

YIQUN ZHOU

Festivals, Feasts,
and Gender Relations
in Ancient China
and Greece

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Festivals, Feasts, and Gender Relations in Ancient China and Greece

Ancient China and Greece are two classical civilizations that have exerted far-reaching influence in numerous areas of human experience and are often invoked as the paradigms in East–West comparison. This book examines gender relations in the two ancient societies as reflected in convivial contexts such as family banquets, public festivals, and religious feasts. Two distinct patterns of interpersonal affinity and conflict emerge from the Chinese and Greek sources that show men and women organizing themselves and interacting with each other in social occasions intended for the collective pursuit of pleasure. Through an analysis of these patterns, Yiqun Zhou illuminates the different sociopolitical mechanisms, value systems, and fabrics of human bonds in the two classical traditions. Her book will be an important resource for readers who are interested in the comparative study of societies, gender studies, women's history, and the legacy of civilizations.

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Preface

This book is a study of interpersonal relationships and structures of sentiment, with a special focus on their reflection in various sociable contexts and on the gender dimension, in ancient China and Greece (ca. 10th–4th centuries BCE). By examining a wide range of sources (mainly literary and historical) that show men and women engaging in the collective pursuit of pleasure on such occasions as family banquets, public festivals, and religious feasts, the study aims to illuminate the different sociopolitical mechanisms, value systems, and human bonds in the two classical civilizations that have exerted far-reaching influences in numerous areas of human experience.

My inquiry steps outside the predominant subjects of study in the fast-growing field of China–Greece comparative research, namely, science, medicine, philosophy, and historiography.¹ By focusing on human

¹ Examples of the articles and book chapters in the existing literature: Keightley (1993), G. Lloyd (1990, ch. 4), Nylan (2000), Schaberg (1999), Turner (1990), Vernant and Gernet (1980), and Wooyeal and Bell (2004). Journals such as the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Dao*, and *Asian Philosophy* from time to time publish comparative studies on Chinese and Greek philosophy. Most recently, a special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (2002, vol. 29, issue 3) was devoted to comparing Chinese and Greek ethics. Monographs: Beecroft (2010), Chen Fang (2001), Jullien ([1995] 2000), Kim (2009), Kuriyama (1999), Li Zhiqiang (2008), Liu Chenglin (2001), G. Lloyd (1996, 2002, 2004, 2005), Lloyd and Sivin (2002), X. Lu (1998), Raphals (1992), Reding (1985, 2004), Shankman and Durrant (2000, 2002), Wang Daqing (2006), and J. Yu (2007). The preceding list includes only publications that focus on comparing China and Greece, and leaves out such works as David A. Hall and Roger T. Ames's voluminous studies (1987, 1998, 1999) on Chinese and Western philosophies, in which the Greeks play an important role. Shankman and Durrant (2000: 4–8; 2002: 3–5) offer useful reviews of the literature that to various degrees draws inspiration from a juxtaposition of ancient China and Greece.

Only two essays to date focus on gender issues in ancient China and Greece. Nylan (2000) compares images of elite women in the Akhaimenid (559–331 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) empires as they are portrayed in contemporary Greek and Chinese

interaction in convivial settings, I seek to create a portrayal of the two ancient civilizations that has both structure and texture and that is both more dynamic and more concrete than earlier studies.

My study explores important topics in gender studies and family and women's history, including the relationship between the public and domestic domains, the dynamics of sexual rivalry and cooperation, the implications that homosocial bonding and gender relations have for each other, the role of religion and ritual in women's lives, and the relationship between female subjectivity and male imagination. As gender relations and the relationship between the family and the larger sociopolitical order continue to emerge as among the most protean and intensely contested aspects of human experience across cultures, my study will help provide a comparative understanding of some of the major historical paradigms in human organization whose legacies are still influential today.

Finally, I hope my inquiry will add to those studies that take sociable activities as their entry point for understanding social organization, value systems, and human relationships. This approach has already enriched our understanding of ancient Greek society, as exemplified in works by scholars such as Oswyn Murray and Pauline Schmitt-Pantel.² The awareness of the need to enlarge the scope of inquiry to gain both more valid generalizations and deeper understandings of individual cases has already led classicists to study convivial practices in the neighboring cultures of Egypt and the Middle East.³ Findings from China, another major ancient civilization, will not only contribute an important case study but also enhance the theoretical interest of sociability studies.⁴

Texts, Translations, Citations, and Reading Approach

All the Chinese and Greek primary texts, major commentaries, and translations consulted for this study are listed at the beginning of the bibliography. Unless otherwise indicated, all Greek texts and translations are from the Loeb Classical Library (with occasional modifications).

historical works, and Raphals (2002b) compares Chinese and Greek notions of gender and virtue through a discussion of Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and several early Chinese historical and didactic texts.

² See these two scholars' works in the bibliography.

³ Dentzer (1982), Murray ed. (1990), and W. J. Slater ed. (1991).

⁴ Murray (2000) calls for including China among the "ancient societies" in future studies of sociability.

Chinese texts come from various editions. For the *Book of Odes*, the most important Chinese text for my study, I use Arthur Waley's translation and make modifications when necessary. The pinyin system is used for the romanization of Chinese throughout the book. For the transcription of Greek names and epithets, I have generally adopted the Greek form (e.g., Alkaios instead of Alcaeus, Ktesios instead of Ctesius) but in some cases have used the familiar Latinized form (e.g., Socrates instead of Sokrates, Achilles instead of Akhilleus).

Though literary texts form the mainstay of the primary materials in this study, I have analyzed them primarily for the insights that they offer into the ideas and practices in social relations in ancient China and Greece. Thus readers sensitive to the fine points in the aesthetic and rhetorical aspects of literary texts may find much wanting in the following pages. I believe, however, that the richness and intensity of the sentiments expressed in the literary texts will still assert themselves and that the texts provide an indispensable source for an investigation of ancient convivial life.

The staggering amount of scholarship behind almost any aspect of the issues touched on in this study makes it impossible to be exhaustive in my references to the secondary literature. I hope, however, that I have managed to cite those works that are most relevant to the topics under discussion, that represent influential positions on the issues, and that contain the most up-to-date research and can guide the reader to earlier studies.

Acknowledgments

This book is based on my 2004 dissertation at the University of Chicago. My committee members, Anthony Yu, Michael Murrin, W. R. Johnson, and David Roy, guided me through the various stages of the project. Anthony Yu, in particular, displayed boundless faith in me as a scholar-in-the-making throughout the long years that I spent in Hyde Park. Without the benefit of his vision and constant reassurances, I could not have brought a wide-ranging and risky project such as this to fruition. Outside of Chicago, Wai-yee Li and Lisa Raphals generously read the dissertation and provided me with much-needed encouragement. I am especially grateful to Wai-yee for suggesting that I incorporate the bronze inscriptions among my Chinese primary sources.

I have come a long way since the summer of 2006, when I picked up my dissertation again and began to revise it. In the revision process, I

have benefited from the magnanimity of many colleagues and friends who took the time to read my work and discuss it with me. I thank Jim Reichert for helping me clarify some important concepts in the prospectus that I eventually submitted to Cambridge University Press. Richard P. Martin provided an informative conversation on Greek women's poetry. Andrew Abbott, Roger Ames, Miranda Brown, Martin Kern, Feng Li, Li Meng, Edward Shaughnessy, Ban Wang, and Anthony Yu read portions of various drafts and supplied stimulating comments. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Geoffrey Lloyd, Michael Nylan, and Peter White, who plowed through a later draft and sent back detailed comments. Near the final stage in the preparation of the manuscript, Mark Lewis read the entire draft and provided comments that enabled me to refine some of my arguments. My deep appreciation also goes to the two Cambridge reviewers, whose incisive and constructive comments played a crucial role in strengthening the study in almost every aspect.

I am profoundly indebted to all the colleagues and friends I have mentioned for generously sharing their knowledge and insights with me. I found it challenging but extremely rewarding to try to absorb their criticisms and suggestions during the revision process. I claim sole responsibility for whatever errors or infelicities my personal biases and limitations prevented me from correcting.

Some of the contents of this work were presented at the following venues during 2005–2006: Valparaiso University (Christ College), Harvard University (Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies), and Stanford University (Center for East Asian Studies). I thank the participants on those occasions for their valuable input. Here I also acknowledge the support from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation, which provided a fellowship that helped me make a critical transition in the writing of the dissertation. In addition, my sincere appreciation is extended to Beatrice Rehl, of Cambridge University Press, my acquisitions editor, for her enthusiastic support for this book project from the beginning, and to Susan Greenberg, my copy editor, for her careful review of the manuscript.

Finally, a big thank you to Dingxin Zhao, who has tirelessly attempted to persuade me, the pessimist, that scholarship would probably give me the best chance to find meaning for a fundamentally insignificant human life. He has watched the continuous metamorphosis of this study with assured sympathy, and he has been my most inspiring critic. To him and the other pillars of my life, my parents, brother, sister, and Wu Xuezhao, a loving mentor and loyal friend for twenty years, I dedicate this book.

