

# Kongzi and Mozi, the Classicists (Ru 儒) and the Mohists (Mo 墨) in Classical-Era Thinking

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Zhongni sat perched and poised for action, 仲尼棲棲  
Mozi felt pressed and agitated.<sup>1</sup> 墨子遑遑

I begin with the seeming conundrum presented by the biography of Mozi in the *Shiji*:

蓋墨翟，宋之大夫，善守禦，為節用。或曰並孔子時，或曰在其後。

Probably Mo Ti was a court counselor in Song, skilled at defense and practicing frugality. Some say he lived at the same time as Confucius; others, that he lived after him.<sup>2</sup>

As many have noted before me, this *Shiji* 史記 “biography” of no more than twenty-four characters (just a brief sketch, really) says surprisingly little about Mozi, except to state that the man’s dates and therefore his relation to Kongzi cannot be ascertained; also that Mozi is associated with one aptitude or skill (“he was good at defense”) and one practice that he urged upon rulers as policy, that of frugality.<sup>3</sup> No mention is made of the many other teachings firmly associated with Mozi by the Han period (206 BC–AD 220), including Mozi’s commitment to the belief that conscious ghosts and spirits exist as underlying explanation or justification for other principles he purportedly propagated. Perhaps most surprisingly, the *Shiji* biography, unlike the text of the *Mencius* that we hold in our hands, makes no attempt to associate Mozi with the *jian’ai* 兼愛 slogan.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, other passages in the *Shiji* suggest that the influence of Mozi was so great that it would in all probability continue after mid-Western times (ca. 100 BC), when the Simas, father and son, were writing.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, at the time of Liu An’s 劉安 (d. 122 BC) supervision of the *Huainan zi* 淮南子 compilation

1 *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 30A.1046. [All *Shiji*, *Han shu*, and *Hou Han shu* references are to the standard Zhonghua shuju editions.]

2 *Shiji* 74.2349–2350.

3 Other biographies of illustrious men (e. g., Zichan 子產 of Zheng and Yan Ying 晏嬰 of Qi) are surprisingly short as well. One good analysis of the hypotheses regarding Sima Qian’s cursory treatment of Mozi is provided by Xu Hua 徐華, “*Shiji lun Mo zhi yi*” 史記論墨志疑, *Gujī yanjiū* 古籍研究 2007, 上, 261–269. Xu does not believe that the *Shiji* biography is truncated, and so he disputes the arguments of Zheng Jiewen (discussed below).

4 Mozi is associated in Han texts with *jian’ai* 兼愛, “love for all” or “inclusivity,” but that phrase is not mentioned in Mozi’s *Shiji* biography, as seen above. NB: *Mencius* 3B/9; 7B/26, had identified Mozi’s chief “crime” as *jian’ai*, a phrase which *Mencius* sometimes took to mean that Mozi worked equally hard for everybody in trying to rescue people (regardless of merit); and sometimes apparently equated with an ideology “having no [special] feeling for one’s own father [or immediate family].” See *Shizi* 尸子, *juan shang* (A), which says that “Mozi valued *jian* while Kongzi valued *gong*” (墨子貴兼, 孔子貴公), which comes close to meaning that Mozi valued the Everyman while Kongzi valued the duke (or possibly the public good). Cf. *Lishi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 17.7/107/3 (“Shen fen lan” 審分覽): (“Kongzi valued *ren*, and Mozi, *jian* 孔子貴仁, 墨翟貴廉). [All references to *Lishi chunqiu* are to the CHANT citation index (no. 12, 1994).]

5 E. g., *Shiji* 130.2074.

(completed ca. 139 BC), not only can we be sure that some version of the *Mozi* was still in circulation, but also that Mozi's reputation was so well-established that "new books by sages were continually being hailed as the work of Kongzi and Mozi" (新聖人書，名之孔、墨).<sup>6</sup> This makes the cursory treatment of Mozi by Sima Qian all the more puzzling, especially when one considers the longer treatment accorded Laozi and the *Laozi*, two comparable topics that surely confronted Sima Qian with even more questions of attribution and dating.

For us to pose the question, "What position did Mozi and the Mo experts really hold during the Han?" we have to set aside Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 confident assertion that the Simas, father and son, intended to slight both Mozi and the Mohists, since their tradition was already moribund by Wudi's (r. 141–87 BC) time.<sup>7</sup> Writing nearly a hundred years after the Simas, in late Western Han, Liu Xiang's 劉向 (d. 8 BC) *Xinxiu* 新序 saw the intense rivalries that plagued the careers of Mozi and Kongzi as central to the story of centralizing empires, since the rivalries had dramatically weakened both of their states in the pre-unification period.<sup>8</sup> Up to now, the common wisdom has presumed an inverse relationship between the receptions of Kongzi and Mozi during Han times, with a rise in influence of the one inevitably spelling the decline in influence of the other. But can we even continue to assume that by late Zhanguo – not to mention Qin or Western Han – the followers of Mozi would have been so very distinct from those of Kongzi or the other masters? After all, several "Mohist" positions – including abdication in favor of the worthy, elevation of the worthy, the need for frugal burials, to name but a few – found different promoters among the Zhanguo advisers who had no clear "school" affiliation.<sup>9</sup>

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- 6 *Huainan zi* 淮南子, *juan* 19 ("Xiu wu xun" 修務), 657. [All references are to *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, ed. Liu Wendian 劉文典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 2 vols.]
- 7 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, *Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa* 中國歷史研究法 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1922), 123. Zheng Jiewen 鄭杰文, *Zhongguo Moxue tongshi* 中國墨學通史 (Beijing: Renmin, 2006) [hereafter Zheng Jiewen], 190, makes the entirely relevant point that *Shiji* 30.2066 allots 129 characters to his description of the strengths and weaknesses of Mozi's followers, whereas the Ru only are given 63 in the same narrative. Liang believed that most documents relating to Mozi and the Mohists must have disappeared by Sima Qian's time (*ibid.*). That assessment ignores the fact that 71 *pian* of the *Mozi* were known to Liu Xiang and Liu Xin, when they were reorganizing and re-editing the holdings of the imperial library during the years 26–6 BC. For further information, see Zheng Jiewen, 190. Two other theories have been put forward often to account for the skimpiness of biography of Mozi in the *Shiji*. (1) that the present version is a truncated version; and (2) that the length of biographies in the *Shiji* seldom is determined by the historical importance of the biographical subject. Zheng Jiewen, 192, upholds theory no. 1, as Sima Qian claims that he has interwoven the "remaining texts of the Ru and the Mo" in his work (*Shiji* 130.3314), but those texts appear now to be missing.
- 8 Liu Xiang, *Xinxiu* 新序 3.7/16/14 ("Zashi" 雜事) [Reference to CHANT (1992) citation index.] One may wonder whether this sort of rivalry did not exacerbate the sort of rivalries among the classicists from the northeast that Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰 describes in his *Jin gu wen jingxue xin lun* 今古經學新論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1997; rpt. 2004), esp. 19–25.
- 9 Sarah Allan, "Not the *Lunyu*. The Chu Script Bamboo Slip Manuscript, *Zigao*, and the Nature of Early Confucianism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72:1 (2009), 115–151, typifies the continuing insistence on clear identities for the Confucian and Mohist "schools," contra the available evidence. From scraps of unreliable evidence (unreliable because it is culled from documents compiled centuries later), Allan claims not only to be able to discern the social status of Kongzi's disciples, but also to define what no scholar to date has ever yet been able to define: the nature of the Ru commitment (see below), arguing, "On a popular level [sic], the *ru* would have been defined principally by their adherence to the figure of Confucius, rather than their ideas" (See Allan, 125). A more nuanced view can be found in Zufferey, *To the Origins of Confucianism: the Ru in pre-Qin times and during the early Han dynasty* (Berlin: Peter Lang,

Given the paucity of the evidence we have for the classical era in China,<sup>10</sup> and, more importantly, the methodological problems generated by easy equations trying to map textual content neatly onto social realities, this paper seeks only to review the present evidence for the frequent coupling in writing of the names of the two masters, Kongzi 孔子 and Mozi 墨子, which may have prompted some conflation of the terms Ru 儒 (classicists) and Mo 墨 (Mohist). As we will see, for every statement that the influence of either Mozi or the Mohists was waning during the latter half of the classical era, there exist counter-statements from the same period. For example, Wang Chong's 王充 (27–97), *Lunheng* 論衡 testifies to the fact that the Way of Kongzi is alive and well in his own day, in contrast to the Way of Mozi – a “fact” that Wang ascribes to the “easier” and “more humane” character of Kongzi's Way, in contrast to Mozi's grim insistence on frugal burials.<sup>11</sup> But the *Han shu* bibliographic treatise (“Yi wen zhi” 藝文志), which was compiled during Wang Chong's own lifetime, catalogues several books that criticize or extol the teachings of Mozi. The existence of polemics devoted to the analysis of teachings associated with a major figure is sufficient to attest the figure's continuing influence, and thus the “Yiwen zhi” catalogue's inclusion of texts like the *Wozǐ* 我子, and the *Suichaozǐ* (隨巢子), in 6 *pian*, the latter reportedly authored by a disciple of Mozi,<sup>12</sup> raises questions about the accuracy of Wang's statement.

