

Mencius 3 滕文公

E Bruce Brooks 白牧之

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

(Sept 1996)

Abstract. MC 3, the last of what we have called the Southern Mencian school chapters, has points of contact with MC 7, the last of the Northern Mencian chapters. Everything in MC 2-3 seems to relate to hopes of a ministerial relationship with Chí.

Data. Passages in MC 3 tend to be long; there are 5 in 3A and 10 in 3B. MC 3A3 has a second half with a new situation; I distinguish them as 3A3a and 3A3b. I here give: the length in characters and whether a passage begins with a remark of Mencius (R), a question (Q), or a narrative incipit (N); dialogue is marked with an asterisk:

3A1	129	N	human nature	3B1	264	Q	against compromise
3A2	358	N*	mourning	3B2	130	Q	against diplomacy
3A3a	372	N	government	3B3	273	Q*	on taking office
3A3b	211	N	well-field system	3B4	195	Q	on official salary
3A4	1114	N*	against primitivists	3B5	366	Q	impending attack on Sùng
3A5	309	N*	against Micians	3B6	156	R*	on persuasion
				3B7	152	Q	on seeing rulers
				3B8	78	Q	on reducing taxes
				3B9	575	Q	on disputation
				3B10	301	Q*	against extreme scruples

Tot: 2493

Tot: 2490

The balance between 3A and 3B is optimal; it could not be improved by moving the chapter division point. Everything in 3A begins with a narrative incipit, and everything in 3B with a question or remark, suggesting some sort of break between them.

Form. There are no *pure* Mencius sayings (M). Several motifs continue for more than one passage: T'ng (3A1-3), anti-Mician (3A4-5), taking office (3B3-4), and difficulties when in office (3B6-7). There is much concern to defend an ideological position. There is a tendency toward pairing of passages; the seeming exceptions are a comment on the threat to Sùng (3B5) and one on tax reduction (3B8).¹

Date. 3B5 treats the Chí attack on Sùng (0285) as a pending event. Mencius's dates were altered to place his death in 0286, minimizing the anachronism, but it remains anachronistic.² MC 3 shows an awareness of passages in Analects 18 and 19, which we date to the late mid 03c. Material shared only with MC 7, but otherwise unique in Mencius, puts at least part of MC 3 in the same timeframe as that chapter.³

¹Both these passages are further discussed below.

²See Brooks **Dates**, with reference to Jōu Gwǎng-yè. I conclude that Mencius died in 0303.

³See Brooks **Nature** 256-258, Im **Tensions**.

The hostility of MC 3 and MC 7 to Yáng and Mwò 楊墨 is one of those common traits. The label “Yáng [Jū]” characterizes the Dàuists as putting the self before the state, which is just what the JZ 4:7 madman urges, and what LY 18:5 (c0262) opposes. The Jwāngdǔ names as its opponents Rú and Mwò: the Confucians and Micicians. Sywǎndǔ, a self-styled Rú, fought the Micicians on music and funerals, and several times criticized Dàuist ideas as wrong or inadequate. The three-way symmetry is complete.

Sequence With MC 2. I have suggested⁴ that the latest material in MC 2, which is hostile to the Chí rulership, follows the disastrous defeat of Chí in 0285. These passages may plausibly be dated to c0282. MC 3A1 uses phrasing reminiscent of 2A1, a letter of self-recommendation for the MC 2 program, and suggests a renewed attempt to interest the Chí ruler (that is, Syāng-wáng, r 0283-0265) in Mencian ideas:

- 2A1. Wǐn-wáng succeeded with a territory of only 100 lǐ
 3A1. Tǐng could implement good government with only 50 lǐ

2A1 had referred to Chí as a state of a myriad chariots. Chí after 0285 was not such a state, and it was adroit of 3A1, borrowing a setting from some speeches of the historical Mencius in MC 1B13-15, to rephrase its argument in terms of small Tǐng, which (without exactly saying so) was closer to the real condition of Chí after 0285.