Introduction

Kinship and Friendship

The social relationships studied in this book are what has been called “amiable relations,” defined by “the moral obligation to feel – or at least to feign – sentiments which commit the individual to actions of altruism.”¹ These relations of amity fall into two broad categories, kinship and friendship.² While they may shade into each other (say, in cases of ritual kinship or ritualized friendship),³ these two major modes of attachment to groups not only are mostly practically discernible and supported by different institutions but also are often defined in relation to and even in contrast to each other in political thought and in anthropological models. Most commonly, friendship is viewed as an “achieved” relationship that is independent of the “ascribed” ties of kinship, and as such, constitutes an alternative and transcendent realm of human solidarity.⁴

The perceived autonomous and achieved character of friendship-based bonds vis-à-vis the prescribed and “natural” connections of kinship is of great significance in the evolutionist model of the social theories that dominated in the nineteenth century and that still enjoy

¹ Pitt-Rivers (1973: 90).

² Pitt-Rivers (1973). This classification is widely cited by scholars who write on social groups in Western antiquity. See, e.g., Konstan (1997: 1–8) and Murray (1982: 48).

³ Generally speaking, the overlapping phenomenon (less the relationship itself than the concerned parties’ perception of it) is more prominent in modern societies. For some case studies of how social scientists handle the problem in their research on contemporary kinship and friendship, see Allan (1979, 1996). In his study of ritualized friendship in ancient Greece, defined as “a bond of solidarity manifesting itself in an exchange of goods and services between individuals originating from separate social units,” Herman (1987: 10) analyzes the common features that ritualized friendship shared with both kinship and friendship.

⁴ Konstan (1997, ch. 1).

far-reaching influence in contemporary academic and popular circles. In this model, the emergence of civil society, which is comprised of individuals severed from the family and bound together by mutual obligations and by loyalty to their commonwealth, marks a break with the premodern social order in that it witnesses a progress from status to contract.⁵ The Greek city-state, a civic community whose members were supposed to associate with one another on principles of equality and competition, has been hailed as the ancient precursor of the nation-state of the modern West,⁶ bearing out Edith Hamilton's (1867–1963) famous statement about the modernity of ancient Greece.⁷ In demarcating a public, political sphere from the private, domestic sphere, and in privileging achieved roles over ascribed ones, the Greeks belong to antiquity only in a chronological sense and their proper place is in the modern world. By contrast, in the evolutionist model China stands as the quintessential example of stagnation and primitiveness for resting on kinship organizations and family ethics for millennia. In China no social, political, or religious institution succeeded in transcending kinship ties to create civic bonds and a countervailing force against the domination that the family had exerted in all spheres of Chinese society from classical antiquity until China's coerced encounter with the West in the modern era. To both Western Orientalist thinkers and patriotic Chinese intellectuals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the enduring centrality of the family in China's sociopolitical organization and value system seems to have been at the root of the backwardness of Chinese society and betokens a despairing contrast between an unchanging China and a progressive West.⁸

⁵ Elshtain (1993, introduction); Pateman (1988, chs. 1 and 2); C. B. Patterson (1998, ch. 1); Rosaldo (1980: 401–405). Among the nineteenth-century evolutionist social theorists were such luminaries as Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–1887), Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), Henry Maine (1822–1888), and Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889). The famous thesis “from status to contract” was formulated by Henry Maine (1861).

⁶ Redfield (2003: 10–11).

⁷ See Hamilton's influential book *The Greek Way*, which first appeared in 1930 and went through one revised edition and numerous printings. “By universal consent the Greeks belong to the ancient world.... But they are in it as a matter of centuries only; they have not the hall-marks that give title to a place there.... None of the great civilizations that preceded them and surrounded them served them as model. With them something completely new came into the world. They were the first Westerners; the spirit of the West, the modern spirit, is a Greek discovery and the place of the Greeks is in the modern world” (Hamilton 1943: 18–19).

⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) played the most important role in propagating this view of China in the West (Saussy 1993: 162–163). For a concise discussion

In light of the special significance of ancient China and Greece in the evolutionist comparative paradigm structured around kinship and friendship, this study, which contrasts the cornerstone status of patrilineal kinship relationship in China with the preeminence of friendship-based relationships in Greece, has a premise that needs to be stated at the beginning. The important differences between ancient China and Greece in social organization and value system should not carry any evolutionary implication for our understanding of the two societies and their descendants. Both the ancient Chinese and the ancient Greeks struggled hard to juggle the various ways of organizing their societies and dealing with interpersonal and gender relations, just as they did in other respects in their pursuit of the good life. The criticism directed at the tendency to polarize China and Greece in comparative studies of the two civilizations should be particularly heeded in an inquiry such as this one.⁹ Kinship and friendship constituted two primary categories of social relations in ancient China and Greece, as they did and still do in all cultures known to us. To describe one society as kinship-oriented and another as friendship-oriented must be a matter of relative difference. Moreover, it will be a sterile comparison if we do not further delineate the subcategories of relationships under the two primary categories, analyze how those relationships are configured into different nexuses of affinity and conflict, or study how the dynamics of relationships within and outside of the family and kinship network shape each other. Thus it is with an understanding of the relative nature of the differences, and of the need to disaggregate the two primary categories of amiable relations and examine the intricate correlations between them and among

of Hegel's conception of the family, see Landes (1982). On how Western evolutionist thinking influenced the views of leading Chinese thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see the anthology edited by Fogel and Zarrow (1997), especially the essays by Liu and Liu (1997) and F-S. Wang (1997). Also see Glosser (2003, ch. 1) and Liang Shuming (2003: 18–22) for some representative modern criticisms of the domination of the family institution in Chinese history.

⁹ Three noted comparatists, David Hall, Roger Ames, and François Jullien, have been sharply criticized for portraying China and Greece as neat binary opposites (e.g., aesthetic/rational, concrete/abstract, oblique/direct, spontaneity/freedom). Jullien, in particular, has sustained scathing attacks for depicting China and Greece / the West in terms of bipolar alterity and valuing China for providing a “theoretical distancing” that enables Western readers to understand their own tradition better. For such criticisms, see Billeter (2006), van Norden (2000), Reding (1996), Salkever (2004), Saussy (2002), L. Zhang (2005), H. Zhao (2007). Shankman and Durrant (2000: 6–7), however, praise Hall and Ames for successfully avoiding a simplification of the two traditions.

their various subcategories, that we embark on a comparison of interpersonal and gender relations in ancient China and ancient Greece.

The present inquiry takes as its starting point the following questions: in what different ways were the family and other social spheres (from politics to religion) related to one another in ancient China and Greece? How did such differences bear on gender relations in these two male-dominated societies if sexual separation was a key principle of social organization and the family was the major realm of activity and influence for women? What different subcategories and constellations of affinity and conflict did “kinship” and “friendship” comprise in ancient China and Greece? And, finally, in these two ancient societies did the dynamics of affinity and conflict within the family mirror those in the larger social processes or did they differ?

To answer these questions I will investigate various sociable occasions in ancient China and Greece that were intended for the collective cultivation of social bonds and during which men and women acted and interacted. Because they brought people together and especially because of the normal behavioral restrictions in these two societies that practiced sexual separation, sociable activities such as festivals, choruses, and banquets provide ideal contexts in which to observe such interactions. Moreover, examining Greek and Chinese gender relations in various sociable contexts helps locate gender in a broader perspective. Inasmuch as group pursuits of pleasure and solidarity were deeply embedded in the religious, political, and ethical life of ancient China and Greece, an analysis that attempts to unfold the nexus of social domains in these two societies enables us to understand their gender relations in light of their distinctive sociopolitical organizations and values.

In the rest of this chapter, I shall define some basic terms and concepts, provide relevant historical settings, introduce the major arguments and primary sources, and lay out the organization of the chapters. In doing so, I also wish to delimit my goals and to acknowledge what my sources and methods are best suited for and what their biases prevent me from accomplishing.

Time and Place

This study covers a broad chronological span, roughly from the tenth to the fourth centuries BCE. According to conventional historical periodization, for China and Greece the six centuries fall into the major periods shown in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1. *Historical periods, ca. tenth to fourth centuries BCE*

China		Greece	
ca. 1045–771 BCE	Western Zhou	12–9th c. BCE	Dark Age
770–256 BCE	Eastern Zhou	ca. 800–480 BCE	Archaic period
770–ca. 450 BCE	Spring and Autumn period	480–323 BCE	Classical period
ca. 450–221 BCE	Warring States period	323–31 BCE	Hellenistic period

Both “China” and “Greece” had changing geographical and political connotations and neither was a unitary territorial or political entity during the six centuries under investigation. In this section, I shall clarify in what sense ancient China (ca. 1000–450 BCE) and ancient Greece (ca. 800–300 BCE) make distinctive civilizational units despite the huge geographical variations and historical changes within each tradition.

