

## EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “RU YI” AND ITS SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

**Hengshuo Liu**

Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine  
Jinan, CHINA

hengshuo@163.com

**Yanyan Hu**

Independent Researcher  
MS: Shandong University  
CHINA

**Abstract.** *Ru Yi* (儒医 - Confucian Doctor) is an integral part of the history of medicine in China, and although there is abundant research on it, few scholars regard *Ru Yi* as a concept with special significance rather than a historical figure or group. Therefore, in an attempt at conceptual history, this paper tries to explore its evolutions and historical significance. First, it examines the conceptual changes of *Ru* (儒 - Confucian) and *Yi* (医 - Doctor) in the Pre-North Song Period, discusses the specific situation of combining the two into *Ru Yi* during the Northern Song Dynasty, and its transformation afterwards. Then, the paper analyses and explains the social and spiritual significance of *Ru Yi* from its fundamental meaning, focusing on the medical knowledge, medical practice, mentalities, and social reputation of medical practitioners.

**Keywords:** Ru Yi, conceptual history, social significance, spiritual significance

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Zhong Yi* (中医) refers to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which is a significant representative of the fine Chinese traditional culture, and *Ru Yi* (儒医 - Confucian Doctor) is a concept deeply related to it. *Ru Yi* originated in China, which can not only refer to the historical figures and groups related to *Zhong*

*Yi* but also show the development of traditional Chinese society, an essential reference for the development and innovation of fine Chinese traditional culture.

Over the past decade, historians have researched the history of *Ru Yi*. Yu Xinzhong (余新忠) discusses the influence of *Ru Yi* on the formation of the phrase *Bu Wei Liang Xiang Ze Wei Liang Yi* (不为良相·则为良医 - well-known governors or famous doctors) and the promotion of Zhang Zhongjing (张仲景) (Xinzhong 2011, 120-131, 2014, 3-13). Feng Yurong (冯玉荣) studies the influence of *Ru Yi* on the construction of the Narrations of Medicine Histories (医宗) and the classicisation of medicine (Yurong 2015, 141-153). These scholars discuss the formation of the academic thinking of *Ru Yi* and regard *Ru Yi* as a special kind of identification of the group of doctors, which provides a good perspective for the interpretation of this concept.

With the deepening research into the history of medicine in China, historians are paying more attention to and thinking about the relationship between *Ru Yi* and various social activities. Zhu Shaozu (朱绍祖) studies the construction and evolution of the medicine “Four Great Physicians” under the influence of *Ru Yi* and scholars in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Shaozu 2019, 28-35). He Xiaoyan (贺晓燕) used the imperial examination in the Qing Dynasty as a starting point to identify those who took up medicine after failing an imperial examination, as *Ru Yi* and then studied their life stories (Xiaoyan 2021, 101-110). Xu Chaoqiong (徐超琼) and Yang Yimang (杨奕望) explain traditional medical ethics in *Leng Lu Yi Hua* (冷庐医话), which was written by Southern Yangtze *Ru Yi* Lu Yitian (陆以湑) (Chaoqiong and Yiwang 2019, 69-72).

Yang Shuting (杨舒婷), Zhou Yongjie (周勇杰) and Gu Man (顾漫) consider Liao Ping (廖平), Zhang Ji (张骥) and Sun Dingyi (孙鼎宜) to be famous representative persons of *Ru Yi* in the late Qing and the beginning of the Republic of China, and explored

their view in combing and studying ancient medical classics, along with their academical characteristics in terms of the treatment and study of medicine (Shuting, Yongjie, and Man 2022, 239-244).

