

Mwòdž 35-37 非命“Against Fate”

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Whether on Graham's three-school theory or on my developmental one, MZ 35-37 differs from the other Mwòdž triplet chapters. In my developmental model, the first chapter in each triplet is the shortest, the second is the longest and uses coverb hú 乎 for normal yú 於, the third uses the formula “in the books of the former kings” before a title followed by 然 or 然曰. In MZ 35-37, by contrast, the first chapter is the longest, the second uses the “books of the former kings” formula, and the third uses coverb hú. In addition, the three do not suggest a plausible development of ideas. I here study similarities and differences among them, showing that the developmental evidence implies a 35-37-36 composition order; and explore the size question, noting that this triplet is late, and that its earliest chapter was thus written when longer essays were the norm. As to why the reordering, I suggest that when the Micians turned from opposition to accommodation with the Confucians, the anti-Confucian MZ 36 was moved from its highly visible final position to a less obtrusive middle position, and the milder MZ 37 replaced it as final, giving the triplet a less politically abrasive form.

Graham reaches the 35-37-36 solution by a different route, noted in the Appendix.

Similarities and Differences

All three chapters represent the Mician attempt to refute what they think of as the Confucian doctrine of fate. I begin by noting a core which is common to all three:

- Logical: Defining three standards of judgement to test the fatalist view
- Historical: Citing the deeds of Tāng and Wǔ
- Associational: Argument that fatalism is the view of wicked persons
- Textual: Citation of Shū texts, including the Announcement of Jūng-hwēi
- Summary: Final statement of Mwòdž's opposition to the doctrine of fate

No essay consists solely of these elements; they are rather a common framework. It is the optional matter, and the handling of the common matter, which distinguishes them. I next note instances in which one essay patterns against the other two.

MZ 35 Against MZ 36 and 37. I find these contrasts:

- MZ 35 has an introduction defining fatalism, which the other two lack.
- It uses 表 “standard” for the three tests of doctrine; the others use 法 “rule.”
- It states briefly that Tāng and Wǔ made a chaotic world orderly; the others give more information.
- It explains fatalism as arising from the miserable people and wicked kings of old; the others specify only “wicked kings.”
- It lacks the formula “written on bamboo and silk,” which the other two have.

MZ 36 Against MZ 35 and 37 presents these contrasts:

- MZ 36 uses the formula 子墨子言曰 only in the introduction; the other two use it also at the conclusion of the essay.
- It says “to make a statement or promulgate a doctrine there must be a standard of judgement;” the other two omit “promulgate a doctrine.”
- To “the deeds of the sage Kings” in the first proposed test, MZ 36 alone adds the characteristic Mician standards “the Will of Heaven and the spirits.”
- In the second test, it replaces “ears and eyes of the people” with “books of the ancient kings.”
- In the third test, it lacks a phrase corresponding to “observing its benefits” (MZ 35) or “effect on the people” (MZ 37), and has only “use in government.”

MZ 37 Against MZ 35 and 36. Besides the difference above noted:

- In the first test, MZ 37 uses 考之 where the other two have 本之.

Each has its own tone (MZ 35 is less well organized, and MZ 36 more strident and partisan) and content (MZ 37 has a long section showing that the legal system does not presume fate), but the above are the chief differences. The difference between MZ 37 and the others is not very strong: commentators note that 本之 means 考其本始 “investigate its origins,” and the next sentences shift to the word 考, so we have little more than a varying disposition to substitute an obvious word for an obscure one.

If there is development of ideas in this triplet, what is its direction? The following features of MZ 35 imply a first effort at the subject:

- It has a fuller definition of “fatalism,” which was not necessary thereafter.
- Its term 表 for “standard” was replaced by 法 in the next two essays.
- Its treatment of Tāng and Wǔ was expanded in the next two essays.
- Its censure of “wretched people” is dropped in the next two essays.

We are now looking for a second essay. As between MZ 36 and 37, the following features put MZ 37 closer than MZ 36 to the initial MZ 35:

- MZ 35 and 37 use the concluding formula 子墨子言曰; MZ 36 does not.
- MZ 37 agrees with 35 in lacking the phrase “promulgate a doctrine.”
- MZ 36 is doctrinaire in adding the Mician dogmas “Will of Heaven” and “Spirits” to its argument; MZ 35 and 37 are more objective.
- The typical Mician utilitarian/populist focus implied in the phrases “[observe] benefits” [MZ 35] and “effect on the people” [MZ 37] is absent in MZ 36.
- The strident tone of MZ 36 distinguishes it from MZ 35 and 37 in a way likely to reflect its purpose: MZ 35 and 37 are analytical, while MZ 36 is combative.