Following the breakdown of kingships at the end of the Greek Dark Age, hundreds of independent city-states (*poleis*) made up Greece, and they would remain the characteristic form of Greek political organization deep into the Hellenistic and Roman periods.¹⁰ The far-flung Greek world that will unfold in this study includes Greece proper, the Aegean islands, the coast of Asia Minor, southern Italy and Sicily, and northern Africa.¹¹ In China, the Western Zhou court first wielded relatively strong rule over a league of regional states. These states were headed by relatives and allies of the royal house, who served as the court’s local agents despite enjoying considerable autonomy in civil, legal, and military affairs. After the first century or so of Western Zhou rule, and unquestionably after 771 BCE (the year the king died in a military action against an alliance of pastoral invaders and disaffected nobles and the court relocated to the east, hence the beginning of the Eastern Zhou), the regional states increasingly engaged in independent warfare and

¹⁰ Murray (1980: 64) believes that “the *polis* already existed in all essential aspects by the end of the Dark Age.” For sources and general historical studies on the *polis*, see Ehrenberg (1969), Jones (1940), Murray and Price (1990), and Rhodes (1986). Under the leadership of Mogens Herman Hansen, the Copenhagen Polis Center (CPC) has, since its founding in 1993, produced many studies on the character and development of the *polis* (for a comprehensive list of its publications, see Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 191–193). On the distinctiveness of the *polis* among what Hansen calls “city-state cultures,” see the next section. It is estimated that there were about fifteen hundred *poleis* over a period of one thousand years (ca. 650–323 BCE) (Hansen 2006: 1–2).

¹¹ Finley (1977: 17) likens “the Greek world” to concepts of medieval Christendom and the present “Arab world.”

diplomacy. By the late Spring and Autumn period the authority of the Zhou court had become virtually nominal.¹² The Chinese world in the period of our discussion was centered in the northern plains, stretched across the Yangtze River in the south, and reached the coast in the east.

Political and territorial unity never existed in either ancient China or ancient Greece. Instead, it was the shared cultural bond among the smaller units in each land that gave each a distinctive tradition when set against those outside. According to a speech that Herodotus (ca. 485–425 BCE) attributes to the Athenians during the conflict between the Greeks and the Persians in the early fifth century BCE, there was a “Greek thing” (*to Hellēnikon*) defined by common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs and mores (*Histories*, 8.1.144). These claims may be open to challenge or may need qualification for a specific region, a certain population, or a particular time. However, it would be difficult to deny the existence of a “Greek way” or a pan-Hellenic identity, which becomes all the more compelling if we speak of perception (by the Greeks themselves or by others, contemporary or in later times) rather than of historical reality.¹³ Summing up more than a decade of collaborative work at the Copenhagen Polis Center leading to an inventory of all known Greek *poleis* in the Archaic and classical periods, Mogens Herman Hansen states, “So the Greeks had a common culture and a fixed belief that they were a single people. And that justifies the proposition that all 1,500 *poleis* belonged to one and the same city-state culture, a proposition formulated with force and brevity by the poet Poseidippos: ‘there is only one Hellas, but there are many *poleis*.’”¹⁴

¹² An estimate is that there were more than one thousand regional states in the early Western Zhou; by the late Spring and Autumn period this number had been reduced to dozens because of the incessant wars of annexation that the states waged against each other (Lü Wenyu 2006: 20–21, 150–151).

¹³ With respect to Herodotus’ claim that the Greeks were of the same stock, Finley (1984: 8) points out that, even though the ancient Greeks were a “thoroughly mixed stock,” “what matters socially and historically in the field of ‘race’ is not science but beliefs.” Elsewhere, Finley (1977: 18) sensibly states that “common civilization never meant absolute identity.” As he expounds, “there were differences in dialect, in political organization, in cult practices, often in morals and values, sharper in the peripheral areas, but by no means absent in the centre as well. Yet in their own eyes the differences were minor when measured against the common elements of which they were so conscious.” Hansen (2006: 36–37) affirms Herodotus’ claim along similar lines.

¹⁴ Hansen (2006: 37).

The unity of the Chinese tradition should be understood in a similar way. Besides the regional cultures that flourished in the states there emerged “an underlying shared system of politicoreligious values, as well as homologies in the social organization of elites.”¹⁵ This phenomenon is even more remarkable because it became more evident and widespread during the Spring and Autumn period, when the fall of the Western Zhou resulted in the weakening and eventual loss of any central political drive that might contribute to the forging of cultural solidarity. Although the notion of a China characterized by cultural homogeneity across geographical regions and social strata is inapplicable to the period of this inquiry (or, for that matter, to the two-millennium-long imperial period after 221 BCE), there nevertheless took place a “gradual process of amalgamation and fusion, one from relative disparity to relative uniformity” during the Zhou. This process occurred amid political disunity and thus testifies to the immense, and to a great extent independent, force of cultural cohesion.¹⁶

Within the six centuries covered in this study, the Archaic and classical periods (ca. 800–300 BCE) will be at the center of the examination of the Greek tradition. While this is a highly conventional chronological choice,¹⁷ there are two reasons behind my decision to focus on these periods, as well as to cross over into the Hellenistic age from time to time.

First, there was clear and strong continuity in Greek social life before and after Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), and what seemed to be

¹⁵ Falkenhausen (1999: 542–544).

¹⁶ Quoted from Blakeley’s (1977: 211) lengthy examination of the different sociopolitical traditions of the states during the Spring and Autumn period. F. Li (2006: 294) characterizes the increasingly widespread adherence to the Zhou ritual system during the Spring and Autumn period as a “spontaneous process in which the common Zhou cultural tradition was revered and followed in the newly rising regional political centers.” Chen Lai (2006: 18, 80) discusses Spring and Autumn culture as a double process of extension and crystallization of Western Zhou culture on the one hand and transmutation and new developments on the other. Pines (2002: 132–135), who comments on the closer ties among the various parts of the Zhou realm during the Spring and Autumn period despite the political disintegration, believes that the cultural developments during this period sowed the seeds for the quest for unity in the Warring States period.

¹⁷ It is still common, despite much recent attention to the Hellenistic period, for discussions of Greek history and culture to concentrate on the four centuries or so between Homer and Alexander, which are usually taken to represent the Greek achievement. To privilege the Archaic and classical periods does not mean that scholars are unaware of the crucial role of the Hellenistic period in the spread of Greek civilization, and it is certainly incorrect to regard all developments in the later era as a simple continuation of Archaic and classical legacies.

strikingly new developments in sociability and gender relations in the later period often turned out to be merely different or more salient manifestations of an enduring feature that has been abundantly illustrated in the previous two periods. As has been pointed out, against the current trend emphasizing the changes during the Hellenistic period, the third and early second centuries BCE formed a continuum with the classical period in the ideas and institutions of Greek civic and private life, and a meaningful break occurred or became visible only afterwards.¹⁸ The second reason is that the Archaic and classical periods effectively elucidate the most notable aspects of Greek sociability and gender relations and allow for the most instructive comparisons with the Chinese tradition. For example, from the perspective of a classicist, Kenneth Dover may have been justly criticized for omitting from his classic study of Greek homosexuality the postclassical period on the grounds that “the distinctive features of Greek civilisation were fully developed before the end of the classical period” and it is therefore not “useful to accumulate evidence which shows only that characteristically Greek attitudes and behavior survived for a long time as ingredients of a Greco-Roman cultural amalgam.”¹⁹ However, from a comparative perspective, I find that the most compelling and the most economical strategy for approaching Greek sociability and gender relations is to focus on these two periods, which not only represented the height of Hellenic civilization for the Greeks themselves but also exerted the most lasting influences on the Western tradition. When I do go into the Hellenistic period, it will mainly be to search for supplementary and corroborative evidence or to illustrate the continuity of a certain aspect of the Greek tradition.

My discussion of the Chinese tradition will focus on the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn periods (ca. 1000–450 BCE). The Western Zhou, which precedes the times of China’s greatest early thinkers by several centuries, has not received much attention in China–Greece comparative research. Yet there is no denying the period’s significance not only for the foundation of Chinese culture in general but also in the realm of Chinese sociability and gender relations in particular. In

¹⁸ Gauthier (1985), Shipley (2000, ch. 3), Van Bremen (2003). Under the Hellenistic kingdoms, democratic institutions such as the assemblies, city councils, and court-houses remained very much intact, and the religious festivals, athletic games, and gymnastic activities might have engaged people’s enthusiasm as much as before. See note 34 below.

