

The Birth of Confucianism from Competition with Organized Mohism

Christoph Harbsmeier

University of Oslo

I. Introduction

Nathan Sivin has warned us against the perplexities of the notion of “Daoism.” He concludes: “I have drawn attention to the frequent confusion between many things that ‘Taoist’ can mean and have suggested that this confusion often mires us down when we try to comprehend the historic character of these phenomena and their complex interplay.” And he continues: “It is, I believe, simple and feasible, when we speak of something as Taoist (or Confucian), to be explicit about the sense in which we so consider it and the criteria by which we so judge it.”¹ I basically agree with all of this and take it as my point of departure.

In his 1981 article, “There Were No ‘Six Schools’ in Pre-Qín Philosophy,”² Rèn Jiyù 任繼愈 elaborated on the obvious a long time ago: the classification of Chinese thinkers into six *jiā* 家 (including Daoism) by Sīmǎ Tán 司馬談 represented Sīmǎ’s own attempt to classify ways of thought in ancient China. It does not belong to the Warring States period. And the classification must not be taken to attribute “six schools” to Warring States times. There was no such thing as a “School of Daoism,” or “School of Logicians,” in Warring States times. On the other hand there was a

¹ N. Sivin, “On the Word ‘Taoist’ as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China,” *History of Religions* 17, no. 3/4 (February–May, 1978), pp. 327, 328.

² Rèn Jiyù, “Xiān Qín zhéxué wú ‘liùjiā’ ” 先秦哲學無「六家」, reprinted in Rèn, *Zhōngguó zhéxué shīlùn* 中國哲學史論 (Shanghai: Shànghǎi rénmín chūbǎnshè, 1981), pp. 431–35.

Late Warring States Mohist school, and in 1998 Rèn Jiyù did go on to lay out the organizational and doctrinal specificities of that Mohist school in some detail in his book *Mòzǐ and the Mohist School*.³

Each of Sīmǎ Tán's six *jiā* "schools of thought" does deserve investigation separately, and each in their own right. There is no one issue concerning the *liù jiā* 六家. There are six separate issues. This paper addresses just one of these that I take to be of particular historical interest. It is the case of the *rú* 儒 "Rú" on the one hand and the *rú zhě* 儒者 "Rúists" on the other in Warring States China. I shall leave aside the quite separate issue of the *rú jiā* 儒家 "Rú school" in Eastern Hàn times⁴ and concentrate on Warring States and a few Early Hàn texts.

Now in recent times, we have been advised by what begins to look like broad sinological scholarly consent against the very notion of "Confucianism" in general, and in particular as applied to the period before the Eastern Hàn. What has been generally looked upon as the "Five Confucian Classics" is introduced in a book entitled *The Five "Confucian" Classics*.⁵ An earlier book promises to explain the Míng dynasty missionary phenomenon of *Manufacturing Confucianism*.⁶ Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan conclude at the very end of their paper: "The implication of the foregoing discussion for early history, prior to and including the Western Han, is clear: the ascription of philosophical 'schools' is an anachronistic imposition of a set of Eastern Han and post-Han concerns onto earlier periods."⁷ In particular, the

³ Rèn Jiyù, *Mòzǐ yǔ Mòjiā* 墨子與墨家 (Peking: Shāngwù yìnshūguǎn, 1998).

⁴ On the concept of a school in ancient China I want to draw attention here to three immediately relevant works by the great Russian sinologist Yuri Kroll (Iurii Krol') that have been so easily overlooked because they happen to be in Russian: (1) "O poniatii *jia* (shkola) v drevnem Kitae (On the concept of *jiā* 家 in ancient China)," VIII *Nauchnaia konferentsiia "Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae": Tezisy i doklady* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), part 1, pp. 79–87; (2) "Rassuzhdenie Sima o 'shesti shkolakh' (Sima's distinction between the 'six schools')," in *Kitai, istoriia, kul'tura i istoriografiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977); (3) "Rodstvennye predstavleniia o 'dome' i 'shkole' (*jia*) v drevnem Kitae (Original conceptions of 'house' and 'school' (*jiā* 家) in ancient China)," *Obshchestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), pp. 39–57.

⁵ Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁶ Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁷ Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China," *T'oung Pao*, 2nd ser., vol. 89, fasc. 1/3 (2003), pp. 59–99.

suggestion already in Nylan's *Five "Confucian" Classics* is that the *rú* 儒 are never Confucians in pre-Hàn and even pre-Eastern Hàn times, but that the term should be translated as "classicists." Csikszentmihalyi elaborates this point of view at length and with useful documentation.⁸ The translation "Confucians" has become proscribed for the pre-Hàn period at least. I shall demonstrate that in many cases this translation imposes itself as not only natural but also correct: not because this Confucianism ever was—nor indeed ever became—a stratified social institution and political organization with a codified catechism like the Mohist school, but because this was a much looser congeries of people who saw themselves as differing strands of followers of a tradition linked to the name of Confucius, admirers of the man and of his basic teachings.

The philological question that lies at the bottom of this issue of translation or terminology is thoroughly worthwhile and not a matter of wording only: When exactly (if ever, indeed!) did the very broad and general term *rú* 儒 begin to be used to refer specifically to demonstrated followers and admirers of Confucius only? Certainly not at the time of Confucius himself, and not even apparently at the time of the composition of the *Analects*.⁹

Zhāng Tàiyán 章太炎 sets the stage for my enquiry magisterially:

儒有三科，闢達、類、私之名。
達名為儒，儒者，術士也。……
類名為儒，儒者，知禮樂射御書數。……
私名為儒。《七略》曰：儒家者流，……

There are three categories of Rú.

They correspond to the broad, the limited, and the narrow names.

The Rú in the broad sense are the specialists (masters of any art). . . .

