

search of a solution.¹ It is largely because of them that these ancient texts have been preserved and that the ancient concepts and terms, altered though they were by later interpretations, have remained alive and vital in Chinese thought and life.

The Classic of Documents

THE "CANON OF YAO" AND THE "CANON OF SHUN"

These texts, which appear at the beginning of this classic, purport to relate the events and pronouncements of the sage kings Yao and Shun, said to have reigned around the twenty-second century, who stand as the founding fathers and exemplars of Chinese civilization. Originally one and divided into two from the Latter Han period, these texts fill a kind of mythic function in the Chinese tradition by establishing benevolent patriarchal rule as the constitutional basis of a vast family system.

In this ideal conception, with the ruler personifying civil and familial virtue rather than military domination, his gentle charisma radiates out to successive degrees of kinship, so that all humankind is harmonized in one loving family. The core value here — that of personal virtue — is underscored by Yao's passing over his own son to find a successor in Shun, himself the embodiment of modesty and filial duty. In this process, the idea of rule by virtue and personal merit is no doubt put forward as an implicit critique of forceful rule, inherited by dynastic succession. Thus, while family values are assumed into the person of the ruler, the family itself is subsumed into the larger human family.

Examining into antiquity, we find that the Emperor Yao was called Fangxun. He was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, sincere, and mild. He was sincerely respectful and capable of modesty. His light covered the four extremities of the empire and extended to Heaven above and the Earth below. He was able to make bright his great virtue and bring affection to the nine branches of the family. When the nine branches of the family had become harmonious, he distinguished and honored the hundred clans. When the hundred clans had become illustrious, he harmonized the myriad states. The numerous people were amply nourished and prosperous and became harmonious. Then he

1. The term *feudal* can be applied to China of the Zhou dynasty only on the understanding that no exact correspondence to Western feudalism is implied. It serves here, and hereafter in these pages, to differentiate, as traditional Chinese historians did, between the Zhou and the relatively more centralized and bureaucratic regimes of the imperial dynasties beginning with the Qin (221–207 B.C.E.). However, some of the basic features associated with these later regimes had already made their appearance in Zhou society, distinguishing it markedly from the institutional patterns of feudal Europe.

charged Xi and He with reverence to follow August Heaven and calculate and delineate the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly bodies, and respectfully to give the people the seasons. . . . The emperor said, "Ah, you Xi and He, the year has three hundred and sixty-six days, and by means of an intercalary month you must fix the four seasons and complete the year. If you earnestly regulate all the functionaries, the achievements will all be glorious." The emperor said, "Who will carefully attend to this? I will raise him up and employ him." Fang Qi said, "Your heir-son Zhu is enlightened." The emperor said, "Alas, he is deceitful and quarrelsome; will he do?" . . . The emperor said, "Oh, you Chief of the Four Mountains, I have been on the throne for seventy years. If you can carry out the Mandate, I shall resign my position to you." The Chief of the Four Mountains said, "I have not the virtue. I would only disgrace the high position." The emperor said, "Promote someone who is already illustrious, or raise up someone who is humble and of low status." They all said to the emperor, "There is an unmarried man in a low position called Shun of Yu." The emperor said, "Yes, I have heard of him. What is he like?" The Chief said, "He is the son of a blind man. His father is stupid, his mother is deceitful, his half brother Xiang is arrogant. Yet he has been able to live in harmony with them and to be splendidly filial. He has controlled himself and has not come to wickedness." The emperor said, "I will try him; I will wive him and observe his behavior toward my two daughters." He gave orders and sent down his two daughters to the bend of the Gui River to be wives in the House of Yu. The emperor said, "Be reverent!"

The emperor said, "Come, you Shun, in the affairs on which you have been consulted, I have examined your words; your words have been accomplished and capable of yielding fine results for three years; do you ascend to the imperial throne." Shun considered himself inferior in virtue and was not pleased. But in the first month, the first day, he accepted the abdication of Yao in the Temple of the Accomplished Ancestor. . . . Then he made *lei* sacrifice to the Lord-on-High; he made *yin* sacrifice to the six venerable ones; he made *wang* sacrifice to mountains and rivers, and he made comprehensive sacrifices to all the spirits. . . . In the second month of the year he went around the east to the fiefs and came to the Venerable Dai Mountain, where he made burnt offering; he made *wang* sacrifice successively to mountains and rivers, and he gave audience to the eastern princes. He put into accord the seasons, the months, and the proper days. He made uniform the pitch pipes, the measures of length, the measures of capacity, and the weights. . . . He delimited the twelve provinces and raised altars on twelve mountains, and he deepened the rivers.