In addition, a few scholars have shifted their attention to the *Ru Yi* groups in China's neighbouring countries. Chen Jing (陈静) and Zhang Ping (张萍) have conducted a comprehensive disclose of the Japanese *Ru Yi* generation formation, and they underwent three stages: Confucianism changing into doctors, integration of Confucian and medicine, and the decline of Confucian and medicine during the Edo period (江戸时代 江戸時代) (Jing and Ping 2020, 247-253). Xie Haijin (谢海金) and Li Liangsong (李良松) review the vital contribution of the Japanese *Ru Yi* Kaibara Ekiken (贝原益轩 えきけん) to the formation and development of the modern health preservation thought in Japan (Haijin and Liangsong 2022, 7-12). Ye Shaofei (叶少飞) examines the life stories and medical achievements of Vietnamese *Ru Yi* Nguyen Giafan (阮嘉璠 - Nguyễn Ka-fan) (Shaofei 2020, 119-140). Although the above studies have provided many broad cognitive horizons, they have not made systematic research on the process from which the concept of *Ru Yi* was established.

In the traditional Chinese society, where Confucianism is venerated, there is a world of difference between *Ru* (儒 - Confucian) and *Yi* (医 - Doctor). However, from the point of view of the evolution of the concept of *Ru Yi*, the tendency to respect doctors (尚医风气) advocated by the Northern Song scholars and scholar-officials (士大夫) is the origin of its development and dissemination. The concept of *Ru Yi* has been spread for nearly 1,000 years, and in this long period, it is worth exploring the vicissitude of *Ru Yi* and the awareness of this concept among contemporaries. Given the value of the concept of *Ru Yi* being explored, this paper aims to discuss the evolution of the concept of *Ru Yi* and its historical significance from the perspectives of the history of concepts.

2. THE CONCEPT OF RU YI

2.1. AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “RU” BEFORE THE NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY

Ru was recorded in the inscriptions of bronze of the Shang period: 丁亥卜， 儒人□珏乎芳旨 (In the practice of augury at the time of the year of Ding Hai, the Ru [shaman] who [wears] two jades joined together is called Naizhi). 贞弜儒人□珏 (Whether or not to divine is held depends on the Ru [shamans] who [wears] two jades joined together). 贞乎取丘儒 (The divine providence of the ancestor gods indicates that the army will capture the Ru [shamans] who live on the hill) (Zhongshu 1989, 879). At this time, Ru was an important group in the worship culture. According to the research of Xu Zhongshu (徐中舒), the original form of the character of Ru is Xu - 需 - in the inscriptions of bronze. Its pictogram is of a man taking a bath (Fig. 1). This was the shamans’ way of respecting the ancestor gods before they hosted the sacrificial ceremony. Therefore, the original meaning for Ru is a kind of shaman who acts as a priest in the sacrificial ceremony.

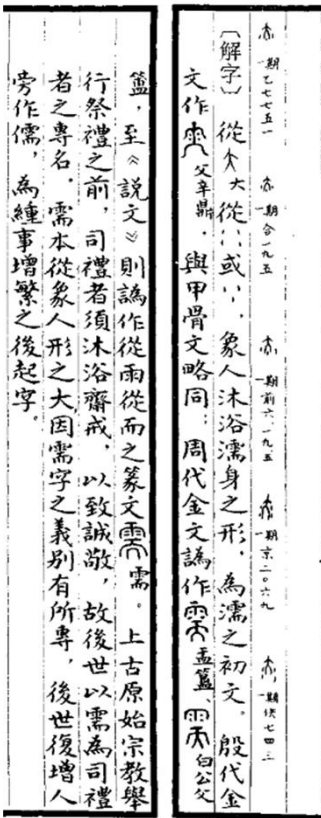


Figure 1. Ru and Xu in The Oracle Bone Dictionary (甲骨文字典) Author: Xu Zhongshu.