The Rú in the limited sense are those who are educated in the six arts of ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and arithmetic. . . .¹⁰

⁸ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 13–58.

⁹ See for example Christoph Harbsmeier, "Confucius Ridens: Humor in the *Analects*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50, no. 1 (June 1990), pp. 131–61, which argues that the *Analects* are best regarded not as a Confucianist work. The separate question whether Confucius himself would or would not count as a *rú* 儒 is, of course, entirely irrelevant to this issue and also of no importance for the present paper.

¹⁰ Compare *Zhōu Lǐ* 周禮, *Tiān guān* 天官, "dà zǎi" 大宰: 四曰儒以道得民. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 comments: "儒，諸侯有保氏，有六藝以教民者。"

The Rú in the narrow sense are what the “Seven Summaries” [by Liú Xīn 劉歆] call “the adherents of the *rú jiā* ‘Rú school of thought.’”¹¹

Zhāng Tàiyán makes a distinction between early “broad” or “loose” meanings of *rú* 儒 on the one hand and a later specific one, just as one might wish to speak of an earlier “broad” meaning of *jūn zǐ* 君子 “man of noble descent” as opposed to (probably Confucian) later meanings “man of noble (decent and) character,” and then “man of noble character.” Expressions like *rú* and *jūn zǐ* do not simply have “one meaning.” They have historically evolving structured sets of historically related meanings. Showing that *jūn zǐ* often means “man of noble descent” does nothing to show that it is not also, and at the same point in time, used elsewhere as a technical term for “a person of noble character.” Similarly, showing that *rú* very often refers to classicists in general and not to Confucians does nothing to show that *rú* does not elsewhere mean “Confucian.”

Hú Shì 胡適, in the opening pages of his remarkably lively and imaginative essay “Shuō rú” 說儒, makes our substantial question for the study of Chinese intellectual history more precise.

太炎先生說「儒之名於古通為術士」，……他們同那狹義的孔門的儒有何歷史的關係，他們同春秋戰國之間的許多思想潮流又有何歷史的關係。在這些問題上，我們不免都感覺不滿足。¹²

Zhāng Tàiyán says that “in ancient times the term *rú* was synonymous with ‘specialist.’” But what historical connection did these people have with the Rú in the narrow sense, and what historical connections did they have with the various currents of thought in Spring and Autumn and Warring States times? When it comes to these questions, we cannot but feel disappointed.

Some of the standard subsequent Chinese scholarship, often using these two classical studies as its point of departure, is conveniently surveyed in the conventional modern Chinese way in the work of Chén Lái 陳來.¹³ But to this day, the decisive question does remain an open one: exactly when, and exactly where, does the term *rú* 儒 begin

¹¹ *Guógù lùnhéng* 國故論衡, “Yuán rú” 原儒, Zhāngshì cóngshū 章氏叢書 ed., vol. 3, pp. 8–10.

¹² Hú Shì, *Hú Shì lùnxué jìnzhù dìyījī* 胡適論學近著第一集 (Shanghai: Shāngwù yīnshūguǎn, 1935), p. 6.

¹³ Chén Lái, “Xiān Qín wénxiàn zhōng ‘rú’ de kèhuà yǔ lùnshuō” 先秦文獻中「儒」的刻畫與論說, accessed 13 February 2012, <http://guoxue.hxslw.com/zhuzi/kz/2010/0914/56578.html>; Idem, “Shuōshuō rú: Gǔjīn yuán rú shuō jí qí yánjiù fānxǐng” 說說儒——古今原儒說及其研究反省, accessed 26 October 2012, <http://www.confuchina.com/10%20lishi/yuanru.htm>.

to refer specifically to followers of Confucius and not to non-military specialists in general, or to professionals in the Six Arts in a narrower sense, or to classicists in general?

II. *Lǐjì* 禮記 41, “*Rú xíng*” 儒行

One obviously important source in which to look for an answer is *Lǐjì* 禮記 41, “*Rú xíng*” 儒行.¹⁴ This chapter was particularly appreciated by Zhāng Tàiyán according to a letter “*Yǔ Wú Guānzhái shū*” 與吳觀齋書 he wrote in 1932: 奮厲志行，兼綜儒俠，莫隆於〈儒行〉。 “As for being vigorously strict about purposeful demeanour, as for summarizing comprehensively what it is to be a *Rú* knight, nothing is superior to the ‘*Rú xíng*.’”¹⁵ Traditionally, however, this chapter is often held in rather low esteem as both repetitive and vulgarly self-aggrandizing. And yet, the commentator Kǒng Yǐngdá 孔穎達 (574–648) is quoted as boldly maintaining: 其十七條之儒，是夫子自謂也。 “The *rú* in these seventeen pieces [in the “*Rú xíng*” 儒行] are the Master [Confucius] referring to himself.” We are tempted to add: “These 17 pieces certainly try to strike such a pose!”¹⁶

The great Sòng scholar Lǚ Dàlín 呂大臨 (1044–1091) is quoted everywhere as expressing his misgivings about the text: 竊意末世儒者將以自尊其教。 “I permit myself the thought that this is a latter-day Confucian promoting his own teaching.”¹⁷

However this may be, I do suppose that at the very latest this text must have been from late Western Hàn times in order to get incorporated into the compilation of the *Lǐjì*, although the excellent commentator on this book, Sūn Xīdàn 孫希旦 (1736–1784), cannot imagine the text being later than Xúnzǐ.¹⁸ In any case, in this text, Confucius is made to advocate his teaching on proper behaviour in terms of what the *rú* 儒 will do. One might still insist that he is just generally referring to the *jūn zǐ Rú* 君子儒 “the noble-man-type *Rú*” of the *Analects*. He may be taken to disregard the *xiǎo rén Rú* 小人儒 “petty-man-type *Rú*” (*Analects*, 6.13).

