's family questioned as to her condition when she arrived home.[34]

The central protagonist of this case, like several of the Lienü zhuan women, comes forward on her own initiative to report the incident and denounce the culpable parties, possibly including herself. She clearly has access to the judicial process and her testimony is taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. The subsequent procedures not only verify her account of events, but attempt to gain independent information as to her condition at the time of the miscarriage.

The women's treatment is not noticeably different from that of a group of male complainants in the next case, a group of men accusing a neighbor of "poisonous words." Most of the record consists of the statement of the accused, who argues against the charge by revealing a history of ostracism of his family ever since his grandmother's denunciation and exile on the same charge, thirty years before. In both cases, the complaining party has access to the judicial process, the complaint is recorded in detail, and an investigation is made to determine the facts of the case to the satisfaction of the examining officials.

Women also speak in their own voices in casebooks (zouxian shu 奏獻書) excavated from Zhangjiashan 張家山 at Jiangling in Hu Bei.[36] The second case in the corpus is a complaint against a Slave Mei 婦女 for absconding after being sold to the daifu 大夫禄 by a commoner Dian 士五 for 16,000 cash in the sixth year of Gaozu's reign (201).[37] Her argument is not to deny her flight but to justify it on the grounds that Dian enslaved and sold her in violation of an edict of 202, which freed persons previously sold into slavery because of widespread famine.[38]

The cause of my becoming Dian's slave is that at the time of [the defeat of Chu] I had fled and absconded and gone down into Han and did not write my name in the population register. Dian detained me, entered me in the register, re-enslaved me, and sold me to Lu. Since I had been re-enslaved improperly, I fled and absconded forthwith, this as in [the statement of] Lu.

Dian claims that the re-enslavement was valid because Mei had not registered herself as free:

Dian said: "The reason Mei is my slave is that at time of [the defeat of Chu] when she fled and I detained her in the sixth year in the middle of the second month, she did not yet have her name in the population register, whereupon I had her entered in the register and sold her to Lu, this as in [the statement of] Lu." He said to Mei: "The reason you are my slave is that, although at the time [of the defeat of Chu] you had fled and gone to Han, you did not write your name in the population register, so when I detained you and re-enslaved you, my selling you was proper. You fled and absconded, what is there to explain?"[39]

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[34] YMSHD slips 688-92, trans. Hulsewé, E 3.
[37] The gongshi was the first and lowest rank of the aristocracy. See Hulsewé, E 23, n. 7.
[38] YMSHD slips 644-70, translation slightly modified from Hulsewé, E 23.
[40] YMSHD slips 671-74, Hulsewé, E 24.
[41] See Jiangling Zhangjiashan Hanjian zhengli xiaozou 張陵張家山漢簡整理小組, "Jiangling Zhangjiashan Hanjian 'Zouxian shu' shiwen" 張陵張家山漢簡纂釋文, Wemen 447 (1993.8): 22-25 and Wemen 466 (1995.3): 31-36. Because of the considerable time between excavation and preliminary publication, these texts have received relatively little study. For an account of some of these in English is given by Susan K. Weid, "The Han Casebooks from Jiangling" (paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago IL, April, 1997).
[43] Hanhu 1B:54. This edict by Han Gaozu followed the pacification of the empire and the defeat of Chu. An earlier edict of 205 BCE had permitted people to sell their children and go to Shu and Han for food (Hanhu 24:1127).
In both the Zhangjiashan and Shuihudi materials, the women’s remarks all conform to the forms prescribed by the Qin state authorities. The brevity thus imposed on them would have precluded the kind of sustained argument found in the Lienü zhuan narratives, the Mengzi, or any other text that foregrounds literary and philosophical arguments that have been crafted to such a high degree. The arguments are less detailed than those of the Lienü zhuan, but they do show women arguing in their own defense, and the voices of actual women retain a sense of authenticity that the more elaborate arguments of the Lienü zhuan may not. These differences between the Lienü zhuan arguments and the statements in case books from excavated texts underscore the literary and philosophical qualities of the Lienü zhuan. Ironically, the sophisticated construction of these narratives makes them sound less “genuine” than the historical statements of female commoners.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I want to reconsider the distinction between hierarchical persuasion and instructive argument in the contexts of state politics and teaching lineages. Arguments within the context of state politics tend toward hierarchical persuasion of an inferior (a minister or woman) to a superior, a client addressing a patron. Effective strategies for this kind of argument include the psychological manipulation described in the Shuowen chapter of the Han Feizi, appeals to the self-interest of the ruler of the kind demonstrated in the Bianzhong zhuan, appeals to the example or authority of rulers of legendary political efficacy and rectitude, and the specific avoidance of adversarial argument. Our major sources for hierarchical persuasions in state politics are quasi-historical narratives, including the Zuo zhuan, Guoyu, Lienü zhuan, Shi ji, and Zhanguoce.

