

Perceptions of the Ancient-Script *Shangshu* 古文尚書 in the 17th-Century Joseon

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The controversy regarding the late-compiled Ancient-Script *Shangshu* extended over several centuries. It was initially instigated by Song 宋 and Yuan 元 scholars, including Wu Yu 吳棫, Zhu Xi 朱熹, and Wu Cheng 吳澄, who introduced a skeptical approach toward the classic. Subsequently, during the Ming period, scholars such as Mei Zhuo 梅鷟 and Hao Jing 郝敬 conducted textual investigations that revealed significant doubts regarding the work.

Amid this fervent debate, neighboring Korea and Japan—through diplomatic book acquisitions and cultural exchanges—gradually became attentive to the issues of authenticity associated with the late-compiled Ancient-Script *Shangshu* 古文尚書, influenced by the scholarly debates of the Ming 明 and Qing 清 periods. A survey of Chinese texts in both countries, however, indicates that the debate resonated more profoundly in Korea than in Japan. This discrepancy can be attributed to the fact that Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism served as the foundational norm for all ritual practices during the formation of the Korean state. Zhu Xi regarded the sixteen-character method for cultivating the mind—"人心惟危，道心惟微。惟精惟一，允執厥中"—as the self-cultivation technique practiced by the ancient sage-kings of the Three Dynasties. Notably, the chapter Dayu Mo, which records this method, is included in the late-compiled Ancient-Script *Shangshu*.

Accordingly, this paper focuses on seventeenth-century Korea, investigating how Korean Confucian scholars of that era perceived the authenticity issues related to the late-compiled Ancient-Script *Shangshu*.

Keywords : Korean Confucianism, Ancient-Script *Shangshu*, Interpretation of the classics, Falsification criticism, Cross-cultural study

Introduction

In the *Siku Quanshu Zongmu Ti Yao* 四庫全書總目提要 (*Annotated Catalog of the Complete Imperial Library*), it is stated: "The most discussed topic concerning the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*The Book of Documents*) since the Han 漢 dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) has been the five elements 五行 in the "Hong fan" 洪範 (The Great Plan) chapter; the most discussed topic since the Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279) has been the mountains and rivers 山川 in the "Yu gong" 禹貢 (The Tribute of Yu) chapter; and the most

debated issue since the Ming 明 dynasty (1368-1644) has been the authenticity of the the modern-script *Shangshu* 今文尚書 and the ancient-script *Shangshu*.”¹

The paragraph above delineates the three core topics of the *Shangshu* studies, which have drawn the attention of the scholars in the Korean peninsula. Among these, the debate over the authenticity of the the modern-script *Shangshu* and the ancient-script *Shangshu* stands out as the most crucial one.

Doubts about the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* first emerged during the Song dynasty. Through the Yuan 元 (1271-1368) and Ming dynasties, these doubts gained traction, and by the Qing 清 dynasty (1644-1912), it was almost conclusively established that the ancient-script *Shangshu* was a forgery.

However, the ancient-script *Shangshu* was not easily dismissed in Joseon. One reason was the high regard for *sŏnghak* 聖學 (sage learning) in Joseon. Another was its connection to the ideology of governance in the kingdom.

Another aspect to note is the deep connection between the ancient-script *Shangshu* and the culture of Joseon. In particular, *sipyukcha simpŏp* 十六字心法 (sixteen-characters principle) had a significant influence not only on the thoughts but also on Sinographic literature of Joseon.

Therefore, this paper aims to examine how perceptions of the ancient-script *Shangshu* was shaped in the 17th-century Joseon as the theory of its forgery, proposed by Ming scholars, was transmitted.

Misu Hŏ Mok 眉叟許穆’s Strong Criticism of the Theory of Forgery

According to the author’s research, the text titled “Tap Yochŏn Hongpŏm Chungyong kochŏng chi silsŏ” 答堯典洪範中庸考定之失書 (Reply to the Argument of the Examinations on Yao dian 堯典, Hong fan 洪範, and *Zhong yong* 中庸 Having Errors, hereafter “Tap Yo”), included in the volume three of *Kiŏn* 記言 by MiSu Hŏ Mok 眉叟許穆 (1595-1682), is the earliest text of Joseon to address the issue of the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*.

