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978-0-521-19431-0 - Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation

Alexander Beecroft

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Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early
Greece and China

Patterns of Literary Circulation

In this book, Alexander Beecroft explores how the earliest poetry in Greece (Homeric epic and lyric) and China (the *Canon of Songs*) evolved from being local, oral, and anonymous to being textualized, interpreted, and circulated over increasingly wider areas. Beecroft reexamines representations of authorship as found in poetic biographies such as the *Lives of Homer* and the *Zuozhuan*, and in the works of other philosophical and historical authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Confucius, and Sima Qian. Many of these anecdotes and narratives have long been rejected as spurious or motivated by naïve biographical criticism. Beecroft argues that these texts effectively negotiated the tensions between local and pan-cultural audiences. The figure of the author thus served as a catalyst to a sense of shared cultural identity in both the Greek and Chinese worlds. It also facilitated the emergence of both cultures as the bases for cosmopolitan world orders.

Alexander Beecroft is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University. He has published on topics in Classics, Sinology, and Comparative Literature in journals such as *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, the *New Left Review*, and *Early Medieval China*.

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ALEXANDER BEECROFT

Yale University



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521194310

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First published 2010

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Beecroft, Alexander, 1973–

Authorship and cultural identity in early Greece and China : patterns of literary circulation / Alexander Beecroft.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19431-0 (hardback)

1. Authorship. 2. Greek literature – History and criticism. 3. Chinese literature – History and criticism. I. Title.

PN146.B38 2010

808'.0209 – dc22 2009034803

ISBN 978-0-521-19431-0 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

This book has been some time in the making, and would not have been possible at all without the help and encouragement of many. I owe a particular debt to those who taught me as an undergraduate at the University of Alberta, including Michael Lynn-George, Alastair and Carola Small, Rosemary Nielsen, Caroline Falkner, Jenny Li-Mitra, and Hai-Ching Du, who introduced me to the Greek, Latin, and Chinese languages and filled me with a fascination for the literature, history, and cultures of the ancient Mediterranean and China. In graduate school, I was fortunate to have a variety of mentors, intellectual and professional, including Michael Puett, Richard Thomas, Paul Rouzer, Calvert Watkins, Carolyn Higbie, John Hamilton, Jan Ziolkowski, and Marc Shell. Most of all, of course, I had the honor and the luxury of writing the dissertation from which this book evolved under the direction of two of the wisest, most insightful, and most genial of advisers, Gregory Nagy and Stephen Owen. My debt to these two men is profound, and displayed on each of the pages which follow.

In my time at Yale, I have also been extremely fortunate in my colleagues, mentors, and friends in the Comparative Literature Department. David Quint, Haun Saussy, and Katie Trumpener have taught me to be a sharper reader and a more thoughtful writer, and their readings of various drafts of this book, combined with their encouragement, advice, and advocacy were indispensable to the directions I have taken. Other colleagues – Richard Maxwell, Pericles Lewis, Carol Jacobs, Katerina Clark, Dudley Andrew, Ala Alryyes, Moira Fradinger,

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Vilashini Coopan, and Ann Gaylin among them – have also played a significant role, and conversations with them over the years have likewise helped to shape my thinking on a number of subjects. I also have had the pleasure and benefit of discussing my work, formally and informally, with a number of colleagues in the Classics Department – including Egbert Bakker, Victor Bers, Chris Kraus, Kirk Freudenberg, Irene Peirano, and Pauline LeVen – and in East Asian Languages and Literatures – including Ed Kamens, John Treat, Christopher Hill, Kang-i Sun Chang, Jing Tsu, and Paize Keulemans. Other scholars, at Yale and beyond, have helped in various ways by reading portions of the manuscript, or through their comments on presentations of some of the underlying themes of the book, or through especially enlightening conversations at varying stages in the development of the project – Tamara Chin, Joy Connolly, David Damrosch, Beatrice Gruendler, Eric Hayot, Andrew Hui, Martin Kern, David Schaberg, Shu-mei Shih, Nancy Worman, and Zhou Yiqun. Laura Slatkin and Froma Zeitlin deserve special mention for critically timed expressions of sympathy and encouragement. A variety of audiences have provided valuable feedback, at meetings of the American Comparative Literature Association in Boulder, San Juan, Princeton, Puebla, and Long Beach; at the American Philological Association in New Orleans; and at the Association for Asian Studies in San Diego, as well as other audiences at Oxford, King’s College London, and the Universities of Toronto and Alberta. I am also grateful to Michael Lonegro for his advice with an earlier phase of the project, to my readers at Cambridge, and to Beatrice Rehl, my editor, and William Stoddard, my copy editor. All of these individuals deserve credit for the book’s successes; any errors or shortcomings are mine alone.

Friends from all stages of my life have kept me sane during the writing of this book, and have in many cases also provided important input into this book. Stuart and Tiffany Chambers, Alex and Catherine Davies, Jason Rosychuk, Margaret Small, Marica Cassis, and Matina Karvellas have been vital supports throughout my adult life (and before) and, in more ways than they know, have made it possible for me to write. Darryl Sterk, also an old friend, has been a constant intellectual and emotional companion, and has borne witness to my evolving intellectual interests over a quarter of a century. Friendships begun at Harvard and developed since with Corinne Pache,

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Justin Isenhart, Wiebke Denecke, and Daniel Fried have been intellectually stimulating and personally enriching. Anne Dunlop, Milette Gaifman, Kate Holland, Ivan Fernandez, Ian Quinn, Seth Brodsky, Gundula Kreuzer, and Graeme Reed have all helped make my years at Yale happy, and also deserve credit for listening to (and helping me with) the gradual emergence of this book from the dissertation with which it began. Viki Zavales, Ben Schreier, Lisa Howe, Mary Ellen Burd, and Rick Cole, among many others, have offered love, support, and understanding over a sustained period. Jackie Olvera, Simon Hay, Cybele Locke, Arang Keshavarzian, Geoffrey Atherton, Jim Austin, and Eric Adler have provided a larger intellectual and social community. Barry McCrea deserves special mention for a friendship that began as collegial and became a sustaining and rewarding part of my life in New Haven.

My family has, of course, been indispensable from the beginning, and I want to thank my parents, Bill and Joyce Beecroft, for their love for me and the intellectual curiosity I learned from them; I also thank my brother, John Coffin, who showed me from an early age the joy that can come from a love of knowledge. I am also profoundly grateful to have known all the other members of my family – my grandparents, Lance and Irene Rowat and Bill and Dorothy Beecroft; my sisters, Debbie Kennedy and Tracy Coffin; my aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, all of whom have contributed to the person I am today. Finally, and most importantly, I want to dedicate this book to my partner, David Greven; no one knows as well as he what went into the writing of this book, and no one else would have had the patience, kindness, and love to see me through it, as well as the intellectual clarity and generosity on which I draw every day.