Review article

Recent Monographs on Confucius and Early Confucianism

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Introduction

In recent years, Confucian teachings have been regaining ground in Mainland China both as the subject of academic discourse and as an expression of Chinese cultural identity. At the same time, manuscript finds have brought to light hitherto unknown source materials pertinent to the study of early Confucianism. These archaeological discoveries have also stimulated methodological reflections on the nature, composition, and transmission of ancient texts more generally. This in itself would provide sufficient reason to revisit the extant texts of early Confucianism with a view of approaching them from new perspectives. Additionally, about a decade ago E. Bruce and A. Taeko Brooks published a controversial monograph that offered a new historical and philological analysis of the *Lunyu* and proposed a rearrangement of the text according to a novel chronological stratification established by the authors. Several scholars have voiced scepticism about the Brookses’ claims. However, regardless of whether or not one agrees

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1) The reviewer is aware that the term “Confucianism” has been criticized for its lack of a precise Chinese equivalent and for forcing a single label on a wide range of historically and philosophically diverse texts and intellectual currents. The term will, nevertheless, be retained here as a convenient shorthand for some of the shared doctrinal and moral concerns of thinkers who associated themselves intellectually with Confucius or focused their discussions on terms and ideas commonly attributed to him.

2) See, e.g., the finds of Guodian from 1993 published in *Guodian Chu mu zhujian* and the manuscript corpus purchased by the Shanghai Museum and published under the main editorship of Ma Chengyuan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001ff.).

