Güngmíng Yí 公明儀
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Discussion Memorandum for WSWG 26 (Nov 2013)

Abstract. This intriguing figure turns up 4x in the Mencius: in the southern 3A1, 3B3, and 3B9, and the northern 4B24. He is explained as “a follower of Mencius” by Jâu Chí, which took no particular imagination. Can we do any better?

The Surname Güngmíng

The surname Güngmíng 公明 is itself strange. A bearer of that surname occurs in LY 14:13 (c0310), a passage which is contemporary with the last years of Mencius:

LY 14:13. The Master asked Güngmíng Jyã 公明賢 about Gúngshú Wündž, Is it true that His Excellency did not speak, did not laugh, and did not take? Güngmíng Jyã replied, Whoever said that has exaggerated. His Excellency spoke only when it was timely, and others did not weary of his speaking . . .

The Master said, Could it have been so? How could it have been so?

That is, Güngmíng Jyã is knowledgeable about certain persons, but Confucius in the end is moved to doubt Güngmíng Jyã’s positive description. The paired LY 14:14 gives another example of Confucius doubting a positive report about an early figure (in that case, Dzàng Wén-jʊng; the positive claim is made in DJ 9/23:5). No one with the surname Güngmíng figures in the DJ. The Analects Güngmíng Jyã is said to have been a man of Nán Wú-chvng 南武城. In LY 14:13 he is clearly a contemporary rather than a disciple of Confucius (nor, consistently, does he figure on the Disciple Register 弟子譜 which underlies both KZJY 38 and SJ 67.

In Mencius we have Güngmíng Yí 公儀 and Güngmíng Gāu 公高, the latter appearing only in the northern passage MC 5A1, where, like the Analects Güngmíng Jyã, he serves as an informant about a historical matter. Besides Güngmíng Jyã, Morohashi sv 公明 has only these two persons and one other, Güngmíng Sywæn 宣. They seem to have been much confused in Hán tradition. The Morohashi identifications are:

• Güngmíng Gāu of Lú Nán Wú-chvng; disciple of Dzvngdž (MC 5A1)
• Güngmíng Yí of Lú Nán Wú-chvng; disciple of Dž-jʊng (Lì Jì)
• Güngmíng Sywæn of Lú Nán Wú-chvng; student of Dzvngdž (Shwó Ywæn)

Note the recurrence of Nán Wú-chvng, the home of Dzvngdž and also the origin of the Analects Güngmíng Jyã. No disciple’s discourse of Confucius would have been alive in the time of Mencius, so if these, or the possible single tradition from which they diverge, has a basis in fact, they (or he) must be seen as from an earlier generation.

In direct conflict with this, as Jörg Schumacher points out (WSW 29 Sept 2013), the commentary calls both Wán Jʊng and Güngmíng Gāu “disciples of Mencius” 與並軌之門人也. We have here an unmistakable conflict. Ignoring Güngmíng Sywæn as a figment of Hán creativity, we may next take up the two persons who actually appear in the Mencius.
Gungming Yi

MC 3A1. Mencius, in Sung, gives three examples to the heir apparent of Tung. One is Ch'ung Iyen 成園, who refuses to be in awe of his ruler Ch'i Jing-gung. A second is Yen Hwee, who asserts that he is a man just as Shun was a man. A third is given indirectly, in a quote from Gungming Yi, who asserts (in an unclear sentence) that Joo-gung was sincere in modeling himself on Wun-wang. This last example is used to show that Tung is big enough for its ruler to succeed by "going good" 鼻善.

MC 3B3. In response to a question from Jou Syau 周霄, Mencius first quotes an otherwise unspecified Jwan 堇 to the effect that when Confucius went for three months without serving a ruler, he was disturbed 恼怒. He then quotes Gungming Yi as saying, "When one of the ancients went for three months without serving a ruler, he was consoled with 舒." The quote from Gungming Yi seems to be on the same level as the quote from the unidentified Jwan, and not part of the 3B3 conversation.

MC 3B9. Mencius is explaining why he must engage in disputation with those who advocate wrong ideas. He several times quotes the Shu; he quotes Confucius's remark on compiling the Ch'un/Chyoo, he describes the present depraved condition of things. He then quotes Gungming Yi as saying, "In your kitchen there is fat meat, in your stables there are fat horses, but your people have a starving look, and in the wilds are the corpses of those who have died of hunger." This is identical with a key phrase in the interpolated MC 1A3:5, a passage written by someone later than, and different from, the one who wrote the spurious 1A3:4 (itself appended, by a different person than its author, to the also spurious MC 1A7). These accusatory passages are not only later than the more constructive MC 1 interpolations, they are seemingly later than all of MC 2, which has no counterpart to them. That is, 1A3:5 (including the lines here attributed to Gungming Yi) were written not too long before 3B9 itself. It would be tempting to identify Gungming Yi as the Mencius disciple who added 1A3:5 to the previous text, but we refrain until we have considered the rest of the evidence.