These considerations of implied development suggest the historical sequence

MZ 35 > MZ 37 > MZ 36

Fatalism was a Confucian doctrine, and all these essays cite Shī and Shū texts¹ against it, letting Confucian texts (or at any rate, Confucian-acknowledged antiquity) refute the Confucians. MZ 36 takes this hostile stance to a more controversial level, urging specifically Mician doctrines against the Confucian doctrine of fate.

¹Not always in a form agreeing with our present Shū; for an overview, see Brooks Shū.

The Size Question

MZ 35-37 do not follow most other triplets in having a small first chapter, as the following size chart will show.² The hú chapters (whose numbers are shown in **bold**) are more or less aligned horizontally:

14 585 17 425 20 601 21 577	11 794 18 1172 26 1383	35 1479
8 820 15 1312		
9 2337 12 2397 16 2716 19 2016	25 2753 27 2314 31 3428 32 1549	36 980
10 1518 13 1886	28 2315	37 1441

MZ 35 is first, but by a small margin also largest, in the triplet. Its content – interest in the legal system, resource management, and logical statements – tends to align it with other chapters in the first of the two hú rows on the chart, and it agrees in size with MZ 15, on the same line of the chart. Also, not all triplets conform to the stated size norm: MZ 20 is slightly larger than the second chapter in that triplet, and MZ 32, the first of a triplet whose other members are lost, is larger in absolute terms than the first chapters of many triplets (MZ 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, and 26, as well as 35). Then size as such does not invariably correlate with position in the triplet.

Relying instead on other criteria, linguistic (presence of coverb hú) and substantive (the development of the anti-fatalism argument over time), we can improve the picture by exchanging the positions of MZ 36 and 37 on the above chart, giving:

14 585 17 425 20 601 21 577	11 794 18 1172 26 1383	35 1479
8 820 15 1312		
9 2337 12 2397 16 2716 19 2016	25 2753 27 2314 31 3428 32 1549	37 1441
10 1518 13 1886	28 2315	36 980

There remains the problem of the chapter numbers, which imply rearrangement. Why would the Micians have switched the original second and third chapters of the triplet? The effect was to substitute the routine MZ 37 for the partisan MZ 36. This might have been done to lower the temperature of the philosophical rivalry, by making the milder MZ 37 the final, and thus definitive, statement of the Micians on the subject of Fate.

Micians and Confucians

There is other evidence in the Mician corpus that supports this irenic possibility. It consists of the other major anomaly in the Mician ethical chapters: the fact that one of its triplets, and the only specifically anti-Confucian one, MZ 38-39, titled 非儒 “Against the Confucians,” was never completed. Here too, the idea might have been to abandon an intrinsically oppositional line of thought, avoiding the incorporation of “Anti-Confucianism” as a fundamental tenet of Micianism. Abandoning that abortive triplet, and formalizing the other Ten Doctrines as official, left the road open to a more collaborative future relationship with the Confucians.

²For other and more detailed charts, see Brooks **Ethical**; MZ 39 is here omitted.

In general, as their ethical chapters accumulate, the Micians modify their position to reflect their achievement of official status. Mician opposition to war, at first absolute (MZ 17) is later weakened by acceptance of “justified war” (in MZ 19). Such compromises with the policies of the governments of the age would be consistent with greater willingness to work beside the Confucians, who probably had higher rank and greater influence at many courts. It would then make career sense for the Micians to weaken their opposition to war, and to damp down their previous anti-Confucianism. I suggest that this is what happened: that the rearrangement of the MZ 35-37 triplet, and the abandonment of the incomplete MZ 38-39 triplet, have this as their motive.

As a sufficient symbol of the later Mician willingness to co-exist philosophically with the Confucians, I may quote the following, both from c0270:³

- MZ 48:16. Master Mwòdž, in disputing with Master Chvng, cited Confucius. Master Chvng said, You oppose the Confucians 非儒; why do you then cite Confucius? Master Mwòdž said, This is something that ought to be, and cannot be changed. Now, if a bird senses danger it will fly high; if a fish senses danger it will swim deep. As for the present matter, even if Yw and Tāng were to consider it, they would surely not change it. We may call birds and fish stupid, but Yw and Tāng would still follow them. Why should I never cite Confucius?
- MZ 48:24. Gàudž said to Master Mwòdž, I would order the country by government 政. Master Mwòdž said, As for government, it is when the mouth says something and the body 身 must infallibly carry it out. But you say it with your mouth, yet your body does not carry it out. Then your body is disorderly. *If you cannot order your own body, how will you be able to order the state?* You will surely bring it into disorder.