The core of Mencian statecraft in 3A1 is “the goodness of human nature,” an idea which had been argued by the northern MC 6, but was utterly unknown to MC 1-2. This suggests a refashioning of southern Mencian theory along more northern lines, an implied contact which would become more obvious in later MC 3 passages.⁵

Sequence Within MC 3. Then 3A1 might have followed the latest MC 2 material at not too long an interval. To take that possibility further will require another look at the MC 3 pairings, and thus possible interpolations. If we repeat the above table, but reformat it to emphasize the possible parallels, we get:

3A1	human nature	3B1	against compromise
3A2	mourning	3B2	against diplomacy
3A3a	government	3B3	on taking office
3A3b	well-field system	3B4	on official salary
		3B5	attack on Sùng
3A4	against primitivists	3B6	on persuasion
3A5	against Micicians	3B7	on seeing rulers
		3B8	on reducing taxes
		3B9	on disputation
		3B10	against extreme scruples

The logic of the 3B9-10 pair is not immediately apparent; see below. Accepting that pairing for the moment, 3B8 still seems miscellaneous, and the Sùng passage, 3B5, stands out as formally intrusive and interpolated. Of the rest, 3A1-5 (the N passages) are substantive proposals, while the 3B sayings (Q and R) concern addressing rulers. If we put aside 3B5 for the moment, we get a three-stage compositional picture.

⁴Brooks **Mencius 2**.

⁵For some details, see again Brooks **Nature** 258-258, Im **Tensions**.

Stage A (MC 3A1-5, 3B1-2). Syāng-wáng, who followed Mǐn-wáng in 0283, favored Dàuism, as is reasonable for the ruler of a reduced state, but he was manifestly in need of new ideas, and it is not surprising if the MC people thought it worth their while to offer him their views on statecraft. MC 3A1-5 (with 3A1 as its commendatory preface) can be read as the resubmission of a revised Mencianism to this new ruler. The inclusion of northern Mencian ideas shows a repositioning of the southern school, under a leader who favored filial piety (taken to an extreme in the northern MC 5) and human nature (developed in MC 6). Neither occurs in previous southern writings.⁶

The failure of this appeal is perhaps reflected in 3B1, where “Mencius” refuses to bend his principles to get a hearing. 3B2 deplores the diplomatists, the manipulators of states against other states, who *do* get a hearing. The 3A1-5 proposal might then be from the early 0270’s, and the 3B1-2 disappointment from later in that decade.

Stage B (MC 3B3-4, 6-8). The last Chí King, Wáng Jyèn (r 0264-0221), favored Confucianism. He revived Jì-syà, and in 0257 hired Sywǎndž as its senior stipendiary. This ideological turn may have inspired hope in the MC 3 group: 3B3 describes Confucius’s desire for office, and the paired 3B4 justifies Mencius’ official stipend. This may reflect the temporary optimism of the early Wáng Jyèn years.

Contrariwise, the following 3B6-7 may mark the end of hope of recognition from Wáng Jyèn. 3B6 complains of the little effect that a good advisor can have on a ruler surrounded by bad advisors; 3B7 justifies a refusal to see rulers when doing so would entail a violation of principle. 3B8 ridicules the reluctance of a ruler to reduce taxes. As with the hostile MC 1 interpolations, direct criticism seems to rule out all hope of a future relationship. 3B8, with its telling image of the partially penitent chicken thief, brings this series of critical passages to a seemingly intentional close: a concluding unpaired passage like those often employed for that purpose in the Analects.

Stage C (MC 3B9-10, 3B5). The arrival of Sywǎndž as Chǔ governor of occupied Lǔ in 0254 was a threat to the Mencians (after adopting northern ideas in 3A1-2, the southern as well as the northern school were on his enemy list). Sywǎndž himself, in SZ 14:5, had laid down a three-year deadline for ideological conformity.⁷ The MC 3 group signaled their willingness to adapt to the new philosophical situation. 3B9 defends the disputations of “Mencius” as opposition to Sywǎndž’s enemies, the Dàuists and Micians. 3B10 deplores the excessive scruples of Chǔn Jùngdž, thus perhaps suggesting a relaxation of previously defended Mencian principles (compare 3B1).⁸

Last comes the interpolated *3B5, which denies that the impending doom of Sùng (which would here be the final conquest of the Sùng/Lǔ area by Chǔ in 0249) is due to its having practiced Mencian statecraft. Others saw the same thing coming. Some wrote epitaphs for themselves, the most moving of them undoubtedly being MZ 50, where “Mwòdž” notes that he saved Sùng from Chǔ, but has gotten no praise for it.

