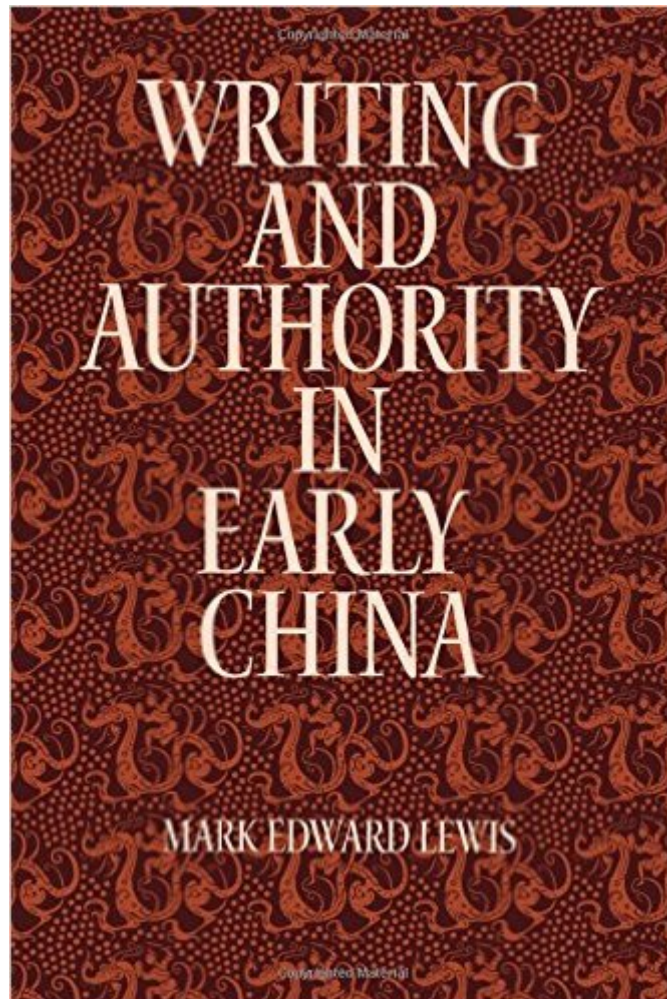


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Writing And Authority In Early China (SUNY Series In Chinese Philosophy And Culture (Paperback))



Synopsis

Traces the evolving uses of writing to command assent and authority in early China, an evolution that culminated in the establishment of a textual canon as the basis of imperial authority. "This book is a masterful study of the ideology and uses of writing in early China. The scholarship is impeccable--indeed, stunning--the interpretation of an array of difficult texts is brilliant, and the conclusions are of central importance to all subsequent studies of this period. This book, in my opinion, is the single most valuable study in the field of early China scholarship since Angus Graham's *Disputers of the Tao*. It is certain to be read, cited, and disputed for many decades." -- Stephen W. Durrant, author of *The Cloudy Mirror*

This book traces the evolving uses of writing to command assent and obedience in early China, an evolution that culminated in the establishment of a textual canon as the foundation of imperial authority. Its central theme is the emergence of this body of writings as the textual double of the state, and of the text-based sage as the double of the ruler. The book examines the full range of writings employed in early China, such as divinatory records, written communications with ancestors, government documents, the collective writings of philosophical and textual traditions, speeches attributed to historical figures, chronicles, verse anthologies, commentaries, and encyclopedic compendia. Lewis shows how these writings served to administer populations, control officials, form new social groups, invent new models of authority, and create an artificial language whose mastery generated power and whose graphs became potent objects. *Writing and Authority in Early China* traces the enterprise of creating a parallel reality within texts that depicted the entire world. These texts provided models for the invention of a world empire, and one version ultimately became the first state canon of imperial China. This canon served to perpetuate the dream and the reality of the imperial system across the centuries. "Writing and Authority in Early China is a comprehensive presentation about the structure of society and authority in pre-imperial and early imperial China from a very important and heretofore unexplored perspective. I would not be surprised to see this book rise to a level of lasting importance that few modern works of scholarship, even good ones, can hope for." -- William G. Boltz, University of Washington

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a very well-researched, scholarly work. It is also incredibly dense to the point of being unreadable. If you're a graduate student in Chinese Lit or Lang (or going to be one), it's probably worth the investment. If you're not, this isn't the book for you.

I had Classical Thought in East Asia as an undergrad. This book is truly the most awful textbook I've ever had to read. And we had to read the whole thing. The one other review for this calls it nearly unreadable. I could not agree more. I barely learned a thing because it is so intense. I was not able to concentrate on it because it just went on and on about every single detail. I'm not a poor reader. I'm not a poor student. I'm not unable to understand dense scholarly writings and books. This book was just awful. On the upside it's incredibly thorough (obviously) and well researched. If this is your area or specialty, go for it. Otherwise, walk away.

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