¹⁹ Dover (1978: 4). For criticism that Dover simplifies the picture by limiting himself to the two earlier periods, see Percy (2005).

that it gave China an ethnic core along with the basic paradigms for its system of political, ethical, religious, and ritual beliefs and practices, even as they continuously underwent transformation and renewal,²⁰ the Western Zhou was held up as the golden age of Chinese civilization until the fall of China's last dynasty in the early twentieth century. This study will bear out the crucial role of the Western Zhou in defining the structure and principles of Chinese sociability and gender relations. As for the Spring and Autumn period, it is important for our purposes because it brought about a steady and often creative crystallization and dissemination of the cultural values of the Western Zhou despite that period's political disunity and apparent cultural fragmentation.

Without implying that the subsequent Warring States era did not contribute critical new syntheses to the Western Zhou legacy, and without repeating my reasons for making short shrift of the Hellenistic period in discussing the Greek tradition, I shall simply quote Lothar von Falkenhausen on these eras: "As established structures [of the Western Zhou] underwent increasing stress, piecemeal modifications occurred; but even the thoroughgoing cultural transformation of the Warring States period left crucial parts of the Bronze Age heritage intact."²¹

In his introduction to *The Legacy of Greece* Moses Finley authoritatively declared that for the purpose of defining the legacy of the Greeks, "place, region, is largely a matter of indifference."²² Statements of such tenor may no longer receive the unqualified approval of classicists or other scholars, and it is imperative to pay more attention to variations in place *and* in time for a nuanced understanding of any particular tradition. However, I believe that it also repays to look beyond internal distinctions and change to discern significant and persistent patterns within a tradition, as well as salient differences between traditions.²³ The

²⁰ Falkenhausen (2006), C-Y. Hsu (2005: 456), F. Li (2006: 293–296).

²¹ Falkenhausen (1999: 543). More recently, with an eye on an overall narrative of increasing internal coalescence and demarcation of external boundaries in Chinese culture during the Zhou, Falkenhausen (2006) examines the changes and variations in Zhou social organization from the beginning through the Warring States period. F. Li (2006: 293–294) quotes Falkenhausen (1999: 543) with approval. M. E. Lewis (1997) affirms the same point in the ritual and symbolic realms, arguing that Zhou rituals provided the reforming kings and ministers of the Warring States period with a repertoire of ideas and images on which to draw for major institutional creations.

²² Finley (1984: 2).

²³ In a conference volume entitled *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, Dougherty and Kurke (2003: 6) advocate exploring diversity within Greek culture to understand how the processes of contact, conflict, and collaboration among subcultures "combine to comprise what we understand as 'Greekness.'"

relationship between broad generalization and change and variation is examined by Benjamin Schwartz, who finds himself poised between a strong bias “toward an insistence on the reality of historic change and the emergence of novelty within Chinese culture” and a need to identify “more or less enduring dominant cultural orientation[s].” Commenting on how the political order enjoyed a primacy and weight in East Asian societies without compare in other civilizations and cultures, Schwartz observes,

In fact, however, we may not be dealing with a dichotomy between mutually exclusive terms. The dominant cultural orientation operates on a high level of generality and it is most easily discerned when we contemplate the whole sweep of Chinese history. It is a general orientation which remains quite compatible with vast and significant changes operative within its wide boundaries.²⁴

As the reader will see, the men and women in the following chapters hail from all over China and all corners of the Hellenic world and from across several centuries. They will show us in these pages how the Theban way, the Spartan way, the Lesbian way, and the Athenian way of sociability and gender relations converged into a Greek way, and how this Greek way entailed practices and ideas that set it apart from the Chinese way as embraced over the centuries by the male and female convivialists of Qi, Chu, Qin, Song, Jin, Zheng, and Lu. Of course, exceptions and inconsistencies, all of which call for specialist studies, will remain to defy the positing of two such broadly distinctive patterns and to testify to the awesome richness of human experience and the tremendous complexity of ancient Chinese and Greek civilizations. Nonetheless, it will be a special tribute to the vivacious men and women of the two ancient worlds to attempt to identify and celebrate their distinctive lifestyles and ways of organizing and thinking.

The *Polis* and Lineage

If one were to name the best-known and most significant sociopolitical and cultural developments in Archaic Greece and Western Zhou

Maintaining a holistic view that recognizes “Greekness” will help put into the right perspective the effort to deconstruct the monolithic view that considers Greek culture as “something simple, pure, and unproblematic – as the beginning, the source of Western civilization” (Dougherty and Kurke 2003: 2). The same applies to the study of ancient China.

²⁴ Schwartz (1987: 1).

China that defined their roles in Greek and Chinese civilizations, one would have to cite the rise of the *polis* and the formation of what came to be known as the Lineage Law (*zongfa*) system. The crucial differences between the social structures, political ideologies, and ethical values associated with these two developments have an important bearing on this inquiry.

According to one recent definition, the *polis* was “a community of persons or, more precisely, citizens (a “Bürgerverband”), of place or territory, of cults, customs and laws, that was able to administer itself (fully or partly).”²⁵ The emphasis on participation by all members in the functioning of the civic community is perhaps what most distinguished the Greek *polis* from the variety of city-states in other parts of the ancient world, so much so that “citizen-state” has been suggested as a more accurate designation for the uniquely Greek type.²⁶ Writing on the emergence of the *polis* as a new social structure that emphasized a community of adult male citizens in the late eighth century BCE, Ian Morris notes, “the new pattern remained in place, albeit with considerable regional and temporal variations and always under pressure from competing models of what the community should be, for the next 500 years.”²⁷

The nature of the *polis* as a civic community has long been thought to have had crucial implications for the role of the family institution and kinship ties in Greek society. In the still widely accepted nineteenth-century evolutionist model of social theory, the emergence of the *polis* as a political (literally, “of the *polis*”) order involved the lifting of the control that kinship, family, and other traditional ties of dependence had exerted on individuals and the forging of a new community of individuals who are equal and free (in the sense that the citizens take turns ruling and being ruled). In this model, the move from ascriptive and hierarchical kinship-based organizations to egalitarian and achievement-based

²⁵ Raaflaub (2005: 269).

²⁶ Raaflaub (2005: 269). Also see, among many others, Hansen (1998: 57–62), Morris (1987), and Vernant (1980, ch. 4) on the ideological emphasis on the *polis* as a political community, a sum of its citizens. Raaflaub (1998), with a host of other authorities on Archaic Greece, upholds the view that the “citizen-state” was “a specifically Greek creation” during a period when Greece was under many influences from neighboring cultures in the Mediterranean and the Near East.

²⁷ Morris (1992: 27). See statements to the same effect in Raaflaub (2005: 270, 275–276). Sealey (1987: 92–96) demonstrates the similarities in the governmental structure of all Greek *poleis*. Murray (1980: 57–68) and Raaflaub (1993), among others, hold that all the essential elements of the *polis* (such as the basic settlement pattern, the deliberative bodies of the assembly and council of elders, and the forms of religious ritual) are already present in Homer.

civic communities is regarded as a progressive one that characterized the Greeks as the harbingers of the modern condition.

More recent scholarship has seriously challenged the evolutionist assumptions of the nineteenth-century model, questioning both the supposed domination of corporate kinship organizations in the pre-*polis* period and the alleged full retreat of the family with the rise of the *polis*. It is pointed out that unilineal descent groups that are linked by kinship (whether actual or fictive) and bound by common property and religious cult never existed in either Archaic or classical Greece.²⁸ It has also been shown that instead of being “dismembered” by the newly arisen civic force, the family remained essential to the well-being of the city-state throughout Greek history.²⁹ The civic community rose to transcend but not to supplant membership in and allegiance to kinship and other rival groupings and ties. With the rise of the *polis*, there came into being a common domain (the *koinon* or *koinonia*) for civic life, including the assembly, agoras, sanctuaries, and gymnasias, a higher level of authority and allegiance over and above the family.³⁰ Riet van Bremen characterizes the status of the family in the civic ideology of the Hellenistic period, when the family’s importance was supposedly enhanced with the political decline of the *polis* under the imposition of monarchical rule, in the following passage:

In the public sphere households re-grouped themselves along lines of gender and age, forming in a certain sense a collective family of citizens. For civic purposes, families dissolved into collectives of men (*neoi*: young men, formed a separate and important group), women (referred to as *gynaiikes* or *politides*), boys of different ages (*paides*: young boys, *epheboi*: boys in their upper teens) and unmarried girls (*parthenoi*). This functional separation affected office-holding, including religious office-holding, and gave structure to civic and religious ritual and to the acculturation and education of (future) citizens.³¹

²⁸ Bourriot (1976), Donlan (2007), C. B. Patterson (1998: 47–50), and Roussel (1976). Two terms, “lineage” and “clan,” are customarily used in these discussions to refer to a corporate kinship organization. According to Roger M. Keesing’s (1976: 251) definitions, “A *lineage* is a descent group consisting of people patrilineally or matrilineally descended from a known ancestor through a series of links they can trace,” whereas “a larger descent category ... [consisting of people] who believe that they are descended from a common ancestor but do not know the actual connections is called a *clan*.”