¹⁴ Lǐ Xuéqín 李學勤, ed., *Shísānjīng zhùshū* 十三經注疏 (Peking: Běijīng dàxué chūbǎnshè, 2000), pp. 1841–58; Sūn Xīdàn 孫希旦, *Lǐjì jíjiě* 禮記集解 (Peking: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1989), pp. 1398–1410.

¹⁵ Quoted in Jiāng Yihuá 姜義華, *Xīnyì Lǐjì dúběn* 新譯禮記讀本 (Taipei: Sānmín shūjú gǔfèn yōuxiàn gōngsī, 1997), p. 857.

¹⁶ Sūn Xīdàn, p. 1409; Lǐ Xuéqín, p. 1843.

¹⁷ See, for example, Yáng Tiānyǔ 楊天宇, *Lǐjì yìzhù* 禮記譯注 (Shanghai: Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè, 1997), p. 1021.

¹⁸ Sūn Xīdàn, p. 1410.

Here, then, is the narrative frame of the chapter which attributes to Confucius one continuous series of what are traditionally counted as 17 characterizations of the proper behaviour of these Rú which form the rest of the chapter:

魯哀公問於孔子曰：「夫子之服，其儒服與？」
孔子對曰：「丘少居魯，衣逢掖之衣；長居宋，冠章甫之冠。丘聞之也：君子之學也博，其服也鄉。丘不知儒服。」
哀公問曰：「敢問儒行。」
孔子對曰：「遽數之不能終其物，悉數之乃留。更僕，未可終也。」
哀公命席。
孔子侍，曰：「儒有席上之珍以待聘，……」

Duke Ai of Lu asked Confucius, saying,

“Is not the dress, Master, which you wear that of a Rú?”

Confucius replied, “When I was little, I lived in Lu, and wore the garment with large sleeves; when I was grown up, I lived in Song, and was then capped with the *zhang-fu* cap. I have heard that the studies of the Rú are extensive, but his dress is that of the state from which he sprang. I do not know any dress of the Rú.”

The duke said, “Allow me to ask what is the conduct of the Rú.”

Confucius replied,

“If I were to enumerate the points in it summarily, I could not touch upon them all; if I were to go into details on each, it would take a long time. You would have changed all your attendants-in-waiting before I had concluded.”

The duke ordered a mat to be placed for him, and Confucius took his place by his side.

He then said, “The Rú has a precious gem placed upon his mat, with which he is waiting to receive an invitation (from some ruler); . . .”¹⁹

The rest of the chapter is Confucius’s elaboration on proper Rú 儒 behaviour in one continuous quotation of Confucius’s direct speech in answer to the duke’s direct question.

And now Hú Shì’s question—a question that badly needs a reasoned answer—becomes more concrete: does the Confucius of this particular episode purport to

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 1398–99; Séraphin Couvreur, trans., *Li Ki ou Mémoires sur les bienséances et les cérémonies*, 2 vols. (Ho Kien Fou: Mission catholique, 1913), vol. 2, pp. 601f; Jiāng Yihuá, pp. 857–58; James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki*, in Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, vols. 17–18 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), vol. 2, p. 403.

describe the behaviour of classicists in general, far and wide, of different specializations and intellectual persuasions otherwise? Or is the latter-day Confucius of this chapter referring to his own followers and disciples as well as disciples of disciples, members of his own tradition or “school of thought” committed to him as a founding father? Confucius’s circumstantial answer makes it clear that he is not talking about just any old Rú, noble or petty. He is clearly not speaking of some diffuse group of disparate and doctrinally completely disunited classicists, good or bad. Chén Lái even insists that in this chapter, the term *rú* 儒 clearly must refer to the followers of Confucius: 與墨者同時的孔門七十子及其後學也以「儒」而自命，並往往通過追述「孔子曰」對「儒」加以定義和說明，在這一方面，《禮記》的儒行篇可謂是最明顯的例證。²⁰ In fact, I dare not go as far as Chén Lái for the “Rú xíng” 儒行 chapter. All I will conclude, remaining firmly within the vocabulary of the *Analects*, is that the Rú in this chapter are of the noble *jūn zǐ Rú* 君子儒 kind, not of the petty *xiǎo rén Rú* 小人儒 kind. We must carefully avoid the quick conclusion that these *jūn zǐ Rú* necessarily must be followers of anything like a Confucian “creed.” Confucius might conceivably want to be taken to describe not his own followers, but the decent ones among those Rú out there, in general, who may have nothing to do with his teaching, let alone with any school of thought or school of disciples relating to this teaching.

Having said that, the dozens of disciples Confucius is reported to have had, and to have interacted with, do nothing to weaken an impression that the Rú referred to here might indeed be those who regard themselves as (perhaps competing) followers of a tradition founded by Confucius.

III. “The Rú and the Mò”

Let us now see to what extent the idiomatic combination *rú Mò* 儒、墨 can be plausibly read as an opposition of “the classicists (in general) and the Mohists,” or whether the opposition is between one tradition, being founded by Confucius, and the other, founded by Mòzǐ 墨子. And there certainly are contexts that painlessly allow the first reading:

而儒墨乃始離跂攘臂乎桎梏之間。意，甚矣哉！其无愧而不知恥也甚矣！

And now come the Rú and Mohists, waving their arms, striding into the very midst of the fettered and manacled men. Ah, that they should go this far, that they should be so brazen, so lacking in any sense of shame!”²¹

²⁰ Chén Lái, “Xiān Qín wénxiàn zhōng ‘rú’ de kèhuà yǔ lùnshuō,” beginning.

²¹ Wáng Shūmín 王叔岷, *Zhuāngzǐ jiàokuán* 莊子校詮 (Taipei: Zhōngyāng yánjiùyuàn Lìshǐ yǔyán yánjiùsuǒ, 1988), p. 385; Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 118.