Rather than postulate a chronological sequence designed to trace the rise and fall of Mohist influence, a fall which presumably occurred long after the classical era was over, this paper – in stark contrast to works like Zheng Jiewen's *Zhongguo Moxue tongsbi* [A Comprehensive History of Mohist Learning in China] concerns itself with a seemingly smaller topic, the characterizations of Mozi and his followers in relation to Kongzi and the Ru, with the sole aim of generating specific evidence relating to the larger question of periodization for Mohist influence. Underpinning the main discussion here is an awareness that many credited Mozi, like Kongzi, with being “cultivated in the techniques and arts of the former kings, and thoroughly versed in the arguments

2003); and Sarah Queen, “Inventories of the Past: Rethinking the ‘School’ Affiliation of the *Huainanzǐ*, *Asia Major*, 14:1 (2001), 51–72. This paper seeks to show that “school” affiliation cannot help us analyze the contents of early manuscripts, even when such masters as Kongzi and Mozi appear in them.

Thus this paper poses the question, Was it the Ru or the Mo or both groups that originated or propagated three important policy measures: (1) abdication; (2) “honoring the worthy”; (3) valuing *gong* 公 (“public-mindedness”) over *si* 私 (“selfish/private interests”), when calculating relative benefit? That it has proven impossible at this remove to prove which group first promoted certain ideas (contra Sarah Allan) is almost certainly significant. Some have termed the Shanghai ms. entitled “Gui shen zhi ming” 鬼神之神明, vol. 5, in the Shanghai bowuguan manuscripts series, a Mohist document, but that identification seems overly hasty.

- 10 Defined for the purposes of this paper as “from 323 BC (the date when all the rulers of the major kingdoms declared themselves independent kings) until AD 316 (after the fall of both Luoyang and Chang'an to the barbarians).
- 11 *Lunheng* 論衡, 83/358/22 (“An shu” 案書): 儒家之宗、孔子也。墨家之祖、墨翟也。且案儒道傳而墨法廢者，儒之道義可為，而墨之法議難從也。 [All references to the *Lunheng*, here and below, are cited according to *Lunheng zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT 22, 1996).]
- 12 *Han shu* 漢書 30 “Yiwen zhi,” commentary includes the note: 為墨子之學 for the first; and 弟子. Besides the polemical *Dongzǐ* 董子, in one *pian*, designed “to stump Mozi,” *Han shu* 30.1737–1738, cites *Yinyi* 尹佚, in two *pian*, *Tian qunzǐ* 田儺子, in three *pian*, *Wozǐ* 我子, in one *pian*, *Suichaozǐ* 隨巢子, in six *pian*, *Hu Feizǐ* 胡非子, in 3 *pian*. Sun Yirang 孫怡讓 has also collected six fragments from the *Chanzi* 纏子 in his *Mozi xiangyu* 墨子閒詁 (Xinbian Zhuzi jicheng 新編諸子集成. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986), 707–708, on the assumption that Chanzi was a defender of Mozi; Sun has also collected four fragments of the *Hu Feizǐ*. In addition, *Han shu* 30.1762 mentions one book of military strategy as a digest (*sheng* 省) of Mozi's writings on the topic.

relating to the Six Arts [Classics or aristocratic polite arts]” 脩先聖之術，通六藝之論;<sup>13</sup> that both the classicists and the Mohist experts were said to be “thoroughly versed in the teachings that have been handed down from the former sages” (*tong xiansheng zhibi yijiao* 通先聖之遺教).<sup>14</sup> Once we see how difficult it is to isolate the Ru as a group with unique claims to “learning,” even classical learning, we will be better prepared to envision the complex interplay between Kong and Mo, and between the Ru and the Mo. Readers will also find it useful to recall the proximity of Song (where early accounts put Mozi as counselor) to Lu and Qi, the two Zhanguo kingdoms most closely associated with Ru learning.

## I Comparisons and contrasts in the extant sources

Simply to start the discursive ball rolling, it may be helpful to outline the most obvious points of comparison between Kongzi and Mozi as supplied by the classical-era texts still extant today: Points of comparison include the following:

1. Both Kongzi and Mozi in legend are supremely wise and/or worthy men – a statement that underlies many, more specific assessments made about the two semi-legendary figures.<sup>15</sup> More specifically, both Kongzi and Mozi are thought of as moral exemplars and men of learning and cultivation.<sup>16</sup>
2. Both Kongzi and Mozi are less idealists than men with practical abilities. Therefore, in both cases, when rulers disregarded their advice, the states of those rulers were quickly imperiled.<sup>17</sup>
3. Both Kongzi and Mozi demonstrate concern for the world in decline.<sup>18</sup>
4. Both Kongzi and Mozi are concerned about the finances and outlays for the state.<sup>19</sup>

13 *Huainan zì, juan 9* (“Zhu shu xun” 主術訓), 303; cf. *Shiji* 130.2063, which mentions the Mohists venerating the Way of Yao and Shun.

14 For the first assertion, see *Huainan zì, juan 9* (“Zhushu xun”), 303; and for the second, *ibid.*, 438. Cf. the statement that both Kongzi and Mozi are *botong* 博通 (“broadly learned”) in *ibid.*, 278.

15 *Shiji* 87.2550, for example, where both are cynically cited for their wisdom in a long speech addressed by Zhao Gao to Li Si.

16 See *Zhuangzi* 91/33/21–25 (“Tianxia” 天下), cited according to the Harvard-Yenching index series. That Ru and Mo teachings constitute the “core content” of learning is clear from Han and Wei-Jin texts, as Zheng Jiewen, 229, demonstrates. Xiahou Zhan’s 夏侯湛 writings in the Wei-Jin periods speak of “transmitting the *Odes* and *Documents*,/ Discoursing on the Ru and Mo,/ and persuading [on the basis of] the Mystery and the Unseen” (傳詩書，講儒墨，說玄虛); see *Jinshu* 55.1494.

17 See *Wenxuan* 文選 39/15b, a letter addressed to the emperor, attributed to Zou Yang while in prison: 鄒陽獄中上書自明. Cf., e. g., *ibid. juan* 45/14b, where Ban Gu’s “Da bin xi” 答賓戲 characterizes both thinkers as promoting “rule by the sages and wise” (*shen zhibe zhibi zhibi* 聖哲之治); and Jia Yi, “Guo Qinlun” 過秦論, which speaks of the proverbial wisdom of Kongzi and Mozi (*Shiji* 6.280; also e-Siku *Wenxuan* 51/5a).

18 See, e. g., *Xunzi* 43/10/47–55 (“Fu guo” 富國) [All references cited according to the Harvard-Yenching index series *Xunzi yin de.*] *Huainan zì, juan 2* (“Shu zhen xun” 倣真訓), 66, which has Kongzi and Mozi stepping into the breach when the Zhou Way declines. Cf. *Hou Han shu* 30A.1046; *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 6.1/39/14 (“San bu zu” 散不足) [All references, unless noted, are hereafter to *Yantie lun*, cited according to *Yantie lun zhubi suoyin* (CHANT 14, 1994).

19 See, e. g., *Xunzi* 43/10/47–55 (“Fu guo”).

5. In the early legends, Kongzi and Mozi both suffered repeatedly from slander, despite their good counsel, with the result that neither received their just deserts and a fair hearing, regardless of their extraordinary talents and learning.<sup>20</sup>
6. They both represent models for those who make civil concerns and literary pursuits (both *wen* 文) their main preoccupation, as distinct from those who are preoccupied with the military or *wu* 武 arts.<sup>21</sup>
7. Both worked hard to promote a unity of thought. Mozi, therefore, is famously said to have shed bitter tears at the divergences in thinking among smart people with access to power.<sup>22</sup>
8. Both reportedly disliked artfulness, craftiness, and duplicity. Purportedly, Mozi, for example, denounced court musical programs as seductive entertainment, and, while Kongzi upheld the importance of rites and music in a civilized society, he, too, was thought to be wary of the dangers attendant upon the merely ingenious.<sup>23</sup>
9. Both men are credited with teaching “a sense of ritual propriety and duty” (*li yi* 禮義) to the world,<sup>24</sup> despite Mozi’s famous opposition to musical performances.
10. Both Kongzi and Mozi were said to be equally well-versed in both the “civil and military” (*wen wu* 文武) of the Three Dynasties period of Xia, Shang, and Zhou (i. e., the distant past and their own contemporary society).<sup>25</sup> (NB the seeming contradiction with comparative point no. 6.)
11. As men of impressive learning and cultivation, they were both consulted for details of historical events.<sup>26</sup>
12. As men of learning and cultivation, both were asked about the true aims and purposes of learning.<sup>27</sup>

20 See *Huainan zi*, *juan* 9 (“Zhushu xun”), 313; cf. *Wenxuan* 51/17a, citing Wang Ziyuan’s 王子淵 “Four Masters Discuss Virtue” (四子講德論). One text, the *Liezi* 列子, *juan* 8 (“Shuofu” 說符), has Kongzi and Mozi both preoccupied with the use of force, thinking that what makes a state great will eventually undermine it, if it the use of force.

21 See Yan Kejun 嚴可均, *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Linchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (1836, rpt 1893; all references to the modern rpt., Beijing: Zhonghua, 1958), “Hou Han wen,” *juan* 43.434 (Fu Yi’s 傅毅 “Mingdi lei” 明帝詠). [All references to Yan cite the Shangwu 1999 ed.] Here, of course, it is relevant that Mohist defensive strategies, especially for siege warfare, are legendary; see, e. g., *Shiji* 93.2466. Note, too, that Lu Jia 陸賈 (tradit., *Xinyu* 新語, *juan* 12 (“Siwu” 思務), contrasts Kongzi and Mozi on this front, saying Mozi’s disciples were all military strongmen, whereas those of Kongzi were interested in the polite arts. See *Xin yu jiaozhu* 新語校注, ed. Wang Liqi 王利器 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986), 173.

