Incorrect Arrangement of the Bamboo Tablets in the Shangshu: A Falsifiable Hypothesis? *

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The problem of cuojian 錯簡 “incorrect ordering of bamboo tablets” is not a new scholarly issue in the field of studies involving jiantu 簡牘 (writings on bamboo tablets). As early as Song times (960-1279), scholars began to notice that the received version of the Shangshu 尚書 was suspected to have had the problem of omitting or missing some characters in the bamboo tablets, referred to as tuojian 脫簡, in the Kanggao 康誥 chapter of the Shangshu. In Qing times (1644-1911) a counter-view was presented; namely, the Song tuojian hypothesis in the Kanggao chapter was not really correct, but it was how the text was arranged that led to some discontinuity in the beginning portion of the said chapter.

This paper provides two specific examples of what may have been the result of a cuojian in the Yaodian 堯典 chapter. It investigates such a possibility in terms of (A) context, (B) lexical features, (C) syntax and semantics, and (D) colometry or isocolometry.

Key words: tuojian, cuojian, Kanggao, Yaodian

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1. Introduction

As is widely known, there are many difficult problems with the text, and indeed some of them, such as even the most basic Urtext reconstruction and proper reading, may never be resolved. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927), a real shuoxue 碩學 “erudite”, wrote: “於書所不能解者殆十之五” (the incomprehensible portions of the Shangshu reach nearly to one half), while “於詩亦十之一二” (those of the Shijing one or two out of ten) (Wang 1911 [1964]: 2.2.1a/p. 75). When he said this, he must have been referring to the received Shangshu and Shijing texts (傳世《尚書》・《詩經》). Since the history of Shangshu scholarship extends over nearly two millennia, textual problems are extremely wide-ranging. Determining what words are expressed by what characters not only in the received version but also in such a bamboo-tablet text as the Tsinghua University 清華大學 collection may be taken as specimens of such problems with the text. Proposed solutions to this problem often take the form 某某字通某某字 “character A is character B” or, more precisely, “character A stands for word B.” This is what we have to confront with and make our decision one way or another.

In Guwen Shangshu Zhuanyi 《古文尚書撰異》, a well-known work of yet another shuoxue Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1806), he gives seven disasters (qì 七) that happened to the Shangshu 周書 which, when taken together, just about wiped out any genuine Guwen Shangshu that is presumed to have once existed (七者備而古文幾亡矣).1 If we were to add on the problem of arranging the bamboo tablets in proper order (i.e., 錯簡問題), then there would be eight disasters standing in our way. I have chosen in this paper to look into the 錯簡問題 in the 14th chapter of the Shangshu, Kanggao 康誥 and the first chapter, Yaodian 尋典, with an emphasis on the latter. The reason for this order will become clear but, in short, it is related to the history of scholarship on the 脫簡 or 錯簡問題, as well as to the question of understanding of some portion of the two chapters.

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1 Some Shangshu chapters in the Tsinghua University collection may be taken as specimens of a genuine guwen text. The qì “seven disasters/evils” are: 1. 秦之火 “Qin’s burning of books [焚書]”, 2. 漢博士之抑古文 “suppression of guwen by scholars during the Han”, 3. 馬鄭不注古文逸篇 “Ma Rong 馬融 and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 did not provide commentaries to the remnant guwen writings of the Shangshu”, 4. 魏晉之有偽古文 “a spurious guwen text was made during the Wei-Jin period”, 5. 唐正義不用馬鄭用偽孔 “Shangshu Zhengyi of Tang did not use Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan’s commentaries, but used the spurious Kong text”, 6. 夭寶之改字 “the change of characters [by Wei Bao 衛包] in the Tang Tianbao period (742-755)”, and 7. 宋開寶之改釋文 “reinterpreting the exegesis of the text in the Kaibao period (968-975) in Song”. See Duan Yucai (19th c. [1995:1]; Huang Qing Jingjie 皇清經解, juan 567:1a).
2. The Cause of 脫簡/錯簡

We would like to examine in this section reasons for the possible existence of 脫簡/錯簡 including broken tablets on which there once were character(s). This section is divided into two subsections. The former subsection gives a review of the problem and the latter one attempts to show the existence of 錯簡 with our suggestion for a reason and a possible solution.