Hŏ Mok was a contemporary of Yan Ruoqu 閻若璩 (1636-1704), one of the most influential figures in the debate on the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*. However, it can be inferred that he never had the chance to read the *Shangshu guwen shuzheng* 尚書古文疏證 (*The Investigations on Ancient-Script Shangshu*) written by Yan Ruoqu during his lifetime. The reason is that Yan Ruoqu began questioning the authenticity of twenty-five chapters of the ancient-script *Shangshu* at the age of twenty, and it took him more than thirty years of textual investigation to resolve all the doubts

¹ Yong Rong 永瑤, Ji Yun 紀昀 et al., “Rijiang Shujing jieyi” 日講書經解義, in *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1983), j. 12.2, p. 280: “尚書一經，漢以來所聚訟者，莫過洪範之五行，宋以來所聚訟者，莫過禹貢之山川，明以來所聚訟者，莫過今文古文之真偽。”

he had raised, and only then did he complete the *Shangshu guwen shuzheng* in eight volumes.² He was already over fifty years old when he began writing the book, making it impossible for the work to have been completed before 1686. In other words, Hō Mok, who passed away in 1682, could not have had the opportunity to see the *Shangshu guwen shuzheng* during his life time. Therefore, it should be understood that the scholarly theories regarding the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* that he encountered were those of scholars from the Yuan and Ming periods.

In “Tap Yo,” Hō Mok rejected his views of Yuan and Ming scholars who had debated the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* and went further by refuting their arguments.

According to *Mi Su Hōsōnsaeng yōnpo* 眉叟許先生年譜 (*The Annals of Misu*), “Tap Yo” is a letter Hō Mok wrote in 1666, at the age of seventy-two, in response to Yun Hyu 尹鑄 (1617-1680).³ “Tok sōki” 讀書記 in *Paekho chōnsō* 白湖全書 contains a reference to this.⁴

In it, Hō Mok first emphasized the importance of the ancient-script *Shangshu*, one of the Six Classics 六經, while presenting his own viewpoint in the letter.

The texts of the Six Classics are those through which the sage, having received the Mandate of Heaven, established standards, enlightened all things, and accomplished every task; hence, they represent the most rightful teachings under Heaven. ... Although the people of the Yin 殷 dynasty admired simplicity, their writings are nonetheless exceedingly archaic and difficult to comprehend. How much more challenging, then, must it be to understand texts from an era predating theirs? Earlier Confucian scholars argued that the two canonical documents, the “Yao dian” 堯典 (Canon of Yao) and “Shun dian” 舜典 (Canon of Shun) in the *Shangshu*, which reflect the noble intentions of Emperors Yao and Shun, are even harder to understand, much like the Qian 乾 and Kun 坤 hexagrams in the *Zhou yi* 周易 (*The Book of Changes*)⁵.

By comparing the “Yao dian” and “Shun dian” with the Qian and Kun hexagrams of the *Zhou yi*, Hō Mok once again underscored the sacredness of the “Yao dian” and “Shun dian.” He held that these two texts must neither be indiscriminately combined nor rearranged. By elucidating the origins of the modern-script *Shangshu* and ancient-

² Qian Daxin 錢大昕, “Yan xiansheng Ruoku zhuan” 閻先生若璩傳, in *Qianyan tang wenji* 潛研堂文集, (Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), j.38, p. 638: “年二十, 讀尚書至古文二十五篇, 即疑其偽, 沈潛三十餘年, 乃盡得其癥結所在, 作尚書古文疏證八卷.”

³ Hō Roc 許磊, “Misu Hōsōnsaeng yōnpo” 眉叟許先生年譜 in *Ki-ōn* 記言 (Seoul: The Association for the Promotion of National Culture, 2006), j. 1, p. 353.

⁴ Yun Hyu 尹鑄, “Tok sōki” 讀書記; “Hongpōm kyōngchōn t’ongūi” 洪範經傳通義 in *Paekh chōnsō* 白湖全書, pp. 275-277, 290-291, 296-316.

⁵ Hō Mok 許穆, “Tap Yochōn Hongpōm Chungyong kochōng chi silsō” 答堯典洪範中庸考定之失書, p. 267: “六經之文, 聖人繼天立極, 開物成務之文, 爲天地之至教. ... 殷人尚質, 其文極古奧難知, 又況其上焉者乎. 先儒以爲二典者, 堯舜之卷舒, 書之二典, 如易之乾坤, 尤不可易言者也.”

script *Shangshu*, he explained how the “Yao dian” and “Shun dian” have been merged and separated over time.

Hō Mok’s position on the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* is as follows.