Duke of Zhou (周公旦) abolished the sacrificial ceremony, formulated Zhou Li (周礼), the rite system of the Zhou Dynasty, and began to rule the public

with secular morality at the turn of the Shang Dynasty and the Zhou Dynasty. These histories indicate the end of the era of the *Hua Xia* nation's worship culture, and the social status of shamans declined. Thus, the concept of *Ru* gradually spread from the ruling class to the folk society. Yang Xiangkui (杨向奎) stated, "The original *Ru* is a kind of shaman in the sacrificial ceremony, probably originating from the Shang Dynasty. The people of the Shang dynasty attached the greatest importance to funeral rites, and *Xiang Li* (相礼 – to take ceremonial process) is a task in which *Ru* excelled. Confucius (孔子) was a descendant of the declining aristocracy of the Shang Dynast *Xiang Li* was his main job (Xiangkui 1992, 414). Therefore, *Xiang Li* was a way for Confucius to notice the concept of *Ru* after the decline of the family.

They were using *Zhou Li* to revolutionise the concept of *Ru*, which encompasses both dimensions of *Jun Zi Ru* (君子儒 - the Confucian gentleman) and *Xiao Ren Ru* (小人儒 - the Confucian small man) in *Lun Yu* (论语 - The Analects of Confucius) (Confucius 2016. Chinese). *Jun Zi Ru* is a kind of gentleman who supports the restoration of *Li Zhi* (礼治 - the principle of rites), and *Xiao Ren Ru* is a kind of ordinary person who is still in the profession of *Xiang Li*. Confucius believed that *Ke Ji Fu Li* (克己复礼 - self-restraint and returning to rites) was an essential mission of Confucianism. Therefore, *Jun Zi Ru* was *Ru*'s exact implication at this time.

The representatives of Confucianism made their mark in the *Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought* after the times of Confucius. Citing the life story of Mencius (孟子) as an example, he advocated that the princes (诸侯) should support his doctrine of kingcraft (王道主义) and educate the public like Yao (尧) and Shun (舜) did, to solve the social problems related to *Li Beng Yue Huai* (礼崩乐坏 - the moral degeneration of society is getting worse) (Mencius 2017. Chinese). From this point of view, *Ru* is still the kind of gentleman who supports the restoration of *Li Zhi* in the Warring States period. However, the meaning of *Li Zhi* was no longer the *Zhou Li* but a political measure to maintain the rule of the princes.

In the early Western Han Dynasty, Emperor Gao of Han Liu Bang (汉高帝刘邦) began to work on the establishment of the ruling order. Liu Bang hated the impolite behaviour of his ministers, such as excessive drinking to cause trouble and making noise in the imperial court, so he approved the request of Shusun Tong - 叔孙通 - a great Confucian scholar, to make rituals. After that, the ministers had to worship their emperor through Confucian rites, for which Liu Bang said: “Only now do I realise the nobility of the emperor’s status” (Qian 2022. Chinese). From this point of view, the *Ru* is still a kind of gentleman who supported the restoration of *Li Zhi* up to the early Western Han Dynasty. However, the meaning of *Li Zhi* was a symbol of emperor power.

In the middle of the Western Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu of Han Liu Che (汉武帝刘彻), under the suggestion of Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒), began to implement the policy of *Ba Chu Bai Jia Du Zun Ru Shu* (罢黜百家·独尊儒术 - ban from hundred philosophers, venerate Confucianism). Confucianism became the orthodox academic research in imperial China. Liu Xiang (刘向), a literary scholar of the Western Han Dynasty, and his son, Liu Xin (刘歆), evaluated Dong as *Wang Zuo Zhi Cai* (王佐之材 - the talent with the ability to assist an emperor in governing a dynasty) and *Qun Ru Shou* (群儒首 - the chief of Confucian scholars) (Gu 2022). These titles of Dong clearly show that, at this time, *Ru* had become a scholar who defended the autocracy of the monarchy, and some of them who qualified to be officials were scholar-officials. They used Confucian political measures to rule and educate the public. While there were frequent instances of powerful ministers challenging Confucian orthodox thought by dictatorship or usurping the throne in the late Han-Wei-Jin-Northern and Southern Dynasties, scholars tried to combine Confucianism with Buddhism and Taoism to come up with new thought to defend the autocracy of the monarchy such as Wei Jin metaphysics(魏晋玄学). This meaning of the concept of *Ru*, as scholars who defended the autocracy of the monarchy remained unchanged until the Tang Dynasty.

