



Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation

Dr Alexander Beecroft

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

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