Why Did Sin Sukju Transcribe the Coda of the Yào 藥 Rime of 15th Century Guānhuà with the Letter ṭ <f>?*

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The Korean sinologist and linguist Sin Sukju (1417-1475) devised transcriptions for contemporary Mandarin pronunciation using the then newly-invented Korean alphabet which is today known as Hangul. These transcriptions have been preserved in a number of texts. Sin’s transcriptions clearly reflect a Mandarin variety in which words having the ancient entering tone had lost their -p -t -k endings but were still pronounced abruptly, possibly accompanied by a glottal-stop coda [ʔ]. While Sin transcribed the coda of most Chinese entering-tone syllables using the Hangul letter ḍ <ʔ>, he transcribed the coda of one syllable type, that found in the Yào 藥 rime, with the Hangul letter ṭ <f>. Sin’s own explanation of his transcriptional practice reveals no reason for this apparent discrepancy; in both cases it would seem that the letter is intended to represent abrupt glottal closure. This aspect of Sin’s notational practice has perplexed scholars up to the present day.

I argue that the explanation for the puzzling discrepancy can be found in factors related to the orthographic structure of Hangul. Taking these factors as a starting point, it is concluded that Sin’s use of ṭ <f> is a logical and elegant solution to the orthographic and transcriptional challenge he faced. Sin’s coda <ʔ> and coda <f> have the same function of representing the abrupt quality of the entering tone. His use of distinct letters is motivated by graphic as well as phonetic factors.

Key words: Hangul, Sin Sukju, popular reading, Guānhuà, Yào rime, entering tone

* This paper was inspired by an email exchange with South Coblin that took place in April, 2003, in which he raised the problem of Sin Sukju’s Popular Reading transcription of Yào 藥 rime syllables. Prof. Coblin responded to an initial sketch of my proposed solution to the problem in this way: “*You* should at some point write a note on that” (personal communication, April 10, 2003). Fully intending to do so, I nevertheless set the matter aside for nearly a decade. It is now an honor for me to have the opportunity to present my views in this volume dedicated to Prof. Coblin. I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions. I hasten to add that any errors or misconceptions are entirely my own responsibility.
試論申叔舟所譯十五世紀官話藥韻之韻尾輔音與諺文ㆆ<f>之關係

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朝鮮時代的漢學家及語言學家申叔舟(1417-1475)利用當時問世不久的朝鮮諺文字母對明代官話語音進行了對音轉寫，這些轉寫至今仍見於許多傳世文獻中。申叔舟清楚地表明在他所轉寫的明代官話中，入聲韻尾 -p, -t, -k 已近消失，但是還是與非入聲字有明顯的發音區別，可能帶喉塞韻尾 [ʔ]。大部分的入聲韻尾申叔舟都用諺文ㆆ<f>轉寫，惟在「藥韻」中，他使用諺文ㆆ<f>表示其韻尾。兩個字母都被用來表示緊喉促尾，而字母差別的原因，申叔舟並未具體解釋。學界迄今為之困惑不已。

本文認爲這種字母運用上的差異實際是為了符合諺文的造字條理。在此認識基礎上，本文進一步推論使用ㆆ<f>韻尾，是申叔舟面臨轉寫挑戰所使用的一種合理而巧妙的手段。無論是韻尾ㆆ<f>或韻尾<f>，其表現入聲促音色彩的作用是一致的。

關鍵詞：諺文，申叔舟，俗音，官話，藥韻，入聲