Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy

Studies in the Composition and Thought of the Shangshu (*Classic of Documents*)

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the "Canon of Yao"

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"Yao dian" 堯典 ("Canon of Yao") is the first chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書.* The "Yao dian" chapter of the so-called modern-script *Shangshu* 今文尚書 includes both the "Yao dian" chapter and the following "Shun dian" 舜典 ("Canon of Shun") chapter of the ancient-script *Shangshu* 古文尚書 that first surfaced in 317 CE and is considered an unreliable forgery.[1] It is the longer, modern-script version of "Yao dian" that is the subject of the present essay. In my analysis, I will suggest, however, that the two narratives of Yao and Shun reflect different ideological takes on archaic kingship, and that they employ rather different rhetorical means to stake out their respective positions regarding the ideal of government. From this perspective, the accounts of Yao and Shun are far less integrated than might appear from their modern-script versions and should be considered two separate texts.

What is "Yao dian"? Traditional scholarship has read this chapter as an idealized account of the ancient rulers of high antiquity, Yao and Shun, who are valorized in a wide range of Warring States (453–221 BCE) and early imperial sources. Guided by the common view of the *Shangshu* as a set of (however idealized or retrospectively composed) historical "documents," we are used to taking "Yao dian" as a narrative of history or political mythology, "euhemerized" or "reversely euhemerized."[2] Meanwhile, modern scholarship has dated

* The present chapter is revised from its earlier version published in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 118–151. The present version now supersedes the earlier one.

1 Without trying to rehabilitate the ancient-script version, I do not subscribe to the common notion of "forgery" in this context for two reasons: it fails to recognize that at least parts of the ancient-script *Shangshu* are based on earlier sources that we still know only in part, and it wrongly elevates the modern-script *Shangshu* to some sort of original and trustworthy record of antiquity. Yet while the received ancient-script version may postdate the Han dynasty modern-script version by several centuries, the latter postdates the events recorded in the *Shangshu* by an even much longer span of time. Neither version can be understood as historically reliable; both present foundational narratives of cultural memory, shaped according to the ideological needs of their own time.

2 See Allan 1981; Boltz 1981; Maspero 1924.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004343504_003

the composition—or at least the substantial rewriting—of the received "Yao dian" to late Warring States or imperial Qin–early Han times.[3] However, it should be noted that all the rather extensive evidence adduced for a Qin or Han dynasty writing or rewriting of the text comes only from the second half of the chapter—that is, the part that corresponds to "Shun dian" in the ancient-text *Shangshu*. Thus, how do the two parts of "Yao dian" fit with late Warring States and early imperial intellectual and political history? What do they contribute to the political thought of their time? And what are the rhetorical means by which they advance their ideological goals? In the following, I wish to suggest that we should read the two parts of "Yao dian" neither as a unified whole nor as mere historical or mythological narratives, but instead as works of political rhetoric representing particular ideologies and showing distinctly performative features.

Performative Speech and the Construction of Yao: The Opening Passage of "Yao dian"[4]

Consider the opening passage of the text, which—we should not forget—is the opening passage of the entire *Shangshu*. In Sun Xingyan's 孫星衍 (1753–1818) standard edition, collated by Chen Kang 陳抗 and Sheng Dongling 盛冬鈴, it is punctuated as follows:

> 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。[5]

With minor modifications, the same punctuation is also found in Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞 2004, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 and Liu Qiyu 劉起釪 2005, Qu Wanli 屈萬里

3 Chen Mengjia (1985: 135–146), Jiang Shanguo (1988: 140–168), and Liu Qiyu (2007: 156–173) assume a Spring and Autumn period (770–453 BCE) date of composition for the original "Yao dian" but also recognize significant Qin-Han elements in the text. Gu Jiegang (1932: vol. 1, 1–45) dates "Yao dian" to the time of Emperor Wu of the Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE).

4 In using terms like "performative speech" or "performance text," I do not mean to imply oral composition or oral transmission. Instead, these terms refer to the linguistic properties that mark the text as structured for oral performance—or, at a minimum, as a written rhetorical representation of such original performativity. Meanwhile, I use "performance" as broadly encompassing various possibilities of embodying and enacting, be it in mere recitation or in a stage setting.

5 Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 1, 2–10.

1977, James Legge 1991, and Bernhard Karlgren 1950, with the only difference being in the first two phrases, which Legge and Karlgren parse as 曰若稽古, 帝堯曰放勳 (Legge: "Examining into antiquity, we find that the emperor Yaou was called Fang-heun"). As can be seen, the overall passage is mostly tetrasyllabic, but not entirely; and it is in the different possibilities of parsing the lines seemingly outside the tetrasyllabic scheme that differences in interpretation become most consequential.

