

Research Proposal on the Study of the *Book of Documents* in Ming Dynasty (1368-1661)



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Introduction

This research tries to review the characteristics, change and development of Confucianism that are reflected in the study of the *Book of Documents* by Ming scholars with the special focus on how the ideas of the learning of mind (*xinxue* 心學) emerged and were expressed in the annotation of the Classic. I.e. to review the switch of the intellectual trend from Zhu Xi to Yangming shown in the study of *Shangshu*.

Methods and Approaches

To review the development of early Ming classical study, works on the *Shangshu* by Ming scholars will be collected and arranged chronologically to see the boom period of the research of the Classic, if there was any. Works with considerably more editions will be reviewed for their importance

Historical approach will also be adopted to examine the transmission of Yuan (and Song) scholarship in the study of the Classics to Ming: how Ming scholars concluded and developed the research of those by their forerunners in the previous dynasties are going to be shown. Although Ming scholars were not having the kind of lineage method (*jiafa* 家法) that the Han Confucians had, their academic relations with Yuan scholars are meaningful and can be reviewed by examining the master-disciple relationships and geographical correlations of various schools.

Background

1. Ming intellectual history is usually considered as the world of Wang Yangming's teachings with his famous claim "The mind is the principle." (*xin ji li* 心即理) and Wang appeared to be a rival of Zhu Xi (1130-1200) when his learning emerged at the beginning of sixteenth century. The intellectual history of the fifteen century, the previous hundred years before Yangming, has been considered as a mere continuation of the Neo-Confucianism represented by Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers in Song.
2. Existing works on several important scholars of the time, such as Xue Xuan 薛瑄 (1389-1464), have illustrated their scholarships and roles in Ming intellectual history, while the focuses and characteristics of the scholarship of the time, particularly the details of why such switch triggered the turning points of the intellectual trend remain unknown.
3. The bias on the study of Confucian classics of the time: the study of Confucian classics in Ming time had few merits because of the distortion of Sages' meanings 聖人之意 due to an unreasonable dependence on Song Confucians' (particularly Zhu Xi's) annotations while ignoring the ancient works (*gu zhu shu* 古注疏) when compared to the arbitrary interpretations and loose philological examination on the texts.
4. By reviewing their annotations, commentaries and critiques on the *Daquan* 大全 or the Classics themselves, it is thereby possible to know more on what happened in the decline of Zhu Xi's learning, the give and take of Zhu Xi's learning that they were familiar with and the atmosphere, environment and elements of the birth of Yangming's learning.

How digital methods help me on my research

1. Data mining on core materials for this research include, the works that specialized on the *Book of Documents* by Ming scholars, that are categorized under the category of *Shangshu* in the section of Confucian Classics (*jinbushule* 經部書類) of Examining the Meaning of the Classics (*Jingyi kao* 經義考) by Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709), the *Sikuquanshu* and some other major catalogues of books in Ming and Qing periods. Thanks to the discoveries and partial digitisations on the undiscovered books in libraries of China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea, we now know some more works on *Shangshu* by Ming people that are not recorded in the above-mentioned catalogues.
2. China Biographical Database Project (CBDB) definitely helps confirming the biographical information of the minor scholars who worked on *Shangshu* in Ming. This then moreover shows on how Ming scholars were connected and their ideas were exchanged in order to know the development of the annotations on the Classic.
3. The visualization by CHGIS (network analysis) makes the geographical relations of Ming *Shangshu* scholars obvious and that supplies important inspirations on reviewing the regionality of *Shangshu* study in Ming time.
4. Some others: A. OCR will make the non-digitized and semi-digitized Ming books about *Shangshu* searchable. The information of the Treatise on Literature and Bibliography (*yi wen zh* 藝文志) in local gazetteers are considered to contain information that may not be found in *Jingyi kao* and worth special attentions. B. Tagging and statistical means will also be employed to locate the frequently discussed chapters, e.g. Yugong was frequently cited and quoted in geographical works and statecraft writings. The research is going to examine the importance of these chapters to Ming scholarships and politics and the reason(s).