²⁹ This is C. B. Patterson’s (1998) major conclusion in her attempt to debunk the evolutionist paradigm.

³⁰ Freeman (1999: 90); Herman (1987); Schmitt-Pantel (1990b); Vernant (1982, ch. 4).

³¹ Van Bremen (2003: 322).

As van Bremen notes, what she writes of the Hellenistic period had long been an inherent feature of Greek society.³² In the civic ideology of the *polis*, natural families dissolved into one civic family, and membership in the civic categories of collectives (men, women, boys, and unmarried girls – each category being associated with different civic identities and functions) was superimposed on kinship relationships. While family and kinship ties no doubt constituted essential bases of solidarity in the *polis*, every man, woman, boy, and girl also *individually* owned membership in and owed allegiance to a specific civic collective, and together these collectives made up the overarching “family of citizens.” Although there was indeed a turning away from politics and a greater emphasis on the family after Alexander’s conquest,³³ the nature of the change has to be construed properly in light of the continuing importance of the concept of the common domain in the Hellenistic period. In the centuries after Alexander, what van Bremen calls “civic family thinking” actually reached a culmination and public institutions concerned with the cultivation and articulation of separate civic identities for men, women, boys, and girls flourished.³⁴

In short, from the Archaic period through the middle of the Hellenistic age, despite variations in the form of government and changes in the distribution of power, what remained constant for life in the *polis* was the important sense of partaking in the “common domain.” Depending on period and place, different kinds of collective activities (strictly political, communal but not political, or otherwise characterized) might play varying roles in fostering this consciousness,³⁵ but the highest status was

³² Van Bremen (2003: 323).

³³ Efforts to highlight changes in families and in women’s lives in Hellenistic times can be found in Fantham et al. (1994, ch. 5), C. B. Patterson (1998, ch. 6), and Pomeroy (1997).

³⁴ Van Bremen (2003: 323, 329). The history of the Athenian *ephebeia*, a military-training institution for young adults (*ephebi*) before they formally joined the citizenry, illustrates what changed in the new times and what did not. Although militarily defunct by the end of the second century BCE, the *ephebeia* continued to flourish as an institution geared toward training youths for athletic and gymnastic competitions, and they constituted a powerful Hellenizing influence in the postclassical world (Garland 1990: 185; Hadas 1959: 26; Shipley 2000: 130). From the end of the fourth century BCE onward there also appeared young men’s associations, parallel to the evolving *ephebeia*, whose primary function seems to have been to encourage athletic contests, often in the form of team activities (Garland 1990: 202). On the significant growth of older institutions such as the gymnasia, agoras, theaters, and sanctuaries in the Hellenistic period, see Hornblower (1991: 275–276) and Shipley (2000: 86–87).

³⁵ The evolutionist paradigm, in lauding the birth of a separate and transcendent public sphere in ancient Greece, tends to focus on activities in such political institutions as the assemblies and law courts.

always granted those activities that aimed to create solidarity among and within the various civic groups.³⁶ While authority relationships (between the elite and the masses, and within the elite) were inherent in the collective pursuit of solidarity, even under a democracy,³⁷ the ideal of the cohesive and robust civic community was to be realized through egalitarian competition among its members, both individually and in civic groups of varying sizes and natures.

The different configuration of the relationships among various social spheres in Western Zhou China can be illustrated by what is commonly known as the Lineage Law system, which regulated the political and economic relationships within the aristocracy through a kinship structure and a code of religious and ritual practices.³⁸ The system was based on the distinction between the Main Line (also translated as the primary line, senior lineage, trunk lineage, etc.), descended through the eldest son of the principal wife (versus the father's other consorts of secondary status³⁹), and the Minor Lines (also known as collateral lines, branch lineages, etc.), descended through the other sons. The Main Line enjoyed precedence over the Minor Lines in the inheritance of political authority and the distribution of economic, religious, and ritual privileges.⁴⁰ The resultant hierarchical kinship structure may be envisioned as a branching tree – each Minor Line forming a Main Line comprised of the head of a Minor Line and his offspring on the same principle of direct patrilineal descent.⁴¹ This lineage system corresponded to the structure of the political system, in which the king granted his relatives

³⁶ Schmitt-Pantel (1990b) investigates the changing statuses of different types of collective practices in defining the civic community from the Archaic to the classical period.

³⁷ J. M. Hall (2007: 46); Ober (1989).

³⁸ Chapter 2 will cover the incorporation of the commoners in the Zhou sociopolitical ideology anchored in the Lineage Law system.

³⁹ Zhou rulers and high officials customarily married a single principal wife and multiple secondary consorts. This practice of polygyny, including its implications for Chinese gender relations and its differences from Greek concubinage, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁴⁰ C-Y. Hsu (2001, ch. 5); Qian Hong (1991); Qian Zongfan (1989: 72–95); Yang Kuan (1999, ch. 6); Zhu Fenghan (2004: 309–337).

⁴¹ The branching image may be found in the second stanza of Ode 235 (“Wen wang,” King Wen) in the *Book of Odes*, whose subject is King Wen, the illustrious founder of the Western Zhou dynasty. “Very diligent was King Wen, / His high fame does not cease; / He spread his bounties in Zhou, / And now in his grandsons and sons, / In his grandsons and sons / The stem has branched / Into manifold generations, / And all the noblemen of Zhou / Are glorious in their generation” (Cheng and Jiang 748; Waley 227).

and allies land and titles (with the most strategic regions of the kingdom going to lineage members), who in turn conferred appointments and other privileges (which, with the territorial expansion of the regional states in the Spring and Autumn period, increasingly included land) on their own descendants and close associates. The ruler at each level of the conical hierarchy that resulted was supposed to be the eldest son by his father's principal wife, while his ministers and retainers were supposed to be his uncles, brothers, cousins, and nephews.⁴² As a matter of principle, and with some local variations (especially in those states that originally had relatively marginal status in the Zhou cultural sphere, such as Qin and Chu), the Main Line–Minor Lines distinction just explicated underscored the political organization of all of the regional states that recognized the authority of the Zhou court. Epitomizing the structural identity between the political and the familial was the person of the Zhou king, who in his rule represented the direct descent line of the dynastic founder and who was thus entitled to command the submission and support of his kinsmen and allies.⁴³

Besides evincing a symbiosis of the political and familial orders, the institution of Lineage Law had religious underpinnings in ancestor worship. As suggested by archaeological evidence, ancestor worship may have been the Chinese people's most significant form of "religious mediation" from as early as the Neolithic Age.⁴⁴ Important Zhou innovations in ancestor worship were the exclusion of Minor-Line ancestors from services and the insistence that the Main Line be the ritual center for the patrilineal descent group.⁴⁵ Performed on numerous occasions throughout the year by members of the same patriline under the leadership of its head, ancestral rites were aimed at forging kinship solidarity

⁴² Lü Wenyu (2006) provides a comprehensive survey of the enfeoffing practice in Zhou history.

⁴³ In his recent work, Feng Li (2008) characterizes the Western Zhou as a "delegatory kin-ordered settlement state," in which the Zhou king delegated his power to the regional states through a kinship structure and the "social organization of the lineages was transferred into the political organization" (quote on p. 296).

⁴⁴ Keightley (1998).

⁴⁵ On ancestor worship in the preceding Shang dynasty, see Chang Yuzhi (1987) and Keightley (1978, 1998, 2000). K-C. Chang (1976, ch. 5), Puett (2002: 50–68), Wang Guimin (1998: 380–381), and Wang Hui (2000, ch. 4) discuss both continuities and changes in Western Zhou ancestral practices. The mid-to-late Western Zhou (the mid-tenth through mid-ninth centuries BCE) has been widely recognized as the key period in which the major ritual innovations of the Zhou took place (e.g., Falkenhausen 2006; Rawson 1999a). Kern (2009a) offers a stratified view of the evolution of ancestor worship during the Western Zhou.

and reaffirming people's identities and obligations as defined by their roles in the descent line. The image of the Zhou king and his subordinates worshipping in the ancestral temple illustrates not only how the familial and the sociopolitical orders mirrored each other but also how religion provided both supernatural sanction for and the means to enact the symbiotic relationship between the political and the familial.⁴⁶ Generally speaking, whereas Greek religion (in its primary form as festivals and sacrifices honoring the gods) did not provide either a value system for or norms of political or ethical conduct, Chinese ancestor worship did furnish the religious underpinnings and moral rationale for both the polity and the family.⁴⁷

The collapse of the Western Zhou in 771 BCE and the increasing political fragmentation over the next few centuries triggered the gradual demise of the Lineage Law system. By the Warring States period, the household (*jia*, coresidential domestic unit that consisted of a married couple, their minor children, and probably one or two grandparents) had replaced the larger kinship organizations (*zong* or *shi*) of the old lineage system as the basic social unit and economic and ritual center.⁴⁸ Radical as this transformation proved to be, however, some essential values pertaining to the Lineage Law system survived, often in new forms. Mark Lewis, who calls the Spring and Autumn period China's "age of the city-state" and argues that the period was characterized by the decline in kinship's political role, the prevalence of collegial authority among the nobility, and the greater role of the populace in times of political crisis, acknowledges that no alternative forms of authority or of political

⁴⁶ Chen Lai (2006: 9–10) calls such symbiosis "rare" in ancient world civilizations. Chapter 2 will discuss how the political, religious, and familial homology here illustrated at the aristocratic level anchors the Zhou sociopolitical ideology that incorporates the commoners.