Legge, Karlgren, Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, Pi Xirui, and Qu Wanli all interpret the first nine characters in largely the same way: beginning with two references in the *Mengzi* 孟子,[6] the parallel version of "Yao dian" in the *Shiji* 史記[7]—which offers something of a translation of the text from a more archaic idiom into Western Han language—and another account in the *Da Dai liji* 大戴禮記,[8] there is broad support for this reading. It implies four different points: first, the opening characters *yue ruo* 曰若 write an initial compound particle that is left to be untranslated; in bronze inscriptions, as well as in early received texts, this compound is attested in the different forms of 粵若, 越若, and 雩若;[9] second, *ji gu* 稽古 refers to the anonymous narrative voice ("if we examine antiquity" or, when read together with the following two characters, "if we examine the ancient Emperor Yao") that begins its text with a programmatic statement on the ancient emperor;[10] third, the second *yue* 曰 that follows "Emperor Yao" is understood not as "to speak" but as "to be named"; and fourth, the final *fang xun* 放勳 is then read as Yao's name, as in the *Shiji*, where the

6 See *Mengzi* 5.4.125 ("Teng Wen Gong, shang" 滕文公上) and 9.4.215 ("Wan Zhang, shang" 萬章上). In 5.4, the phrase is "Fangxun said: …" (放勳曰). In 9.4, the *Mengzi* quotes "Yao dian" as follows: "After twenty-eight years, Fangxun perished" (二十有八載，放勛 [= 放勳] 乃徂落). The received "Yao dian" has "After twenty-eight years, the emperor perished" (二十有八載，帝乃殂落).

7 See *Shiji* 1.14–15; see also 13.489.

8 Wang Pinzhen 1983: VII.62.121 ("Wu di de" 五帝德), VII.63.126 ("Di xi" 帝繫). In "Wu di de," the identification of Yao is even attributed to Kongzi 孔子: "Kongzi said: 'The son of Gaoxin was called Fangxun" (高辛之子也，曰放勳). In "Di xi," the *Da Dai liji* states: "Emperor Ku produced Fangxun, who was to be Emperor Yao" (帝嚳產放勳，是為帝堯).

9 See the discussions in Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 2–5; and in Pi Xirui 2004: 3–5. See also Wu Zhenyu 2010: 274–279.

10 However, both Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) understand *ji gu* as an attribute of Yao, saying that Yao "followed and examined the ancient way" (*shun kao gu dao* 順考古道; Ma Rong) or "adhered to Heaven" (*tong tian* 同天; Zheng Xuan). See the discussion in Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 1, 2–4; Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 3–4; Karlgren 1970: 44–45, gloss 1207.

phrase is interpreted as such.[11] In other words, the initial sentence of "Yao dian" sets the stage for a historical narrative of remote antiquity that, however, is still accessible through careful "examination" (*ji* 稽).[12]

As the text continues, this reading necessitates taking the following six characters as another single phrase: *qin ming wen si an an* 欽明文思安安, a series of epithets that are then applied to Yao, the subject just introduced. Commentators differ regarding the interpretation of the individual characters, as traditional texts quote the passage with several variants, including *se* 塞 for *si* 思 and *yan-yan* 晏晏 for *an'an* 安安. Without compelling parallels in other texts, any interpretation of such terms, and especially of reduplicative binomes, remains speculative.[13]

The initial four-character phrase *yue ruo ji gu* 曰若稽古 appears once more in the modern-script *Shangshu* and, in addition, twice more in the ancient-text version. To briefly dispose with the latter: the two chapters that in the ancient-text version follow "Yao dian," namely, "Shun dian" and "Da Yu mo" 大禹謨

11 An exception to this last point is the critical comment by the eighth-century commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞, who questions whether the epithet *fangxun* is indeed Yao's name; see *Shiji* 2.49. Sima extends the same doubt to the "names" of Shun 舜 and Yu 禹 as they appear in the *Shiji*, *Da Dai liji*, and elsewhere, as well as in the opening lines of the respective ancient-script *Shangshu* chapters; see below. Likewise, the pseudo–Kong Anguo 孔安國 commentary to the ancient-script *Shangshu* interprets *fangxun* as descriptive of Yao; see Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 9. On the other hand, in his commentary to *Shiji* 1.15, Sima Zhen claims that *fangxun* is Yao's personal name while Yao is his posthumous temple name (*shi* 謚). The same is claimed by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (fl. 725–735) in his commentary to *Shiji* 1.14 and by Pei Yin 裴駰 (fifth century) in his commentary to *Shiji* 1.15. Zhang Shoujie, however, also gives specific meaning to the name *fangxun*: "Yao was able to imitate the merits of the previous era and thus was called *fangxun*" (堯能放上代之功故曰放勳), an explanation likely inspired by Zheng Xuan's commentary that Yao "imitated the meritorious transformation of previous generations" (放效上世之功); for the latter, see *Shangshu zhengyi* 2.118c.