["Yaodian," "Shundian," *Shujing* — BW]

Yao appoints
Xi and He
to calculate
the seasons

illustrate
virtue of
humble
people
of low
status

Shun
of Yu

go to chronicle
Shun

THE GRAND MODEL

Chapter 24 in the *Classic of Documents*, "The Grand Model" (*Hongfan*), purports to be a plan offered by the viscount of Ji, who had served the Shang dynasty, to King Wu of Zhou. Though the viscount had been imprisoned by Di Xin, the last ruler of the Shang, and released by King Wu of Zhou, he nonetheless refused to serve the Zhou and made known his plan to flee to Korea. Admiring his fidelity to the Shang, King Wu is supposed to have announced his intention to enfeoff the viscount in Korea. The model for good government associated with the sage king Yu, founder of the Xia dynasty, was believed to have been presented by the viscount when he appeared at the Zhou court. Reformers of later dynasties often cited "The Grand Model" as the classic basis for their radical reform plans. Here the translation is abridged.

In the thirteenth year, the king went to inquire of the Viscount of Ji and said to him, "Ah. Viscount of Ji, Heaven, unseen, has given to humankind their constitution, aiding the harmonious development of it in their various conditions. I do not know how their proper virtues in their various relations should be brought forth in due order."

The Viscount of Ji thereupon replied, "I have heard that of old Gun dammed up the inundating waters and thereby threw into disorder the arrangement of the Five Phases.² God (Di) was thereby roused to anger and did not give him the 'Grand Model with its Nine Divisions,' whereupon the proper virtues of the five relations were left to go to ruin. Gun was then kept a prisoner until his death, and Yu rose up to continue his undertaking. To him Heaven gave 'The Grand Model with its Nine Divisions,' and thereby the proper virtues of the various relations were brought forth in their order."

Of the Nine Divisions, only a portion of the fifth and the ninth are reproduced here. The first deals with the Five Phases (or Agents); the second with moral conduct and intellectual virtues; the third with branches of administration; the fourth with the calendar; the fifth with rulership, as follows:

"Fifth, of royal perfection: the sovereign, having established his highest point of excellence, concentrates in himself the five happinesses and then diffuses them so as to give them to his people. Then on their part the multitudes of the people, resting in your perfection, will give you the preservation of it. . . . When men have ability and administrative power; cause them still more to cultivate

2. The Five Phases are water, fire, wood, metal, and earth. (See ch. 10, pp. 347-49.) Gun, the father of the sage king Yu, dammed up the waters instead of creating an outlet for them; he was therefore punished. The work was then taken up by Yu, who employed a different strategy and obtained a different result.

their conduct, and the prosperity of the country will be promoted. All right men, having a competency, will go on to be good.

"If you cannot cause men to have what they love in their families, they will only proceed to be guilty of crime. As to those who do not love virtue, though you may confer favor on them, they will only involve you in the guilt of employing the evil.

"Without deflection, without unevenness,
Pursue royal rightness;
Without any selfish likings,
Pursue the royal way;
Without any selfish dislikings,
Pursue the royal path;
Without partiality, without deflection,
The royal path is level and easy;
Without perversity, without onesidedness,
The royal path is right and straight.
Seeing this royal excellence,
Turn to this perfect excellence."

He went on to say, "This amplification of the royal perfection contains the unchanging [rule] and is the [great] lesson. It is the lesson from God (Di). All the multitudes, instructed in this amplification of the perfect excellence, and carrying it into practice, will approximate to the glory of the Son of Heaven and say, 'The Son of Heaven is the parent of the people, and so becomes the sovereign of the empire.'"

The sixth division deals with questions of governance, adapted to different people and times; the seventh is concerned with the examination of doubts and the investigation of dubious matters in consultation with the nobles, officers, and masses of the people, and through divination by the turtle and milfoil. The eighth deals with confirmation from seasonable weather, and the ninth with the resultant five happinesses.