22 See *Wenxuan* 25/15b (盧子諒贈劉琨一首并書), for the phrase “Mo Di chui ti” 墨翟垂涕). Cf. Jia Yi 賈誼, *Xin shu* 新書 (“Shen wei” 審微) 2.4/15/19 (“Mozi saw a fork in the road and bewailed it”: 故墨子見衢路而哭之). [Reference to *Xin shu zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT 13, 1994).]

23 See *Wenxuan* 42/20a (“Tsao Zijian’s letter to Wu Jizhong” 曹子建與吳季重書).

24 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 9 (“Zhu shu xun”), 303.

25 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 13 (“Fan lun xun” 汜論訓), 432.

26 *Shujing zhu* 水經注 [cited by e-Siku], *juan* 7/23a, has Mozi identifying a place mentioned in the “Tribute of Yu” chapter in the *Documents*. That the Mozi of legend was supposedly as liable to get into minutiae as any other Ru is made plain in *Shujing zhu*, *juan* 24.

27 See Liu Xiang, *Xinxu*, fragment, recorded in *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 83/7a; *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 607/6a [both cited by the e-Siku].

13. Both supposedly knew well and propagated the stories and legends about the ancient sage-kings, as both were profoundly interested in the Way of Antiquity.<sup>28</sup>
14. Therefore the sayings ascribed to them and their followers, the classicists and Mohists, about even the very distant past are considered trustworthy.<sup>29</sup>
15. Both were purportedly tireless workers, which helps to build their moral authority (see above),<sup>30</sup> as does their desire, to “save the world” from itself.<sup>31</sup>
16. Both Kongzi and Mozi were interested in the role that habit and convention play in forming a person’s inclinations. Mozi, like Xunzi, uses the metaphor of dyeing undyed silk,<sup>32</sup> and both supposedly acceded to local conventions when having audiences with those in power.<sup>33</sup>
17. Both trained their followers to be intrepid and consistent in their defense of the right values and priorities.<sup>34</sup>
18. Both are described as master persuaders and rhetoricians.<sup>35</sup>
19. Kongzi and Mozi are two figures whose authority stems not from their possession of territory nor of high rank, but from their moral authority (i. e., extra-territorial and extra-legal authority), with the results that (a) their disciples would “go through fire” at their bidding or in defense of their principles and hence (b) they and their followers constituted a potential threat to normal channels of hereditary authority.<sup>36</sup>

28 See, e. g., Yan Kejun, “Hou Han wen,” *juan* 66.676 (Zhao Zi 趙咨, “Yi shu” 遺書): 墨子勉以古道. For Mozi’s citation of the *Odes* and other old texts, see CHANT database: 墨子引逸詩; 墨子引古語; and 墨子引周詩. For both Kongzi and Mozi as men who “cherished the Way of antiquity but were unable to see it put into practice” (懷古道而不能行), see Wang Liqi 王利器, ed., *Yantie lun xiaozhu* 鹽鐵論校注 (Wang Liqi ed. Tianjin: Tianjin guji, 1983), 253. I suspect that the adulation of the ancient sage-kings is a stronger rhetorical feature of the Mohist discourse initially, though the Han Ru eventually saw the wisdom in upholding the same line. Zheng Jiewen, 197, assumes that both the Ru and Mo experts adulated the ancient sage kings with equal fervor from the beginning. That, and the proper attribution of the source for an emphasis on the “Will of Heaven” (*tianzhi* 天志) remain to be sorted out.

29 *Shujing zhu*, 1/23b speaks of the theories of Ru and Mo (儒墨之說, 孰使辨哉).

30 See *Huainan zi*, *juan* 19 (“Xiuwu” 脩務), 633; *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 20.6/174/11 (“Fan zhi” 反質); also *Wenzzi* 文子, chap. 8 (“Ziran” 自然). [All references to the *Shuoyuan* cite CHANT 1992 index.]

31 See, e. g., *Lishi chunqiu* 13.7/68/17 (“Yu da” 喻大); *Lunben* 80/345/14 (“Ding xian” 定賢).

32 *Lishi chunqiu* 2.4/9/21 (“Zhong chun ji” 仲春紀). Another story tells of Mozi lamenting the ease with which yellow silk could be died black. See *Huainan zi*, *juan* 17 (“Shuolin xun” 說林訓), 583.

33 *Lishi chunqiu* 15.7/88/17 (“Shen da lan” 慎大覽).

34 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 20 (“Taizu xun” 泰族訓), 681.

35 For the “Seven Stimuli,” see David R. Knechtges, and Jerry Swanson, “Seven Stimuli for the Prince: The Ch’-fa of Mei Ch’eng,” *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–1971), 99–116; and Victor Mair, “Seven Stimuli,” in Mair, Victor H., ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 411–428.

36 For (a), compare *Huainan zi* (Liu Wendian ed.), 681, with *Shiji* 47.1947; for (b) *Lishi chunqiu* 15.7/88/17 (“Shenda lan” 慎大覽): 無地(而)為君, 無官(而)為長; *Huainan zi*, *juan* 12 (“Daoying xun” 道應訓), 386. Wang Chong’s *Lunben* (see below) is particularly likely to lump these two figures together as “experts” without the advantages of birth. See Zheng Jiewen, 206, for examples. It is particularly puzzling that Wang Chong once seems to imply that Liu Xiang is a Mohist adherent.

20. Given their immense authority, new works by aspiring sages were often given the attribution of Kongzi or Mozi.<sup>37</sup>
21. Both were said to be “teachers or models of [the techniques of] how to be true kings” (*wangzhe shi* 王者師).<sup>38</sup>

Before turning below to other, less prominent ways the names of Kongzi and Mozi were routinely coupled, it may be worth noting at this juncture that the legends about these two illustrious men bespeak the governing elite’s profound anxiety in the centralizing and centralized empires about fame’s relation to power. If the entire realm of empire increasingly was seen as the *de facto* personal property of the ruler, then the so-called “elite” men were little more than slaves, in that they enjoyed little or no discretion over the disposition of their own affairs. Enter on the historical stage the figures of Kongzi and Mozi, who became authorities because they reeked of authenticity based in autonomy: the two figures reputedly said what they thought, rather than acting like the many craven men in service who merely accepted, promoted, and transcribed their rulers’ version of events. To be a “great man,” in the classical era, meant to capture the gaze of others among the powers-that-be, to have been duly evaluated by them, and to have received a favorable reputation on the basis of that evaluation.<sup>39</sup> These two men, then, somehow in history came to stand for those who had managed to occupy that treacherous middle position between “precipitous defiance and disgraceful compliance”; they were faithful men in service who nonetheless maintained their personal integrity. Still, even as they were dispelling the common herd’s stupendous ignorance on the subject of how to evaluate men’s true value to the community, their obvious merits left them all the more liable to the envy and slander of lesser talents. This constellation of basic dispositions associated with the most highly respected “masters” – independence of mind and deed, discipline in training, a willingness to eschew the pleasing word or gesture, resoluteness in the face of unjust assaults on one’s person – should not escape the modern reader’s attention, for the underlying anxiety that persisted throughout the classical era was of greater historical and philosophical consequence than any single “fact” imputed to the lives of these two famous men at a distance of several centuries.

If we accept the foregoing, the secondary set of claims coupling the names of Kongzi and Mozi become all the more interesting:

1. The names of Kongzi and Mozi appear together in a given critique when both are accused of “bringing chaos to the world,” as Han Feizi and Zhuangzi charged.<sup>40</sup> That both the Ru and the Mohists are “avaricious inside, while respectful outside” is a charge laid by the modernist debaters depicted in the *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論.<sup>41</sup>

37 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 19 (“Xiu wu” 修務), 657.

38 *Shiji* 121.3116.

39 Cf. Dylan Sailor, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008), esp. 18, 30, speaking of Rome under the *princeps*.

40 For Han Fei’s criticism of Mozi, see, e. g., *juan* 50, 342, 351–52 [All references to *Han Fei* cited according to Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Han Feizi ji jie* 韓非子集解 (Taipei: Shijie, 1962); for Zhuangzi’s, see *Shiji* 63.2144. Cf. Xu Gan’s *Zhonglun* 中論, *juan* 11 (“Kaowe” 考偽), which lists Mozi among a total of five great Zhanguo masters who “imposed chaotic judgments on the former king’s Way” (*niluan yu xianwang zhi dao* 汨亂乎先王之道); Makeham trans., *Balanced Discourses*, 139).

41 *Yantie lun* 4.3/25/13 (“Hui xue” 毀學 chap.).