12 As David Schaberg (1996: 197) has argued, *ji* 稽 "specifically denotes the citation of historical precedents and language in the construction of deliberative and philosophical arguments."

13 See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 9–11. Recent manuscript finds have made it abundantly clear that the methods of traditional scholarship, including the meticulous investigations of Qing dynasty *kaozheng* 考證 philology, are powerful tools to compare textual parallels in received texts, but that they do not reach beyond the massive editorial interventions by Han (and later) scholars who translated and transcribed archaic texts into the words and characters of their own time. Looking at newly discovered manuscripts from late Warring States and early imperial times, one finds that binomes (such as *an'an*) and particles were particularly prone to a wide range of graphic variation whenever a traditional text was committed to writing; see Kern 2005, 2002.

("Counsels of the Great Yu"), both imitate the beginning of "Yao dian" and have been interpreted in accordance with its Han reading:

> "Shun dian": 曰若稽古帝舜曰重華 (Legge: "Examining into antiquity, we find that the emperor Shun was called Ch'ung-hwa.")
>
> "Da Yu mo": 曰若稽古大禹曰文命 (Legge: "Examining into antiquity, we find that the great Yu was called Wăn-ming.")

These two parallels do not help us to understand "Yao dian." As read in the traditional way represented by Legge, they merely reveal their inspiration from the particular "Yao dian" reading that took hold in the Han, that is, long before the composition of the two ancient-text chapters. (The modern-script version, in which "Shun dian" is part of "Yao dian," lacks the introductory paragraph referring to Shun.)

There is, however, one more instance of *yue ruo ji gu* in the modern-script *Shangshu*, that is, in the presumably early version of the text. This true parallel is the beginning of the chapter "Gao Yao mo" 皋陶謨 ("Counsels of Gao Yao"): 曰若稽古，皋陶曰：允迪厥德，謨明弼諧. Here, the following text makes it unambiguously clear that the final *yue* 曰 that follows the name Gao Yao cannot mean "is named" but must be taken as the introductory marker—that is, as the verb "said"—for Gao Yao's following speech (Legge: "On examining into antiquity, we find that Kaou-yaou said, 'If a sovereign sincerely pursue the course of his virtue, the counsels offered to him will be intelligent, and the aids of admonition will be harmonious'"). In other words, our only true parallel to the opening phrase of "Yao dian" within the modern-script *Shangshu* does not support the *Shiji* reading of "Yao dian." Considering that the two passages are identical and clearly adhere to a formula, we should attempt to read both in a single, consistent fashion; and given that we cannot read the "Gao Yao mo" passage according to the Han interpretation of "Yao dian," we should read "Yao dian" according to what "Gao Yao mo" requires.

In addition to the "Gao Yao mo" passage, one more parallel can be found: at the very beginning of the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 chapter "Wu mu" 武穆. Here, *yue ruo ji gu* is directly followed by *yue* 曰, which then introduces a twelve-line, mostly tetrasyllabic, and partly rhymed poetic passage.[14] Finally, another *Yi Zhoushu* passage, this one in the chapter "Wu jing" 寤儆, is illuminating: a speech attributed to the Duke of Zhou 周公 contains the phrase 奉若稽古維王, where the initial compound is not *yue ruo* but *feng ruo* 奉若, which

14 *Yi Zhoushu* III.33.339.

traditional commentators have glossed as *cheng shun* 承順 (to receive and follow).[15] Whether or not *feng ruo* might have such specific meaning or should be taken as just another, if phonetically distinct, version of the compound particle *yue ruo*, the following *ji gu* is emphatically attributed to the king: "He who appraises antiquity is the king." This understanding is parallel to how the Han commentators Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan have interpreted *ji gu* 稽古 in "Yao dian," namely, as the mental activity of Yao.[16]

Over the past two millennia, much erudition has been devoted to the interpretation of *yue ruo ji gu*,[17] albeit without ever reaching a firm conclusion. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) in his *Hanshu* 漢書 commentary notes the despair that must have befallen readers already in Han times when a scholar capable of explaining "Yao dian" spent thirty thousand words on the phrase.[18] Considering the many parallels to *yue ruo*, I follow its by-now-accepted reading as an initial (emphatic?) compound particle.[19] At the same time, for a highly stylized text such as "Yao dian," it is indeed defendable to follow the earliest commentaries by Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan (as well as the "Wu jing" passage in *Yi Zhoushu*) in taking *ji gu* as the (grammatically pre-positioned) activity attributed to Yao.[20] This understanding is further echoed in the ancient-text *Shangshu* chapter "Zhou guan" 周官, which has the king uttering the following line: 唐虞稽古，建官惟百 (Legge: "He said, 'Yaou and Shun studied antiquity, and established a hundred officers'"). What is more, in the *Yi Zhoushu* "Wu mu" parallel, the *yue* 曰 following *yue ruo ji gu* clearly introduces the following speech—which is also what I propose for "Yao dian." Thus, I do not accept the parsing and reading of *yue fang xun* 曰放勳 as "was named Fangxun,"[21] nor do I understand the

15 *Yi Zhoushu* III.31.322.