The non-classicist, and not-so-traditionalist Mohists would be opposed to the traditionalist classicists.

The parallelism in the current combination *rú Mò* 儒、墨 “The Rú and the Mohists” does seem to invite an interpretation along the conventional lines of “Confucians and Mohists,” but it remains crucial to keep in mind that most of these examples may seem to invite a traditional reading “Confucians” for *rú* 儒 but that one might still insist on a general reading “classicists” for more general historical reasons. This latter strategy begins to be problematic when we have conversion to *rú*-hood, as in *wéi rú* 為儒 “convert to Rú-hood”:

鄭人緩也，呻吟裘氏之地。祇三年而緩為儒。河潤九里，澤及三族，使其弟墨。儒、墨相與辯，……

There was a man from Zhèng named Huán who, after three years of reciting and memorizing texts at a place called Qiúshì, finally became a Rú. As the Yellow River spreads its moisture for nine li along its banks, so Huán’s affluence spread to his three sets of relatives. He saw to it that his younger brother Dì became a Mohist, and the Rú and the Mohist debated with each other, . . .²²

One does wonder why it should take the man three years to become classicist, since he was reciting these texts all the time and that should presumably qualify him already. The conversion seems to be to something like the Confucian tradition.

Moreover, Zhào Qí 趙歧 (died A.D. 200) found it implausible to read *rú* 儒 as referring to any classicists in general, noble or petty in the following:

孟子曰：「逃墨必歸於楊，逃楊必歸於儒，歸斯受之而已矣。今之與楊、墨辯者，如追放豚，既入其茆，又從而招之。」

Mencius said, “Those who desert the Mohist school are sure to turn to that of Yáng; those who desert the Yáng school are sure to turn to the Rú. When they revert²³ (to us, the Rú, where they properly belong, we) simply accept them. Nowadays, those who debate with the followers of Yáng and Mò behave as if they were chasing strayed pigs. They are not content to return the pigs to the sty, but they go on to tie their feet up.”²⁴

²² Wáng Shūmín, p. 1259; Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, pp. 354–55.

²³ Note that unlike *fǎn* 返 “return,” *guī* 歸 “revert; return” typically refers to returning to where one belongs.

²⁴ Jiāo Xún 焦循, *Mèngzǐ zhèngyì* 孟子正義 (Peking: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1987), p. 997; D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 162–63.

The old commentary confirms D. C. Lau's understanding of the object of *guī* 歸 "revert to X (where one belongs)." Zhào Qí 趙歧 comments:

以言去楊、墨歸儒則可，又復從而罪之，亦云太甚。

So this means that when they leave the Yángists and the Mòhists and turn to the Rú (where they belong), if one then again goes on to criticize them (for having followed other persuasions) one will surely say that this is very excessive.²⁵

In his summary, Zhào Qí even goes on to identify the Rú 儒 as *zhèng* 正 "correct, right-thinking" as opposed to *xié* 邪 "bad, incorrect, wrong-headed," something that could only be said of members of a group with doctrinal coherence: Zhào Qí's summary (*zhāng zhǐ* 章指) elaborates the matter as follows:

驅邪反正，正斯可矣。來者不綏，追其前罪，君子甚之，以為過也。

When they eschew the wrong-headed and turn to what is correct then if they are correct that is fine. When they have come (into the Rú fold) not to retreat but to pursue their former crimes, the gentleman will find this excessive, and he will regard it as a mistake.²⁶

So then, the question we must not let go of remains this: who among Zhāng Tàiyán's three possible referents of *rú* 儒 are being referred to in the present context: Could Mencius be thinking of these people reverting to the fold of the diverse classicists of all sorts of persuasions in general? Clearly not, in the eyes of Zhào Qí, who died in A.D. 200, who (realistically or not) even seems to entertain something like a notion of *zhèng* 正 "orthodoxy" versus *xié* 邪 "depraved heterodoxy." One might object that the question remains whether we are obliged to follow Zhào Qí in taking the Rú to be followers of Mencius's persuasion, or whether we might still construe Mencius as welcoming people back to the fold of classicists of all sorts of different doctrinal persuasions? After all, the name of Confucius is not mentioned. It may be barely tenable to take the Rú to be "classicists" in general, but it is not, as it were, logically impossible to insist on such a reading. And it is very healthy to insist on still more incontrovertible evidence to demonstrate that *rú* 儒 will regularly, though evidently not always, refer to the followers of Confucius and not to classicists in general. After all, we are discussing the origins of the most influential intellectual movement in Chinese intellectual history in Warring States and Western Hàn times.

²⁵ Jiāo Xún, p. 998.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 999.

IV. “Confucius and Mòzǐ” and Their *Hòu xué* 後學 “Epigones”

One does wonder how there can be any “later students” *Kǒng Mò zhī hòu xué* 孔、墨之後學 without there being adherents of the tradition founded by Confucius, in addition to that founded by Mòzǐ, as in the following passage from a third-century encyclopaedic work which lists up the disciples and disciples of disciples of Confucius and Mencius and then goes on:

孔、墨之後學顯榮於天下者眾矣，不可勝數。

Later students of Confucius and of Mòzǐ who became famous in every way throughout all under Heaven are many, indeed they are beyond counting.²⁷

The phrase *Kǒng Mò zhī hòu xué* is not misunderstood by traditional Chinese scholarship when it is taken to refer to those who are so often referred to as *rú mò* 儒、墨 “Rú and Mohists.” This is not to say that 孔之後學 have been taken to constitute anything that was called a *jiā* 家 in Warring States times.²⁸ It does mean that there were Confucians in the sense of 孔之後學 “later continuers of the Confucian intellectual tradition,” indeed members of a lineage of disciples of the Master. And one wonders why these should not be just the ones referred to elsewhere by the name *rú* 儒 when that term is used in a narrower sense in the combination *rú mò* 儒、墨.