2. The names of Kongzi and Mozi can be coupled – and this will surprise many – because Mozi is sometimes called a “Ru” along with Kongzi.<sup>42</sup> (Readers should note that sometimes quite surprising people are described as Ru, such as Yang Zhu 楊朱, which suggests that the term “Ru” meant little more than “men of learning” in a culture that tended to equate “learning” with “learning about past exemplars.”)
3. The names of Kongzi and Mozi can be coupled because both urged self-restraint and societal constraints, as well.<sup>43</sup>
4. The names of Kongzi and Mozi can be coupled because they define the two opposite ends of the spectrum of thought on any given issue.<sup>44</sup> For instance, Xunzi’s chapter 21, “Dispelling Obsession” (Jie bi 解蔽), contrasts the one-sided approach of Mozi (who is “preoccupied with utility and uncomprehending when it came to the advantages of formal patterns”) with the breadth of Kongzi’s approach, which is said to be “humane, wise, and free of obsession.”<sup>45</sup>
5. Mozi was a critic of Kongzi’s teachings on three grounds (elaboration of rituals; lavish burials; and protracted mourning), while Mozi’s teachings were themselves subject to reformist criticism in four main areas (*jian ai*, employ the worthy; belief in ghosts; and disbelief about fate).<sup>46</sup> Yet all the reformers from Kongzi on were said to have gained insights about the relation of individuals to society and state.<sup>47</sup>
6. In both cases, after Kongzi and Mozi died, their disciples split up into many groups, which quarreled over the best way to follow their masters, without ever being able to agree upon the “real” way of the ancient sage-kings, Yao, Shun, and Yu.<sup>48</sup>

What the tales would have you see is *not* what actually happened, the critics of Kongzi and Mozi charge in some anecdotes. By definition, the acts of exemplary men should prove consequential for the community, improving or reconstructing it in some way. But men who parade their principles can actually bring destruction to their states and those of others. They may be “avaricious inside, while respectful outside”; their advice may be one-sided and “uncomprehending,” despite its loud

42 See, e. g., *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 5.5/35/12–17, which calls those who follow Mozi’s teachings “vulgar Ru” (*su Ru zhe* 俗儒者). [All references to that text are cited according to the CHANT 1992 (unnum.) volume.] *Mencius* 7B/26 also implicitly relates Mozi to the Ru, with their Middle Way.

43 See the *Shiji* 63.2144, for Zhuangzi “flaying” the Ru and Mo experts.

44 *Shiji* 23.1163 (“Treatise on the Rites”), when speaking of rites and music, credits the Ru with “getting two good things” (兩得) while the Mo get “two losses” (兩失), in this following the *Xunzi* 71/19/13 (“Li lun” 禮論) closely; compare *Xin yu* 新語 12 (“Si wu” 思務 chap.), 173, where Mozi defines the excellent in the military sphere and Kongzi in the civil.

45 *Xunzi* 79/21/21 (mod.), to which *Shuojuan* 20.6/174/11ff. (“Fanzhi”), has Mozi answering that it’s a question rather of setting priorities, such that provision of the basic necessities comes before attention to ritual and formal patterns: “Therefore, one must eat one’s fill before one seeks fine tastes; one must have warm clothes to wear before one seeks beauty; one must have a secure livelihood before one seeks music and pleasure. . . . One puts first the plain necessity and later the elaborately patterned. This is what the sages take as their main task” (故食必常飽，然後求美；衣必常暖，然後求麗；居必常安，然後求樂。 . . . 先質而後文，此聖人之務)。

46 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 12 (“Fa lun xun”), 436.

47 *Ibid.*

48 HFZ, *juan* 50 (“Xianxue” 顯學), 342, 351–352.



claims to erudition; they may ask too much of their followers, so that those anxious to throw off unnecessary constraints come to reject their teachings, with the result that even their second-generation disciples cannot agree even on the main contributions of their supposed leaders. Again, after just a little thought, a pattern about anxiety emerges that allows us to make sense of what otherwise would strike us as a motley assortment of complaints about two heroes of old. Not even one's nearest associates, allies, and descendants can be trusted to safeguard a person's memory. And what if many of the most famous hardly deserve commemoration, so that faithful adherence to the models ascribed to them may do more harm than good? Such suspicions surely dash any pious hope that good deeds and honest intentions grounded in successful emulation of heroic figures will inevitably earn a person just requital, either in this life or after death.

There is more in these couplings to consider than the apparent discourse of elite anxiety. As these two lists citing numerous points of comparison amply demonstrate, the received literature from Western and Eastern Han so routinely pairs the names of Kongzi and Mozi that modern historians of the distant past cannot reasonably claim to know how thinkers and persuaders of the Han period viewed the opposition between Kongzi and Mozi, or if, indeed, there was much opposition. Certainly, the contrasts between the teachings of the two seems stark enough when viewed through the single lens of the *Mencius*' rhetoric, but the question is, were such clear distinctions made uniformly or often between the two masters in the long centuries after their deaths? And if they were, then what did Zhanguo, Qin, and Han thinkers perceive to be the main points of difference between the teachings and actions of the two thinkers? (These two questions become fair game once we concede the obvious: that by Han times, many supposed "experts" seemed very unclear about aspects of pre-Qin ritual and thought.)<sup>49</sup> If clear differences were commonly posited, did the growing respect for theoretical unity – so evident in some chapters of the *Mozzi*, the text of the *Xunzi* 荀子, and such Western Han texts as Jia Yi's 賈誼 (d. 169 BC) *Xin shu* 新書 – make it nearly inevitable that the differences between Kongzi and Mozi, between the Ru and the Mo, would be glossed over by the prominent Han synthesizers?<sup>50</sup> Odd as it may seem to modern readers attuned to political schisms and religious sects, Xunzi's labeling of Mozi as a "vulgar" Ru [*shu Ru* 俗儒] need not reflect total condemnation of Mozi and his teachings as much as Xunzi's desire for all men of learning and cultivation to accept the manifest superiority of theoretical unity.<sup>51</sup> And what are to do with the tradition current in Han times that Mozi was the disciple of Kongzi, who saw the necessity of reforming some abuses after the Master's death?<sup>52</sup> Did Sima Qian's brief notice regarding Mozi allude to this relationship between

49 See, e. g., *Shiji* 12.242, for one of many pieces of evidence attesting this ignorance of pre-Qin rites and music. For further evidence, see Wang Baoxuan, *Jin gu wen jingxue xin lun*, esp. 3–8, citing Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. AD 23), among others.

50 For one expression of this (continuing) trend to emphasize synthesis of the insights of the Zhanguo thinkers, see *Huainan zi*, *juan* 2 ("Shu zhen xun"), 55–56.

51 See *Xunzi* 15/6/6 ("Fei shier zi" 非十二子) chapter. A comparison might be drawn to Han Yu's 韓愈 (d. 824) condemnation of public worship of the Buddha's bone, which has to be squared with other favorable or neutral mentions in Han Yu's work of Buddhist teachings and the Buddhist faithful. That a denunciation in one passage is not necessarily a denunciation in all is one fact not recognized by Zheng Jiewen, 183 (see below). Zheng alleges that both Han Ying 韓嬰 (d. ca. 120 BC), compiler of the *Hanshi waizhuan* (and putative adherent of Kongzi), and the compilers of the *Huainan zi* (whom Zheng miscasts as Huang-Lao adherents) are equally severe critics of Mozi.

52 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 21 ("Yao lue" 要略 chap.), 709. Though it is taken for granted by most scholars that the Ru prescribed three years' mourning for everyone, it seems more likely that they advocated three years' mourn-

Kongzi and Mozi or implicitly deny it? Sima Qian's language is ambiguous, perhaps because he wished to preserve plausible deniability with respect to this fraught issue. But, if the early accounts are true (a major caveat), Mozi almost certainly lived long after Kongzi, since he and his followers appealed to an *earlier* distant past, the Xia, than the first adherents of Confucius.<sup>53</sup>

At this remove, we can but try to delve a bit deeper to ascertain provisional answers to the foregoing questions. The late Zhanguo, Qin, and Han texts articulate some of the main contrasts between Kongzi and Mozi, the wise men, and between the Ru and Mo policies, even if we cannot always know how much nuance or weight was accorded such policy differences. One intriguing statement often overlooked is drawn from the *Huainan zi*, which says that the Ru, for all practical purposes, cannot exist outside of court, so thoroughly are they attuned to it, while the good Mohist cannot find it within himself "to blow the flute at court" – and not only because of Mozi's famous opposition to court musical extravaganzas.<sup>54</sup> This statement I take this to mean that the Ru feel comfortable in court, and are ambitious for a place there, in contrast to the Mohists, who may concede the necessity to work under certain rulers, but whose main preoccupation remains the welfare of the subject population, regardless of the centralizing ruler's interests. Of course, to highlight this characterization is not to imply anything so silly as that the alleged Mohist discomfort with courts reflects the lowly class or status backgrounds of Mozi and his followers as artisans or convict laborers.<sup>55</sup> No good evidence exists by which to ascertain the class and status backgrounds of Mozi or his followers. Rather, the ready ascription of a specific class background and occupation to Mozi underscores the point that historical or semi-historical figures often acquire attributes because of the figure's alleged determination to distance himself from the autocratic rulers of his time.

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ing only for rulers and very high officials, not only because extended mourning seems to have been the exception, rather than the during Western Han, when Xunzi's influence was great, but also because the Mawangdui mourning diagram stipulates one year's mourning as the outside limit for the aristocratic family of Lady Dai. For further information, see Michael Nylan, "Confucian Piety and Individualism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (Jan.–March, 1996), 1–27; contra Lai Guolong, "The Diagram of the Mourning System from Mawangdui," *Early China* 28 (2003), 43–99. The *length* of mourning may not have been the key issue separating the Ru and Mo, but rather the degree of lavishness. See Riegel, "Eros, Introversión, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (June, 1997), 143–177.