2.1 The Case of Kanggao

The opening passage consisting of 48 characters in the Kanggao chapter has since Song times (960-1279) been controversial with respect to 脫簡問題. Below we give an overview of the controversy. However, its final solution will have to remain, like the Yaodian chapter to be considered in 2.2, as a hypothesis potentially falsifiable. This we think is significant as some hypotheses are hard to verify and often to such a degree that they might never be verified. If we find some pertinent “hard” sources, e.g., oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions including other unearthed texts (出土文獻) closer to the time and events that the text purports to recount, the falsifiability criterion could be applied to both the Kanggao and Yaodian chapters to test if any of the 脫簡/錯簡 hypotheses can be validated. In the case of the Shangshu these “hard” sources are practically confined to the bamboo-tablet texts from the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.) such as, for instance, those in the Tsinghua University collection.

Song literates like Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) and Cai Chen 蔡沈 (1167-1230) already considered this opening passage as a result of 脫簡, while Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857) of the Qing (1616-1911) in his Shuguwei 書古微 argued that it is a preface summarizing the three chapters of Kanggao, Jiugao 酒誥, and Zicai 梓材. That is, in Wei Yuan’s view the Kanggao chapter was originally made up of one thematic unit later split into these three chapters. Some more recent scholars, e.g., Sun Yirang (1919 [1988]:4), Qian Mu (957:5, 16), and Ikeda Suetoshi (1976:290) accept,

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2 Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Dong Po Shuzhuan 東坡書傳 and Cai Chen 蔡沈 (1167-1230), Shujing Jizhuan 書經集傳. See also Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857), Shuguwei 書古微, 9. See also fn. 4.

3 《清華大學藏戰國竹簡》（壹）（貳）. However, neither the Kanggao nor the Yaodian chapter appears in the Tsinghua collection. It is hoped that these chapters will be found in the future. A bronze inscription such as Maogong ding 毛公鼎 is similar in language to the Shangshu, but the remnants in the Tsinghua bamboo tablet collection have a far more intimate relationship with a presumed Shangshu Urtext.

4 The “Author, date, and page” scientific style of citing references is generally followed in this paper. Here “1919” refers to when the work first appeared, and “1988” in brackets refers to a
mutatis mutandis, Wei Yuan’s view. On the other hand, Guo Moruo (1931:1.63; 1935 [1956]:6b), Qu Wanli (1983:145), Chen Mengjia (1955:163; 1985:51-53), and Katô Jôken (1964:333) still consider the opening passage of the Kanggao chapter to be an example of 脫簡 or 錯簡. If considered as a preface, however, the aforementioned scholars (Wei Yuan, Sun Yirang, Qian Mu, and Ikeda) all differ in associating it with different chapters. Their reasons are diverse, all seemingly reasonable, but it is difficult to evaluate their merits objectively. There seems no strict evaluative procedure available, nor any newly discovered sources that show the 48-character passage. It seems to be a matter of emphasis to decide with which chapter this passage should be associated. We have, therefore, chosen not to probe this contextual problem. Instead, we will give here the very reason for the development of the 脫簡/錯簡 controversy itself. But, later, in paragraph 2 of subsection 2.2, we shall offer a new way of analyzing this problem. It will be seen there that the original idea of the Song scholars, that 脫簡 has occurred, is probably correct.

Actually, the reason for the emergence of the controversy is rather well-known, but it is noteworthy that it took until Song times for any scholar to note that there was something in the opening passage that did not quite fit the rest of the contents of the Kanggao chapter. It is something anyone can easily see. Let us first look at the opening passage of Kanggao:

(1)惟三月哉生魄周公初基作新大邑于東國洛。四方民大和會。侯、甸、男、邦、采、衛，百工、播民和見士于周。周公咸勤,乃洪大誥治。

It was in the third month, when the moon began to wane, that the Duke of Zhou commenced laying the foundations to build a new great city in Luo in the eastern territories. The people from all the countries assembled in great harmony. (The leaders of) the allied states with the Hou, Dian, and Nan peerage (including those of) Cai, Wei, and (the hundred artisans:) various officers and the people (from the Yin) congregated to serve the Zhou. The Duke expressed his gratitude to them all, and made a great announcement.

reprint or republication. When these were not available, the author’s dates are given as in fn. 2 above.

5 In terms of the history of classical-scriptural learning (經學) in traditional China, there must have been reasons for having taken so long for any scholar to point out a mismatch of the thematic units, a topic worth pursuing further.