## 2.2 AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “YI” BEFORE THE NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY

Changes in *Yi*'s social identity led to evolutions in the concept of *Yi*. During the Spring and Autumn Period, *Yi* mainly served the nobility and sometimes participated in political activities. Duke Huan of Qin Ying Rong (秦桓公嬴荣) once sent Yi Huan (医缓) to treat the sick Duke Jing of Jin Ji Nou (晋景公姬獯) to promote friendly relations between the two countries, which had positive diplomatic significance (Ming 2015-b). However, there were also *Yi* whom the aristocrats sent to take part in political struggles, as in the case of Duke Cheng of Wei Ji Zheng (卫成公姬郑), who was about to be assassinated by a *Yi* when Jin detained him (Ming 2015-a).

In addition, *Yi* and the witch doctor's relationship was entangled during the Spring and Autumn Periods. When the Duke Dao of Jin Ji Zhou (晋悼公姬周) felt ill during a visit to the state of Song, his retainers did not hire a *Yi* to treat him, but a witch doctor instead (Ming 2015-b). These histories indicate that, at this time, the role of *Yi* in healthcare was unimportant and that they had a low social status. When Yi He (医和), an excellent *Yi* of Qin, was treating the Duke Ping of Jin Ji Biao (晋平公姬彪), he was criticised by the aristocrat Zhao Wu (赵武) for talking about the politics of the state: “Is a *Yi* worthy of talking about the politics of the state?” (Ming 2015-a). The words reveal Zhao Wu's dissatisfaction with *Yi*'s involvement in politics and his contempt for them. In summary, this paper suggests that the concept of *Yi* in this context could refer to a kind of attendant engaged in medical work.

During the Warring States period, the concept of *Yi* was still referred to as a kind of attendant engaged in medical work. In the case of Bian Que (扁鹊), for example, before he practised medicine, he worked as a *Ren She Zhang* (人舍长 - the keeper of a guest house), and a similar word is *She Zhang* (舍长). *Ren She Zhang* and *She Zhang* are occupations related to the attendant (Zhiji 2015). After meeting Chang Sang Jun (长桑君), Bian Que learned his medical skills, and

some scholars have pointed out that Chang Sang Jun might have been an aristocrat (Huikang et al. 2021, 85-86+96). Therefore, this paper speculates that the attendant may have been a social status of Bian Que. In addition, the Bian Que had diagnosed or treated high-ranking aristocrats such as Zhao Yang - 赵鞅, Crown Prince Guo - 虢太子, Duke Huan of Qi Tian Wu - 齐桓公田午, and King Wu of Qin Ying Dang - 秦武王嬴荡. These histories not only prove Bian Que’s medical skill but also show that he had the experience and method of serving the aristocrats as an attendant, echoing the above speculations.

In the Han Dynasty, the imperial court became the *Yi*’s governing body, so some *Yi* were subject to the medical administration of the time. In the fifth year of Yuan Shi, the imperial court recruited *Yi* from all over the country, who were familiar with the *Ben Cao* (本草) (Gu 2022). In addition, some scholar-officials would select *Yi* from the folk society and send them to undertake medical treatment. In the fourteenth year of Jian Wu, the scholar-officials Zhongli Yi (钟离意) pacified the people in the epidemic area and sent *Yi* to treat the sick and save the people, which eventually achieved good results (Ye 2022. Chinese). In a period of frequent epidemics, for the power-holding scholar-officials, disaster relief for the people was one of the measures they took to maintain their rule, so the medical administration became the primary way to intertwine *Ru* and *Yi*.