53 Gu Jiegang's 顧頌剛 (1893–1980) brilliant hypothesis still stands, despite all the Sandai 三代 efforts to overturn it by the vociferous *xingyu/xingzhong* 信古/信中[國] voices: the older the authority cited, the later the citation is likely to be. For Gu's arguments, see *Gu shi bian* 古史辨, edited by Gu and others, 6 vols. (1926–1936), passim; also *Shilin zhashi chubian* 史林雜識初編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1963), passim.

54 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 17 ("Shuo shan xun" 說山訓), 530.

55 Probably Mozi and his band of followers were just as much members of the governing elite as Kongzi and his band, contra the Cultural Revolution attempts to cast them as a reflection of "popular" ideas. The remark that Mozi was "counselor in Song" says as much. Needless to say, I find even more ridiculous the assertions that Mozi was somehow more "democratic" than Kongzi or the Ru, since Mozi clearly advocates obedience to authoritarian rule for all. The (some?) Mohists, as in *Mozi* 9 ("Fei Ru 非儒 B"), 177–189, accused the classicists of many acts of wrongdoing, among the most serious of which was wasting their time mourning their many relatives, including women, and treating their wives as well as their parents. See *Mozi zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT, 2001). Moreover, the main ideas associated with the Mohists (opposition to luxurious display, plus the promotion of ideas mandating impartial treatment of subjects, respect for the spirit world and divination, and honouring "worthies") were gaining strength within the ranks of the governing elites in Zhanguo and Western Han, including segments of the classicist groups.

There are further surprises in the received literary record, including the following statement about Xunzi:

苟卿 [...] 鄙儒小拘，如莊周等又猾稽亂俗，於是推儒、墨、道德之行事興壞，序列著數萬言而卒。因葬蘭陵。

Xunzi [...] was contemptuous of the Ru (men of learning?) arguing over minutiae. In addition, people such as Zhuang Zhou [i.e., Zhuangzi] were disordering convention with smooth talk. And so he then drew inferences and arguments from the conduct and policies advocated in the Ru, Mo, and Daode teachings to bring new life to what had fallen into decay, putting in order writings many tens of thousands of phrases long before his death, when he was buried at Lanling.<sup>56</sup>

Xunzi's opposition to the "vulgar Ru" (meaning Ru not like himself) is famous. What surprises is the bald statement that Xunzi, in devising his formulations as correctives to "people such as Zhuang Zhou" (i. e., the thinker most resembling Xunzi in many respects), resorted to drawing upon the "conduct and operation" (i. e., deeds and words, with no particular emphasis on writings) of the Mo experts, among others – a characterization with which several roughly contemporaneous texts concur.

Another surprise to me: I could find no early authority imputing different notions regarding the spirit world to Kongzi and Mozi. Many surmise with far greater confidence than I can muster that while both figures support the notion of a spirit world that is deeply implicated in human affairs as a sanctioning or punishing voice,<sup>57</sup> a slightly different emphasis in their modalities exists, with the ancestral spirits more highlighted by Kongzi, in contrast to the supra-lineage spirits promoted by Mozi. Regrettably, things are less clear to me, and I would be willing to think this failure a function of my own muddleheadedness or of the limited number of genuinely early sources that have survived<sup>58</sup> were I not mindful of other possible reasons for this lack of clarity. As it is, plenty of appeals to an impartial Heaven (formulaic or not) appear in works assigned to both legendary masters and their adherents, in part because the thorny topic of fate and its inevitable constraints assume a large place in the surviving works.<sup>59</sup> Readers will doubtless recall that Kongzi is seen castigating the preferences for the family and ancestors in an impeccably canonical work, the "Liyun" 禮運 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記.<sup>60</sup>

56 *Shiji* 74.2348.

57 Hence Kongzi's confidence that he will not be killed, lest the Way die with him, or his discouragement, supposedly, when the dead Duke of Zhou no longer appears in his dreams (*Analepts* 9/5; 7/5). But while Kongzi is sometimes made to speak as if he is operating under the watchful eyes of Divine Providence, many of the references to Heaven and spirits (e. g., *Analepts* 7/22) are as formulaic as the phrase often on my lips, "Heaven help me!"

58 For the Shanghai mss., "Gui shen zhi ming" 鬼神之神 (the title devised by Cao Jinyan 曹錦炎), found in Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bonuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhusu*, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2005), 149–159 (plates), 307–320 (transcription).

59 The two best works on fate in the extant philosophical works remain Fu Sinian 傅斯年, *Xingming gushun bianzheng* 性命古訓辨證 (comp. 1940); Mori Mikisaburō 森三樹三郎, *Joko yori Kandai ni itaru seimeikan no tenkai: jinseiron to unmeikan no rekishi* 上古より漢代に至る性命觀の展開：人生論と運命觀の歴史 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1971). English-only readers may consult *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2005).

60 On this very issue, Roel Stercyx asks in a private communication to me (June 25, 2009) that "Am I mistaken that Mozi's position on spirits does not draw anywhere near the same kind of criticism by Mencius and Xunzi than his condemnation of music or his moderation in expenditures?" I find it exceedingly diffi-

## II Problems with Zheng Jiewen's *Zhongguo Moxue tongshi*

Some thirty years ago, Benjamin E. Wallacker proposed a simple explanation for a historical trend that he took for granted: a decline in the influence of the Mohists beginning by the end of the Zhanguo period and continuing during Han, until such point as the Mohist influence became negligible.<sup>61</sup> By his explanation, the very gradual displacement of Mohism by Kongzi's version of the Way came as a result of the appropriation and consequent dilution of Mozi's teachings by the Ru in power. As evidence for this appropriation Wallacker cites a single pronouncement made by Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (d. 121 BC), chancellor under Han Wudi, who conflated the "Confucian" notion of *ren* 仁 (love and concern expressed according to graded kinship obligations) with the Mohist notion of "universal love" (*jian ai*). As Wallacker believed that the latter concept was much more suited to a centralized government "demanding equal obeisance from all" its subjects, regardless of kin obligations,<sup>62</sup> Wallacker was left to explain how and why the Ru eventually "triumphed" over the Mohists.<sup>63</sup> Wallacker went so far as to speak of an absorptive and even "*content-free Confucianism*" [my italics] being the norm in mid-Western Han times among the most prominent court policy-makers,<sup>64</sup> a group in which Wallacker put Gongsun Hong and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (d. 104 BC).<sup>65</sup> The main premise of Wallacker's essay – that the Ru "triumphed" over the Mo, may be faulty, as it relies overmuch not only upon the outdated vision of competing "schools" in Han, but also upon a single assertion made by the polemicist Wang Chong in his *Lunheng* (comp. AD 97?) to the effect that Mohist influence is on the wane in Wang's own day.<sup>66</sup> Much counter-evidence has been painstakingly gathered over the course of

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cult to imagine that there was a separate Mohist pantheon, although Mozi's followers would have offered cult to him.

- 61 Benjamin E. Wallacker, "Han Confucianism and Confucius in Han," in Roy, David T. and Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, eds. *Ancient China: studies in early civilization* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University, 1978), 215–228. Wallacker cites Fukui Shigemasa, "The Resuscitation of Mo-*chia* in the Former Han Dynasty," *Tōhōgaku* 29 (1970), 1–18, which also argues that Mohism was absorbed into the Ru teachings before and during Han.
- 62 Wallacker, 228.
- 63 Wallacker ignored the importance of the twenty or twenty-one grades (*jue*, called by Loewe "orders of honor") in penal, administrative, and civil law. For the most succinct summary of these "orders," see Michael Loewe, "Social Distinctions, Groups and Privileges," and "The Laws of 186 BCE," in *China's Early Empires: a reappraisal, conceived as supplement to The Cambridge History of China, vol. 1*, ed. by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (publication: October, 2010).
- 64 Wallacker, 222, focuses particularly in the figure of Gongsun Hong, who seems to him to combine Mohist commitments with those toward the Ru school. He mentions that Gongsun Hong was notorious for penny-pinching; also for his idea that the Han subjects ought to be disarmed; finally, he expressed "a view of Heaven more consonant with the theism of Mozi than with the agnosticism of Confucius."
- 65 Wallacker sees Gongsun Hong as "the chief agent of the central government in the construction of the new educational and training facility." Wallacker believes that Confucius and his followers had three valuable skills to offer the Han state: (1) they had a greater command of ritual and protocol than other groups; (2) they placed a higher value upon literacy than did competing schools [sic]; and (3) their devotion to historical texts gave them the ability to quote classical precedent with facility. The extant sources do not necessarily support hypotheses 2 and 3, however, as most of them make the Mohists well-versed in the traditions concerning the antique sage-kings.

66 *Lunheng*, 83/358/22.

the last twenty years, the cumulative effect of which has been to lower the probable place of Kongzi and the Ru in early Han times.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Wallacker's attention to Gongsun Hong's conflation of *ren* with *jian ai* compels our attention.<sup>68</sup> The idea that the Mozi's main prescriptions for "saving the world" are simply incorporated into the mainstream discourse in Han, obviating the necessity for their continued existence as a discrete set of teachings – this seems plausible enough to account for certain phenomena in the historical record.