16 See n. 10 above.

17 See, e.g., Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 2–5; Jiang Shanguo 1988: 141–142; Karlgren 1970: 44–45, gloss 1207.

18 *Hanshu* 30.1724. Yan quotes Huan Tan's 桓譚 (ca. 43 BCE–28 CE) *Xin lun* 新論, which may have been ridiculing (and exaggerating) the effort; see Pokora 1975: 92n2.

19 I suspect, however, that the ancient meaning of *yue ruo* was already lost to the earliest commentators.

20 *Pace* Sun Xingyan, Pi Xirui, Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, James Legge, Bernhard Karlgren, Qu Wanli, etc.

21 In rejecting *fangxun* as Yao's designation, I consider the readings given in *Shiji*, *Da Dai liji*, and other Han sources to be misinterpretations. At the same time, the fact that already the *Mengzi* understands *fangxun* as Yao's personal name raises two possibilities: either this reading, which runs against the structure of the *Shangshu* text itself, was indeed very early, possibly in a separate tradition of the Yao legend, or the two pertinent *Mengzi* passages (5.4 and 9.4) were composed only under the influence of Han sources such as the *Shiji*.

initial section of "Yao dian" as a pseudohistorical narrative document. Instead, I read the section as a performance text—a text quite possibly not merely to be read but to be staged—that was directly modeled on the much earlier (late Western Zhou?) speeches generally believed to form the historical core of the *Shangshu*.[22] My following reading is consistent with both "Gao Yao mo" and the two parallels in the *Yi Zhoushu*; it reveals a different linguistic structure and allows us to rethink the rhetoric and ideology of "Yao dian."

While I am confident about reading 帝堯曰 as "Emperor Yao said," there are good arguments for and against understanding 稽古 as Yao's own mental activity, which involves either taking only 曰若 or taking the entire 曰若稽古 as the introductory formula. On the one hand, as cited above, there is clear evidence that some ancient scholars attributed the act of "appraising antiquity" to Emperor Yao, which would lead to reading the initial 曰若稽古帝堯曰 as "Ah—indeed! Appraising antiquity, Emperor Yao said." In this understanding, it is not the anonymous narrator who "examines antiquity"; Yao himself looks to the past in search of a model of good rule, exhibiting his ability to "imitate [past] merits" (*fangxun*) while at the same time praising his ancestors for precisely the same. This reading would show Yao as a ruler who faithfully emulates his predecessors, that is, as the "rememberer remembered," a rhetorical pattern familiar from other early and medieval Chinese texts.[23]

On the other hand, 曰若稽古 as a whole is well attested as a stable formula in its own right and thus would serve as a perfect framing device for a text that begins by quoting Emperor Yao. This latter choice would then lead to the following:

> Ah—indeed! As we appraise antiquity [we find that] Emperor Yao said:
> 曰若稽古帝堯曰
>
> "Imitating [past] merits, respectful, and bright,
> accomplished, sincere, and greatly peaceful,
> truly reverential and able to yield!"
> 放勳欽明 *-aŋ
> 文思安安 *-an
> 允恭克讓 *-aŋ

22 See Shaughnessy 1993.

23 See Owen 1986: 17–32; Kern 2000a: 59; Kern 2000b: 140–147.

"The glory [of the ancient kings] covered [the lands within] the four extremities,[24]
reaching to [Heaven] above and [Earth] below."
光被四表 *-aw
格于上下 *-a

"They were able to make bright their lofty virtue;
by this, they made affectionate to one another the nine family branches—
the nine family branches were then close kin."
克明俊德 *-ək
以親九族 *-ok
九族既睦 *-uk

"They made even and distinguished the [noble officials of the] hundred surnames—
the hundred surnames were shining and bright.
They regulated and harmonized the myriad states—
the common folk were thus transformed and concordant."
平章百姓 *-eŋ
百姓昭明 *-aŋ
協和萬邦 *-oŋ
黎民於變時雍 *-oŋ

If we parse the text in this way—instead of reading *fang xun* as Yao's fancy personal name—everything else falls elegantly into place, resulting in an extended and remarkably well-ordered speech. This speech consists of four units of different length (three lines, two lines, three lines, and four lines), all of which, except for the concluding line, are tetrasyllabic. It is common in Warring States prose texts for a poetic passage to be capped with an extended concluding line (possibly signaling the end of the section); at the same time, the final line in this case contains two particles—*yu* 於 and *shi* 時— that in poetry in the style of the *Shijing* 詩經 do not count as metric units; in other words, the final line still conforms to the tetrasyllabic meter.