The point of MZ 48:24 is that Mwòdž quotes Analects 13:13⁴ as his own argument. Can assimilation to another’s doctrinal position go further?

Appendix: The Graham Solution

A C Graham (**Divisions** 12f) saw “serious dislocations” in MZ 35-37. His view of the Mwòdž before these dislocations is: MZ 14, 17, and 20 are not chapters; MZ 17 (425 words) was originally part of MZ 26; and MZ 14 (588 words) and 20 (601 words) are digests.⁵ The other 20 chapters make up three series, called Y, H, and J after certain characteristic phrases, and representing the texts of separate Mician schools. Graham denies lateral contact between these independently evolving schools (p28),⁶ and ignores absolute date as a factor in producing the differences in the texts (p28).

³These inevitably approximate dates are from Brooks **Analects** 259-262.

⁴LY 13:13. “The Master said, If he can correct his person 身, what problem would there be in his serving in government? But if he cannot correct his own person, how could he be able to correct others?” Note that MZ 48:24, in which this piece is paraphrased, is the last saying in MZ 48, and may have been intended to stand as a final comment on the compatibility of at least the fundamental Confucian and Mician tenets. In the war of ideas, these two are the moralists. A strategic alliance, or a reduction of hostilities, might thus at some point have made sense.

⁵For critiques of this aspect of Graham’s theory, see Brooks **Fragment** and Fraser **Is**.

⁶Despite evidence of tight Mician organization in MZ 50 (c0250) and LSCC 19/3:4 (c0215).

Graham defines his three chapter series in this way:

- Y (MZ 8, 11, 15, 18, 21, 267, and 35) are so called from the word yén 言 in the formula 子墨子言曰. They are characterized by an “extreme rarity of quotations and absence of appeals to the authority of the former kings,” and are the shortest chapters in each triplet.
- H (MZ 9, 12, 16, 19, 25, 27, 31, 32, and 37) are so called from the use of coverb hú 乎. They are the only members of a triplet to do so, and are the largest chapters in the triplet.
- J (MZ 10, 13, 28, and 36) are so called due to their use of rán ywē 然曰 [in Graham’s spelling, “jan yüe”] or simply ywē after book titles preceded by the phrase “among the books of former kings,” and are the last of the triplets.

Graham solves the MZ 35-37 problem by moving material. In HY concordance terms, he transfers 35:10b-18a to MZ 36 and 18b-33 to MZ 37, and shifts 36:5-9a and 9b-13 to MZ 35. This makes MZ 35 the shortest chapter and MZ 37 (the hú chapter) the longest. These features then lead Graham to posit the original order 35-37-36, corresponding to the Y-H-J order he finds elsewhere. His changes do not produce an entirely satisfactory picture even on his own terms; he cannot, for instance, suggest where in MZ 37 the shifted passage 35:18a-33 should go (p14); and in his MZ 35 the second “test” of doctrine is taken up before the first (p15). More generally, though he speaks of “dislocation,” his transferred passages are integral sections, not fragments such as damage to a bamboo-slip text might produce; rather, they suggest intentional rearrangement, for which I can imagine no scenario. Finally, as noted above, Graham’s model is itself suspect at several points. Some details of his proposal may have merit, but doubts about his overall picture prevent my accepting Graham’s 35-37-36 result as a meaningful confirmation of my own 35-37-36 finding.

Without prejudice to the future possibility of constructive transpositions of material between chapters, I have here preferred to work with these chapters as they are. I find in their differences not the traits of isolated Mician centers,⁷ but the result of evolution in the political stance and rhetorical sophistication of a unified Mician movement.

Works Cited

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⁷Graham relies on the three Mician schools listed in HFZ 50 and JZ 33. Both are Hán texts from c0140 (Brooks **Prospects**, Brooks **Jwāngdž 33**), and not relevant for the earlier period. A two-part east/west division is implied in a Chín-dynasty anecdote, LSCC 16/7:1 (c0219), and it may be that the separation of Micianism into regional varieties began under the Empire.