⁴⁷ On Greek religion's not providing ethical norms, see Raaflaub (2005: 276). Scholars differ as to whether ancestor worship already had an ethical dimension in the Western Zhou or acquired that dimension only in the Spring and Autumn period (Holzman 1998: 2; Hsu 2005: 456; Knapp 1995: 201–204; Pines 2002: 188–194; Zha Changguo 1993; Zhang Jijun 2008: 63–66). I agree with the Western Zhou argument. Whereas perhaps unsystematically articulated, the Western Zhou sources clearly indicate that the rites associated with ancestor worship had implications for daily ethical conduct (see Chapters 2 and 3 for detailed discussion). See A. C. Yu (2004) for an examination of the entwined relationships among religion, ethics, and the state in Chinese history.

⁴⁸ Li Hengmei (1999: 306–315); M. E. Lewis (2006a, ch. 2); Zhu Fenghan (2004: 559–575).

participation emerged during those centuries.⁴⁹ In explaining why the new developments that he identifies in China's "age of the city-state" left little trace in later history, Lewis points to the "lingering presence of the Zhou monarchy as ritual reality and political idea."⁵⁰ For our purposes, there are two points with respect to the lasting legacy of the Western Zhou's kinship-based sociopolitical model that are worth noting.

First, following the breakdown of the Lineage Law system, the head of the patrilineal household replaced the head of the Main Line as the focus of the political, economic, and ritual activities associated with the family. Although the strong drives of the emergent large territorial states to harness the family as a potentially contentious political and economic entity during the Warring States period greatly changed the morphology and function of the institution and added tension to the relationship between the political and the familial, a reconfigured homology between the two remained the foundation for both ethics and political ideology in China. The "higher authority" that the state during the Warring States period (and afterward) attempted to wrest from the family institution never produced an autonomous civic community or a privileged common domain.⁵¹ Second, the concept of filial

⁴⁹ M. E. Lewis (2006a: 138–150). As M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149) points out, the general populace never attempted to rule as a group and there never developed any theory of the autonomous city in early China. Yates (1997: 76), who also applies the term "city-state" to ancient China, acknowledges that the Chinese polities so characterized did not have a free citizen body. I shall argue in Chapter 2 that citizenship, which was an essential aspect of the Greek *polis*, was alien to ancient Chinese sociopolitical conceptions.

⁵⁰ M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149). Lewis's discussion on pp. 149–150 aims at distinguishing Spring and Autumn period Chinese "city-states" from the Greek *polis*, which is widely regarded as the paradigm of the city-state. Recent comparative studies (notably, those conducted at the Copenhagen Polis Center; see note 10 above) have attempted to place the *polis* in a world-historical context of different types of "city-state cultures," but the *polis* is clearly treated as the model against which other forms are compared. Regardless of whether we call Spring and Autumn China an age of the city-state, it is crucial, with Lewis, to recognize the fundamental differences between a Chinese regional state and the *polis*.

⁵¹ As is widely recognized, filial piety tended to enjoy precedence over loyalty to the state in people's conceptions in the preimperial era, particularly before the middle of the Warring States period (Knapp 1995; Lin Suying 2003; Zhang Jijun 2008: 143). The tension between allegiance to the family and allegiance to the state was to become one of the most enduring and vexing moral issues for Chinese thinkers and statesmen during the imperial era (see Feng 1998 [1931]; Guo Qiyong 2004; Q. Liu 2003; Tan 2002). Two points are noteworthy from a comparative perspective. First, the Chinese state was never conceived as a political community that equaled the sum of its citizens, and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled was considered analogous to

piety, which withstood the collapse of traditional norms and centuries of profound sociopolitical changes, received new interpretations by thinkers and statesmen of various persuasions and purposes, and reemerged during the Warring States period as a pivotal virtue that carried ethical, religious, and political imperatives.⁵²

The homology in China among the political, the religious, and the familial, and the lack of a Chinese equivalent for the Greek idea of the common domain are, I believe, a critical difference between the Chinese and Greek social orders.⁵³ The tenacious Chinese homology

the relationship between parents and children. Second, Chinese reflections and solutions concerning the unresolvable tension tended to be expressed through the deeds of heroes and sages presented in such a way that they highlighted familial duties and sentiments as the fundamental moral imperatives in Chinese society. In contrast, in Greece, Antigone, a woman and thus supposed to be primarily a domestic being, best embodied such conflict and was the most eloquent spokesperson for family interests vis-à-vis the state. Humphreys (1983: 72) suggests that the depiction of Antigone represents “a way of exploring the implications of placing the central meaning of life in the private sphere, without arousing all the ambiguous reactions which the audience would feel if presented with a male hero taking this stance.” On the Antigone story’s enduring legacy in Western literature, philosophy, and art, see Steiner (1984). In a recent study focused on Spring and Autumn and Warring States warfare, Zhao Dingxin (2006) examines the crucial role of those centuries of incessant and inconclusive wars among the states in creating a strong state that was able both to fuse political power and ideological power and to marginalize economic and military power. This development, Zhao argues, would shape the entire history of imperial China. While agreeing with Zhao on the important functions of war during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in the formation of China’s distinctive and exceptionally resilient sociopolitical order, I believe that the war-driven development reconfigured, rather than created, the homology under discussion.

⁵² For discussions of the evolution of the concept of filial piety from the Western Zhou to the Warring States period, see Kang Dewen (1997), Knapp (1995), Pines (2002: 188–199), and Zhang Jijun (2008: 137–145). Holzman (1998: 4) observes that by the mid-fourth century BCE filial piety had become a “very special kind of virtue, one that overrode almost any other considerations.” Chen Lai (2006: 10) distinguishes between a political level and a social level in analyzing the collapse of the Lineage Law system from the late Spring and Autumn period onward. As he argues, the collapse occurred only at the political level; at the social level, the way of organizing relationships as stipulated in the Lineage Law system remained intact. Li Xiangping (1991: 220–223) makes the same point in discussing the changing significance of ancestor worship from the mid-Spring and Autumn through the Warring States period.

⁵³ Arnason (2005: 47–48), distinguishing between state formation in ancient China and in ancient Greece, argues that whereas in Greece the process was “uniquely self-limiting, oriented toward a fusion of the state with the political community and a systematic minimization of monopolizing trends,” in China the process was marked by the state’s “exceptionally strong” monopolizing trends. Although Arnason’s formulation appropriately characterizes the Greek case, I believe it is more accurate to identify the source of China’s monopolizing dynamic in the Chinese homology between the political, the familial, and the religious. In China the familial provided the cornerstone

defies the popular distinction in Western political thought, based on the Greek example, between prestate society, where the economy, politics, and religion are all “familized,” and state society, marked by the emergence of a separate public political order and the suppression and privatization of the family.⁵⁴ It is no wonder that modern Chinese scholars, when first exposed to Western political thought, puzzled over the nature of premodern Chinese society, which, despite China’s sophisticated government system, apparently had remained for several thousand years largely a polity organized by kinship principles.⁵⁵ Nor is it surprising that other modern thinkers, Chinese and Western, should conclude that, dominated by family ethics, China was never a genuine political entity and could never have developed a civil society between family and state.⁵⁶ Whatever the value judgments about China’s aberrance that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars conveyed from the perspective of Western political theory, the challenging questions that the evolutionist paradigm poses about how to understand the striking differences between the sociopolitical models of the two great traditions remain.

I approach this challenge by taking the perspective of gender and trying to uncover the links between gender relations and the larger structures of solidarity and authority in ancient China and Greece. How did the distinct relationships among the major social realms in the two traditions shape their different patterns of gender relations? What was it like for men and women to live in a society where they formed two

institution and ideology that preempted competition from the other forces and ties that could be found in the Greek common domain.

⁵⁴ Comaroff (1987: 63); Elshtain (1993).

⁵⁵ Yan Fu (1854–1921), who is most famous for introducing to China the works of Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer, once observed that, even though Chinese society had evolved into an empire after the Qin and Han dynasties, in the end it remained “seventy percent a lineage organization and thirty percent an empire” (Liang Shuming 2003: 18–19). Lei Haizong (1902–1962) (1940) argues that for most of its history China was a family-dominated society and the Warring States period was the only era in which the state constituted a true political entity. Of course, the kind of totalitarian political power wielded by the state and the lack of any notion of citizenship during the Warring States period were nothing like the equation between the state and the civic community in ancient Greece.