Following the event in the Qin dynasty, in which Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 ordered the burning and destruction of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (*The Book of Songs*) and the *Shangshu* and buried Confucian scholars alive, great turmoil spread throughout the empire. When the Han dynasty emerged and attempted to recover these lost texts by recruiting scholars, only about twenty to thirty percent of the original works were successfully retrieved. At over ninety years of age, Fu Sheng orally transmitted these classical texts, but was only able to pass down around twenty chapters. In the process of merging the “Shun dian” with the “Yao dian,” the phrase “carefully uphold the five canons” 慎徽五典 originally appeared after the line “the emperor said: be reverent” 帝曰欽哉; however, along with a total of twenty-eight characters the former phrase was omitted from the surviving text. Only upon the discovery of classical texts concealed within the walls of the Kong 孔 family residence did scholars first recognize the existence of the “Shun dian.” However, these texts, entirely inscribed in the ancient-script *Shangshu*, were significantly damaged, rendering many characters indecipherable. Consequently, these manuscripts found on the wall were once again secured within the Kong family and withheld from broader dissemination. It was not until the fifth century CE, when Yao Fangxing 姚方興 acquired the missing sections, that the “Shun dian” was finally restored to its complete form. Expressions such as “profound, wise, accomplished, and intelligent” 濬哲文明 and “mild, respectful, and entirely sincere” 溫恭允塞 found in the “Shun dian” are not phrases that a forger could have easily invented. Today, these texts are considered forgeries and thus been excluded from scholarly consideration. Furthermore, the belief that they constitute a revised form of the ancient-script *Shangshu* is no longer accepted. Despite rejecting the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*, scholars paradoxically assert the textual reliability of the oral transmissions by Fu Sheng 伏生, even though these transmissions clearly contain numerous errors. Moreover, the discovery of the ancient-script *Shangshu* within the walls of the Kong family residence, authentic or otherwise, provides minimal assistance in addressing fundamental philosophical discussions. Given these circumstances, on what basis could one conclude that Chengzi 程子 and Zhuizi 朱子 were mistaken in following the two canons derived from the ancient-script *Shangshu*.⁶

⁶ Hō Mok 許穆, “Tap Yo,” pp. 268-271: “秦時，焚滅詩書，坑殺學士，天下大亂。漢興，招學士，求亡書，亦十不二三。伏生年九十餘，口授經文才二十餘篇。舜典合於堯典，帝曰欽哉之下，有慎徽五典缺文二十八。及孔氏壁經出，人始知有舜典。而皆科蚪古文，又磨滅不可知者亦多。藏之孔氏，不行於世。至蕭齊時，姚方興得缺文，然後舜典始備。濬哲文明，溫恭允塞，非偽作者所能言也。今以爲偽書而去之，又不信古文所改定。既非古文尚書，伏生口授又失錯謬如此，而自以爲經文已正。孔壁古文出不出爲無益，程·朱氏從古文二典爲誤耶？”

Hō Mok primarily centered his analysis on the division and combination of the “Yao dian” and the “Shun dian.” He argued that these two texts were originally separated and that during Fu Sheng’s process of combining both texts into the single “Yao dian,” twenty-eight characters originally located at the beginning of the “Shun dian” were omitted. Hō Mok further claimed that, after the discovery of the ancient-script *Shangshu* hidden within the walls of the Kong family residence, the existence of the “Shun dian” became known. However, according to him, this text was not transmitted to the scholarly community due to its lack of formal recognition by official academic institutions. It was further asserted that, fortunately, Yao Fangxing of the Southern dynasties obtained the previously missing passages, thereby revealing the complete version of the “Shun dian” to scholars. Although Hō Mok argued that phrases such as “profound, wise, accomplished, and intelligent” 濬哲文明 and “mild, respectful, and entirely sincere” 溫恭允塞 could not have been invented by a forger, the twenty-eight characters in question were, in reality, forged by Yao Fangxing. Several scholars have already demonstrated that when Yao Fangxing divided the “Yao dian” into two separate texts, inconsistencies emerged between the resulting sections, requiring him to insert several additional characters to restore textual coherence. Hō Mok was the only scholar in the Joseon period who did not consider Yao Fangxing’s edition of the *Shangshu* as a forgery. To further substantiate his position, Hō Mok invoked the authority of Cheng Yi 程頤 and Cheng Hao 程顥 as well as Zhu Xi 朱熹. He argued that if there had indeed been issues with the authenticity of the “Yao dian” and the “Shun dian,” such renowned scholars as the Two Chengs and Zhu Xi would certainly have recognized and addressed them. In other words, according to Hō Mok, the fact that neither the Two Chengs nor Zhu Xi expressed doubt regarding the Shun dian clearly indicated that the ancient-script *Shangshu* could not be considered a forgery.⁷

The act of damaging or altering classical texts is unprecedented in history. The teachings of the sages are objects of reverence and must not be distorted. While it may be possible to deceive the world, one cannot distort the words of the sages. ... Should such corruption occur, none of the Six Classics would remain intact, nor would any of the classical texts within the ancient-script *Shangshu* survive in their complete form. Damage to classical texts happens primarily in two ways: first, destruction by burning; second, deliberate textual alteration – How could this not be seen as deeply alarming? ... When Yi Yin 伊尹 (early Shang dynasty) admonished Tai Jia 太甲 (r. 1623-1611 BCE), he identified ten transgressions, one of which was disrespecting the teachings of the sages. Similarly, among the three matters Confucius instructed his disciples to hold in deep reverence was the words of the sages. If individuals who read the texts of the sages and study their teachings regard themselves – and are similarly regarded by others – as extensively versed in classical