The encyclopaedic *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子 (139 B.C.) certainly never refers to any *rú jiā* 儒家. But the text does explain the origins of what it calls “the way-of-study of the Rúists.” The very important Postface of this book links this Rúist way of thought and study unambiguously to Confucius as an originator. The relevant passage is so important to the present subject that it needs to be quoted *in extenso*:

孔子脩成康之道，述周公之訓，以教七十子，使服其衣冠，脩其篇籍，故儒者之學生焉。

Confucius cultivated the ways of [Kings] Chéng and Kāng, he transmitted the instructions from the Duke of Zhōu and thus instructed his seventy disciples. He made them wear the right garments and hats and revised the documents, and so the study of the Rúists came into existence.²⁹

²⁷ Chén Qíyóu 陳奇猷, *Lǚshì chūnqiū xīn jiàoshì* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shànghǎi gǔjí chūbǎnshè, 2002), p. 98.

²⁸ Indeed, even the title 儒家者言 which archaeologists have given to a text excavated at Dingzhōu 定州 seems almost amusingly anachronistic to me.

²⁹ Zhāng Shuāngdi 張雙棣, *Huáinánzǐ jiàoshì* 淮南子校釋 (Peking: Běijīng dàxué chūbǎnshè, (Continued on next page)

Confucius is not said to be supporting just any Rú classicists or non-military specialists. He is construed as the originator and as the inspiration of the intellectual activities of these Rúists. The Rúists here are taken to have an intellectual pedigree—that of a certain individual: Confucius.

An early commentary confirms the essential link to the person of Confucius in the definition of *rú* 儒 and also comes in the *Huáinánzǐ*:

儒墨乃始列道而議，分徒而訟。於是博學以疑聖，……

The Rú and the Mohists then began to lay out their Ways and to enter discussions. They divided into followers and entered into formal disputes. At that point they studied broadly and compared themselves to sages, . . .³⁰

Gāo Yòu 高誘 comments: 儒，孔子道也。墨，墨翟術也。“Rú is the Way of Confucius; Mohism is the art of Mò Dí.” And the next commentary persists in a reading of the text with which one may well want to disagree, but which does make plain his conception of a prevalent “art of Confucius” in these Late Warring States times: 博學楊、墨之道，以疑孔子之術。“They broadly study the Way of Yáng and Mò so as to cast doubt upon the art of Confucius.”³¹

Now there we have it: Did the encyclopaedically learned Gāo Yòu (*fl.* A.D. 205–212) have it all wrong, along with Zhào Qí (died A.D. 200), when he defined *rú* 儒 as *Kǒngzǐ dào* 孔子道 “the Way of Confucius” in a standard context like *rú mò* 儒、墨 “the Rú and the Mò”? Interpreting *rú mò* 儒、墨 as referring, not to “classicists (in general) and Mohists,” but as “followers of Confucius and followers of Mòzǐ,” does have the additional philological virtue of respecting the parallelism, juxtaposing naturally related movements linked in each case to a famous founding figure. But, of course, such parallelism in no way implies that the organization of the followers of one man and of the other was at all similar or even comparable. Their common feature is a focus on the veneration of a founding figure. That is all.

There is more evidence of this kind in the same book.

(Note 29—Continued)

1997), p. 2150. Cf. John S. Major et al., trans., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 863–64 (by Sarah A. Queen and Judson Murray).

³⁰ Zhāng Shuāngdì, p. 198.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209, notes 33 and 34; Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu, eds., *Philosophes taoïstes*. Vol. 2, *Huainan zi: Texte traduit, présenté et annoté* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), p. 73.

³² Zhāng Shuāngdì, p. 985; John S. Major et al., p. 326.

孔丘、墨翟修先聖之術，通六藝之論，口道其言，身行其志，慕義從風，而為之服役者不過數十人。使居天子之位，則天下徧為儒、墨矣。

Even though Confucius and Mò Dí cultivated the political art of the former sages, were well-versed in the theories of the six arts, and what they expressed orally they embodied in their conduct, even then, those who cherished and followed their teachings and those who served them were no more than a few dozen. If, however, they had occupied the throne of the emperor, the whole empire would have become Rú or Mohists respectively.³²

The intellectual pedigree of the Rú 儒 is explicitly stated to go back to Confucius himself, and not beyond, just as the pedigree of the Mohists is Mòzǐ.

Hán Fēi's book also has many passages that do not at all seem to be open for a general "classicist" reading of *rú* 儒, if only because they also make this specific mention of the founding Master Confucius:

儒者破家而葬，服喪三年，大毀扶杖，世主以為孝而禮之。夫是墨子之儉，將非孔子之侈也；是孔子之孝，將非墨子之戾也。

The Rúists ruin their families for the sake of funerals, they wear mourning clothes for three years, they greatly exhaust themselves and walk with canes. The rulers of the time consider this as filial and treat them with politeness. But if one is to regard Mòzǐ's frugality as right one will have to regard Confucius's excessiveness as wrong; if one regards Confucius's filial piety as right one will have to regard Mòzǐ's strictness as wrong.³³

The presupposed link between the Rú and Confucius is plain and explicit in the present case. The Rú are not just classicists of any kind: they are unambiguously and explicitly followers of the tradition of Confucius, who is mentioned by name.