During the period of Wei, Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties, medical education was integrated into the medical administration. Under the influence of the Imperial College (太学), the *Yi* involved in teaching activities had a title similar to *Bo Shi of the Imperial College* (太学博士), such as *Bo Shi of the Imperial Doctor* (太医博士) in the Northern Wei Dynasty. Later, the Sui imperial court established the *Bo Shi of Medicine* (医博士) (Shou 2022. Chinese, Zheng 2022. Chinese). Until the Tang dynasty, medical education in official schools developed rapidly under the support of the imperial court. Medical education in the Tang Dynasty was already quite complete,

and a variety of Confucian titles were established: *Bo Shi* (博士), *Zhu Jiao* (助教), *Sheng* (生), and *Dian Xue* (典学) (Chun 1998, Zhenguo 2023, 165). Under the intervention of the scholar-officials, medical education kept the concept of *Yi* in the atmosphere of Confucian culture for a long time, creating favourable conditions for the combination of the concepts of *Ru* and *Yi*.

### 2.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF *RU YI* AFTER THE NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY

*Ru Yi* was formed by compounding *Ru* and *Yi* in the late Northern Song Dynasty. During the reign of Zheng He (1111-1118), the Song imperial court set up the Imperial College of Medicine (太医学) at the same level as the Imperial College (Song 2008, Chongru14-15+20). It introduced scholars to receive medical education, and *Ru Yi* appeared in the enrollment edicts. According to the administrative rules of *Gong Shi* (贡士 - scholars recommended to the imperial court by local authorities), the *Ru Yi* were trained as some scholars who were good at medicine.

From the Southern Song Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, *Ru Yi* became the title of the doctor. The scholars and scholar-officials recognised the similarity of the doctor's behaviour with Confucianism in practising medicine. Then, they considered that there was a juxtaposition between *Ru* and *Yi*, thus constructing the concept of *Ru Yi* (Bingwen 1489, Fu Ruojin 1384, Guang, Xuanweng 1848, Zhen 1337, Zhencheng).

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, *Ru Yi* and scholars had similar behaviours. The doctors at this time were full of people who liked ancient Chinese poetry, and this hobby enabled them to establish a stable communication network with the scholars. Therefore, at this time, *Ru Yi* was highly similar to scholars, which was an essential basis for Confucian scholars in the Ming and Qing dynasties to construct the concept of *Ru Yi* (Bao. 21b, Bao. 13b, Gu, 27b, Min 2009, 147-155, 2012, 79-88, 2012).

During the Republic of China period, *Ru Yi* retained the praise of traditional Confucianism, such as the knowledgeable doctor and the doctor who could save many lives (June 14, 1913). These praises were the social capital that supported the survival of *Ru Yi* and played a positive role in the construction of the concept of *Ru Yi* in the Republic of China (April 13, 1934, November 5, 1934, February 21, 1935, March 9, 1935, September 4, 1935).

In summary, the construction of the concept of *Ru Yi* mainly centred on the views of Confucian scholars and doctors. Secondly, social opinion is also a key factor affecting its evolution.

### 3. THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *RU YI*

#### 3.1. WORKING ABILITY OF DOCTORS

From the Southern Song Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, the title of *Ru Yi* was used to indicate the working ability of the doctors. Scholars and scholar-officials generally emphasised the profound knowledge of *Ru Yi* in the study of *Yi Li* (医理 - the theory of medicine) by constructing a link between medicine and Neo-Confucianism (理学), thus enhancing their image as excellent doctors (Fu Ruojin 1384). In addition, they also paid attention to the efficacy of *Ru Yi* in treating diseases and showed and praised the miracles of *Ru Yi* in different ways in their poems and writings, so that their image of excellent doctors was widely spread in society (Fugu, Mai 2006, Xuanweng 1848, Yingli). Most of the doctors in this period often practised medicine in the folk society, and their positive image of being good at healing provided effective material for mainstream Confucianism. Zhu Xi's doctrines (朱子学) were popularised by using easy-to-understand examples, so scholars and scholar-officials tried to bring these highly skilled doctors into the category of Confucianism. However, *Ru* and *Yi* represented different professions, so they called them *Ru Yi* to emphasise the working ability of the doctors, so as to talk about them alongside Confucianism.