6 The notational device “(…:)” indicates whatever preceded by the colon in the parentheses is equivalent to, or interpreted as, what follows after it. Here “(the hundred artisans:)” is interpreted, in accordance with many commentators, as referring to “various officers”.

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The above passage consisting of 48 characters is followed by the sentences that begin with 王若曰 which, I think, should be taken to convey: “His Majesty, in accordance with what was set down, said” in contrast to just 王曰 “His Majesty said.”\(^7\) The content of his speech is a succession of counsels. If we count the list of counsels introduced after 王若曰 or 王曰,\(^8\) there are fourteen of them all given to Meng Hou 孟侯 “(lit.) Hou of Meng” referring to Kang Shu 康叔, younger brother of the Duke of Zhou 周公. For the purposes of this paper, we give here only the first counsel:

(2) 王若曰：「孟侯,朕其弟,小子封,惟乃丕顯考文王克明德慎罰,不敢侮鰥寡;庸庸,祗祗,威威,顯民,用肇造我區夏,越我一、二邦,以修我西土。惟時怙冒聞于上帝,帝休;天乃大命文王殪戎殷,誕受厥命,越厥邦民。惟時敘,乃寡兄勖。肆汝小子封在茲東土。」

His Majesty, in accordance with what was set down (separately), said, “Meng Hou, my younger brother, little one, Feng, it was the greatly distinguished King Wen who was able to exemplify his virtue and refrain from the use of punishments, who did not dare to disdain (widowers and widows;) people without relatives, who strived to glorify people with reverence and deference. It was in such ways he initially created our small domain of (Xia:) the Zhou kingdom and also our one or two allied states, and thus regulated our western land. It was this (sort of fine deeds) that was heard by God on High, and God was pleased; Heaven then gave a grand charge to King Wen to topple and exterminate the Yin, to accept its great mandate and the people of its allied states as well. It is this which (King Wen) developed in orderly fashion, and then your (servile:) obsequious elder brother (= King Wu 武) exerted himself. Thus, you Feng, the little one, are here in this eastern land.”

If we now compare examples 1 and 2 above, we can immediately see that they are not linked well. Example 1 narrates the establishment of a new city in Luo by the

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\(^7\) There must have been a difference between 王若曰 and 王曰, and there is much literature on it, particularly on the former expression. Although I have my own view on the difference (based on the morphology of the word 若), I eschew further discussion of it here.

\(^8\) In the Kanggao chapter 王若曰 is used right after the beginning passage in question and at the end of the chapter. If we count only larger themes, there are five (Katō Jōken 1964: 92-101, Matsumoto Masaaki 1988: 45-49), the fifth theme being a kind of conclusion of the Kanggao chapter.

\(^9\) There are many interpretations offered for this expression, but none of them is convincing to me. I leave it untranslated, but in terms of syntactic function it seems best to take it as adverbial.
Duke of Zhou who was assisted by the allies of the Zhou royal house including the officers and people of their former enemy, the Yin. Example 2 is the first counsel in the Kanggao chapter addressed to Feng, younger brother of the king 王 couched in the phrase 王若曰. Exactly to which Zhou king does 王 here refer is the question many scholars have been debating, but no consensus has emerged. Some scholars think the 王 here refers to Wu Wang 武王; a great majority thinks Cheng Wang 成王; some even think the Duke of Zhou 周公 to have actually come to the throne. If the last scenario is correct, no problem between 王若曰 and the content of 曰 would arise. All of these views, however, have problems. The Wu Wang view assumes that there was a textual corruption in both the preface to the Shangshu 《尚書》序 and the Zuozhuan 《左傳》定公四年 in which 王 is taken to refer to Cheng Wang, but Cheng Wang (周成王) is claimed as an error for Wu Wang. No evidence exists for such a textual corruption to have occurred. The Tsinghua collection offers no help in this matter either. The Cheng Wang view is also not free from problems. The most disturbing is the expression 聿其弟 “my younger brother” because Cheng Wang was still very young and had not yet come to the throne when Zhou Gong was a regent, so that it would be very strange for him to have used such an expression. This expression would have been quite cogent only if 王 in the phrase 王若曰 were Zhou Gong. But this view is also problematical (no solid evidence, as already mentioned, for Zhou Gong to have become the king). We do not wish to join in this debate any further because all we see is just arguments without any hard evidence. The pertinent point is that here lies the very reason for the emergence of the 脫簡 controversy. In example (1) the subject is clearly expressed as 周公, and in example (2) it is 王: what, if any, is the relation? In the following subsection, we will be concerned with a similar kind of contextual cohesion on a micro level.