⁷ Yi Tam-myōng (1646–1701), a scholar active slightly after Hō Mok, presented an opposing viewpoint in *Chōngchae munjip* 靜齋文集 (*The Collected Writings of Yi Tam-myōng*), similarly grounding his arguments in the textual division and combination of the “Yao dian” and “Shun dian.” This particular matter will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

scholarship, yet at the same time denigrate the teachings of the sages and distort their writings, how can one ascertain whether such individuals revere or disrespect the sages' words? The harmful tendency for each scholar to presume that their own doctrines derive directly from the sages persisted continuously from the Eastern Zhou period to the late Ming dynasty. These detrimental consequences arose precisely because reverence for classical texts has diminished, leading to their distortion. Therefore, scholars who engage in classical studies must remain especially vigilant against this tendency.⁸

As illustrated above, Hō Mok, who held firmly to the position that the teachings and writings of the sages must not be undermined, attempted to persuade scholars who regarded the ancient-script *Shangshu* as forgeries. According to Hō Mok, the sages' philosophical teachings and aphorisms constituted a critical legacy that deserved reverence across all periods; hence, if the ancient-script *Shangshu*, embodying such teachings, were determined to be forgeries, they would inevitably lose their sacred status, ultimately causing a collapse of ethics and social order. Hō Mok invoked the words of revered ancient Chinese sages such as Yi Yin and Confucius, sharply criticizing those who altered or distorted classical texts. He further asserted that this detrimental practice persisted continuously from the Eastern Zhou period through the late Ming dynasty, and thus urged scholars who learn the writings of the sages to remain particularly vigilant against such distortions.

Upon examining Hō Mok's argument, it becomes clear that the evidence supporting his claims is insufficient. His argument primarily stresses that one should neither doubt nor oppose the words of the sages. Furthermore, his assertion – that the ancient-script *Shangshu* cannot be considered a forgery simply because the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi did not question the authenticity of the “Shun dian” – lacks substantial justification. This is because their lack of suspicion must be understood in light of two historical circumstances of their time, which would have made such a stance reasonable.

First, it must be acknowledged that as we move further back in history, the available sources and materials become increasingly scarce. During the era of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, the textual resources at their disposal were limited, making it highly unlikely that they could have gathered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Shun dian was a forgery. Given this, to argue that the ancient-script *Shangshu* cannot be considered a forgery simply because the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi expressed no suspicion about its authenticity can be seen as a form of sophistry.

⁸ Hō Mok 許穆, “Tap Yo,” pp. 268-271: “毀改經文，蓋亦前古之未聞。聖人之言，可畏不可亂也。天下可誣也，聖人之言不可亂也。... 六經無全經，古文無全文，經文之害，焚滅一也，毀壞二也，豈不為大可懼也。... 伊尹訓太甲言十愆，其一侮聖人之言，孔子之戒有三畏，其一畏聖人之言。人有讀聖人之書，學聖人之事，其自任既以經術博覽，人之待之亦以經術博覽。而其貶論則聖人之言，其毀壞則聖人之書，竊不知此侮聖人之言者乎，抑畏聖人之言者乎。... 人人自聖之弊，其害自東周以降，至明末之世，皆是此衰亂之事也，尤為經術士所宜戒也。”

Second, the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of the period must be considered. In this regard, one may refer to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄's practice of interpreting classical texts by citing content from the apocryphal texts (*weishu* 緯書). As is generally known, the content of these seems highly implausible and lacks credible foundations. Nevertheless, Zheng Xuan utilized these texts extensively in his commentaries on the classics, aiming thereby to more clearly elucidate the meanings intended by the sages. Given that the Han dynasty was characterized by the widespread prevalence of prophetic-apocryphal discourses 讖緯說, it is perhaps unsurprising that Zheng Xuan adopted these texts within such an intellectual environment. In other words, while these texts appear unreliable from the present-day perspective, during the Han dynasty they were frequently employed by many scholars. Given this context, it is reasonable to conclude that Hō Mok's attempt to construct his argument without accounting for the atmosphere of the era in which the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi lived is inappropriate.

Nevertheless, "Tap Yo" is currently the earliest known Joseon-period source dealing with the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*. Although his arguments may not be sufficiently rigorous, this text should be highly valued as it initiated the discourse on the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*.