All four units employ their own scheme of rhyme or assonance on the final words of their lines. First, we find the rhyme *-aŋ on lines 1 and 3, further supported by the assonating *-an on line 2. Second, we find the rhyme *-aw and *-a. The third unit is marked by the three *rusheng* 入聲 assonances of *-ək,

24 I divide the text according to its four different rhymes, not according to the number of lines in each rhyme.

*-ok, and *-uk; and the final unit contains the rhymes and assonances *-eŋ, *-aŋ, *-oŋ, and *-oŋ. These regularities, combined with the regular meter, must have been purposefully composed.[25] What we see here, in fact, is what is traditionally identified as poetry in the archaic style of the *Shijing*, which is formally defined by precisely the same features of rhyme and meter. We also find one reduplicative, *an'an* 安安 (or whatever other characters one may want to substitute for it), typical of the "Daya" 大雅 ritual hymns in the *Shijing* but extremely rare in early prose, and two instances of anadiplosis (*jiu zu* 九族 … *jiu zu* 九族 and *bai xing* 百姓 … *bai xing* 百姓), again a feature typical of, and almost entirely restricted to, the same limited set of "Daya" hymns. Both in the "Daya" and in Yao's speech, this language of poetry is the language for exalting the past.

However one might want to rationalize the traditional reading of the passage, this set of hard linguistic data must be accounted for. There is no question that we are dealing with a poetic text modeled after the language of the "Daya," attributed to Emperor Yao, who is said to be uttering (*yue* 曰) it. What further identifies this passage as precisely such a poetic utterance is its uniqueness within the entire "Yao dian" proper (i.e., before the text moves on to Shun, whom Yao then addresses in similarly formulaic fashion, though even there, his speech is not nearly as well ordered as it is here). The remainder of the Emperor Yao narrative, which is about six times as long as the initial eulogy, shows only a limited use of tetrasyllabic meter, no instance of rhyme, almost no reduplicatives,[26] no anadiplosis, and no other linguistic features typically identified with the ritual hymns of the *Shijing*. In other words, the initial passage of "Yao dian" is composed in a diction and a register that decidedly set it apart from the rest of the text; following it, the text immediately falls into an entirely different mode. This combination of regularity (within Yao's speech) and difference (from the remainder of the text) cannot be accidental.

Altogether, the received scholarly consensus regarding the reading of the initial "Yao dian" passage, disregardful as it is of linguistic structure and rhetorical pattern, seems difficult to defend. But how did it become the accepted reading for more than two millennia? How was it possible for highly educated scholars since at least the Han—who were incomparably more deeply immersed in their tradition than any modern interpreter—to look past, even

25 None of the rhymed passages identified in the present essay—in fact, no passage from the entire "Yao dian" and "Shun dian" chapters—has been considered in Jiang Yougao 江有誥 (d. 1851?) 1993: 116–118; Long Yuchun 1962–1963, 2009: 182–283; or Tan Jiajian 1995.

26 The only exception is one very brief passage in the later "interview" section where Yao looks for a functionary to ward off a disastrous flood; see below.

willfully so, what must have been obvious? Here we are largely left to speculation. I suspect that the story of Yao must have circulated in different versions, written and oral, already by Han times. In what appears to be the earliest of these versions, perhaps even built around the archaic poem identified above, *fangxun* was a verb-object phrase meaning "imitating [past] merits." This is the version I identify in the received *Shangshu*.

Yet parallel to this reading, something else developed no later than in Han times.[27] How could what appears to have started as a phrase end up as a name? Consider the case of Saint Expeditus, a man mentioned in Roman martyrology. As explained by John J. Delaney in his *Dictionary of Saints*, "popular devotion to him may have mistakenly developed when a crate of holy relics from the Catacombs in Rome to a convent in Paris was mistakenly identified by the recipient as St. Expeditus by the word *expedito* written on the crate. They began to propagate devotion to the imagined saint as the saint to be invoked to expedite matters, and cult soon spread."[28] In the case of Yao, such a process may have been initiated by a similar act of misreading in one of two ways: first, by a simple misunderstanding of the very passage that opens "Yao dian," 帝堯曰放勳, or, second, by the erroneous connection of an early gloss of the type "to imitate past merits is called *fangxun*" with the figure of Yao himself. The fact that the phrase *fangxun* appears exclusively in connection with Yao may have contributed to such a misunderstanding.