Ostensibly, the first volume of Zheng Jiewen's *General History of Mohism in China* presents something of a challenge to Wallacker's portrait of the distant past, for Zheng sketches a historical trajectory by which Mohist influences – very strong in the pre-Qin period – begin an exceedingly slow, if inexorable decline over the course of the four centuries of Han, so slow a decline that "Mohist learning [even] in late Western Han was not really cut off."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in Zheng's narrative, Mozi's influence remains more or less constant throughout the four centuries of Han. Unfortunately, Zheng has forgotten some of the basic laws of writing history: First, Zheng claims to be able to provide a broad overview of important societal and intellectual trends when the present evidence precludes confident formulations about the distant past, while meanwhile forcing upon us two uncomfortable realizations: that the individual printed books that we hold in our hands today neither precisely match those available during the classical era nor do they represent the compilations of men with identical views on key issues. Zheng Jiewen nonetheless mistakes a line-up of texts that he has dated for a schematic chart of the shifting social realities in the world outside the text. Zheng has yet to see a text whose accounts he doubted.<sup>70</sup> Zheng's book includes many egregious examples of anachronistic dating of texts, blithely dismissing cases of post-facto compilation, not to mention literary prosopopeia, by assigning dates of the books he surveys to the period when the putative events occurred *or* the putative author lived (even when anomalies and contradictions complicate the picture we have inherited about one and the same person). Naturally, this haphazardness badly throws off attempts to analyze trends within any single time period. For instance, the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BC) in late Western Han is presumed to be a reliable guide to the standing of the Mohists in the Zhan-guo period, more precisely, the years 454–209 BC, which are "covered by" the anecdotes in Liu Xiang's book.<sup>71</sup> However, many scholars would prefer to read the contents of that compilation

67 See, e. g., Michael Loewe, *The Men who Governed Han China: companion to A Biographical Dictionary* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), chap.10; Michael Nylan and Thomas Wilson, *Lives of Confucius* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

68 Sato Masayuki, a participant at the 2008 conference in Leuven, seems to have come to the same conclusion in his own work. See his article "The Idea to Rule The World: The Mohist Impact of Jian 兼 on the *Xunzi*", in this issue.

69 Zheng Jiewen, 202. Since Liu Xiang in all his corpus only quotes the *Mozzi* four times, and Yang Xiong, thrice, we may question the basis for Zheng's statement anyway. See more on this below.

70 See his analysis of what is clearly an enjoyable anecdote (Zheng Jiewen, 163), which he treats as a matter whose historicity "cannot be doubted."

71 See *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), pp. 1–11, on the *Zhanguo ce* (entry by Tsuen-hsuei Tsien). With respect to the *Yanzi chunqiu*, Zheng ignores Wang Gengsheng's noting of twenty-odd serious anachronisms. See *Ibid.*, p. 485 (entry by Stephen Durrant). Zheng also believes that he can parse the "school affiliation" of recently excavated texts that demonstrate considerable eclecticism; see Zheng Jiewen, 167–175, on the Guodian manuscript "Tan Yu zhi dao" 唐虞之道, and he launches a rather ill-informed argument against Gu Jiegang's 顧解剛 pioneering work on the Mozi in *Gushi bian* 古史辨, which is followed in the main by Sarah Allan in her essay

as a record of late Western Han attitudes toward Zhanguo and Qin figures and events, taking into account Liu Xiang's official position as *zongzheng* 宗正 (imperial clan leader) at the Han court.

Second, Zheng believes that he can ascertain the key doctrines associated with Huang-Lao theory and practice, when no responsible scholar in recent years has spoken confidently about the place of Huang-Lao based on the extant sources.<sup>72</sup> And, in company with most mainland China scholars, Zheng Jiewen does not hesitate to date to the beginning of Wudi's reign (r. 141–87 BC) a dramatic rupture in what he thinks of as the “academic world” at court, whereby the Ru masters are catapulted to prominence far above the other experts specializing in the other “schools” (a serious, if widespread misreading of events in the distant past).<sup>73</sup> Had Zheng been more conversant with the latest scholarship, he might have hesitated before saying that Wudi's ascendancy to the throne prompted a tilt in the court's favor toward the Ru and away from the other “schools”; he would also wonder why the Huang-Lao proponents, supposedly so very strong in early to mid-Western Han, suddenly cannot defend themselves from the attacks launched against them and the Mohists.<sup>74</sup> Finally, and most troubling of all, Zheng identifies no standard by which to measure the degree of influence exerted by either Mozi or the Mohists,

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(op. cit.), except that Allan would prefer to make the abdication issue a “Confucian” innovation, rather than a Mohist, as she follows Li Xueqin in all such matters.

- 72 On Huang-Lao, see, e. g., Nathan Sivin, “Taoism and Science,” in *Medicine, Philosophy, and Religion in Ancient China* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), esp. 9; Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China,” *T'oung pao* 89 (2003), 1–41; and Timothy Barrett, “Religious Change Under Eastern Han and its Successors: some current perspectives and problems,” forthcoming in *China's Early Empires*.
- 73 See Fukui Shigemasa 福井重雅, *Kandai Jukyō no shiteki kenkyū: Jukyō no kangakuka o meguru teisetsu no saikentō* 漢代儒教の史的研究：儒教の官學化をめぐる定説の再検討 (Tokyo: Kyūko, 2005). For those whose Japanese is rusty, Fukui's main arguments are summarized in Nylan, “Classics without Canonization: reflections on classical learning in Qin (221–210 BC) and Han (206 BC–AD 220),” *Early Chinese Religion, Part One, Shang through Han (1250 BC–AD 220)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 721–777.
- 74 Zheng Jiewen, 187, takes Dong Zhongshu, Gongsun Hong, Sang Hongyang, and Ni Kuan all to be Ru. But the compilers of the *Yantie lun* would hardly characterize Sang (not to mention some of the others) as a Ru representative. To give two other examples, Zheng erroneously dates the *Yantie lun* to 81 BC, the date when the debate is recorded to have taken place, ignoring the internal evidence that points toward authorship by Huan Kuan, who served at the court of Emperor Xuan (r. 74–49). For this, see Michael Loewe's essay on the *Yantie lun* in *Early Chinese Texts*, 477. Zheng also, contra much accepted work, dates all the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 to the time of Dong Zhongshu. See Zheng Jiewen, 195. In repeated personal communications with me, Loewe has been inclined to stress that the *Yantie lun* is a rhetorical exercise written decades after the court conference it supposedly reports upon. In any case, that text puts Kongzi and Mozi on a par with one another no fewer than 10 times. Regarding the *Chunqiu fanlu*, Sarah Queen's *From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, according to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996); and Anne Cheng, “Review of Sarah Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon*,” *Early China* 23–24 (1998): 353–366, ably summarize the recent objections to the traditional dating. Michael Loewe is soon to publish with Brill a monograph examining the place accorded Dong in Han through Tang times. Fukui Shigemasa has painstakingly listed the main Republican-era textbooks that promoted a coherent narrative about the Ru, but the picture is coming together from a number of other historians as well.

thereby failing to distinguish routine adulations of “wisdom bags”<sup>75</sup> from assertions about figures exerting a transformative influence upon public policies and social realities.

Because Zheng’s portrait of the distant past is likely to be mistaken by so many non-specialists for an admirable summary of complex social and political realities, I think it worthwhile to outline and refute his main arguments about the place of Mozi and his followers in the classical era. With those arguments in mind, this essay will then attempt to formulate a less anachronistic portrait that still recognizes a host of unresolved puzzles that Zheng seems to ignore. This is not to discount the enormous debt that all scholars owe Zheng for the monumental effort he has expended in marshalling the very texts that historians must now review, if they are ever to arrive at a more accurate view of the place of Mozi and the Mohists in reception history. In short, Zheng has undertaken the preliminary spadework, and it is up to we who follow him to read the sources gathered by him in a more critical way.

Zheng Jiewen takes for granted the huge influence of Mozi and the Mohists during the late Zhanguo period, an assumption that he does nothing to test but one that is nevertheless probably warranted. He then takes a look at the four centuries of Han, which he divides roughly into two periods, with the first up to Han Wudi’s reign (141–87 BC) and the second after Han Wudi. As mentioned above, Zheng dates the growing influence of Ru or “Confucian” ideas to Han Wudi’s decisions (ca. 135 BC) to nominate Academicians for the Five Classics and to exclude other “schools” of thought. Fukui Shigemasa has neatly demolished every single premise underpinning Zheng’s rather haphazard analysis, most crucially with regard to the following: (1) that Ru influence escalated because of Han Wudi’s decisions early on in his reign; (2) that the other streams of thought as “rivals” to the Ru were from that time forward virtually excluded by policy-makers; and (3) that Han Wudi substantially elevated the Academicians’ roles, rather than reorganizing their roles. Having noted Fukui’s objections to the conventional Republican-era narrative adopted wholesale by Zheng Jiewen, let us explore Zheng’s suggested scenario in greater depth.

Zheng Jiewen notes that Mozi is mentioned some 32x in early Western Han, playing an especially prominent role in the *Lǐshì chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋 (comp. ca. 238 BC) and the *Huainan zǐ*. His explanation for that prominence verges on the tautological because of its circularity: Mozi is prominent because the Ru in early Western Han for some reason did not usually see Mozi as an enemy, and instead viewed both Kongzi and Mozi as courageous fighters against the biggest rulers (*zhèng wànchéng zhī jūn* 爭萬乘之君).<sup>76</sup> Zheng apparently sees the Ru and Mo as allies in the fight waged against proponents of Huang-Lao, though he never states this clearly. Indeed, at points, Zheng tends to ascribe a “live and let live” attitude to the early Huang-Lao adherents, whom he believes dominated the court until Wudi’s time. In any case Zheng’s narrative asserts that only from the time of Han Wudi on did the Ru come increasingly to see Mozi and the Mohists as rivals or threats.