### 3.2 REPUTATION OF DOCTORS

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, *Ru Yi* became a reputation for the doctors. Some medical books and articles were compared to tao-tung (道统) of Confucianism to build *Yi Tong* (医统 - the scholarly inheritance of medical knowledge), and *Ru Yi* became a symbol of orthodox medical academic research. According to *Yi Deng Xu Yan* (医灯续焰), *Ru Yi* could only establish the canon of medical academic research through *Yi Tong* (Ji 1997). On the one hand, Gu Jingyuan - 顾靖远, a *Ru Yi*, criticised some self-proclaimed excellent doctors with the medical classics in *Yi Tong*, such as *Huang Di Nei Jing* (黄帝内经 - *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*) and *Jin Kui Yao Lue* (金匱要略 - *Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber*) (Jingyuan 2014). On the other hand, Yu Huan(俞寰) listed many famous medical figures from the Yan and Huang eras (炎黄时代) to the Song and Yuan dynasties in his essay to Yao Meng (姚蒙): Shen Nong(神农), Xuan Huang(轩皇, 轩辕氏), Qi Sou (岐叟, 岐伯), Lei Gong(雷公), Lu Bian(卢扁, 扁鹊), Chang Sha(长沙, 张仲景), Dong Yuan (东垣, 李杲) and Dan Xi (丹溪, 朱震亨), who had already formed a clear lineage of scholarly inheritance in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Chen Wei 1512). Yu Huan used *Yi Tong* to evaluate Yao Meng's medical experience to emphasise his orthodox academic status. Therefore, the importance of academic status and honorary status of the Ming and Qing medical practitioners was a significant impetus for the transformation of the concept of *Ru Yi*.

The Ming imperial court instituted the Hereditary Doctor System (世医制度) for doctors to survive in society by relying on medical skills that were handed down in their families. However, from the first year of Jing Tai (1450), the Sale System of Rank and Office (捐纳制度) had a significant impact on the structure and composition of the hereditary doctor group, so in the middle and late Ming Dynasty, hereditary doctors faced many survival crises. Since then, it has no longer been a necessary means of development for doctors, and medical skills are handed down in their families. Reputation

gradually became an essential role in doctors’ practice. Those who enjoyed the reputation of *Ru Yi* were respected by others and had an easier time obtaining support for their livelihoods (Jingzi 1958, Kuan, Sheng 1994).

In summary, the reputation of *Ru Yi* as a means of obtaining development opportunities and resources reflects the doctors’ awareness of the benefits and values of their profession. Also, it means that *Ru Yi*, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, was no longer a reference for the actual level of the doctors as *Ru Yi* from the Southern Song Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty.

### 3.3 FAMOUS EXPERTS AND CONSERVATIVE DOCTORS

During the Republic of China period, the concept of *Ru Yi* became the title of famous medical expert. *Ta Kung Pao* (大公报), a modern newspaper in China, was famous throughout the country in the first half of the 20th century and possessed the ethical spirit of journalistic professionalism, striving to express an objective and impartial value orientation compared with other media of the same period. The newspaper published many advertisements about *Ru Yi*, describing some as experts in treating certain illnesses. It often published information about their business trips, clinics, and moves to notify the public to arrange medical appointments (16 June 1913, 7 December 1917, 21 February 1924). In the Republic of China, *Ru Yi* became a medical expert as a way for doctors of *Zhong Yi* to rely on newspaper publicity to maintain their livelihood against the background of the dominance of Western medicine in the medical field. They attracted the general public’s attention by emphasising the diseases *Ru Yi* could treat and simultaneously expanded the scope of their activities to different regions to increase their popularity.