2.2 The Case of Yaodian

As far as I am aware, there has not yet been any scholar who has suggested that there might be a 脫簡 problem in the Yaodian chapter. In the case of Kanggao, it was easy to see that there was something that prevented us from seeing a smooth transition from example 1 to example 2. In the Yaodian chapter, however, the problem is more subtle, requiring us to pay closer attention to textual integrity in the chapter. This involves contextual, lexical, syntactic, and “colometrical” analyses as we shall be soon considering. Since the last of these, colometrical analysis, may not be familiar to many readers, we will take a little detour, and explain it.¹⁰

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¹⁰ Peter Boodberg (1957 [1979]:451ff.) seems to be the first scholar who applied the use of such analysis to textual criticism. In the first paragraph, he says, “… Chinese
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Colometry (簡上字數分配法), sometimes termed isocolometry (簡上字數均配法), is based on the observation that each bamboo tablet was used to write a more or less equal number of characters, typically 29 or 32 (written hereinafter as “29~32” with 32 being the most frequent on a “standard” sized tablet of about 45cm in length in the case of the Tsinghua collection). However, depending on the chapters of the Shangshu or other books in the Tsinghua University collection, the number of characters on a tablet differs. In the Huangmen 皇門 chapter of the Yizhoushu 逸周書 and Chuju 楚居 chapter of the Shiben 世本, for example, the number is “37~48” with 40 as the most frequent number. But the rest, the Yingao 尹誥 and Jinteng 金滕 chapters, or the Chengwu 程寤 chapter of the Yizhoushu 逸周書, for example, the number is “29~32” with 32 as the most frequent. Insofar as the number of characters on each tablet is concerned, there are two categories: one might be referred to as “dense” (or packed) and another as “lax” (or spaced). The dense category is “37~48”, while the lax one is “29~32”. Also, we know that on the back of each tablet the ordinal number is written so that we know the order of tablets to be arranged and read. There are other details, but we can omit them here.

If we apply such colometry as sketched above to the opening passage of the Kanggao chapter consisting of 48 characters, the first question we face is which of the two categories did the Kanggao chapter belong to? Unfortunately, we cannot answer this question definitively. Yet, since the dense category has 40 as the most frequent number of characters with a range of “37~48”, it is possible that the Kanggao chapter was written on the bamboo tablets of this category. If this conjecture turns out to be correct, the number 48 is a perfect match. This suggests the existence of 無簡/錯簡 after the opening passage of the Kanggao chapter. If the most frequent number of characters in this category (40) is chosen, then 8 characters remain to be explained somehow. One possibility is that they were written in the back of a tablet. As we have seen, the end of the opening passage of the Kanggao chapter is made up of 9 characters: 周公咸勤乃洪大誥治 “The Duke expressed his gratitude to them all, and made a great announcement”. This, or something similar to it, may well have been written on the back of a tablet but was later incorporated into the opening passage.

Historiographers had a tendency to calibrate their statements and align their data in cola of three typical lengths: the minimal, of 16 to 20 characters, the normal, of 21 to 25 graphic units (columns of 22 and 24 characters were distinctly favored), and the oblong, of 26 to 33 characters….” I should like to modify this based on my actual observation of the bamboo tablets of the Tsinghua University collection (see infra). A successful application of Booodberg’s original contribution is presented in William Boltz (1980). In the Baoxun 保訓 tablets, however, it is reported as measuring 28.5cm in length with 23 characters being the most frequent.
In fact, we actually see a comparable phenomenon in the Jinteng 金滕 chapter in the Tsinghua University collection. In the back of tablet #14 there is a total of 14 characters which read as follows:

(3) 周武王又疾周公所自以弋王之志。

King Wu of Zhou fell ill, and the Duke of Zhou took upon himself (to execute) the wishes of His Majesty.