⁶The northern passages are the genuine Mencian speeches in 1A3 (repeated in the spurious 1A7) and 1A5. Syàu 孝 never appears in MC 2 writings, or in any interpolations in MC 1 which can be ascribed to the MC 2 period. Its MC 3 appearances are in 3A2 and 3B4.

⁷See Brooks **Writings** 00.

⁸For one device of accommodation in the contemporary Analects, see Brooks **Reader** 67.

Southern Chronology (MC 1-3) is here summarized as a convenience to readers:⁹

<i>Ngwèi Hwèi-wáng (r 0370-0320, interested in populist government)</i>		
0320	1A1, 3, 5	Presentations by Mencius; the King then dies
<i>Ngwèi Syāng-wáng (r 0319-0296, interested in world conquest)</i>		
0319	1A6	Unsatisfactory interview with Mencius
<i>Chí Sywān-wáng (r 0319-0301, inclined to military expansion)</i>		
0318	1B1	First interview with Sywān-wáng
0317	1B16	No interview with Lǚ Píng-gūng
0316	2A2:1-17	Conversation with disciples on mental control
0315f	1B9-10	Mencius backs disastrous Chí policy in Yēn
0313	1B12	Mencius dismissed; passes through Dzōu
0312f	1B13-15	Mencius gains a position in tiny Tǔng
0303		Mencius dies
<i>Chí Mǐn-wáng, 0300-0284, rashly inclined to military expansion)</i>		
0300	2A2:18-22, 25-28	Acceptance of Analects rejection of meditation
0298	2A3-2B1	Reformulated Mencian doctrine (cf GZ 10)
0296	2B2-12	Revisionist account of Mencius in Chí
0296	*1A2, *1A7, etc	Positive additions to the Mencius interviews
0295	2A1	Recommendation of Mencian doctrine to Chí
0286		<i>Chí invasion of Sùng</i>
0284		<i>Death of Mǐn-wáng in Jyǔ; Chí occupied by Yēn</i>
<i>Chí Syāng-wáng, 0283-0265 (inclined to Dàuist statecraft)</i>		
0282	*1A4, *1B6, etc	Hostile additions to the interviews of Mencius
0282	2B13-14	Distancing Mencius from Chí
		<i>New leadership for Southern Mencians</i>
0278	3A1-5	Newly reformulated Mencian doctrine
0270	3B1-2	Disappointment at nonacceptance by Chí
<i>Chí Wāng Jyèn, 0264-0221 (better disposed toward Confucian statecraft)</i>		
0263	3B3-4	Willingness to accept office
0260	3B6-7	Disappointment at lack of an invitation
0258	3B8	Hostile complaint about taxation (cf DDJ 75)
0254		<i>Syǔndž comes to Lán-ling as governor</i>
0253f	3B9-10	Willingness to accommodate to Syǔndž
0250	*3B5	Final self-statement of the southern Mencians
0249		<i>Destruction of Lǚ; end of southern Mencians</i>

Everything centers around the hope of a ministership and its repeated disappointment.

Works Cited

- A Taeko Brooks. The Writings of Syǔndž. WSP v3 (2012) 145-154
 E Bruce Brooks. The Dates of Mencius. WSP 3 (2012) 223-226
 E Bruce Brooks. Mencius 2. WSP v2 (2011) 111-113
 E Bruce Brooks and A Taeko Brooks. The Nature and Historical Context of the Mencius;
 in Alan K L Chan (ed), Mencius (Hawaii 2002) 242-281
 Manyul Im. Tensions Between Mencius 3 and 7. WSP v1 (2010) 158-159

⁹And to replace the more general suggestions in Brooks **Nature** 273. Most dates are circa.