Whatever the case, Han sources such as the *Da Dai liji* and the *Shiji* are unequivocal in understanding the term as Yao's personal name, and *Mengzi* 9.4 explicitly quotes "Yao dian" as "After twenty-eight years, Fangxun perished" where the received "Yao dian" has simply "After twenty-eight years, the emperor [*di* 帝] perished," possibly even suggesting a different early recension of the text—the same one that may well have influenced, or in turn may have been influenced by, the understanding in the *Da Dai liji* and the *Shiji*. What is striking here, however, is the fact that Yao was given a personal name (while "Yao" was reconceived as his posthumous temple name) that could be understood,

27 Given the uncertain textual history of the received *Mengzi*, including Zhao Qi's 趙岐 (d. 201 CE) editorial interventions, we cannot determine isolated passages within it as pre-Han. Perhaps the reading advanced in the *Mengzi* already existed during the Warring States period; perhaps it only emerged in the early empire.

28 Delaney 1980: 219. An even more astounding story, in this case of an entirely redefined name, is that of Saint Josaphat, a Christian saint known since the Middle Ages. He is no other than the Gautama Buddha, whose name changed incrementally at each step of the way as his story traveled west and through a series of languages. For a useful account, see *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Barlaam and Josaphat," accessed April 23, 2013 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barlaam_and_Josaphat>.

and clearly was understood, as expressive of his virtue of "imitating past merits." In other words, his newly acquired name was more than just a name: it was a powerful characterization that identified the core of Yao as a person, as a sage, and as an emperor. The fact that this identification mirrored Zhou and Han idealizations of the past—including the idealization of Yao himself—only enhanced his stature.

Once this compelling name was established and adopted by the authors of the *Mengzi*, the *Shiji*, and the *Da Dai liji*, there was perhaps no going back. The authority especially of the *Mengzi* and the *Shiji* must simply have been too strong. The former vouched for the authenticity of "Yao dian" while elsewhere exhibiting a critical attitude toward other texts considered *Documents*.[29] The latter transformed the series of Yao's performative speeches into a coherent narrative of history—a narrative where names are of utmost importance.

Yet this reading always remained somewhat uneasy. In the *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 edition of the seventh-century *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義, for example, the discussion of whether to take *fangxun*, *chonghua* 重華, and *wenming* 文命 as the personal names of Yao, Shun, and Yu or whether to understand "Yao," "Shun," and "Yu" as personal names or as posthumous temple designations extends, in fits and starts, for well over two thousand characters through pages of commentary at the outset of "Yao dian."[30] Yet despite these efforts, contradictions remained: while Ma Rong takes *fangxun* explicitly as Yao's personal name, Zheng Xuan defines *xun* as *gong* 功 (merit) and interprets *di Yao yue fang xun* 帝堯曰放勳 as "Yao imitated the meritorious transformation of previous generations" (*Yao fang shangshi zhi gonghua* 堯放上世之功化)[31] without ever explaining the function of *yue* 曰 in front of *fangxun*. As both commentators understand everything after *di Yao yue* 帝堯曰 as characterizing Yao, it is possible that Zheng Xuan as well takes *fangxun* as Yao's name—a name expressive of Yao's virtue of "imitating past merits"—even though the commentary never says so. Moreover, even the later *Shiji* commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (eighth century), who explicitly identifies *fangxun* in the passage under discussion as Yao's name (*Shiji* 1.15) and hence reads the following text as descriptive of Yao, questions this very identification shortly thereafter (without going back to explain the function of *yue*) (*Shiji* 2.49). At the very least, the self-contradiction in Sima Zhen's *Suoyin* 索隱 commentary suggests a greater fluidity of such commentarial material than is generally assumed. Yet more importantly, the existence of such contradictions

29 For the latter point, see *Mengzi* 14.3.325 ("Jin xin, xia" 盡心下).

30 See *Shangshu zhengyi* 2.118b–119a.

31 *Shangshu zhengyi* 2.118c.

and the uneasy way in which the Han commentators take *fangxun* as both Yao's name and part of his narrative characterization reveal the lingering uncertainty about this central passage centuries after *Mengzi* and *Shiji*. And while it is not unusual for early Chinese historical figures to be referred to by designations acquired only later in life or posthumously,[32] the idea that something like "imitating past merits" was the personal birth name (as asserted in traditional commentaries beginning with Ma Rong's) may be taken as the mark of a gradually developed legend.