Hán Fēi 韓非 (died 233 B.C.) drew a widely quoted close parallelism between Confucius and his tradition on the one hand, and Mòzǐ and his tradition on the other:

世之顯學，儒、墨也。儒之所至，孔丘也。墨之所至，墨翟也。自孔子之死也，有子張之儒，有子思之儒，有顏氏之儒，有孟氏之儒，有漆雕氏之儒，有仲良氏之儒，有孫氏之儒，有樂正氏之儒。

³³ Zhāng Jué 張覺, *Hán Fēizǐ jiàoshū* 韓非子校疏 (Shanghai: Shànghǎi gūji chūbǎnshè, 2010), p. 1238; Burton Watson, trans., *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 119.

Those who are the most famous for studies in this world are the Rú and the Mohists. The one the Rú come from is Confucius; the one the Mohists come from is Mò Dí. After Confucius died there were the Zǐzhāng Rú, there were the Zǐsī Rú, there were the Mr Yán Rú, there were the Mr Mèng Rú, there were the Mr Qīdiāo Rú, there were the Mr Zhòngliáng Rú, there were the Mr Sūn Rú, and there were the Mr Yuèzhèng Rú.

自墨子之死也，有相里氏之墨，有相夫氏之墨，有鄧陵氏之墨。故孔、墨之後，儒分為八。墨離為三。

After Mòzǐ died there were the Mr Xiànglǐ Mohists, there were the Mr Xiàngfū Mohists, and there were the Mr Dènglíng Mohists. Thus after Confucius and Mòzi the Rú were divided into eight schools, the Mohists were divided into three schools.³⁴

The Rú and the Mohists are construed as having this in common: their ultimate veneration for their respective founding figures, and one might even say their “intellectual pedigree.”

V. The Mohist Attack on the Rú Mòzǐ 墨子, “Fēi Rú xià” 非儒下

I take the liberty to speak of the Mohist school, in spite of the predominantly observed prohibition against speaking of schools of thought in pre-Hàn China. My reason for my deviation from correct parlance is simple enough: the existence of a Mohist school is quite well documented.³⁵ A. C. Graham sums it all up magisterially, and he does refer his reader to the relevant primary sources: “Throughout the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. we meet the Mohists as a highly organised community under a Great Master, which by the end of the period had split into three sects which denounced each other as ‘heretical Mohists’. It appears from the dialogue chapters of the *Mo-tzu* that the members who took office in a state were expected to contribute to the funds of the organisation, and that if they betrayed Mohist principles the Grand Master could order their retirement, also that the school taught ten specific doctrines, which are those expounded in the ten essays which are the core of the book *Mo-tzu*.”³⁶

³⁴ Zhāng Jué, p. 1234; Watson, *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, p. 118.

³⁵ See e.g. Rèn Jiyù, *Mòzǐ yǔ Mòjiā*.

³⁶ A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), p. 35.

I have nothing to add to this, except perhaps that the absence of *Kǒng zhě* 孔者 “Confucian” is surely significant, and that this absence does indicate that the Mohists and the Rú were not at all of the same sort of group, organization, or intellectual tradition.

I respect the distinction between *rú* 儒 “Rú” and *rú zhě* 儒者 “Rúist” in translation, in spite of the fact that it seems currently disregarded in the literature. *Wáng* 王 “king” **can** refer to a person worthy of the title of a king whereas *wáng zhě* 王者 “a true king, a king worthy of his name” **must** refer to such a worthy king. In a comparable vein, *rú* 儒 can indeed refer to scholars in general, or non-military specialists in general, as it does in *Analects* 6.13, but it appears that *rú zhě* 儒者 tends to refer to those who profess an ideology of a Rú, and the term is therefore perhaps appropriately rendered not as “Rú” but as “Rúist.” The First Emperor “buried” *kēng* 坑 the *rú* 儒. I wonder when he is said to have *kēng* 坑 the *rú zhě* 儒者 “Rúists.” There are over 400 occurrences of *kēng rú* 坑儒 in the *Sìkù quánshū* 四庫全書, but for some reason my computer does not come up with a single occurrence of *kēng rú zhě* 坑儒者.³⁷

When the Mohists begin to quote someone they call *rú zhě* 儒者 “Rúist,” in their chapter “Against the Rú,” they begin by quoting “Zhōngyōng” 中庸 and go on to paraphrase the *Yìlǐ* 儀禮.³⁸ Then they go on to attack the kind of fatalism we know from the Confucian *Analects*. The accusation is not of one classicism as such, but of “extreme incoherence” *nì mò dà yān* 逆莫大焉 of the discourse of these *rú zhě* 儒者 “Rúists.”

Mòzǐ 墨子, “Fēi rú xià” 非儒下 is divided into two parts. The first attributes to the Rú what, very broadly speaking, the—rightly or wrongly—so-called “Rú” are reasonably well-documented to have believed. But, of course, the Mohists were doing their best to distort the evidence for their polemical purposes. The second (and perhaps more problematic regarding authorship and dating) part persists in retelling tales about a certain *rú* 儒 “rú” referred to coyly as *Kǒng mǒu* 孔某 in some early editions, clearly in order not to offend Confucianist sensibilities of the Sòng dynasty time of printing.³⁹

³⁷ See the carefully argued analysis in Jens Østergård Petersen, “Which Books *Did* the First Emperor of Ch’in Burn? On the Meaning of *Pai Chia* in Early Chinese Sources,” *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995), pp. 1–52.

³⁸ *Mòzǐ* 墨子, *Sìbù cóngkān* 四部叢刊 ed., *juàn* 9, pp. 15b–16a.

³⁹ Compare also the omission of the stroke in 丘 from Sòng times onwards. It seems well worth investigating in some detail exactly when this form of taboo on the character 丘 began to be practised and when it became current. The earliest occurrence of this taboo character I know of is in *Wūjīng wénzì* 五經文字, “yībù” 一部, which does have the character 丘. The preface to this work is dated 773 by Zhāng Cān 張參.