Chōngjae Yi Tammyōng's Criticism on the Authenticity of the *Ancient-Script Shangshu*

Chōngjae Yi Tam-myōng (1646–1701) came from a family that had been affiliated with the Namin 南人 faction for generations. In his youth, he studied under Misu Hō Mok and consistently upheld a stance aligned with the Namin throughout his life.⁹ Yi is widely recognized for his literary accomplishments rather than his contributions to classical scholarship. Among his notable literary works is a *sijo* 時調 *Sa noch'in kok* 思老親曲 (*Song in Memory of an Aged Parent*). His only extant work related to classical scholarship is *Sōchōn ch'aūi* 書傳筭疑 (*Critical Notes on the Commentaries of the Shangshu*), which appears in the section on miscellaneous writings 雜著, volume five of *Chōngjae munjip* 靜齋文集 (*Yi Tam-myōng's Collected Works*). This text is a collection of critical annotations (ch'abki 筭記) composed by Yi to address doubts and questions arising from his reading of the *Shangshu*, primarily concerning the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*.

As previously mentioned, based on the author's research to date, "Tap Yo" constitutes the earliest known text addressing the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* in Joseon. The primary focus of this work is to affirm the credibility of the ancient-script *Shangshu*. In contrast to Hō Mok's stance, his disciple Yi Tam-myōng,

⁹ Kim Ch'aesik 金萊植, "Chōngchae chip haeche" 靜齋集解題, in *Hankuk munchip ch'ongkan haeche* 韓國文集叢刊解題 (Seoul: Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics, 2010), v. 8, p. 512.

in the *Sŏchŏn ch'aŭi*, questions the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*. Based on the author's research to date, Yi's work is the earliest Joseon document to explicitly question the reliability of the ancient-script *Shangshu*. As such, it holds particular significance as an early source for examining Joseon scholars' perspectives on the ancient-script *Shangshu*'s authenticity.¹⁰

In general, scholars who defended the ancient-script *Shangshu* argued for its reliability based upon Zhu Xi's annotations on the text. In contrast, those who considered the ancient-script *Shangshu* a forgery pointed to the statements that Zhu Xi himself had doubts about the text. Unlike these scholars, Yi Tam-myŏng asserted that neither the Cheng brothers nor Zhu Xi ever questioned the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*.¹¹ Yi's distinctive perspective appears to have been influenced by his teacher, Hŏ Mok.¹²

Although Yi Tam-myŏng maintained a critical stance toward the ancient-script *Shangshu*, unlike his teacher, he neither severely criticized scholars who defended the text – as proponents of the forgery theory, such as Kim Chŏng-hŭi, did – nor did he actively endorse the claim that the text was fabricated. Instead, he primarily documented various doubts he had about the *Shangshu*. Yi first cited the example of Wei Tai 魏泰 of the Song dynasty, who composed a text titled *Bi yun xia* 碧雲駢 under a name of Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002–1060). By referring to this case, Yi highlighted that literary enthusiasts 好事家 in China had occasionally deceived readers by falsely attributing their own writings to prominent figures.¹³ This observation implied that Yi saw doubts about the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* as unavoidable. The questions Yi raised can be summarized into the following three points:

The first issue concerns the combined chapters “Yao dian” and “Shun dian.” As discussed above, Hŏ Mok argued that the “Shun dian” chapter originated from the text found in the walls of the Kong family (“Kong bi” 孔壁 text). He further asserted that the twenty-eight-character phrase, “The Emperor Shun was profound, wise, accomplished, and intelligent. He was mild and respectful, and entirely sincere” 濬哲文明，溫恭允塞 could not have been easily fabricated. Based on this, he maintained that the ancient-script *Shangshu* could never be regarded as a forgery. In

¹⁰ Hŏ Mok's “Tap Yo,” which affirms the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*, and Yi Tam-myŏng's *Sŏchŏn ch'aŭi*, which challenges it, were both composed in the seventeenth century. Apart from these two works, the majority of Joseon writings that discuss the reliability of the ancient-script *Shangshu* date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹¹ Yi Tam-myŏng 李聘命, “Sŏchŏn ch'aŭi” 書傳筭疑 in *Chŏngjae munjip* 靜齋文集, j. 5, p. 339: “雖以程朱大賢，亦信之不疑，從而註解之。”

¹² As noted above, Hŏ Mok asserted that the ancient-script *Shangshu* is not a forged text. Among the reasons he presented was the fact that Zhu Xi did not question the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* and used it for annotations.