"Ninth, of the five happinesses: the first is long life; the second is riches; the third is soundness of body and serenity of mind; the fourth is the love of virtue; the fifth is an end crowning one's life."

["Hongfan," *Shujing* — trans. adapted from Legge, *Shoo king*, pp. 320–343]

THE METAL-BOUND COFFER

This document, while perhaps dating from as late as the fifth or fourth century B.C.E., purports to celebrate events that occurred at a critical juncture at the inception of the Zhou dynasty and affords insight into Zhou attitudes toward the religious authority on

which the rule of the Zhou house was based. As the story opens, King Wu, the first of the Zhou sovereigns actually to rule, is ill and believed to be near death. One of his younger brothers, Dan, known as the Duke of Zhou, appeals through prayer to the spirits of his forebears to accept him as a sacrifice in the place of King Wu. He divines and receives in response an auspicious sign. The king improves. Later, after the king dies, rumors are spread casting doubt on the fidelity of the Duke of Zhou to King Cheng, his young nephew who has succeeded King Wu. Note here the invocation of the idea of the Mandate of Heaven and the way in which Heaven is understood to intervene in the human sphere.

It must be acknowledged that there remain differences among scholars about the interpretation of this fascinating text, and the translation offered here is an innovative one. One of the most interesting departures from earlier interpretations comes at the point in the text immediately following the divination by the Duke of Zhou with three turtle shells; here we find a prognostication that our translator believes is meant to represent the Duke of Zhou speaking *in the voice of the king*, or in the king's role. In other words, while the gravely ill King Wu is not present here, the duke is seen to be ritually representing him — a reflection, perhaps, of the fact that it would always have been the king who, in the earlier divinatory tradition, uttered the prognostication.

However that may be, the underlying implication of the story is an ideal virtually eternal in China, and the celebration of the Duke of Zhou merely exemplifies and dramatizes it: a ruler rules by his "virtue." Virtue requires of the king restraint, humility, and willingness to listen to advice. In principle this does not limit royal authority but rather demands its exercise — and virtue is not limited to kings. If a king acquires virtue by his action and an attitude that can be seen as self-sacrificial or self-denying, this will also be true of others, notably the king's ministers. So, paradoxically, it is precisely by a minister's self-denial — his renunciation of any interest of his own, in a complete demonstration of loyalty, to the death, if need be — that he gains and establishes the authority that effectively requires his king to heed him. In this story, the duke's demonstration of selflessness is made complete by his swearing the witnesses to silence, setting up the situation that *requires* Heaven's intervention. This is the deeper meaning of the myth celebrated in "The Metal-Bound Coffin."

Two years after the conquest of the Shang dynasty, the king caught a fever and was quite ill. The Two Dukes said, "Let us reverently consult the turtle concerning the king." But the Duke of Zhou said, "You may not so distress our former kings."

He then took the business on himself and made three altars of earth on the same cleared space; and having made another altar on the south, facing north, he there took his own position. He placed the jade *bi*-discs [on the three altars], while he himself held his jade *gui*-mace.³ He then addressed King Tai, King Ji, and King Wen.

3. A jade tablet or mace conferred by kings on feudal lords as a symbol of rank.

The recorder accordingly wrote [the duke's] prayer on a tablet:

"N. your chief descendant,⁴ is suffering from an epidemic disease and is violently ill. If you Three Kings are obligated to Heaven for a great son, let me Dan be a substitute for his person. I am graceful and accommodating, clever and able. I am possessed of many abilities and arts which fit me to serve spiritual beings. Your chief descendant, on the other hand, has not so many abilities and arts as I and is not so capable of serving spiritual beings. Moreover, he was appointed in the hall of Di to extend his dominion to the four quarters [of the world], so that he might establish your descendants in the lands below [Heaven] and so that none of the peoples of the four quarters would fail to be in awe and fear. Oh! Do not let that precious Heaven-conferred Mandate fall to the ground; then [all] our former kings will also ever have security and resort."

"Now I accordingly make this charge to the great turtle. If you grant what I request, I will take these discs and this mace and will go back and await your command [i.e., my death]. If you do not grant it, I will put the discs and mace away."

[The duke] then divined with three turtle [shells], and all alike were favorable. He opened the tubes and read the [oracle] texts, and these too were favorable.