However, some doctors think that some *Ru Yi* are stuck in their ways and do not know how to adapt, so it can be seen that *Ru Yi* appears to be the meaning item: conservative doctors. The reasons

for this are, firstly, the internal contradiction of the *Zhong Yi* group and the pursuit of medical progress of medical practitioners by criticising the old-fashioned thinking of some *Ru Yi* in medical treatment, to express the idea of reforming *Zhong Yi* into *Shi Xue* - 实学 - practical learning. The second is that the pedantic image of some old-time literati who called themselves *Ru Yi* hurt the concept of *Ru Yi* (Jian 1939, Jianshou 1934, 32, Ren 1914, 5-6, Zhongnong 1936, 21-22).

#### 4. THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *RU YI*

##### 4.1 PRAISE FOR THE MENTALITIES OF PRACTICING MEDICINE

From the Southern Song Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, the number of *Cong Yi Shi Ren* (从医士人 - scholar practising medicine) increased. They were mainly engaged in medical work, but in this regard, they showed a similar style of Confucianism, so they were a special kind of doctor. Some scholar-officials called them *Ru Yi* to praise the mentalities of practising medicine.

Most of the medical texts of this period were obscure and difficult to understand, and there were few shortcuts in practising medicine. *Cong Yi Shi Ren* were also influenced by Confucianism and tended to treat diseases cautiously with respect for life (Fu Ruojin 1384, Tianjue 1335, Xuanweng 1848, Zhencheng). As a result, they would practice medicine down-to-earthly, holding the original intention of medicine with generosity, benevolence, and low regard for profit, thus showing the spirit of perseverance and benevolence (Minzhong, Zhiyu).

For the scholar-officials, the above mentalities of doctoring were in line with the pursuit of Confucian values, so they praised *Cong Yi Shi Ren* as *Ru Yi* and, at the same time, brought Confucianism and doctors closer together so that the scholar-officials could take the initiative in interpreting the mentalities of practising medicine and promote Confucian morality by praising them. For those scholars who were not successful in their official careers, they accepted the

title of *Ru Yi* as a complimentary title. After failing the imperial examinations, they relieved their sense of loss by promoting Confucianism in their mentalities of practising medicine, which was a favourable condition to support the Song and Yuan scholars to turn to medical work.

#### 4.2 THE STRONG MENTALITIES OF DOCTORS TO SEEK CONNECTIONS IN CONFUCIANISM

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, *Ru Yi* showed the strong mentalities of doctors to seek connections in Confucianism. Some *Ru Yi* would seriously weigh the relationship between their status as doctors and their status as scholars.

When Wu Chu (吴楚), a *Ru Yi*, received many medical honorariums, he would use the money for his expenses in the imperial examinations to demonstrate his ideal of entering the official career (Feng-En 2017, 37). At the same time, he hoped that his patients and friends would provide financial support for the publication of his medical book, *Yi Yan Lu* (医验录), to write a book in the same way as scholars did. Wu Chu also wrote *Lan Cong Shi Jie* (兰丛十戒), a code of medical practice, to regulate his behaviour in order to show support for the image of Justice Outweighing Benefit (重义轻利) as a *Ru Yi* (Feng-En 2017, 97).

*Yi Jing Xiao Xue* (医经小学) of Liu Chun (刘纯), *Yi Du* (医读) of Wang Ji (汪机), and *Yi Xue Ru Men* (医学入门) of Li Chan (李梴) represent the Confucianisation of the academic tradition of medicine in the Ming and Qing dynasties. All of these books emphasise the authors' identity as *Ru Yi* (Angela 2012, 44).

In addition, the families of *Ru Yi* also emphasised Confucian education, and men in these families were immersed in Confucianism from childhood (Min 2009, 2012, Lian 2011). In contrast, women, influenced by Confucian poetry and history, possessed the image of a virtuous woman who understood the

principles of justice, filial piety, and fraternal duty (Kuan, Maoyin, 207).