¹³ Yi Tam-myŏng 李聘命, “Sŏchŏn ch'aŭi” 書傳筭疑 in *Chŏngjae munjip* 靜齋文集, j. 5, p. 339: “吾嘗觀中國人好事者著書，往往託於名人以欺人，如梅聖俞之碧雲駢，甚多大航頭古文尚書之說，雖以程朱大賢，亦信之不疑，從而註解之。而後生淺見，猶或有疑於其間，恨不生並一世，得質於函丈也。”

contrast, Yi Tam-myōng questioned the authenticity of the “Shun dian” chapter by analyzing its context.

In the Fu Sheng version of the modern-script *Shangshu*, the chapters “Yao dian” and “Shun dian” appear combined into a single text. Unlike the ancient-script *Shangshu*, this edition lacks the twenty-eight characters extending from “Examining into antiquity, we find that the Emperor Shun...” 曰若稽古帝舜 to “And he was appointed to occupy the imperial seat.” Instead, the expression “carefully uphold the five canons” 慎徽五典 directly follows the phrase “the emperor said to his daughters, ‘Be reverent!’” 帝曰欽哉. This section describes Emperor Yao’s first testing Shun by giving him two daughters in marriage, followed by assigning him various official duties to further evaluate his virtue and abilities (see item ⑤ in Table 4-1 below). Accordingly, within this context, the phrase “carefully uphold the five canons” 慎徽五典 should not be interpreted as “Shun cautiously beautified the Five Codes 五典” but rather as “Yao instructed Shun to cautiously beautify the Five Codes.” The structure of this phrase parallels the second chapter of the “Yao dian,” specifically the part of “He was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of the nine classes of his kindred, who all became harmonious” 克明峻德, 以親九族, 九族既睦 (see item ① in Table 4-1). Chapter one of the “Yao dian” begins with Panghun 放勳 (Shun’s name) and concludes with “The display of these qualities reached to the four extremities of the empire, and extended from earth to heaven” 光被四表, 格于上下, naturally leading into chapter two, which opens with “He was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished” 克明峻德. This continuity indicates that Emperor Yao successfully manifested lofty virtue, demonstrating consistency in subject matter between the two chapters and ensuring smooth narrative progression. However, such textual coherence is disrupted in the case of the “carefully uphold the five canons” 慎徽五典 of “Shun dian,” resulting in an interruption of the narrative flow.¹⁴ These are summarized in the table below.

No.	Text	Summary	Subject of Description
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¹⁴ Ibid.: “伏生今文, 則以堯舜典合爲一典, 而以慎徽五典, 接於堯典帝曰欽哉之下, 而無乃命以位’以上二十八字, 則是堯之於舜也, 既以二女試之, 猶以爲未也, 又以五典試之, 又以百揆四門大麓試之然後授政. 其意義脈絡, 貫徹無碍. 而若以古文所編觀之, 則乃命以位之下, 直曰慎徽五典云云. 所謂慎徽五典者, 非舜慎徽之也, 乃堯使舜慎徽之也. 而文勢直硬, 全無曲折. 此則似是蹈襲「堯典」首章之下‘克明峻德, 以親九族, 九族既睦’等語, 而堯典首章之意, 則以放勳爲頭辭, 而以光被四表格于上下總論之. 其下乃曰克明峻德, 所謂克明峻德者, 堯克明之也. 其文勢自然承上接下, 豈若古文舜典慎徽五典之文義相戾也哉? 此其可疑者也.”

①	曰若稽古帝堯, 曰放勳. 欽, 明, 文, 思, 安安, 允恭克讓, 光被四表, 格于上下. 克明俊德, 以親九族, 九族既睦, 平章百姓, 百姓昭明, 協和萬邦. 黎民於變時雍.	Praise for Yao's Virtue and Governance	Yao 堯
②	乃命羲和, 欽若昊天, 歷象日月星辰, 敬授人時. 分命羲仲, 宅嵎夷, 曰暘谷. 寅賓出日, 平秩東作, 日中星鳥, 以殷仲春. 厥民析, 鳥獸孳尾. 申命羲叔, 宅南交. 平秩南訖, 敬致. 日永星火, 以正仲夏. 厥民因, 鳥獸希革. 分命和仲, 宅西, 曰昧谷. 寅饒納日, 平秩西成, 宵中星虛, 以殷仲秋. 厥民夷, 鳥獸毛毚. 申命和叔, 宅朔方, 曰幽都. 平在朔易, 日短星昴, 以正仲冬. 厥民隩, 獸氄毛.	Yao observes the natural order and entrusts Hŭijung, Hŭisok, Hwachung, and Hwasuk with the duties corresponding to the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, respectively.	Yao 堯
③	帝曰: “咨! 汝羲暨和. 替三百有六旬有六日, 以閏月定四時, 成歲. 允釐百工, 庶績咸熙.”	Yao establishes the calendar system.	Yao 堯
④	帝曰: “疇咨若時登庸?” 放齊曰: “胤子朱啟明.” 帝曰: “吁! 嚚訟可乎?” 帝曰: “疇咨若予采?” 驩兜曰: “都! 共工方鳩僝功.” 帝曰: “吁! 靜言庸違, 象恭滔天.” 帝曰: “咨! 四岳. 湯湯洪水方割, 蕩蕩懷山襄陵, 浩浩滔天. 下民其咨, 有能俾乂?” 兪曰: “於! 鯀哉.” 帝曰: “吁! 咈哉, 方命圯族.” 岳曰: “異哉! 試可乃已.” 帝曰: “往, 欽哉!” 九載, 績用弗成.	Yao reflects the opinions of various people and appoints government officials.	Yao 堯