Altogether, an even larger problem of "Yao dian" looming in the background may account for some of the textual difficulties that have remained unresolved throughout the exegetical tradition. As argued by Bernhard Karlgren and more forcefully by Sarah Allan,[33] "Yao dian" is a composite text that combines vestiges of Shang dynasty and possibly even earlier knowledge with cosmological notions datable to Warring States times. As Allan has shown, the correlative cosmology of "Yao dian" is already evident in Shang oracle bone inscriptions—albeit now expanded and integrated into the "Five Phases" (*wuxing* 五行) system of thought.[34] A colorful example of such integration of archaic knowledge that even the earliest commentators on "Yao dian" no longer recognized is the set of calendrical regulations. In traditional commentary, these characterize the dispositions of the people (*min* 民) according to the seasons: after the spring equinox is set, the people "disperse" (*xi* 析); after the summer solstice, they "act in accordance" (*yin* 因); after the autumn equinox, they are "at ease" (*yi* 夷); and after the winter solstice, they "keep in the warm" (*yu* 隩). While these terms are perfectly integrated with the larger description of each season, they also are something entirely different—names associated with the celestial quadrants and the winds of some of the four directions as recorded in Shang oracle bone inscriptions.[35] Clearly, "Yao dian" here conflates two distinct sets of knowledge, integrating a much older terminology into a new context.[36]

32 See Goldin 2005: 6–11.

33 Karlgren 1946: 264; here cited from Allan 1991: 58.

34 Allan 1991: 58–62.

35 Allan (1991: 60–61, 79–83) may be simplifying the matter slightly. As noted in Robert Eno's comments on the present essay, these terms appear in the oracle bone inscriptions as "a conflation of a name of the East quadrant, a name that might be related to the West quadrant or wind, the name of the South Wind, and a name perhaps related to the name of the North Wind."

36 Allan (1991: 58–62) has taken this argument further, suggesting that the "Yao dian" proper is not about Yao at all but that it is the Shang high god *di* 帝 who appoints Shun as emperor. In this reading, the initial phrase 帝堯曰 would be a much later (Warring States?) interpolation. While this is an intriguing possibility, it lacks specific evidence.

The Narrative of Yao

The opening passage of "Yao dian" discussed above deserves further attention, as it is more than a piece of hitherto-overlooked poetic speech attributed to the ancient emperor. Implied in its formal arrangement is a claim for tradition, spoken in the idiom of tradition. As I have argued elsewhere, the poetic form of *Shijing* ritual hymns, defined by rhythmic repetition, is a direct reflection of the ideology of the ancestral sacrifice and its commitment of the living to emulate the dead.[37] Reproduction, to invoke Stephen Owen's insightful analysis of the *Shijing* hymns, is not merely a theme but a linguistic structure—more specifically, a structure of mimesis, as aptly identified by David Schaberg for the early *Shangshu* speeches.[38] This is the framework that Yao adopts when singing of good government: Yao does not speak of himself, nor does he appear as the creator of a new political system. What is more, his speech (or song) does not have any particular audience. It is a self-referential utterance that performs its own act of commemoration as the further model for ritualized remembrance, perpetuation, and reproduction—in other words, the very acts by which Yao's speech itself retains its presence throughout all further tradition.[39] Such representation of an ancient culture hero as the successor to an imagined prehistorical order is itself traditional; an immediate example is the story of Lord Millet (Hou Ji 后稷) as told in the "Daya" hymn "Sheng min" 生民 (Mao 245), where the sage's mother reverently observes the inherited rituals and as a result becomes pregnant with him. Yet at the same time, Yao also represents a figure of, in Weberian terms, charismatic authority—a disruptive, revolutionary force who initiates a new system of government.[40] As much as Yao is portrayed as looking back to tradition, he also is fiercely autonomous, unpredictable, and even idiosyncratic in his actions. Over the course of the "Yao dian" narrative (see below), he emerges as a true authoritarian: by the sheer force of his personality, he overrules his advisers and makes his own decisions.

The account that follows the initial section of "Yao dian" is divided into two parts. The first shows Yao giving out appointments to members of the Xi 羲 and He 和 clans to determine the calendar according to correlative cosmology.