The context of teaching lineages, by contrast, favors instructive argument by a teacher or sage to an inferior disciple or interlocutor. Effective strategies for this kind of argument include appeals to the rectitude and authority of the sages, claims for one’s own position within a teaching lineage and access to its secrets and esoteric meanings (for example, Mencius) or texts, and the use of adversarial arguments against competitors, either inside the lineage (for example, Xunzi’s attacks on Mengzi) or to defend the lineage against attacks from without (for example, Zhuangzi’s attacks on the Ruhists and Mohists). Our major sources for instructive argument within teaching lineages are the texts of the Masters category, supported by anecdotal traditions within the teaching lineage. Several points about the distinction between these two contexts are worth making.

First, arguments by women fit squarely into the context of state politics and are absent or excluded from the context of teaching lineages. Within quasi-historical narratives, women address rulers in the same texts, contexts, and terms as men do. Women appear in Masters texts, but as examples or objects of discussion, not as agents. Mothers instructing sons are also examples of instructive argument, but these mothers are not part of teaching lineages. Second, narratives about state politics and narratives in teaching lineages are potentially competing traditions. Part of the difficulty in distinguishing the two contexts is that “teachers” appear in both, but in opposite roles. In the context of state politics, a teacher or sage who discusses virtue and politics with a ruler is an inferior; the narrative is focused on the ruler, not on him. In the context of the texts of his teaching lineage, the same individual is a superior instructing disciples (or attempting to do so). In this context, a ruler is reduced to the status of disciple/interlocutor. Mother-teachers appear rarely in teaching lineage stories, but they are similarly polyvalent in that they are inferior to their sons by gender and superior as parents and as teachers. The overlap between the two contexts and the exclusion of women from teaching lineages obscures our view of the role of women in early argumentation.

In a study of the contexts for debate in China and Greece, Sir Geoffrey Lloyd has argued that specifically philosophical argument played a minor role in the development of textual teaching lineages, which were primarily concerned with the transmission of texts; they avoided criticizing predecessors and legitimated their own views by appeals to authority.¹⁰¹ The arguments of the Bianzhong zhuan throw an interesting light on this claim: do the women in the Bianzhong zhuan engage in adversarial argument; to what kind of authority do they appeal (if any), and finally, do their arguments fall under the broad rubric of philosophy?

Jing Jiang disparages her son’s competence as minister of Li;
Meng Mu upbraids her son for neglecting his studies; the bowmaker's wife and the Taiyang's daughter accuse the rulers of their states of vicious and immoral conduct; and even Xiuwu disparages her wealthier neighbor's grasp of essentials. Yet none of these arguments are directly adversarial in the manner observable in Greek debates. How could they be? Arguments motivated by real needs and addressed to powerful superiors are necessarily diplomatic.