⑤	帝曰：“咨！四岳。朕在位七十載，汝能庸命，異朕位？”岳曰：“否德忝帝位。”曰：“明明揚側陋。”師錫帝曰：“有鰥在下，曰虞舜。”帝曰：“俞？予聞，如何？”岳曰：“瞽子，父頑，母嚚，象傲，克諧以孝，烝烝乂，不格姦。”帝曰：“我其試哉！女于時，觀厥刑于二女。”釐降二女于媯汭，嬪于虞，帝曰：“欽哉！”慎徽五典，五典克從，納于百揆，百揆時敘，賓于四門，四門穆穆，納于大麓，烈風雷雨弗迷。帝曰：“格！汝舜。詢事考言，乃言底可績，三載。汝陟帝位。”舜讓于德，弗嗣。	Yao selects a wise man and, to pass down the throne, marries his two daughters to Shun to test his conduct and abilities.	Yao 堯
⑥	正月上日，受終于文祖。在璿璣玉衡，以齊七政。肆類于上帝，禋于六宗，望于山川，徧于群神。輯五瑞。既月乃日，覲四岳群牧，班瑞于群后。	Shun receives the abdication of the throne and governs as regent.	Shun 舜
...			

<Table 1> Yi Tam-myǒng’s contextual analysis of the “Yao dian” in the modern-script *Shangshu*

Therefore, Yi Tam-myǒng argued that the twenty-eight-character passage was artificially fabricated and inserted by later authors. Additionally, Yi noted that the burning of books by Qin Shi Huang had not yet occurred during Mencius’s lifetime; therefore, Mencius likely had access to the original contents of the *Shangshu*. In the “Wan Zhang shang” 萬章上 chapter of the *Mencius*, there is a passage that reads: “After twenty eight years, the Highly Meritorious one deceased. The people acted as if they were mourning for a father or mother for three years, and up to the borders of the four seas every sound of music was hushed” 二十有八載，放勳乃殂落，百姓如喪考妣，三年，四海遏密八音. Yi emphasized that when Mencius quoted this passage, he explicitly referred to the chapter “Yao dian,” not “Shun dian.” Based on this point, Yi concluded that the “Yao dian” and “Shun dian” chapters originally constituted a single chapter, thereby asserting that the “Shun dian” did not originally exist as a separate text.¹⁵

¹⁵ Yi Tam-myǒng 李聃命, “Sŏchŏn ch’aũ” 書傳劄疑 in *Chŏngjae munjip* 靜齋文集, j. 5, pp. 340-341: “又孟子之時，秦火不作，全經尚存。其所引二十有八載，放勳乃殂落，百姓如喪考妣，三年，四海遏密八音者，古文則乃舜典語，而孟子不曰舜典而曰堯典。然則二典合爲一典，而初無舜典者，於此豈不益驗耶？”

Second, the Fu Sheng version of the modern-script *Shangshu* combines the chapters “Counsels of Gaoyao” 皋陶謨 and “Yi and Ji” 益稷 into a single chapter, as well as the chapters “The Announcement of King Kang” 康王之誥 and “Testamentary Charge” 顧命. In contrast, the ancient-script *Shangshu* separates each of these into two individual chapters. Upon detailed analysis of their content, Yi Tam-myŏng argued that merging these chapters into single units results in a more coherent textual flow than dividing them into separate ones. Based on this observation, Yi raised substantial questions of the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu*.¹⁶

Third, a comparative analysis of the “Great Declaration” 泰誓 chapter in the ancient-script *Shangshu* and the “Speech at Mu” 牧誓 chapter in the modern-script *Shangshu* reveals substantial stylistic differences. These discrepancies are significant enough to be noticeable even to those without advanced scholarly expertise, which explains why earlier scholars had already questioned the authenticity of the “Great Declaration” chapter. Moreover, while each chapter in the Fu Sheng version of the modern-script *Shangshu* is characterized by concise expression and refined meanings, the ancient-script *Shangshu* exhibits such stylistic elegance only in the chapter “Counsels of the Great Yu” 大禹謨, with the remaining chapters lacking comparable sophistication. This inconsistency further intensifies the doubt. Above all, whereas the content of the modern-script *Shangshu* consistently maintains a complex and elevated literary style, the ancient-script *Shangshu* is comparatively simpler and more easily comprehensible, giving the impression that the two versions originated from different authors.¹⁷