The duke [speaking in the king's role] said, "Let there be no harm [to the duke]. I, humble prince, have a renewed mandate from the three kings. It is a lasting future that [I] may expect. Then what [we] 'await' [is not the duke's death, but] is that they will have concern for me, the One Man."

The duke went back and then placed the tablet [with the charge] in a metal-bound coffer. On the next day the king recovered.

After King Wu died, [other sons of King Wen,] Guan Shu and his brothers spread talk around the country, saying, "The duke will do no good to the [king's] young son."⁵ The Duke of Zhou accordingly declared to the Two Dukes, "If we do not punish them, we will be unable to report to the royal ancestors [that we have done our duty]." The Duke of Zhou spent two years in the east, whereupon the guilty men were apprehended. Afterward the duke made a poem and presented it to the king, calling it "The Owl." The king on his part did not dare to blame the duke [for thus punishing King Cheng's uncles].

In the autumn there was a great [impending] harvest that had not yet been reaped; Heaven then sent a great storm of thunder and lightning, with wind. The grain was all beaten down and great trees were ripped up. The people of

4. "N" (i.e., "N[ame]") renders a Chinese word (*mou*, "so-and-so") conventionally used in order to avoid actually writing down the name of a person who must be accorded great respect. Though the custom arose in the Zhou period of avoiding naming a king directly, it is possible that the duke would actually have referred to his brother, King Wu, by name and that this circumlocution was introduced by a later speaker or recorder.

5. King Wu's successor was King Cheng, whom the Duke of Zhou was to serve as a regent.

the land were all terrified. The king and his great officers thereupon all put on their caps of state and opened the metal-bound coffer [and examined the] writings in it, and thus obtained the account of the Duke of Zhou taking it upon himself to be a substitute for King Wu. The Two Dukes and the king then questioned the recorder and all the other officers about the matter. They replied, "It was truly so. But, ah, the duke ordered us not to dare to speak about it."

The king held the writing and wept, saying, "Let us not reverently divine [for the truth is plain]. Formerly the duke had an earnest concern for the royal house, but I, only a child, was not able to know about it. Now Heaven has moved its terrors to display the virtue (*de*) of the Duke of Zhou. I, princeling, will greet him in person. The rites of our country indeed make this right."

The king went forth to the suburbs [to meet the duke]; Heaven then sent down rain, and a contrary wind, so that the grain all stood up. The Two Dukes gave orders to the people of the land to take up all the great trees that had been blown down and replant them. The year then turned out very fruitful.

["Jinteng," *Shujing* — DSN]

SHAO ANNOUNCEMENT

The "Shao Announcement" (*Shaogao*) purports to record the occasion of the founding of a new Zhou capital near the Luo River, an event that occurred during the reign of King Cheng, whom we encountered above in "The Metal-Bound Coffer." King Cheng was at this time still young, and his uncles, the Duke of Shao and the Duke of Zhou, served as his chief advisers. At this point the Duke of Zhou, also familiar from "The Metal-Bound Coffer," was in the seventh and last year of his regency.

The text opens with an account of the preparations made by the Duke of Shao and the Duke of Zhou for the building of the new city — taking oracles about the site and offering sacrifices before putting the Yin (i.e., Shang) people to work on its construction. Our selection begins with the main narrative: a declaration by one of the dukes about the background of the Zhou accession to power and the nature of the political order that the Zhou must maintain. While modern scholars differ as to whether this declaration was made by the Duke of Shao or the Duke of Zhou, the present translation is based on the view that the principal speaker is the latter. Whatever the attribution, the interest of the declaration lies in its powerful articulation of the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*) as a doctrine of political legitimization and its assertion of a concomitant responsibility on the part of the ruler to listen to wise counsel and to benefit the people.

He [the Duke of Zhou] said,

"I salute with joined hands and bow my head to the ground, in respect for you, king-favored duke. And in a [formal] announcement I declare [this] to [you] Yin peoples and to your managers of affairs.

Open the
coffer
all is
settled

Shang → Zhou
 "Ah! August Heaven, High God, has changed his principal son and has revoked the Mandate of this great state of Yin. When a king receives the Mandate, without limit is the grace thereof, but also without limit is the anxiety of it. Ah! How can he fail to be reverently careful!"

