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**Tony Swain, *Confucianism in China: An Introduction*. London and New York:**

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Tony Swain's *Confucianism in China: An Introduction* is an interesting and readable study, which is accessible to readers with minimal specialist knowledge, yet is methodologically complex enough to satisfy more advanced audiences. Part One consists of two chapters; "On Confucianism and religion" and "The way of the Ru". The first demonstrates how enmeshed Western scholarly arguments about the nature of religion are with Western efforts to classify the traditions and customs of the "other" (peoples encountered during the colonial era, roughly from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries). Also, scholars from non-Western cultures—including China—absorbed ideas from colonisers, and in the contemporary, globalised world it is difficult to isolate particular strands. Swain notes that Confucius was not a Confucian, and that Rujiao (the way of the scholar) was not a religion, though he thinks that it may be becoming one. This is due to the imbrication of Western and Chinese learning in modernity, and the influence of Mou Zongsan, the premier Ru scholar of the twentieth century, and one of the authors of a 1958 manifesto that argued core ideas "are pervaded by [religious] sentiments, and hence [are] quite different from occidental atheism" (p. 17). The second chapter is largely an exposition of these core Ru ideas.

Part Two has three chapters; the first, "A history of sages," examines the life context of Konzi, the mythology of King Wen and King Wu of Zhou, the five "Confucian classics", and the revival of ritual that he transmitted (an act that Swain regards as innovation, though Kongzi denied this). Chapter 4, "Two paths: mysticism and ritual", discusses rival thinkers Mengzi (Mencius, or Master Meng) and Xunzi (Xun Kuang, or Master Xun). The former discussed Heaven and human nature extensively, arguing humans are innately good. The latter opposed this view, and argued that rites (li) were "introduced into the world by ancient sage-kings in order to harmoniously satisfy human desires" (p. 85). He did not think the classics (which he knew well) were as important as ritual and music in the cultivation of human virtue. This part concludes with "From ritual masters to Classicists" which opens with a sketch of the Han dynasty as crucial to China, and the Ru tradition as equally essential, and unpicks this intimate connection as a fabrication, analysing the historians Sima Qian and Ban Gu, noting that "During the

Han, Ru began telling a story that is still being told today ... the First Emperor, in his ruthless quest for military supremacy, detested the cultured and moral ways of the Ru. To ensure their teachings did not hinder him, he ordered their Classics to be burnt” (p. 97). This, though based on Sima Qian, is not accurate; Swan notes that it is during the Han Dynasty that the Ru became classicists, and not ritual specialists. He concludes that while the Han era transformed the Ru, the later experience of Daoism and Buddhism were equally, if not more, transformative.

Part Three opens with “Learning of the Dao”, which establishes the idea of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism), and that the reunification under the Sui dynasty had initially favoured Buddhism, though the Tang rulers favoured Daoism. The Ru rose to prominence from the start of the Song dynasty (960 CE). The development of print as a mode of textual manufacture and of the examination system as the prioritisation of statecraft, and the emergence of a number of powerful teachers, particularly Zhu Xi, created a different context. Chapter 7, “The Principle of the Heart and Mind,” recovers China’s past as a world-dominating power, and considers the relationship between the Ru and the Ming dynasty. Teachers including Wang Yangming, whose fusion of the Ru and Chan Buddhism was notable, and Wang Gen who argued that self-cultivation would rectify the world. The Manchu takeover in 1644 challenged China by not being ethnic Han, and the Ru played a part in creating stability. Part Four starts with Chapter 8, “The Great Unity,” which interrogates the idea of datong, the Great Unity, which Swan argues is not Confucian, and the nineteenth century transformation which resulted in Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864) claiming to be the younger brother of Jesus; he went on to lead the Taiping Rebellion, which Swain claims was a revolution, given it was the first “to comprehensively condemn the Ru edifice” (p. 171).

After this came the Boxer Rebellion, and the deposition of the Last Emperor, Pu-Yi (1906–1967) in 1912 when he was just six years old. Swain briefly covers the warlord period, the rise of the new Culture Movement, and the critique of Ru ideals that emerged in the early Communist period. The ideal of venerating classics was antithetical to a generation that had turned its back on authority. Liang Shuming (1893–1988) is identified as the harbinger of the New Ru Learning, which his colleague Xiong Shili (1885–1968) was the direct founder of. The fate of disestablished Confucian scholars after the Revolution is considered; these two men were harassed, their books burned, and safety threatened during the “anti-Kongzi campaign ... [when] ‘Kongzi’ was synonymous with ‘reactionary’” (p. 200). The next chapter, “New Ru learning,” discusses the movement that Swain claims “was an ingenious concoction that turned fragmentary developments into a well-defined commodity” (p. 204) in the 1980s. Fang Keli (1938–2020) headed up the committee that organised fifteen scholars into three generations that defined the New Ru Learning. The “second generation” (Tang Junyi, Xu Fuguan, and Mou Zongsan) authored the Manifesto mentioned above, published initially in two

Taiwanese journals, *Democratic Review* and *National Renaissance*; Swain sees these authors as “seeking to consolidate a revival, even perhaps to initiate a movement” (p. 212). Mou argued that China could incorporate Western science and technology without being diminished, as China could advance “the West’s philosophical and religious understanding” (p. 220).

The final chapter of *Confucianism in China: An Introduction* brings the Confucian tradition into the twenty-first century. Swain discusses the 2008 Olympic Games, the proliferation of statues of Kongzi in China, the contribution of Jiang Qing (b. 1953) to the promotion of Ru learning as the core of Chinese culture and the code that must be returned to for the future, and efforts to place Confucianism as a “de facto civil religion” (p. 235, quoting Anna Sun). There are birthday celebrations every year for Kongzi in Qufu, children are being taught the Classics again, and films like Hu Mei’s *Kongzi* (2010) starring Chow Yun-fat place Confucius at the heart of Chinese civilization. This is an interesting history of Kongzi and his followers, and as interesting a historiography of writings (Western and Eastern) about Confucianism and religion from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Swain’s undecided conclusion as to whether the Ru might become a state-sponsored ideology or state religion is actually less important than it might seem. The destination is not really the story; rather the journey holds the reader’s attention.