Contextually, this is closely related to “…… 於後周公乃遺王志” (… afterwards the Duke of Zhou carried on the wishes of His Majesty) occurring as it does on the tablet #8 in the Jinteng chapter in the Tsinghua University collection. But the scribe did not write (3) in the back of the tablet #8. Instead he wrote it on the back of tablet #14. Its obverse has only 3 characters (則大穫) on the top of the tablet leaving the space below all blank. We remain ignorant of why this is so. However, it does seem possible to assume that the scribes did their work according to a certain system of colometry that was understood by the readers of the time. The same thing would also be applicable to the “lax” (spaced) colometry of “29~32” with 32 as the most frequently used number. Since there are several conceivable possibilities for it but none seems susceptible of verification, we have to stop here and wait for the discovery of a relevant bamboo tablet.

We now return to the Yaodian chapter. Although somewhat prematurely, it may be easier to present the conclusion of this paper at the outset than to develop our arguments step-by-step. We will afterwards give our observation, evidence, analyses, reasons, and such. The first example suggested here to have involved 錯簡 is written with the lishu 隸書 font, and the second example with the kaiti 楷體 font:

(4) 月正元日，舜格于文祖，詢于四岳，闢四門，明四目，達四聰。咨十有二牧，曰，「含緖，惟時柔遠能邇，惇德允元，而難任人，蠻夷率服。」

On the first (auspicious) day of the first month, Shun went to (the temple of) Ancestor Wen, and inquired the Four Yue Powers how to open the doors, how to clear his visual perception, and how to (reach:) achieve his auditory sense (with respect to the affairs of) the Four (quarters). He consulted with the Twelve Pastors, saying, “… [I do not presently translate the 2 characters in the lishu 隸書 font and the 18 characters in the kaiti 楷體 font because these do not belong in here; this is where I suggest 錯簡 to have happened, as will be explained below].”
We would like to discuss the last portion consisting of 20 characters, which are divided into 2 in the lishu font and 18 in the kaiti font, in terms of (A) context, (B) lexical features, (C) syntax and semantics, and (D) colometry/isocolometry.

(A) Context

The main point of the first half of (4) is that Shun went to the temple of Ancestor Wen to inquire how he could attain wisdom from the Four Yue Powers (or Spirits) believed to have held sway over all under heaven, as well as to consult (咨 = 諮) the Twelve Pastors (who were in charge of the land). Then Shun presumably uttered an exclamatory expression “食哉”. Various interpretations have been offered for this expression because none of the common meanings of 食 “eat, feed, food, stipend, food officer” (q.v. [B] below), followed by the exclamatory marker zai 哉, makes any sense in this context.

(B) Lexical features

The word 食 occurs 15 times in the authentic chapters of the Shangshu, and 3 times in the spurious chapters （偽書）. On the basis of my separate study examining all these occurrences, all other cases of 食 mean: “to eat” (Vtransitive), “to give food, feed” (Vcausative), and “food, stipend, food officer” (N). There is thus no justification for the use of this word here to be taken as something else as proposed by many renowned commentators (e.g., Sun Xingyan, Pi Xirui, Yang Yunru, Katō Jōken, etc.). The character 哉 occurs over 100 times in the Shangshu, and no doubt it functions as an exclamatory marker in all. As for the word 時, most commentators interpret it as meaning “time” but not in

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12 Very briefly, the following list gives the authentic chapter names followed in parentheses by the number of occurrence of the word 食: Yaodian 毌典 (1); Gaoyaomo 賣陶謨 (3); Tangshi 湯誓 (1); Xibo kanli 西伯戡黎 (1); Weizi 微子 (1); Hongfan 洪範 (4); Jiugao 酒誥 (1); Luogao 洛誥 (2); Wuyi 無逸 (1).

13 Sun Xingyan (1986:1.60), for instance, says: “食者，《方言》云「勸也。」《廣雅•釋詁》同。《爾雅•釋詁》云「食，偽也。」案偽即為也，言勸使有為。…… (As for the meaning of 食, Fangyan says that it means ‘to offer’. Guangya, Shigu, says the same. Erya, Shigu, says ‘食 means false.’ It is my view that 偽 ‘false’ here stands for 為 meaning ‘to do’, that is, 勸 ‘offer’ would make it be 有為 ‘of use’.) ” What could we make of this sort of argument? Sun does not seem to know what to do with the use of 食 here. I fail to see any connection from “A” (食) to “B1” (勸) as well as to “B2” (偽), from “B2” to “C” (為), and then from “C” to a combination of “B1” and “D” (使), finally yielding “E” (有為). This is a prime example of the “某某字通某某字” practice mentioned in the introduction of this paper. All other commentators advocate in a similar fashion, and none takes “A” as “A”. Yet this is precisely how I think we should approach the text in this instance.
its ordinary sense. They interpret it as implying a specific calendrical time for agricultural purposes. I find this farfetched because no agricultural activities are at issue here, at least not yet. This character in our view is not a shici 實詞, but a kind of 虛詞, a demonstrative (q.v. [C] below).