Based on the three points outlined above, Yi Tam-myŏng presented the aspects of the ancient-script *Shangshu* that raises doubts. However, he refrained from explicitly concluding that the ancient-script *Shangshu* was unequivocally a forgery. Additionally, he made the following statement:

In this book, what I happened to encounter was as described above, yet the more I contemplated it deeply and repeatedly over time, the more unsettled I became. It is not that I seek to boast of my own views, nor is it my intention to pursue strange opinions that differ from those of others, nor do I dare to suggest that the commentaries and interpretations of the sages of old are untrustworthy. ... However, since the doubts in my mind have ultimately reached this point, I now dare to set

¹⁶ Ibid.: “伏生今文，則皋陶謨益稷合爲一篇，康王之誥顧命亦合爲一篇，而古文皆分而二之。詳其文意，則其分而二之者，又不如合爲一篇者之接續而貫通，此又可疑也。”

¹⁷ Ibid.: “至於泰誓，古人亦疑其或非盡當時之本文，而其辭氣之際，瑣而不簡，迫而不寬，比之牧誓，不啻天壤。豈以一武王之言，而一則如是嚴重，一則如是迫隘也哉？以泰誓牧誓參互見之，則不待宿儒而能辨，此其可疑之甚也。況伏生今文，篇篇辭嚴而意簡，條達而綱舉，而今文無古文有之篇，則大禹謨一篇，最爲近古，其餘似無統領，此固可疑。而今文則皆奇而古，所謂古文則皆順而易，如出二人之手。何今文二十八篇之外，獨古文專無奇古者，間於其間也耶？此又可疑之至也。”

them down here, setting aside the sin of presumption, and humbly await the correction and guidance from scholars of greater discernment.¹⁸

As examined above, although the questions Yi Tam-myǒng raised concerning the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* may not appear exceptionally insightful, it is significant that such questions emerged as early as the seventeenth century in Joseon. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Yi held an opposing view to that of his teacher, Hǒ Mok.

Yi Tam-myǒng's primary concern was the textual coherence of the twenty-eight-character passage in the ancient-script *Shangshu*. Yan Ruoqu, in chapter 65 of volume 5 of his work, the *Shangshu guwen shuzheng* 尚書古文疏證 (*The Investigations on the Ancient-Script Shangshu*), thought "Yao dian" and "Shun dian" were originally one text, but were arbitrarily divided by the twenty-eight characters inserted by Yao Fangxing 姚方興." He cited the remark of his colleague Liu Cheng, who stated: "If one wishes to refute the forged ancient texts 僞古文, one must begin with the twenty-eight characters in the 'Shun dian.'" ¹⁹ Given that Yan Ruoqu lived from 1636 to 1704 and Yi Tam-myǒng from 1646 to 1710, it is evident that both scholars were contemporaries. Thus, it appears that each of the two scholars questioned the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* from similar perspectives.

Conclusion

As previously noted, after the forgery theory proposed by Ming dynasty scholars was introduced to Joseon, the initial response in Joseon was the emergence of arguments defending the ancient-script *Shangshu*. It aimed at upholding the authenticity of the *Shangshu* and its authority as a canonical text. Based on the author's research to date, the earliest Joseon scholar to explicitly argue for the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* was Hǒ Mok. Conversely, the first Joseon scholar to question its authenticity was Yi Tam-myǒng. Their divergent positions regarding the authenticity of the ancient-script *Shangshu* indicate that debates over its legitimacy emerged for the first time in Joseon during the seventeenth century. However, it was only from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries that such debates became increasingly active and widespread.

Translator: Bae Seungchan

¹⁸ Yi Tam-myǒng 李聃命, "Sǒchǒn ch'aui" 書傳筭疑 in *Chǒngjae munjip* 靜齋文集, j. 5, pp. 342-343: "余於是書, 偶因見得如此, 沈潛反覆, 愈久而愈未釋然. 非以自多其見也, 非欲其求異於衆也, 又非敢以古賢訓解謂不足信也. ... 而所疑於心者終如此, 故敢忘其僭猥之罪, 而姑識于此, 以俟夫先覺者而卞之."

¹⁹ Yan Ruoqu 閻若璩, *Shangshu guwen shuzheng* 尚書古文疏證 (Shanghai 上海: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), p. 203: "同里老友劉琨先生之言曰: '欲黜僞古文, 請自二十八字始.'"

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