These arguments are more than merely nonadversarial. They also are arguments that—to varying degrees—solve the problems they describe. Ji's instruction teaches Wenbo how to govern effectively. Meng Mu's slashed weaving cures Mencius of negligence for the rest of his life. The archery lesson of the bow-maker's wife cures the maladroit shooting that caused Duke Ping to condemn her husband. Ti Ying offers to "pay" for her father's crime, even as her arguments eliminate the charges brought against him.

The arguments of the Biantong zhuan differ from Masters text arguments in the nature of their appeals to authority. They appeal to the Five Classics (especially the Changes, Odes, and Rites), to the sage kings, and to the examples of sagacious women of the past. Nonetheless, the arguments rely more on internal logic and ethical values than on appeals to textual or personal authority. They use analogy but do not center on exact correspondence between analogized qualities for their force, as does, for example, Mencius' dispute with Gaozi.\(^{109}\) Finally, their appeals to authority do not invoke the specific authority of teaching lineages.\(^{109}\)

These arguments treat the same subject matter as the canonical texts of Chinese philosophy: the nature of government (Jing Ji), the goals of life (Meng Mu), and the practice of justice in government (the bow-maker's wife and Ti Ying). Advocates of a "female ethic" might emphasize the importance of the particularity, pragmatism, and relational nature of these arguments. An interesting alternative is to grant, argumenta, the claim that intellectual debate for its own sake was not the central feature of Chinese philosophical thought. In this case, we can hardly, as it were, demand of the women what we do not expect of the men. Admitting these arguments

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\(^{109}\) For a vitriolic critique of Mencius' use of analogy, see Chad Hansen, A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 180-93.

\(^{109}\) I follow Lloyd (Adversaries and Authorities, 27) in using the terms authority, textual authority, or authority figure to mean individuals, texts, or ideas invoked to justify ideas or practices.
Appendix 1. Continued.

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Mayi zhuon

| 1.9 Jing Jiang of the Ji of Lu | to son | weaving-government analogy |
| 1.11 Meng Mu | to son | weaving-government analogy |

Rhetorical persuasion: 9: to ruler 7, to official 1, to neighbors 1 instruction: 6: to ruler 4 (of whom 3 marry her), to consort 1, to stranger 1

Appendix 2: Logic of the Arguments

I. The Wife of the Bow-maker of Jin

Duke Ping’s argument

1. If the bow is not well made, the bow-maker deserves death.
2. If the bow is well made, the ruler can shoot straight.
3. The ruler cannot shoot straight.
4. Therefore (a) the bow is not well made, and (b) the bow-maker deserves death.
   It is valid by modus tollens and modus ponens.

Modus tollens (2, 3, therefore 4a)

2 If the bow is well made, the ruler can shoot straight.
3 The ruler cannot shoot straight.
Therefore (4a) the bow is not well made.

Modus ponens (1, 4a, therefore 4b)

1 If the bow is not well made, the bow-maker deserves death.
4a The bow is not well made.
Therefore (4b) the bow-maker deserves death.

The first argument of the bow-maker’s wife

1. If the bow is well made, the bow-maker does not deserve death.
2. If (a) the bow is well made and (b) the ruler is a skillful archer, then (c) the ruler will be able to shoot straight.
3. (a) The bow is well made, and (b) the ruler cannot shoot straight.
4. Therefore (a) the ruler lacks skill, and (b) the bow-maker does not deserve death.
   Her argument is also valid by modus ponens and partially valid by modus tollens.

Modus ponens

1 If the bow is well made, the bow-maker does not deserve death.
3a The bow is well made.
Therefore (4b) the bow-maker does not deserve death.

Modus tollens

2 If the bow is well made and the ruler is a skillful archer, the ruler will be able to shoot straight.
3b The ruler cannot shoot straight.
Therefore (4a) the ruler lacks skill [and the bow is not well made]. Her emphasis on (4a) seeks to draw attention away from the contradiction of her claim at (3a).