(C) Syntax and Semantics
The expression 食哉 occurring after the verb 曰 is bizarre in the context of the immediately preceding descriptions (q.v. [A]). If we follow the grammar of oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions, 惟時 should be analyzed as comprising COP + DEMONSTRATIVE meaning “it is this”. This seems the most straightforward syntactic interpretation. Since what follows 惟時 is a set of four-word phrases typical of the Shangshu, sentence parallelism suggests that 食哉惟時 should also constitute a four-word phrase. This is how many scholars interpret as pointed out by Ikeda Suetoshi (1976:75) who also accepts it. But the problem is how to make sense of 食哉惟時. Taken as is, it is indeed syntactically a possible construction, i.e., an inversion, meaning “It is this that (we) eat!” or “It is such an occasion/place (we) eat (something)!”. Yet, this does not fit the context at all. This has led me to re-examine the whole Yaodian chapter completely afresh. My conclusion is that the expression 食哉 is misplaced. We now turn to the colometrical aspect to see how the misplacement hypothesis might have played its role, though it will not be possible to say precisely how.

(D) Colometry/Isocolometry
If it is correct to judge that the 2-character phrase 食哉 was misplaced, where does it belong? To answer this question, we need to look at a larger context. Below we provide the bare minimum required to understand what is going on in the text. We first need to pay attention to the use of the verb 曰 “to say” because the larger context is made up of a series of conversations between Shun, Di 帝 (referring to Yao 堯), and their subordinates. They all appear as the grammatical subject of yue. Following this, we rearrange the text à la novel (小說) dialogue style as follows:

(5) 舜曰：「咨，四岳！有能奮庸熙帝之載，使宅百揆亮採，惠疇？」
Shun said, “Ah, the Four Yue Powers! If there is anyone who can with vigorous service attend to all the affairs of Di, inducing him to help my work in the choice of the (One Hundred kui:) Governor, who should he be?”
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(6) 僉曰：「僉曰：「伯禹作司空。」
All [the Twelve Pastors] said, “Bo Yu, (please) make (him) be the Minister of Works.”

(7) 帝曰：「僉，咨，禹！汝平水土，惟時懋哉！」
Di said, “Yes, Ah, Yu! You shall regulate the water and the land, and it is in this you exert yourself!” Yu did obeisance with his head to the ground, declining in favor of the Minister of Agriculture, Xie, and Gao Yao.

(8) 帝曰：「僉，汝往哉！」
Di said, “Yes, (but still) you go!”

(9) 帝曰：「棄！黎民阻飢；汝后（>司？）稷，播蒔百穀，□□！」
Di said, “Qi [name of the Minister of Agriculture, 稷]? Common people are starving; be in charge of agriculture (if the traditional interpretation is followed: if you, Hou Ji, sow …), and if you sow (for the people) various kinds of grain, they can eat (them)!”

If we now move the 2-character phrase 食哉 to the end of (9), it is felicitous. In terms of colometry, there are 14 characters before this phrase and, as observed earlier, that is 1/3 the number of one bamboo tablet of the dense category with a range of “37~48”. Moreover, in example (4) the number of characters before this 2-character phrase is exactly 28. If we take the most frequently used figure of 40, it is short by 12 characters. It is possible that some 12-character sentence (or 3 four-word phrases) is missing after “咨十有二牧，曰，” in (4). Most likely this is where 脫簡 occurred. We await any future discovery of bamboo tablets for verification. Where, then, should the remaining 18-character phrase after 食哉 go? To answer this question, we have to look at a bit larger context following example (9) which reads:

(10) 帝曰：「契，百姓不親，五品不遜。汝作司徒，敬敷五教，在寬。」
Di said, “Xie, the people are not commune with each other, and five orders of relationship (among fathers, mothers, elder and younger brothers, sons) are not in order. You should be the Minister of Instruction, enforcing the Five Teachings (just, loving, friendly, respectful, and filial) reverently, and they will be realized (?)”
(11) 帝曰：「皋陶，蠻夷猾夏，寇賊姦宄。汝作士。五刑有服，五服三就。五流有宅，五宅三居。惟明克允！□□□□□□，□□□□，□□□□，□□□□。」

Di said, “Gao Yao, the barbarians are disturbing our empire, committing robberies, murders, and rebellions. You shall be the Minister of Crime. As to the five punishments, you shall have (the barbarians) take them, and those who took the five punishments, have them locate in three (different places). As to the five kinds of banishment, have (the barbarians) obey them, and as for those who obeyed, have them occupy in three (different places). This is to manifestly expose the truth!