Hea → Shang → Zhou
 "Heaven has rejected and ended the Mandate of this great state of Yin. Thus, although Yin has many former wise kings in Heaven, when their successor kings and successor people undertook their Mandate, in the end wise and good men lived in misery. Knowing that they must care for and sustain their wives and children, they then called out in anguish to Heaven and fled to places where they could not be caught. Ah! Heaven too grieved for the people of all the lands, wanting, with affection, in giving its Mandate to employ those who are deeply committed. The king should have reverent care for his virtue."

"Look at the former peoples of ancient times, the Xia. Heaven guided, indulged, and cherished them, so that they would strive to understand what Heaven favors, but by this time they have let their Mandate fall to the ground. Now look at the Yin; Heaven guided them, stayed near them, nourished them, so that they would strive to comprehend what Heaven favors; but now they have let their Mandate fall to the ground."

"Now a young son succeeds to the throne; let him not, then, neglect the aged and experienced. Not only do they comprehend the virtue of our men of old — nay, more, they are sometimes able to comprehend counsels that come from Heaven."

"Ah! Even though it be that the king is young, he is [Heaven's] principal son. Let him be grandly able to be in harmony with the little people. In the present time of grace, the king must not dare to be slow, but should be prudently apprehensive about what the people say."

"The king will come representing the High God and himself undertake [the government here] in the midst of the lands. I, Dan, say, 'Let a great city be made here; may he from this place function as the mate of August Heaven, reverently sacrificing to the higher and lower spirits. May he from this place centrally govern. When the king has a fully effective mandate, his governing of the people will then enjoy [Heaven's] grace.'

"Undertaking [the administration of] the Yin managers of affairs, the king should first associate them with our Zhou's managers of affairs, so as to discipline their natures, and they will day by day advance."

"Let the king reverently function in his position; he cannot but be reverently careful of his virtue. We cannot fail to mirror ourselves in the Xia; also we cannot fail to mirror ourselves in the Yin. We must not presume to suppose that the Xia received the Mandate of Heaven for a fixed period of years; we must not presume to suppose that it was not going to continue. It was because they did not reverently care for their virtue that they early let their Mandate fall. We must not presume to suppose that the Yin received the Mandate of Heaven for

a fixed period of years; we must not presume to suppose that it was not going to continue. It was because they did not reverently care for their virtue that they early let their Mandate fall. Now the king has succeeded them in receiving their Mandate; let us also, in regard to the mandate of these two states, continue it with like achievements; [if we do,] then the king will [truly] now begin to undertake the mandate.

"Ah! It is like bearing a child: all depends on what happens when it is first born; one gives it oneself its allotment of [future] wisdom. Now as to whether Heaven is going to give an endowment of wisdom, of good fortune or bad, or an endowment of so-and-so many years, we [just] know that now we begin the undertaking of the Mandate.

"Dwelling in this new city, now let the king just earnestly have reverent care for his virtue. If it is virtue that the king uses, he may pray Heaven for an enduring Mandate. As he functions as king, let him not, because the common people stray and do what is wrong, then presume to govern them by harsh capital punishments; in this way he will achieve much. In being king, let him take his position in the primacy of virtue. The little people will then pattern themselves on him throughout the world; the king will then become illustrious.

"Those above and below being zealous and careful, let them say, 'As we receive Heaven's Mandate, let it grandly be like the long years enjoyed by the Xia, and not fail of the years enjoyed by the Yin' — in order that [as one would wish] the king, through the little people, may receive Heaven's enduring Mandate."

[Response:] He [the Duke of Shao, replying] saluted with joined hands, touching his head to the ground, and said, "I, your humble servant, together with the grandees of the king's vanquished peoples, and with the allied peoples, presume to receive and cherish the king's dread command and bright virtue, so that the king will finally [as you have said] have a fully effective Mandate, and the king will also be illustrious. We do not presume to encouragement; we just respectfully offer [these] gifts, so as to supply the king with the means to pray for Heaven's enduring Mandate."

[From "Shaogao," *Shujing* — DSN]

The Classic of Odes

FROM THE GREATER ODES AND SACRIFICIAL ODES OF ZHOU

These odes celebrate the virtues of King Wen, founder of the Zhou, as successor to the Shang rulers who failed to fulfill their moral responsibility. Heaven's Mandate or charge is no less real and compelling for being intangible (i.e., spiritual, moral values not reducible to words), and his successors can take King Wen as an example to live up to.