The second argument of the bow-maker’s wife

1. If the bow is well made, the bow-maker does not deserve death.
2. If the bow is well made and the ruler is a skillful archer, the ruler will be able to shoot straight.
3. The bow is well made, and the ruler shoots straight (by virtue of her instruction).
4. Therefore the bow-maker does not deserve death.

Modus ponens (1, 3A, therefore 4A)

1 If the bow is well made, the bow-maker does not deserve death.
3a The bow is well made.
Therefore (4) the bow-maker does not deserve death.

and, in passing

2 If (a) the bow is well made and (b) the ruler is a skillful archer, (c) the ruler will be able to shoot straight.
3 The bow is well made, and the ruler shoots straight.
Therefore (2b) the ruler is a skillful archer.

II. Xuwu of Qi

Liu’s argument

1. Weaving at night requires sufficient candlelight.
2. Each member must bring a candle to ensure sufficient light.
3. Xuwu has not brought a candle.
4. The light is insufficient, or Xuwu consumes more than she contributes.
5. Xuwu’s presence harms the association.
6. Xuwu should be excluded.
Xuwu's counter-argument

1. Weaving at night requires sufficient candlelight.
2. If the light is sufficient, weaving can proceed.
3. Xuwu has not brought a candle
4. The light is already sufficient; Xuwu's presence does not diminish it, and Xuwu benefits the association in other ways than bringing a candle.
5. Xuwu's presence benefits the association.
6. Xuwu should not be excluded.

III. Ti Ying

The king's argument

1. The king desires justice to prevail in the empire.
2. The king convicts a man of a crime if and only if he has serious faults.
3. If the king convicts a man of a crime, he sentences him to death or mutilation in the name of justice.
4. Chunyu Yi has been convicted of a crime.
5. Therefore Chunyu Yi has serious faults, and
6. Chunyu Yi deserves death or mutilation in the name of justice.

Ti Ying's counter-argument

1. The king desires justice to prevail in the empire.
2. Justice and integrity are (partially) defined as the desire to correct one's faults.
3. Chunyu Yi has a (deserved) reputation for justice and integrity.
4. Therefore Chunyu Yi desires to correct his faults.
5. If a man suffers death or mutilation, he cannot return to life or physical integrity.
6. If he cannot return to life or physical integrity, he cannot correct his faults.
7. If Chunyu Yi suffers death or mutilation, he cannot correct his faults.
8. Therefore whoever causes Chunyu Yi to suffer death or mutilation prevents him from correcting his faults.
9. The king has sentenced Chunyu Yi to mutilation in the name of justice.
10. Therefore, in the name of justice, the king prevents Chunyu Yi from doing that which makes him just (correcting his faults).
11. Therefore the king cannot desire justice to prevail in the empire.

IV. Jing Jiang's analogy

1. Government (A) is the primary activity of men.
2. Weaving (B) is the primary activity of women.
3. Government requires the correct function of eight components $A = \Sigma(A_1...A_8)$.
4. Weaving (B) requires the correct function of eight components $B = \Sigma(B_1...B_8)$. $A:B:=(A_1...A_8):\Sigma(B_1...B_8)$.
5. Men's governing is like women's weaving; key offices correspond to key parts of the loom.
6. I am a woman, and I understand weaving.
7. You are a man, and you do not understand government.
8. I understand the necessary qualifications for each component of the loom, and the correspondences between them and the various offices of the government.
9. Therefore I am competent to instruct you in the appointment of officials.

V. Meng Mu's argument

1. Men's studying and self-cultivation is like women's weaving insofar as both are: (1) the goal of activity, (2) the source of livelihood and recognition, and (3) protection against misfortune in an unpredictable world.
2. As a woman, if I neglect my work, I will pay the price in misfortune later and hunger now.
3. If as a man you neglect your work, you will pay the price in misfortune later.
4. By cutting my weaving now, I make you pay the price in hunger now, with me, so you will learn by it and not have to pay the price in misfortune later.