Classical Confucian Political Thought: A New Interpretation. By Loubna el Amine. pp. 218. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.
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In this book, Professor El Amine argues for a division between Confucian ethical and political thought, going back to the very earliest writings on the subject: the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects of Confucius), *Mengzi* 孟子 (Mencius), and *Xunzi* 荀子. Chapter One discusses the concept of virtue (*de* 德), arguing that early Confucian philosophers saw a very limited potential for people other than the ruling elite to acquire this key quality. Chapters Two and Three consider the mechanisms which early texts considered necessary for ensuring social stability and harmony, while Chapter Four describes the roles ascribed to government ministers. Finally, Chapter Five is concerned with the duty of the individual with respect to the state, particularly in terms of government service, and Chapter Six concludes with an account of the Confucian conception of *tian* 天 (Heaven), which validates their vision of an orderly society. The most successful part of *Classical Confucian Political Thought* is its discussion of English language scholarship on early Confucian thought in the last fifty years—this is thorough and comprehensive, and references the work of many of the most important scholars in the field, with a useful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments. The remainder of the book is more problematic. In spite of the account of the historical background given in the Prologue, the subsequent handling of the main texts is unsophisticated and lacking in contextualisation. Since the Confucian texts under consideration are thought to be the products of different times and places, it is not appropriate to treat them as if the governments and political systems under discussion are as one. Of equal concern is the author's failure to even mention the developments which occurred during the Han dynasty. Prior to the first century BCE, Confucian scholars were at best limited to the lower levels of the bureaucracy, hence early Confucian political thought predating this period should be understood as utopian. The cataclysmic political upheavals which took place in the reign of Han Wudi (r. 140–87 BCE) resulted in a situation where Confucian scholars were promoted to the highest level of officialdom, whereupon their attempts to introduce Confucian policies frequently met with predictably disastrous results. By eliding these two stages in the history of early Confucian thought, the author does her arguments no service.

Given Professor El Amine's limited knowledge of classical Chinese, she is of necessity confined to those early Confucian texts which have been translated into English. This means that other early Confucian philosophical texts which have not been translated are perforce ignored—the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan) in particular contains a unique and valuable discussion of the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the role of officials in the government of the country and the limits of their duties to the ruler, and the mechanisms by which an unsatisfactory ruler could be removed, all of which would be highly relevant to the topics considered in this book. Professor El Amine is also forced to neglect the ritual and historical texts for which there are no translations into English, though again these contain many important insights into early Confucian political thought, not to mention Han dynasty compilations of earlier textual material, such as the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Stories), which incorporate many discussions on the nature of rulership, and the relationship between monarch and subject. Nowhere in the book did I find mention of the many archaeologically recovered texts that have been the subject of intensive research in China in the last thirty years; in the case of material with a transmitted counterpart, these finds have allowed a new and deeper understanding of the development of some of the most important philosophical texts; in instances where the bamboo and silk documents are entirely new, it has resulted in a much enhanced appreciation of the breadth of the Confucian textual tradition in pre-unification and early imperial China, and the richness of early Chinese philosophy.

Where Professor El Amine quotes from the key source texts, she does not give due consideration to different commentarial traditions, not even the particular commentary followed by the translator for the passage in question. The author seems to be unaware of the problems caused by this reliance on translations, particularly the fact that her conclusions are preordained by the choice of commentary the translator has used—the plethora of alternative interpretations having already been screened out. Although the actual quotations given in *Classical Confucian Political Thought* are relatively unproblematic, deriving as they do from translations produced by highly respected scholars with an excellent knowledge of the texts, on the occasions that Professor El Amine ventures away from them, her work is marred by anachronistic translations of key Chinese terms. For example, the author translates *di* 帝 as "Emperor" when speaking of the sage-kings of high antiquity; although many scholars dislike the word "Thearch" as a translation for this term, in this case it would actually be an improvement. Given the strong tendency of early Chinese philosophers, including those categorised as Confucian, to illustrate their theories with historical anecdotes, it is particularly crucial that the terms indicating the respective ranking of the individuals concerned should be properly translated, and if necessary explained with footnotes.

In terms of discussion on secondary scholarship, El Amine does not appear to acknowledge that these texts have been intensively studied in China for at least two thousand years, in many cases with particular reference to political thought. Only one Neo-Confucian scholar is mentioned in passing, and that is Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). Furthermore, Professor El Amine's virtually exclusive reliance on English language material means that not a single scholar from Mainland China has their work referenced, with the exception of those who write in English. In this day and age, it is deeply worrying that a reputable academic press still feels that it is appropriate to publish books about East Asia by authors working through translations and secondary sources. milburn@snu.ac.kr

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Building a Sacred Mountain – The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai. By Wei-Cheng Lin. pp. 344. Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2014.
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Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province has been a significant site of Chinese Buddhism throughout its two millennia of religious history. The mountain landscape, legends, the apparitions of the residing bodhisattva, monastic community and architecture are subjects of several anthological hagiographies and gazetteers of the mountain, the earliest dated to 680. The conception of Mount Wutai as the abode of Mañjuśrī the bodhisattva of wisdom, was formed in the sixth century. Interest in the sacred mountain also extended to the art and architecture associated with it. The images of Mañjuśrī, particularly the idea of a true image of the bodhisattva and the depiction of the mountain in prints, paintings and wall paintings have been well studied. The surroundings of Wutai include two wooden buildings with the main structure and sculpture dating from the late eighth and mid-ninth centuries. They are the earliest wooden constructions extant in China. The sacred mountain is thus ideal for the study of an important aspect of Chinese Buddhism.

How can the rise of Mount Wutai as a sacred realm be understood and conceptualised? *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai* offers an in-depth attempt in examining the sacred phenomenon of the mountain through its architecture and representation of