The trouble with the form Kǒng mǒu 孔某 for Kǒng Qiū 孔丘 in printed editions of the *Mòzǐ* 墨子 is that Kǒng mǒu is surely due to the printer's observing the taboo rather than to any "original" early version of the text he is printing observing it already. In all Kǒng mǒu is mentioned well over a dozen times in this one chapter. The matter has to be discussed in connection with the study of Sòng dynasty Confucianism rather than with pre-Hàn intellectual developments.

In all of the *Mòzǐ* the name Zhòng ní 仲尼 occurs only in one single passage:

葉公子高問政於仲尼，曰：善為政者若之何？

Lord Zǐ Gāo of Shè asked Zhòng ní about government, saying: "What is a good governor like?"⁴⁰

Needless to say, the tales recounted in this chapter are accompanied by ample critical comments. These comments need not be our present concern. We are concerned, at this point, not with the Mohist criticism itself, but with what exactly it was the Mohists criticized when they criticized the *rú zhě* 儒者 "Rúists."

The politically correct avoidance of personal names like *Kǒng Qiū* 孔丘, *Zhòng ní* 仲尼 in "Fēi Rú xià" 非儒下 is in itself primary evidence of the existence of a kind of Confucianist piety, but of course only at whatever time it was that the text received its exact present shape.

But there are much more important considerations immediately relevant to the very argument of "Fēi Rú xià" 非儒下. One might indeed suspect that what is being attacked in this chapter is, in the end, the classicists in general of whom Confucius is just one very distinguished representative with his very own line of thinking—that is not at all that of the classicists in general. If that were so, then it would indeed be crucial to translate *rú* 儒 as "classicists" and certainly not as "Confucians." Consider now an example in which Sòng dynasty editors have presumably observed a taboo of Kǒng Qiū 孔丘 and have rewritten it here, as in many other places, as Kǒng mǒu 孔某, very much out of Confucianist piety:

孔某與其門弟子閒坐，曰：夫舜見瞽叟，孰然，此時天下圾乎，周公旦非其人也邪？何為舍其亓家室而託寓也？孔某所行，心術所至也。其徒屬弟子皆效孔某：子貢、季路輔孔悝亂乎衛；陽貨亂乎齊；佛肸以中牟叛；秦雕刑殘；莫大焉！夫為弟子後生，其師必脩其言，法其行，力不足知弗及而後已。今孔某之行如此，儒士則可以疑矣。

⁴⁰ Wáng Huànbǎo 王煥鏞, *Mòzǐ jíǔ* 墨子集詁 (Shanghai: Shìjì chūbǎn jítuán Shànghǎi gǔjì chūbǎnshè, 2005), p. 1013; Ian Johnston, trans., *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010), p. 649.

Kǒng mǒu was sitting at ease with his disciples. He remarked: “When (emperor) Shùn saw (his father) Gǔ Sōu, he was fidgety. At the time all under Heaven was in danger. Was not Duke Dàn of Zhōu the right man for his job? Why did he discard his family and home and live somewhere privately?” This is as far as Kǒng mǒu’s demeanour and mental/spiritual culture went.

His followers and disciples all tried to live up to Kǒng mǒu.

Zìgòng and Jì Lù assisted Kǒng Kuī and committed high treason against the state of Wèi.

Yáng Huò rebelled against Qí.

Bì Xì was entrusted with Zhōng móu and became independent. Qī Diào had a ferocious appearance. Nothing can be more outrageous than this!

Now concerning the teacher of these disciples and latter-borns, they will advocate his doctrines and imitate his conduct, but their powers being insufficient, only having understood that they are unable to reach his level, they give up. Now, since the conduct of Kǒng mǒu was like this, the Rú scholars should be held in suspicion.⁴¹

Now why exactly should we suspicious of all classicists just because one of them, this *Kǒng mǒu* 孔某 or rather *Kǒng Qiū* 孔丘, acts inappropriately and speaks irresponsibly? The text does tell us explicitly why: it is because these Rú scholars are disciples or disciples of disciples of Confucius who aspire to live up to the ideals of the Master. *Shì* 士, in such contexts, can probably be read as a general term “gentleman; educated person; scholar,” and what *rú* 儒 seems to add in this particular context is that crucial link to Confucius.

This passage is remarkable also in other ways. For one thing it presents Confucius relaxing, musing off-line, in private as it were, with his students around him. We overhear him in an historically and not personally reflexive mood that we rarely find elsewhere.

“Fēi Rú xià” 非儒下 openly attacks what it conceives as (and misconstrues in many details, in a polemical, hostile manner, of course) as something we might very well want to call Confucianism because it is so pervasively linked, directly or indirectly, to the tradition hailing from Confucius.

Some very few of these latter propensities are discussed and distorted in “Fēi Rú xià.” For “Fēi Rú xià” is manifestly polemical against the mythologized Confucius

⁴¹ Wáng Huànbīāo, pp. 983–87; Wú Yùjiāng 吳毓江, *Mòzǐ jiàozhù* 墨子校注 (Peking: Zhōnghuá shūjú, 1993), p. 388.

on the one hand, and his admirers on the other. It is to such an attack on this loose and disparate group of admirers of Rú that Mòzǐ and Xúnzǐ responded so vigorously.

The issue is not whether Confucianism was organizationally and even intellectually like the strictly organized and dogmatically well-defined School of Mohism. However, the fact that the concept of a philosophical “school” is a Hàn time invention doesn’t mean that Mohism wasn’t such a school, *avant la lettre*, and it does not mean that the strong tradition of personal veneration of Confucius wasn’t a significant intellectual trend in ancient China. This tradition was sufficiently important historically, in any case, for the Mohists to want to devote a special attack to it.

The Mohists attacked the Rú as a tradition inextricably linked to the veneration of the person, Confucius. Mencius and Xúnzǐ responded vigorously to what they clearly saw as an attack on them from a competing Mohist tradition on them.