To summarise, how doctors seek connections in Confucianism was reflected in their personal behaviour, academic traditions, and family education, making *Ru Yi* an essential reference for the value of doctors. In terms of medical care and state society at this time, the medical administration had shrunk entirely, and the state could not adjust the medical market. Hence, the free competition in it became more and more intense. As a result, some of the doctors in the society that Confucianism is venerated would make efforts to get closer to Confucianism in their practice of medical care, study of medical care, and family education, to accept the label of *Ru Yi*, which is a combination of Confucianism and doctors, to prove that they are the elites of the doctor group.

#### 4.3 MAINTENANCE AND EXTENSION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

During the Republican Period, China experienced the collapse of the monarchy and the decline of Confucianism amid this significant change. However, *Ru Yi* at this time still maintained the Confucian sense of social responsibility to *Ji Shi* (济世). *Ji Shi* means “help everyone” in a broad sense, and for the doctor group, it refers specifically to “save many lives”.)

*Zeng Yi Shi Yao* (赠医施药 - helping the public through medical services) is a kind of good deed of traditional Chinese doctors, following the example of Confucianism to *Ji Shi*. In the first and middle of the 20th century, this kind of good deed was reported by many newspapers under the theme of *Ru Yi Ji Shi* (儒医济世). These reports make *Ji Shi* a feature of the concept of *Ru Yi* in the Republic of China.

“Saving the country” was a social mentality at that time. All kinds of social groups showed their feelings of saving the country in different ways, such as The Revolution of 1911 (辛亥革命) led by Sun Yat-sen, Huang Xing, and others, and the May Fourth Movement -

五四运动, in which young students, workers, citizens and other strata of the population participated together. As a result, *Ru Yi* also showed a tendency to save the country in their medical activities. Pan Zishou (潘子寿), a *Ru Yi*, once talked about using the money he earned from practising medicine to help the country solve its financial problems. While there are few relevant records, they also show *Ru Yi*'s extension of social responsibility from *Ji Shi* to saving the country (May 31, 1912).

The concept of *Ru Yi* in the Republic of China expanded in significance with the decline of Confucianism. The concept of “salvation of the country”, similar to the concept of *Ji Shi*, came into the evolution of *Ru Yi*, causing confusion between the two and manifesting itself through *Ru Yi*'s sense of social responsibility. Therefore, the concept of *Ru Yi* in the Republic of China retains the sense of responsibility for *Ji Shi* and extends the sense of responsibility for the country's salvation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper explains *Ru Yi* from the perspective of conceptual history. While *Ru Yi* is a common concept in the history of medicine, it has both social and spiritual significance when examined in detail. The perceptions of scholars, scholar-officials, and doctors were the driving force behind the evolution of *Ru Yi* to take on this significance.

The medical administration formulated by the scholar-officials was the primary way *Ru* and *Yi* came into contact with each other. However, purely medical administration was only a management measure the scholar-officials took for the doctors. At the time when the scholar-officials introduced the scholars into official medical education, *Ru* and *Yi* formed the *Ru Yi*. *Ru Yi* implies the doctor's choice of thinking of medical study and the spirit of medical practice, which is deeply related to the activities of scholars and scholar-officials in the Song Dynasty and later dynasties in learning

and practising medicine. Therefore, this paper considers *Ru Yi* a manifestation of doctors' medical knowledge, medical practice, mentalities, and social reputation.

At the same time, *Ru Yi* is a term of praise because it fulfils the moral standards of Confucianism, which can be regarded as a kind of "discipline" for doctors by scholars and scholar-officials. Although the decline of Confucianism in the Republic of China has reduced the influence of *Ru Yi*, it has recreated new significance in the tangle of tradition and modernisation.

*Ru Yi* has embodied many imprints of traditional culture throughout its complex evolution, making it impossible to define with a single meaning. Therefore, revisiting the concept of *Ru Yi* and uncovering its historical significance holds greater academic and practical value.

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