75 “Wisdom bags” (*zhì nang* 智囊) is the term applied, in praise or blame, in Han texts on those of vast erudition. See, e.g., *Shiji* 71.2307; 101.2746; *Hanshu* 49.2278; *Lǐshì chūnqiū* 47/214/9; 59/260/14. See also the description of “wisdom bags” in Yang Xiong’s *Fayan* 6/14/4: (*Shī zhī guì yě, zhī dà zhī yě* 師之貴也, 知大知也). References to the *Fayan*, here and below, are to the *Fayan zhūzǐ suoyin* (CHANT 18, 1995).

76 *Huainan zǐ, juan* 9 (“Zhu shu xun”), 313. This assessment seems to run counter to an explicit statement in Liu Wendian, 530, that Kongzi and the Ru feel comfortable with the court and with centralizing rulers, in contrast to Mozi and the Mohists, whose main concern is always the welfare of the subject population, as opposed to the ruler’s interests. Zheng Jiewen, 183, also notes (correctly) that the *Hanshi wáizhuan* is not enamored of Mozi; see *Hanshi wáizhuan zhūzǐ suoyin* 4.22/31/1; 5.5/35/6. Zheng assumes this is because the text is a Confucian text following Mencius.

Turning to Wudi's reign, Zheng curiously ignores the counter-evidence that he himself presents.<sup>77</sup> Zheng then discusses the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, dangerously reading the latter as but a mere "continuation" of the former, while noting how seldom the historians invoke Mozi or the Mohists in their analyses. Of course, Sima Tan's famous "On the Six Types of Experts" urges members of the governing elite to select the "best points of the Ru and Mo experts" (*cai Ru Mo zhi shan* 采儒墨之善), along with those of the logicians and would-be social engineers, to devise a truly improved way of operating in the public sphere.<sup>78</sup>

From Wudi's time onward, Zheng insists, Mozi and the Mohists retain a measure of their influence, even as he concedes that their names are seldom invoked in discussions on relevant policy questions, including taxes, monetary policy, and food distribution.<sup>79</sup> To corroborate his picture of barely diminished influence for Mozi and the Mohists, Zheng cites the *Yantie lun* passages where Kongzi and Mozi both come under equal attack, on the grounds that "neither could carry out public policy when they got power, nor could they practice the Antique Way they so cherished."<sup>80</sup> Zheng then constructs the case that the Mohist influence continued to be strong through Eastern Han, mainly because Wang Chong's *Lunheng* mentions either Mozi or the Mohists a total of twenty-five times. Thirteen of those citations pair Kongzi with Mozi as proverbial "wisdom bags" or pair the Ru with the Mohists. One wonders what, then, to do with Wang's bold assertion that Mohist influence is on the wane, not to mention the fact that nearly all the remaining citations relate to Wang's pronouncements on the nature of death. Zheng insists that Wang Chong's writings attest his detailed knowledge of Mozi's teachings, and since the Han bibliographic treatises, including the *Bielu* 別錄 and its later recension, the "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 in the *Hanshu*, list a handful of polemical texts devoted to the *Mozzi* in addition to a lengthy text of the *Mozzi* itself, Zheng finds no reason to suspect that Mohist teachings were not in wide circulation during Eastern Han and thus easily accessed, especially by those studying in the capital.<sup>81</sup>

However, such an exposition of Wang's citations mainly serves to demonstrate that Wang Chong's understanding of Mohism was not terribly rich or sympathetic, as Wang's *Lunheng* reduces Mohist teachings to two potentially contradictory teachings (the dead are conscious and burials should be frugal). Admittedly, Wang Chong gives this internal contradiction within Mohist teachings as "the probable reason why the Mohist arts and techniques are *not* transmitted" (*ci gai moshu suoji bu chuan* 此蓋墨術所以不傳) in Wang's own day. If we accept Wang's assertion as fact, three supplementary questions still remain: (1) Do Wang's writings illustrate a broad historical trend or do

77 Zheng Jiewen, 183, describes Huang-Lao in terms of five policies: (1) the simplification of Qin laws; (2) the simplification and adaptation of Qin ritual; (3) frugality in state expenditures; (4) fixing the monetary system; and (5) lowering taxes. For Zheng, the Huang-Lao proposals all favor the poorest subjects of the Han realm at the expense of its aristocrats. Some of the evidence that Zheng ignores includes Xiao He's insistence that Gaozu build lavish palaces in Chang'an. Zheng also presumes that Legalist influence is on the decline – something not altogether apparent from the extant sources. Finally, Zheng presents some counter-evidence, for example, that the Mohists' teachings are deemed "unworkable" by the people he calls Huang-Lao adherents.

78 *Shiji* 130.2064.

79 Zheng Jiewen, 185–86.

80 *Yantie lun* 5.1/29/9 ("Xiang ci" 相刺).

81 Most of the *Bielu* is missing, of course, but "Mohist learning" (*Mozzi zhi xue* 墨子之學) is cited in Yen Kejun, "Quan Han wen," *juan* 38.395. As scholars in late imperial China noticed, this meant that the "sayings of Mohists could be reconciled with those of the Ru." See Xu Yunwen 徐允文 (fl. 1163), "Zun Meng bian Bielu" 尊孟辯別錄 (上/8a) [e-Siku].



they represent his own idiosyncratic views.<sup>82</sup> A bit of both, if other essays by Wang are a guide, since the deeply conventional Wang is trying extremely hard to convince others of his unique abilities to analyze all kinds of phenomena. (2) How much was the *Lumbeng* in circulation in Eastern Han before the last decades, when Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192) seems to have established its reputation? Not much, if we trust the *Hou Hanshu* account,<sup>83</sup> and (3) How can the *Lumbeng* be construed as verification of the continuing influence of Mozi and the Mohists, if the *Lumbeng* itself mainly criticizes Mozi for what it perceives to be an inherent contradiction in that master's teachings?<sup>84</sup> Playing the numbers game, in other words, is not all that helpful to establish the lasting influence of a person or a group. To raise a hypothetical: a given persuader might find it more politic to attack one group when his real target is another.

In arguing that the Mohist influence continues unabated during late Western and Eastern Han, Zheng has undercut some of the evidence that he himself has marshalled. That evidence suggests that, beginning in late Western Han, Mozi and the Mohists, with rare exceptions, either disappear from the standard accounts or they appear as subjects of critiques penned by the Han authors. Yang Xiong's 楊雄 (53 BC–AD 18) *Fayan* 法言, for example, mentions Mozi only twice, each time as an obstruction to right thinking and right conduct.<sup>85</sup> Ying Shao's 應邵 *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (comp. ca. 203) mentions Mozi only three times, in the stock ways, which seem after centuries of use entirely perfunctory. Xun Yue's 荀悅 (149–209) *Shenjian* 申鑑 and Xu Gan's (171–218) 許幹 *Zhonglun* 中論 virtually ignore Mozi and the Mohists as well, evidently because the Eastern Han writers feel that they can afford to. To bolster his shaky arguments about continuing Mohist influence, Zheng resorts to the methodologically indefensible ploy of tracing all ideas about immortality, frugality, or an interventionist Heaven straight back to the Mohists, despite the fact that these ideas enjoyed lives of their own before, after, and outside the circles of Mozi's admirers. Following Zheng's logic,<sup>86</sup> one would have to believe that Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 was a Mohist, along with all the *fangshi* 方士 and omen prognosticators. We must never forget that counting explicit references, not to mention alleged "connections," is a very poor measure of societal influence. Han historians should instead consider the abundant evidence showing that the all-important court debates on ritual expenditure in particular and on the economy in general Han tend to perpetuate themes and concerns articulated in the Zhanguo *Mozi* without giving evidence of a perceived need centuries later to label these as particularly Mohist.<sup>87</sup>

When it comes to the post-Han period of Disunion (220–581), Zheng Jiewen's chronological outline becomes still more incoherent. On the one hand, Zheng states that the Ru and Mo teachings remained the "core" curriculum for learned men. On the other, he argues that those same two

82 This does not appear to be a question that Zheng ever confronts. Quite often, Zheng, on the basis of a single book, believes that he can map chronological change; here (see Zheng Jiewen, 210), as is usual in his treatment of authors, Zheng ignores the sheer idiosyncrasy of many, if not most of Wang's views. One passage by Liu Xiang attributes the collapse of state power in Qi and Lu at least partly to a supposedly intense rivalry between Kongzi and Mozi. See Zheng Jiewen, 202–203.

83 See *Hou Han shu* 49.1629, citing the *Hou Hanshu* compiled by Yuan Shansong 袁山松 (Jin dynasty) and Ge Hong's 葛洪 (284–364), *Baopuzi* 抱朴子.

84 As Zheng Jiewen, 208, notes.

85 *Fayan* 2/5/22; 8/21/17.