It is my view that passage (11) as interpreted above is not complete. The bamboo tablets should continue with 18 more characters that read: “惟時柔遠能邇，惇德允元，而難任人，蠻夷率服。” That is, this string was misplaced in example (4). On what grounds do I so judge? First, I would point out the contextual cohesion I see here rather than in (4) where, as already mentioned, Shun went to the temple of Ancestor Wen to inquire how he could attain wisdom from the Four Yue Spirits. The topic in (11) is the barbarians (蠻夷) causing trouble in the empire. Example (4) has nothing to do with the meaning of this 18-character string. I would, therefore, follow the grammar and construe it as meaning:

It is (in) this (way) that you can pacify the distant and make good the near, cultivate the virtue, and effectuate the principles; if you discountenance the artful, the barbarians will accordingly make their submission.

We now consider the misplaced string in terms of colometry/isocolometry. There is no example in the Tsinghua collection in which one tablet has as many as 49 characters. It would seem prudent, therefore, to apply, as we have done so far, the “37–48” colometry with the most favored 40 characters to the above-mentioned 18-character string. We would then get 22 characters left over. Since anything is possible with this number, we will not speculate any further, and wait for new findings.

The upshot of all this is that the contextual and syntactic analyses of the 18-character string may be more powerful than the colometrical analysis, but the latter at least indicates the possibility that 脫簡 or 錯簡 has occurred. The colometrical analysis also has merits in terms of falsifiability.
3. Conclusion

We observed that there was a contextual mismatch in the beginning passage of the Kanggao chapter. It was in Song times that the hypothesis of a 脫簡 to explain the mismatch was presented. Scholars generally accepted it until Qing times when another hypothesis was raised that the mismatch was not due to 脫簡; instead, we should consider the beginning passage independently as a kind of summary preface (總序) of the three chapters of Kanggao, Jiugao, and Cicai. There seems no decisive evidence to settle the controversy, but colometrical analysis suggests that 脫簡 is likely to have been involved. As for the Yaodian chapter, this paper has suggested the 錯簡 was involved. This is based on contextual, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and colometrical analyses. However, the 脫簡 / 錯簡 hypothesis still awaits real verification, possibly by some new discovery of unearthed texts.
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有待於驗證的假設
──《尚書》中是否有錯簡？

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本文以《尚書•堯典》中兩個實例為依據，提出傳世《尚書》文本中或許有「錯簡」的假設。在簡牘研究中，錯簡並不是一個新發現的學術問題。早在宋代（960-1279）就有學者指出過在抄寫的過程中，傳世本《尚書》有可能把原始簡本上的一些字省掉或者漏掉了，「康誥」篇很可能就存在「脫簡」問題。到了清代（1644-1911）又有學者提出一個假設，這就是，宋代學者指出的「康誥」篇中的脫簡問題並不正確，實際情況是此篇首段的句子次序安排有問題才導致了理解上不連貫。理清《尚書》中的脫簡與錯簡問題，對我們正確理解這個研究古代中國的重要文獻有著非常重要的意義。

本文僅就傳世本《尚書》中的兩個具體例子，探討「堯典」篇存在錯簡的可能性，並從以下幾個方面分析了這種可能性：（1）上下文語境；（2）詞彙特點；（3）句法和語義；（4）簡上字數分配法（colometry）。很遺憾，「康誥」和「堯典」均不見於新近整理出版的《清華大學藏戰國竹簡》（壹）（貳）中。因此本文試圖通過前面提到的四個方面分析錯簡問題，特別是採用一條新的途徑，即根據簡牘字數的書寫和安排方式，也就是（4）中的簡上字數分配法來推測《尚書》的原始文的樣貌。

關鍵詞：脫簡、錯簡、堯典、康誥