⁵⁶ Hegel is the most famous Western proponent of this view (see earlier). Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), during his visit to China in 1920/1921, remarked that China was a cultural entity, not a state (Liang Shuming 2003: 29). On discussions among Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century (Yan Fu and Liang Qichao [1873–1929] being their most eminent representatives) about the lack of civil society in premodern China, see Liu and Liu (1997) and F-S. Wang (1997).

separate collectives in a “civic family” as compared to living in a society where kinship and family ties determined the structure and values of the political and religious orders? How will examining their different patterns of gender relations enhance our understanding of the value systems and key sociopolitical institutions of the two traditions?⁵⁷

Gender and Sociability

A study of gender relations in ancient China and Greece must start with the fundamental principle of sexual separation. According to this rule, men and women move in different physical spaces, engage in different activities, and have different responsibilities and rules of conduct. The spatial separation, typically expressed in terms of a contrast between “inner” (female, the house) and “outer” (male, outside of the house), provided both a physical basis and a metaphor for the distinction in gender roles and virtues.⁵⁸ To be sure, the dichotomies thus established could not have been as clear-cut in real life. Even barring unusual circumstances, such as times of war or social chaos,⁵⁹ there were always exceptions due to factors such as the age, familial role, or socioeconomic status of a woman. Furthermore, as will be seen in later chapters, there were numerous socially and ritually sanctioned occasions for the temporary relaxation of the rule of sexual separation. However, although Chinese and Greek women were never “locked away,” and although women doubtless engaged in certain trades and public roles, it cannot be denied that in both societies wives, mothers, and daughters constituted the primary social roles available to women and that the home was where the women fulfilled most of their duties and exerted their greatest influences.⁶⁰ The instances of exception and relaxation gain

⁵⁷ In her call to probe the specific contents of familial bonds instead of demonstrating universal principles of domestic groupings, Rosaldo (1980: 408) suggests that questions on “how varying relationships within the home might influence relationships outside it” be asked.

⁵⁸ Classic textual formulations: *Book of Changes*, ch. 37 (“household”); Xenophon, *Oikonomikos*, Book 7. Studies: Hinsch (2003); Just (1989, ch. 6); Raphals (1998, chs. 8 and 9); Vernant (1983); Walker (1983).

⁵⁹ For example, Pomeroy (1975: 119) speculates that the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) may have caused a temporary breakdown of sexual decorum, forcing women to abandon seclusion and take up tasks formerly performed by men.

⁶⁰ Priestesses, who enjoyed high social prestige and typically came from families of noble lineages, were among the few women who played public roles in Greece. However, the priesthood was not a lifetime position in Greece. After serving her term, a priestess returned to her normal family life. In the Chinese case, many women served as

significance precisely because they testify to what was supposed to be normal and normative; instead of undermining or belying the rule, they reveal to us the complexity and flexibility of its workings.

A basic observation of this study is that while the ancient Chinese and Greek societies were both governed by principles of sexual separation and male domination, two distinct patterns of sociability – of how men and women related to each other both across the gender line and within the same sex group on the occasions intended for the collective cultivation of social bonds – appear in the extant sources for the two traditions. How and why this was so is the focus of this study, and some preliminary points regarding my ideas, concerns, and methods follow.

First, I consider “gender relations” (defined in this study as relationships between men and women) together with relationships among men and relationships among women. The three cannot be considered in isolation. Because of sexual separation and overwhelming male domination in both societies, how men bonded with each other had crucial implications for gender relations,⁶¹ and the way that women related to each other not only followed from but also helped to mold the patterns of gender relations. Four types of relationships can be examined in accordance with the gender of the people involved and the sexual or nonsexual nature of their relationships: homosocial, homosexual, heterosocial, and heterosexual. Furthermore, since women’s ascribed role was familial and since the house was supposed to define the parameters of women’s activities and duties, social relationships naturally fall into two large categories: within the family and outside of the family. Table 1.2 shows the resultant eight combinations of interpersonal relationships.

The familial relationships in Table 1.2 are straightforward and require little explanation. The extrafamilial heterosocial category barely existed in the two societies where regular association between unrelated men and women was prohibited and any such relationship was automatically expected to entail a sexual transaction (through adultery or prostitution).

officials in the king’s palace, taking charge of its daily operation. Yet despite their official titles, these women functioned in the capacity of king’s consorts and were essentially running a household of special status.

⁶¹ Seeing irony in the fact that “the turn toward ‘women’s studies’ in the China field seems to have encouraged a turn *away* from studies of men,” Mann (2000: 1600–1603) advocates considering relations among men as a legitimate subject of gender analysis.

TABLE 1.2. *Categories of interpersonal relationships*

	Homosocial	Homosexual	Heterosocial	Heterosexual
Familial	Father–son, mother–daughter, brothers, sisters, uncle–nephew, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, sisters-in-law, etc.	NA	Mother–son, father–daughter, brother–sister, etc.	Husband–wife
Extra-familial	Friends, associates, neighbors, fellow citizens, etc.	Male lovers, female lovers	NA	Courtesans and patrons

The categories of extrafamilial homosocial and extrafamilial homosexual relationships, however, and the connection between the two, call for clarification. While a sexual component is crucial in distinguishing between “homosexual” and “homosocial” in their application to our contemporary society, the same discontinuity cannot be assumed in other societies and historical periods. The ancient Greeks conceived of such ties as civic fellowship (bonds between citizens that sustained the unity of the city) and male homoeroticism (manifested mainly in pederasty, in which an adult man acted as the lover and mentor of a male adolescent in the latter’s socialization process) as being on a continuum.⁶² The Greek socialization and politicization of homoerotic relationships was not attested in China, but neither was there a conceptual or moral opposition between the homosocial and the homosexual. In China, sexual passion between two persons of the same sex did not occupy enough of a social niche to become an object of heated contention (as in the modern West) or of active appropriation (as in ancient Greece).⁶³ For

⁶² I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 1. Hartsock (1983, ch. 8) characterizes the *polis* as a community constituted by male Eros. I follow the current practice in classical studies in using the Greek term “pederasty” to refer to the institutionalized relationships between adult males and adolescent boys in ancient Greece, which had both a pedagogical function and an erotic dimension. Davidson (2007, ch. 3) painstakingly argues that Greek “pederasty” was not necessarily “intergenerational” because it often involved partners who were just a few years apart in age and the close relationship established in pederastic courtship could continue for years afterward. A distinction should be made between the Greeks’ practices and understanding of pederasty and the negative perceptions of pederasty in postclassical times and into the contemporary period (for a genealogical analysis, see Foucault 1985, 1986).

⁶³ On male homoeroticism in Chinese history, see Hinsch (1990) and C. Wu (2004).

different reasons, therefore, it is unnecessary to insist on explaining the existence or absence of a sexual dimension in extrafamilial bonds between individuals of the same sex in either ancient China or ancient Greece.⁶⁴ Throughout this study, the term “extrafamilial homosocial” will be used to refer to a spectrum of bonds that covers social relationships ranging from that of close friends, fellow citizens, and associates in formal and informal organizations to pederastic partners and other individuals of the same sex engaged in erotic or quasi-erotic liaisons (the language of homosexuality and homoeroticism will, however, be applied to this last category when the erotic element is explicit in the sources being discussed). With or without a sexual component, between adults or between adults and adolescents, extrafamilial homosocial ties constitute a primary alternative category of social relationships vis-à-vis family and kinship relations.

The category of extrafamilial heterosexual relationships in Table 1.2 essentially refers to the connections between professional female entertainers and their male patrons. Despite the obvious interest this category of relationships should command for a study on gender and sociability, I made the difficult decision to leave it outside the scope of this inquiry, following the guidelines that governed my choice of the types of interpersonal relationships to focus on. That is, I privileged those relationships that allow cross-cultural generalizations and have the support of evidence that both yields insights into the thoughts of the ancient agents or observers and is of comparable quantity and quality for the two traditions. Professional entertainers and their patrons are excluded from this study because the state of the evidence makes

⁶⁴ In her work on male homosocial desire in English literature, Sedgwick (1985, ch. 1) warns against the anachronistic conceptual distinction between the homosocial and the homosexual by invoking the example of the ancient Greeks. Davidson (2007) criticizes the influential Dover paradigm for equating Greek homosexuality with male sexual relationships (an approach that he derides as “a poetics of sodomy,” p. 104) and thus trivializing it and severing it from the complex sociopolitical background within which the phenomenon should be understood. Our points of departure and our purposes are different, and I do not share all of Davidson’s views. (Davidson attempts to downplay pederasty as the institutionalized and idealized form of male same-sex bonding in Greek society. Instead, he establishes adult homosexual pairing, which in the opinions of most classicists lacked social recognition let alone idealization, as the most inspiring and enduring legacy of Greek homosexuality.). However, Davidson’s emphasis on the public context and emotional dimension of male homoeroticism in Greece is a good corrective to some scholars’ preoccupation with the sexual element. As will be explained presently, in my study the category of extrafamilial homosocial bonds (for both males and females) comprises both homoerotic ties and other types of same-sex relationships, and the two may be intertwined.

it impossible to meet these criteria. A few more words are necessary to justify my reluctant decision.