MC 4B24 begins with a statement (from the narrator, not by Mencius) that Ping Meng killed his teacher, the Archer Yi 箭. To this, Mencius remarks that Yi was himself to blame for this. Gungming Yi responds "It would seem that he was not at fault therein" 宣若無罪者. In this northern passage as usually read, Gungming Yi is in the conversation with Mencius, whereas in the other three passages (all from the southern school) he is, as it were, quoted as an outside authority. The northern and southern images of Gungming Yi seem not to match very well. This is our problem.

Gungming Gau

MC 5A1. This is another narratively strange passage. Wan Jang begins by asking a question about Shun, and Mencius answers. Wan Jang then asks whether Shun resented his parents, not directly, but by what turns out to be a quote from Dzvngdz.1 He then puts his own question: did Shun feel resentment toward his parents? Mencius answers, again not directly, but by quoting another conversation, in which:

1It occurs in the Da Dao Li Ji and also in the Li Ji. See also Brooks: The Han Dzvngdz.
(1) Chang Syi 子丨子 says to Gungming Gao, as though he had just heard an explanation from him, that he “now understands why Shun toiled in the fields,” but he does not understand why he wept. (2) Gungming Gao says, “That is beyond your understanding.” Mencius then proceeds to explain Gungming Gao’s explanation, and continues in his own voice to the end of the passage. We get the impression of suddenly breaking in on a conversation between Chang Syi and Gungming Gao, in the middle of a later conversation on the same subject by Wan Jang and Mencius. Stranger still, the previous question was put by Wan Jang partly in the form of a tacit quote from Dzungdz, who (in at least one tradition) was the teacher of Gungming Gao.

Whatever may be the case with this embedded conversation or conversations, we must conclude that like Dzungdz himself, Gungming Gao is here not a disciple of Mencius, but as an earlier figure whom Mencius quotes and indeed expounds.

The southern Gungming Yi passages, discussed above, can also be understood as quotations from an authority earlier than Mencius. In light of the foregoing, we may construe the northern Gungming Yi passage 4B24 this way:

4B24 [Narrator]: P'ng Meng learned archery from Yi, and when he had learned all of Yi’s art, he reflected that in all the world only Yi was superior to him, and thereupon he killed Yi. Mencius said, “In this, Yi too was at fault therein.”
[Unnamed Interlocutor, quoting an earlier authority]: Gungming Yi said, “It seems that he was without fault therein.”
[Mencius explains Gungming Yi’s statement]: “He meant that it was slight. How could he be entirely without fault? [He then gives his counterexample].

This is choppy, but not moreso than 5A1. It follows that Gungming Yi and Gungming Gao (assuming them to be different persons) are not disciples, but earlier authorities. Their surname implies a Lu origin. Whether they or he were native to Nan Wu-chung, they may have had some connection with the Dzungdz tradition, since in at least one case their tradition is quoted in close proximity to a seeming use of Dzungdz tradition. They the two lines in MC 1A3:5 which are attributed to Gungming Yi in MC 3B9 may really be from Gungming Yi, but it does not follow that they were original to the writer of 1A3:5. They may there have been an unacknowledged quote from Gungming Yi.

Possibilities for Research

The use of other traditions by the Mencius writers is a complex subject. Another example is MC 1B4, in which “Mencius” does not offer a persuasion in his own words, but instead explicitly quotes a long persuasion of Yendz against burdensome royal tours. This passage occurs also as YZ 4:1 in the eventual Han Yendz, but differences between them make it clear that YZ 4:1 is the prototype, and that MC 1B4 derives from it. This shows us that the Yendz tradition was already well advanced in Chi by the time MC 1B4 was written. The above notes suggest that the same may have been true (at a perhaps somewhat later date) of the traditions of Gungming Yi (now lost) and Dzungdz (preserved in several forms, of which the Han Dzungdz is earlier than the parallel passages in the Li Ji). It might now be of interest to systematically gather the Dzungdz quotes in Mencius, and compare them with the Han Dzungdz.