86 Zheng Jiewen, 218–219.

87 As Roel Stercyx observes, again in a private communication with me, this is "a bit like debating democracy without citing the Greeks."

traditions were being relegated to the 雜 (miscellaneous) category in bibliographic terms,<sup>88</sup> as the fashion for Lao-Zhuang teachings became something like a “cultural fever”<sup>89</sup> and the Buddhists “sometimes suppressed and sometimes promoted Ru and Mo teachings.”<sup>90</sup> (Here three works devoted to the shifting bibliographic categorizations and fashions in commentarial traditions might have proven useful.)<sup>91</sup> In Zheng’s view, after the North and South split in AD 316, responses to Mozi and the Mohist teaching begin to vary dramatically according to location,<sup>92</sup> with the Northerners more inclined to repeat the old Han formulations and the Southerners more inclined to seek for commonalities between the Mohist teachings and those of the organized religions of Buddhism and Daoism, presumably because of the undeniable religious fervor which the Mohists brought to their teachings.<sup>93</sup> But Zheng has far too few sources on which to base any respectable analysis – or so it seems to me.<sup>94</sup>

A much more plausible narrative that is truer to extant sources found in Zheng Jiewen’s treatment would posit the very gradual displacement of Mohism through a process by which the specificity of Mozi’s teachings is gradually diluted (a process to which Wallacker’s essay points), until the eventual submersion of the discrete Mohist traditions, aside from the ranks of readers of the *Mozzi*, the breadth of whose circulation cannot be taken for granted. At this point, Mozi and the Mohists appear to have suffered most substantially from the “classical turn” that took place in late Western Han in conjunction with the *haogu* 好古 (“loving antiquity”) movement promoted by Yang Xiong, during Chengdi’s reign (r. 33–7 BC).<sup>95</sup> It can hardly be coincidence that neither Yang nor his mentor, Liu Xiang, were laudatory about Mozi; both Yang and Liu Xiang treat Mozi rather dismissively in a few brief passages.<sup>96</sup> Beginning in late Western Han, then, if my own cross-reading of the very same passages collected in Zheng’s work can be trusted, the range of Mozi’s teachings seems to be effectively reduced to (1) mere advocacy for frugal burials; and (2) the view that the dead – possibly limited to the royal dead – retain consciousness. During this lengthy process, Mozi the master remains a tireless advocate on behalf of a set of generally unspecified ideas ascribed to the ancient

88 Zheng Jiewen, 229–30.

89 Ibid., 227–228.

90 Ibid., 235.

91 Jean-Pierre Drège, *Les Bibliothèques en Chine au temps des manuscrits (jusqu’au Xe siècle)* (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1991); Glen Dudbridge, *Lost Books of Medieval China* (London: British Library, 2000); Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰, *Zhou Qin Han Wei zhubuzi zhijian shumu* 周秦漢魏諸子知見書目 (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1975–1979; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju rpt, 1993), 6 vols.

92 Glen Dudbridge, 239.

93 Ibid., 155. However, Zheng, 235, cites evidence that some in the Wei-Jin period took Kongzi and Mozi to be providing solutions for ordering the age (zhi shi 治世), while the Buddhists were seen as the best teachers for whatever lies beyond mundane existence.

94 Before 316, the received literature registers little of the “strong reaction” that supposedly accompanied the downfall of Eastern Han in AD 220.

95 *Fayan* 8/21/17 says, “Mo Di and Master Yan urged frugality but they rejected ritual.” (墨、晏倭而廢禮) The context for this line puts Mozi as part of a group of policy-makers, most of whom Yang Xiong deplores. Ibid., 2/5/22 condemns Mozi as someone who “blocked the road” 墨塞路 (i. e., impeded the spread) of Confucius’s teachings. On the *haogu* movement, see the forthcoming monograph by Michael Nylan for the American Oriental Society.

96 Mozi is mentioned a sum total of three times in Yang’s writing (with two assessments quite negative), and four times in the vast corpus attributed to Liu Xiang.

sage-kings.<sup>97</sup> Frugal burials, the belief that the dead are conscious, and a reverence for antiquity – none of these ideas would have been distinctive enough to keep Mozi constantly before the mind’s eye of the Eastern Han and post-Han thinkers. So whereas the text of the *Mozi* seems to have remained in circulation throughout the Han period, the figure of Mozi became more and more a stock device fashioned as a useful model of diligence and integrity for right-thinking people of any persuasion.

### III Tentative Conclusions

The first part of this essay places question marks around the often assumed clear-cut identity split between Kong and Mo in Han, while the second offers a critique of the possibility that we should draw any confident conclusions on the socio-political context in which Mohist ideas were cast in Han and developed thereafter. (The essay takes Zheng Jiewen to task, not because his work is unusually bad, but because the sloppy methodology he employs is typical of vast numbers of academic writings relating to Han thought.) While the Han and immediate post-Han sources may be too paltry to allow the formulation of strong hypotheses about the fate of Mozi and the Mohists during the classical era in China, what they indisputably show is the ease, verging on abandon with which Han thinkers lump together figures that modern sectarian views once assigned to separate “schools.” Because both advocated frugality in state expenditures, Han texts show Mozi likening himself to Yan Ying 宴嬰, the famous minister of Qi, whom legend blamed for destroying Kongzi’s career.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the name of Mozi is frequently coupled with that of Zengzi, an exemplar of filial duty who appears in ritual texts as an ideal Ru, and anything but a proponent of frugal burials.<sup>99</sup> Then, too, Mozi early on appears as a student, along with Kongzi, not just of Yao and Shun, but also of King Wen and the Duke of Zhou.<sup>100</sup> Most talk about Mozi or the Mohists meanwhile reveal deep-seated anxieties about the inherent difficulties of establishing an independent voice at the centralizing and centralized courts of Zhanguo through Wei-Jin Nanbeichao, and the right ways to achieve sufficient social standing to make that voice be heard.

Like their Roman counterparts, thinkers in Han and the immediate post-Han period tended to be pragmatists. Even the metaphysician Yang Xiong let it be known that the Great Mystery [Taixuan 太玄] was no great mystery at all, insofar as the ineffable cosmic processes in no way interfered with the governing elite’s duty to display the usual roster of virtues in public life. Thus it did not take long for the distinctive characters ascribed to Kongzi and Mozi, not to mention other masters, to be taken as “proof” that each person whose attainments had earned him the

97 Note the perfunctory treatment of Mozi in Ying Shao’s *Fengsu tongyi*, which mentions Mozi a mere three times. Zheng seems to believe that if a figure like Mozi is mentioned at all, his influence on contemporary culture can be taken for granted. Nothing is further from the truth.

98 *Shuyuan* 20.6/174/11 (“Fanzhi”) has Mozi promoting frugality along with Yan Ying, prime minister of Qi under Duke Huan.

99 See *Shiji* 112.2956; *Wensuan* 39/15b, letter sent by Zou Yang 鄒陽 to the emperor while Zou is in prison; *Shiji* 83.2478; and *Taiping yulan* 912/4040. Two sources tie the *Mozi* text with the Jingzhou thinkers Song Zhong 宋衷 and Liu Biao 劉表, if the sources cited in Zheng Jiewen, 215, can be trusted. Both Song and Liu were followers of Yang Xiong, as shown in Nylan, “The Legacies of the Chengdu Plain,” *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures From a Lost Civilization*, ed. Robert W. Bagley (Seattle, Wash.: Seattle Art Museum, 2001), 307–328.

100 *Lishi chunqiu*, 24.5/158/13–15 (“Bo zhi” 博志). Sun Yirang has noted this /in his *Mozi xiangyu*, 407–408.

title of “master” displayed strengths and weaknesses, which should be taken into consideration when trying to make sense of the state of the world. To my mind, the most interesting rhetoric found in such Eastern Han compendia as the *Fengsu tongyi* discusses the changing contexts that establish memorable deeds, though that type of rhetoric is easily traced back to Han Fei’s account of the sagely inventors of primeval times.<sup>101</sup> With this synthetic tendency propelling a great deal of the theorizing in Han, the tradition that Mozi was once a devoted disciple or follower of Kongzi, who was nonetheless dismayed by the over-elaboration of some rituals mandated by the “Confucian” Way,<sup>102</sup> portrays Mozi as a safe (if somewhat innocuous) hero to invoke, particularly after budgetary shortfalls propelled the *baogu* movement thinkers to propose paring back imperial expenses on the “basis” of pseudo-classical restraints. But even this scenario remains speculation at this remove, for we lack sufficient evidence to say anything for sure.

More work remains to be done on the subtexts lurking right under the surface of our philosophical texts. References to the elite anxiety discourse are not only relevant in the context of Mozi and his followers. They also constitute one way of making sense of an enormous body of writings from the late Western Han period through mid-Eastern Han, after which this particular discourse is often supplemented by another fashionable line pitting talent against virtue.<sup>103</sup> John Dewey once remarked that “anyone who begins to think places some part of the world in jeopardy.” Work on this essay has reminded me of how arduous an effort is entailed to recast the distant past along lines in greater conformity with the evidence at hand, even when the principals rethinking that past don’t mind shaking up old bits of common wisdom. To date, no excavated manuscript says much about Mozi, more’s the pity. Until one does, the foregoing analysis may be about as far as historians can go with the story of Mozi and his later followers, absent more digging in the Mohist canon itself.

101 For the *Fengsu tongyi*, see esp. chapter 5 on “Ten Contradictory Exempla” (“Shi fan” 十反); for *Hanfeizi*, see the opening lines to *juan* 49, “Five Vermin” (“Wu du” 五蠹).

102 *Huainan zi*, *juan* 13 (“Fanlun xun”), 432; *ibid.*, *juan* 21 (“Yao lue”): 墨子學儒者之業，受孔子之術，以為其禮煩擾而不悅[悅]，厚葬靡財而貧民。 Cf. *Fayan* 8/28 with *Shuoyuan* 20.6/174/11, as noted above.

103 On this, see Étienne Balazs, *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy* (New Haven: Yale University, 1964). I would like to thank the KU-Leuven conference organizers Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, my fellow conference participants, and Roel Stercycx, my discussant, for two days of heady conversation relating to Mozi and reception history.