

# MASTER'S EXAMINER REPORT

*GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University*

Thesis title:	Geopolitical Constitutions in New Confucianism: The Case of Qian Mu
<b>Name of Student:</b>	Wei Chun Liao
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	Tomáš Halamka, PhD
<b>Report Due Date:</b>	18.06.2024

**Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the four numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

## **1) Contribution and argument:**

The thesis deals with the political thought of Qian Mu, its genealogy and its relation to geopolitics and New Confucianism. It declares two principal research purposes: the first more particular, concerned with Qian Mu's thought, the second more general, connecting New Confucianism and geopolitics. I find the thesis's analysis and arguments more persuasive in its first declared aim dealing with genealogy of Qian Mu's thought. Here, the thesis focuses Qian Mu's life, touches on his intellectual biography, and most importantly introduces relevant thoughts from Qian Mu's extensive work. These chapters result in the identification of key shifts in Qian Mu's thought and what they had to do with geopolitics. This is the core of the thesis, and the findings are persuasive and well-supported.

I am less convinced by the second, more general goal of the thesis. Here, the thesis brings together too many topics, but it does not, and perhaps even cannot, commit enough space and concentration for their proper elaboration. The problem on general level already stems from the fact that Qian Mu is the only thinker who is analysed in-depth, and even he is not depicted as fully representative of new Confucianism. To fully establish the connection between geopolitics and new Confucianism would thus require much additional research and probably also a different type of project. Rather than making this issue a separate research question, it would serve the thesis better to omit its more general research question, only hint at such a direction in the conclusion and leave it for future research. The thesis could have used the saved energy and space and devote it to further develop the genealogy of Qian Mu's thought and how precisely it was influenced by geopolitics. The respective last third of the thesis is the most original and could have been further strengthened by the introduction of more in-depth interpretation and connection to the existing debates.

## **2) Theoretical and methodological framework:**

There are multiple theories and methodological frameworks (Critical Geopolitics, new Confucianism, historical analysis, documents analysis and genealogy) introduced in the thesis with varying degrees of their actual application and relevance for the thesis. All these frameworks and methods are relevant to the selected topic, but their number could have been reduced. To continue my earlier point, the core part of the thesis dealing with genealogy of Qian Mu's thought is done by introducing (sometimes very long) citations from his work. Unfortunately, the accompanying text is very brief and often only literally repeats key parts of the particular citation, without introducing author's interpretation or perspectives from the secondary literature. That would support the main line of argument better than earlier listing of several geopolitical perspectives which have little impact on the main line of argument. However, despite these reservations, the overall framework works on the general level relatively well and indicates author's good orientation in the field,

### 3) Sources and literature:

The thesis works with a respectable amount of relevant primary literature, where it is able to identify and use the key citations in a huge corpus of Qian Mu's work. Secondary literature is used too, but it could have been more prominent at times; especially for the interpretation of primary texts. There are some minor citation inconsistencies in the bibliography.

### 4) Manuscript form and structure:

The structure of the text is mostly logical and reflects the research intention. The particular ordering of some specific chapters is more questionable and makes the main line of argument less transparent and a bit shattered. For example, the chapter introducing new Confucianism offers several characterisations, but they are not used when a later chapter discusses Qian Mu's association with the movement. Instead, an entirely new criterium is introduced. This might be caused by an earlier mentioned inclusion of too many perspectives in the research. Later in the thesis, the chapters are ordered chronologically, and the main line of argument is easy to follow.

### 5) Quality of presentation:

The electronic file of the thesis does not follow the FSS template, and some of the information (such as the name of the author or the declaration) is not included in the submitted file. Otherwise, the quality of presentation is mostly decent. There are occasionally some unnecessarily strong normative expressions and some language mistakes, but they do not prevent the unproblematic understanding of the text.

<b>CATEGORY</b>		<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions)</i>	<i>(max. 40 points)</i>	32
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework</i>	<i>(max. 25 points)</i>	20
<i>Sources and literature</i>	<i>(max. 10 points)</i>	8
<i>Manuscript form and structure</i>	<i>(max. 15 points)</i>	11
<i>Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence)</i>	<i>(max. 10 points)</i>	8
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<i>(max. 100 points)</i>	<b>79</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>		<b>C</b>

**Suggested questions for the defence are:**

**I recommend the thesis for final defence.**

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**Referee Signature**

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good
61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	<b>F</b>	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.