The presence of the courtesans (*hetairai*, high-class prostitutes hired to provide entertainment and sexual service) at the Greek symposium (all-male drinking party) is extensively attested in literary and artistic representations from the sixth century BCE onward.⁶⁵ Did Greek men adore the talented and charming courtesans for giving them the kind of emotional and intellectual satisfaction that they could not obtain from their wives, who generally lacked not only education but also the skills to please men? Or, were the real rivals of the wives not the courtesans, who were merely for sensual gratification, but the boys whom Greek men admired and courted in pederastic relationships? Socially accepted relationships between courtesans and their customers clearly had significant implications for family life and conjugal relations in ancient Greece. My decision not to deal with this category of relationship follows from the consideration that there is no comparable evidence in Chinese sources about the activities of similar professionals in the centuries under discussion.

The “oldest profession on earth” had certainly existed in China since early times. However, all available evidence suggests that the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) was the first time that professional courtesans, through commercial prostitution, began to play an indispensable role in Chinese sociable activities and literary imagination. Before then, and certainly in the period of this study, records about the women who sang, danced, and provided sexual services at male gatherings show those entertainers to be maintained either by the government for official functions or in individual households to supply hospitality or domestic entertainment.⁶⁶ In the former case, only a highly restricted circle of men (e.g., officials and soldiers) had access to the regulated services of the entertainers; in the latter case, the entertainers occupied an ambiguous status between servant and concubine. In either instance, the relationship between the woman and her patron was very different from that in ancient Greece or in later Chinese history (although governments and households remained major sponsors of female entertainers even after the rise of commercial prostitution in the Tang). A set of factors may have accounted for the difference between the primary channels of

⁶⁵ See Davidson (1997), Faraone and McClure (eds., 2006), Keuls (1985: 160–168), Kurke (1997), Stewart (1997).

⁶⁶ Wang Shunu (1935); Zheng Zhimin (1997); Zhou Jiren (1993: 44–46).

extrafamilial heterosexual relationships open to men in ancient China and Greece. On the one hand, ancient Chinese society was characterized by the presence of the state and the family as the major controllers of human and material resources and by the relative weakness of all other social forces and organizations (which partly found expression in a relatively low degree of commercialization and urbanization).⁶⁷ On the other hand, in Greece, where a more complex constellation of social forces existed and egalitarianism lay at the heart of the civic ideology, there was an entrenched sense of a common domain open to all, including professional female entertainers providing commercialized sexual services.⁶⁸

While I believe that my speculative explanation for the disparity in the development of commercial prostitution in ancient Greece and China identifies fundamental differences between the two societies and is worthy of further exploration, at this stage I am unable to establish systematic and satisfactory correlations between the disparity and the distinct patterns of gender relations that I have deduced for the two societies. It requires a thorough study that juxtaposes the history of prostitution and the history of the family in China, and compares the finding with those for ancient Greece and perhaps for other premodern societies that have similar gender structures to generate a hypothesis about the relationship between commercial prostitution and conjugal relations in these societies. That task is well beyond the scope of this inquiry.

As already noted, a further reason that led me to leave female entertainers (professional or otherwise) out of the picture is that in the early Chinese sources there were few testimonies about their presence let alone about their interactions and emotional engagement with their

⁶⁷ Wang Daqing (2006: 39–40) contrasts the domination of commerce by political power in the ancient Chinese city with the independent status of commercial interests in the ancient Greek city. M. E. Lewis (2006a: 149) invokes the relative weakness of merchants and of merchant wealth to explain why the city did not develop as a distinct and autonomous form of social organization in early China. In their attempt to explain why physical education was promoted much more heavily in ancient Greece than in ancient China, Wooyeal and Bell (2004) propose as one important reason that the material surplus of largely commercial societies and greater freedom from family obligations in Greece provided sufficient leisure time for a class of male citizens to devote themselves to training for physical excellence and participating in athletic competitions, whereas the largely agricultural political economies and the primacy of family obligations in China were not conducive to the promotion of such pursuits. On the rapid development of purely commercial transactions unbound by personal and quasi-familial ties in the second half of the Tang dynasty, see J. Gernet (1995: 276).

⁶⁸ Halperin (1990, ch. 5).

patrons. Thus it is difficult to infer their role in men's lives (other than as objects of exchange and the backdrop for male joviality⁶⁹) or their importance for an understanding of gender relations in ancient China. The females whom we will encounter in the following chapters are so-called respectable women: mothers, wives, and daughters. To be sure, the lively presence of these female convivialists deserves a full study and is sufficient to generate a systematic comparison between the two traditions. Moreover, I believe that my findings based on these "respectable women," who were by far more numerous and more relevant to the functioning of society than the female entertainers were, will yield patterns of gender relations into which the "disreputable" women can be fit when we have gained a better understanding of their role in ancient China.

The same guidelines that governed my choice of categories of interpersonal relationships also led me to focus on certain types of sociable occasions, both domestic and extradomestic, as the stage for interactions between men and women, among men, and among women. The differences between ancient China and Greece can be brought out by analyzing not only the unique sociable forms of the two traditions but also the settings that were common to both. Striking examples of the former are the ancestral sacrifices in China and the athletic competitions and festival choral performances in Greece, whereas the shared occasions include family banquets, men's drinking parties, and festivities in honor of deities. By examining gender relations against a broad array of sociable contexts, this study will shed new light on some important aspects of ancient Greek and Chinese societies, including religion, politics, and ethics.

Religion. Scholars have repeatedly made strong statements about the all-pervading presence of religion in Greek sociability. For example, Pauline Schmitt-Pantel remarks that "religion is present in all the different levels of [Greek] social life, and all collective practices have a religious dimension," and a state-of-the-field essay by André Vauchez states that classical studies since the nineteenth century have made it clear that in Greece "no form of sociability escaped the hold of religion."⁷⁰ Be it in the form of a festival, a choral performance, or a symposium,

⁶⁹ Texts such as *Zuo's Commentary* and the *Intrigues of the Warring States* contain numerous records in which female entertainers are offered as gifts among the ruling elite, often along with musical instruments and other items of luxury.

⁷⁰ Schmitt-Pantel (1990b: 200); Vauchez (1987: 9–10, 11, 13). This line of thinking goes back to Fustel de Coulanges' (1980) classic work *The Ancient City*, first published in 1864.

the celebration took place under the eyes of the gods and the mortal celebrants of Hellas forged ties with each other at the same time as they established communication with the divine. Religion likewise enjoyed central significance in Chinese sociability, although huge differences from Greek religious or religion-informed occasions and their ethical-political implications obtained. Whereas the public festivals of a civic and intensely competitive character dominated in ancient Greece, in ancient China ancestor worship, the domestic religion par excellence, was the most important form of religious activity. As I shall argue, insofar as religion was a crucial area in which women could gain formal public recognition for their contributions to society, the great differences between Chinese and Greek religious sociability provide a key to our understanding of the distinct patterns of gender relations in the two traditions.⁷¹

Politics. In ancient Greece, the symposia and group activities organized for male youths functioned as avenues for “socialization and apprenticeship in political life” and for “apprenticeship in civic values” not only by transmitting knowledge, values, and skills but also by adopting the models of the city-state’s political institutions in their protocols.⁷² The future citizens who would deliberate and vote in the assembly and fight on the battlefield were groomed through various sociable activities, and their participation on those occasions after reaching their majority would mark their full membership in the civic community. In contrast to the importance of moving among one’s peers for the making of the Greek citizen, in ancient China the family served as the crucial site for the inculcation of social and political virtues. Insofar as the societies of ancient China and Greece were sustained by distinct means of socialization and political reproduction, women occupied different places in the two sociopolitical orders even though they participated as mothers, wives, and daughters in both.

Ethics. Sociable occasions often throw into high relief the values and rules that shape interpersonal relationships and guide people’s actions under normal circumstances. However, they are also likely, their purported aims notwithstanding, to offer a stage for the enactment of tensions and conflicts *as well as* of affinities. What form the tensions and conflicts take, who experiences them, and why they arise are questions

⁷¹ It is Émile Durkheim’s (1858–1917) (1976) fundamental insight that religious beliefs and practices replicate and reinforce social experience.

⁷² Schmitt-Pantel (1990b: 206). Also see Murray (1983a, 1983b).