I find it quite plausible to imagine that the Mohist attack served as a trigger that caused greater cohesion among the Rú than there was before this attack. The organized common Mohist enemy, with its quasi-military command and control structure, would then have been the challenge that led to an influential historical response: the incipient crystallization of a tentative solidarity among the disjointed Rú followers of Confucius. And the irony is that even before their deed was completely done, the Mohists had practically disappeared from the cultural scene. I do not know of any confirmed Mohist in Hàn times, although for all I know there may have been military advisers who thought of themselves as Mohists even at that late stage.

Nonetheless, before they disappeared from view, the Mohists left us the most explicit evidence in which the link between the tradition of the *rú* 儒 and the person of Confucius is not only clearly present, but actually topicalized:

子墨子與程子辯，稱於孔子。程子曰：非儒，何故稱於孔子也？子墨子曰：是亦當而不可易者也。今鳥聞熱旱之憂則高，魚聞熱旱之憂則下，當此雖禹、湯為之謀，必不能易矣。鳥魚可謂愚矣，禹、湯猶云因焉。今翟曾無稱於孔子乎！

In a discussion with Chéngzǐ, Mozi quoted/praised Confucius. Chéngzǐ inquired: “Why, since you criticize the Rú, do you quote Confucius?” Mòzǐ said: “This has reference to what is right and cannot be altered. When the bird becomes aware of the danger of heat and of drought, it flies high. When the fish becomes aware of the danger of heat and of drought, it swims low. In such circumstances even the deliberations of Yǔ and Tāng cannot differ from this. The bird and the fish may be

said to be unintelligent. Yet, in some instances, even Yǔ and Tāng would follow them. Should I never quote/praise Confucius?”⁴²

Chéng Fán 程繁, who is honoured by the name Chéngzǐ 程子, is so important in the *Mòzǐ* because he is always so keen to mediate between Mohists on the one hand, and the Rú on the other! In the conflict between the Mohists and the Rú he looks something like a *zhōngjiān rénwù* 中間人物, a mediator. His presence in the *Mòzǐ* goes to show that the Mohists were not fundamentalists. Fundamentalists would have banished such mediators from their company. Criticizing the Rú, Chéng Fán clearly insinuates, is inconsistent with quoting (or praising, whichever way one prefers to take this text) Confucius the man. So there we are! Chéng Fán not only presupposes but actually asserts what he sees as a self-evident ideological link between the group or tradition of the Rú with Confucius the man. Chéng Fán insists on the Rú being followers of Confucius—he is not only implying it. And as a sympathizer with Confucius and the *rú* 儒 that are being attacked by the Mohists one might even be tempted to say that he should know what is talking about in matters of this sort. He may have been, for all we know, an apostate from the Confucian fold, but still in two minds. This is something of a subsisting remnant or survival from those obscure Confucian origins of Mohism of which we know so little. All this remains speculation. But it is based on close observation of the intellectual role of Chéng Fán in the *Mòzǐ*.

I must add here a piece of historical speculation which for some reason I find plausible, but for which I certainly have no proof: Just as “Daoism” became an organized movement, to the limited extent that it ever did, for its part, as an organizational response to Buddhist ideology and monastic discipline, the disparate and disunited followers of the tradition of Confucius may have drawn some of whatever cohesion they gained in Warring States times from the aggressive attacks on them by the Mohist apostates (if apostates they were).

I know far too little detail about the ins and outs of Warring States intellectual history to prove my case by any direct evidence. But we certainly do need to explain what exactly it was that made the Rú so strikingly different, shall we say, from much more cohesive intellectual movements such as Greek Epicureanism on the one hand or from Chinese Mohism on the other.

Leaving aside such speculations about Mohist influence, we must definitely continue to insist that there never was one organized and unified *Kǒng jiā* 孔家 or “school of Confucianism” in Warring States China. But we cannot, on these grounds,

⁴² Wáng Huànbīāo, p. 1106; Johnston, p. 691.

deny that there were Rú traditions in a narrow sense, very much linked to the personal veneration of Confucius as its founding and defining figure. The intellectual veneration of Confucius as a sage *shèng rén* 聖人 started early, as a matter of personal veneration of a master, and in perplexing ways it came to turn into a decisive factor in Chinese intellectual history.

VI. Conclusion

Not unlike Nathan Sivin's Daoism, Confucianism thus remains a source of enduring perplexity, for many reasons. It needs clarification and analysis. The "movement" of Confucianism may even seem to resist successful definition in the first place. It also may have tended to be misconceived in some of the traditional scholarship. But just because we find something hard to understand and hard to define doesn't mean that we should deny that it exists. All we need to do when using the term "Confucian" is quietly to try and "be explicit about the sense in which we consider something or someone to be Confucian and about the criteria by which we so judge it/him" as Nathan Sivin advises us to do.

Zhāng Tàiyán has gone some way towards such necessary conceptual clarification when posing his question about the three kinds of meanings of *rú* 儒. We may wish to disagree with Zhāng Tàiyán's and Hú Shì's concrete results in their pioneering works "Yuán rú" 原儒 and "Shuō rú" 說儒. But their questions were excellent. We need to ask not only general questions such as: Who were the *rú* 儒? Were the *rú* 儒 classicists or Confucians? We need to ask much more specific, focused questions. One such crucial question I have focused on in this paper is this: When exactly and where exactly did the word *rú* 儒 come to refer specifically and unambiguously to followers, disciples, and disciples of disciples of the "sage" Confucius, and the tradition of other sages that these people felt Confucius had defined for generations to come? My answer is unreserved and unambiguous: *rú* 儒 is commonly used to refer specifically to such followers of Confucius in Late Warring States times, and also in early Hàn times. It is too late to deconstruct early Confucianism.