37 Kern 2000a, 2009.

38 Owen 2001; Schaberg 1996: 115–128 passim.

39 For "the rememberer remembered," see references in n. 23 above.

40 See Weber 1978: 241–254.

Yao's appointments are grounded in astrology, mapping human activity on the movement of the stars that determine the hemerological order:[41]

> Thereupon he issued his command to the Xi and the He: "Respectfully follow Vast Heaven! Calculate and make figures of the sun and the moon, the stars and the constellations, and deferentially arrange the proper seasons for human activities!"
> 乃命羲和：欽若昊天。曆象日月星辰。敬授人時。

Following this emphatic command, he appoints four individual members of the Xi and the He clans to take up residence in the regions of the east, south, west, and north, respectively, and to determine the correct dates for the equinoxes and solstices so that both the folk (*min* 民) and the birds and beasts (*niaoshou* 鳥獸) live and act in accordance with the seasons. Thus—in the traditional interpretation of the text—after the spring equinox is set, "the people disperse, and birds and beasts breed and copulate" (*jue min xi, niaoshou ziwei* 厥民析，鳥獸孳尾); after the summer solstice is set, "the people act in accordance, and birds and beasts shed and begin to change their coats" (*jue min yin, niaoshou xige* 厥民因，鳥獸希革); after the autumn equinox is set, "the people are at ease, and birds and beasts grow snug new coats" (*jue min yi, niaoshou mao xian* 厥民夷，鳥獸毛毨); after the winter solstice is set, "the people keep in the warm, and birds and beasts have thick coats" (*jue min yu, niaoshou rongmao* 厥民隩，鳥獸氄毛). In other words, Yao's officials adjust the calendar to its correct primordial order—the order of human and animal life before history.[42] Even as he creates a new social order, Yao's repetitive commands do not show him as an actual creator or revolutionary: his task is to align human activity with the mechanics of the cosmic clockwork. After the year has been properly established in 366 days and the four seasons are fixed to schedule, the section concludes with a proverb-style tetrasyllabic couplet:

> Truly ordered are the hundred kinds of artisans;
> the multitudes all flourish.

41 For an excellent account of Yao's arrangement of the calendar, which almost amounts to a cosmogony, and its comparison to Warring States manuscripts on the same subject, see Kalinowski 2004.

42 In Qin and Han texts, this order is then much extended and centered on the timely activities of the Son of Heaven in the "Monthly Ordinances" ("Yue ling" 月令) in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Liji* 禮記, and *Huainanzi* 淮南子.

允釐百工，
庶績咸熙。

All this has been accomplished by Yao's appointments, while the emperor himself does not take an active role in government beyond issuing his initial series of repetitive appointments. Up to this point, we learn nothing about Yao the person, nor are we told about any of his policies. The sage-emperor as created in these two sections is a man without qualities.

This changes with the final section of the "Yao dian" proper, before the text turns to Shun. Here, Yao strenuously searches for capable functionaries to manage his realm, to ward off natural disaster, and, finally, to succeed him as emperor. Through a series of brief dialogues with his advisers, Yao now emerges as a highly personal presence, a charismatic leader speaking in an unmistakable and commanding voice that begins every utterance with an exclamation. Repeatedly, he asks his advisers to recommend an able administrator, and in one case (that of Gun 鯀) he even allows for a probationary period of nine years before concluding that the candidate has remained incompetent. What stands out in this sequence of interviews is Yao's emphatic display of personal, even harsh judgment that remains in constant disagreement with his officials; the matters of appointment and succession are not in their hands but are his own choice, beginning with his stark rejection of his own son: "Alas! He is deceitful and quarrelsome—how could he do?" (吁！囂訟可乎). Yao's disagreements with his advisers show him as strong as they are weak: they have opinions, but they do not represent a developed, functioning system of government. The Yao of this lengthy interview section is individual and even idiosyncratic; if the previous sections had rendered him nearly invisible, an abstract, impersonal force operating through the dual authority of tradition and cosmology, now he speaks as an intensely personal figure of archaic charisma. At one point (before giving Gun his probationary appointment), he falls into a dramatic description of the disastrous flood that threatens the folk:

The emperor said: "Alas, [Officer of the] Four Peaks![43]
Swelling, swelling—the rising flood is causing damage all around!
Vast, vast—it engulfs the mountains, overflows the hills!
Gushing, gushing—it surges to Heaven;

43 The term *si yue* 四岳 (lit. "four peaks") is much debated in early commentaries. All of them concur that it is an official title, but there is widespread disagreement on (*a*) whether the term refers to a single officer or a group of functionaries and (*b*) who this or these might be; see the discussion in Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 77–79.

the folk below are groaning.
Is there a capable man whom I could ask to attend to the situation?"
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？

In this speech of dramatic performance, Yao appears as a ruler who cares for his people and who grasps the urgency of protecting them. The power of this speech is further apparent from the fact that lines 3–5 appear nearly verbatim, though in different order, once again in "Gao Yao mo," this time attributed to Yu as he speaks of his own accomplishments in taming the flood.[44]

Remarkably, nothing in the entire interview section appeals to either tradition or cosmology—the points of reference in the earlier parts of the chapter—or, for that matter, to any other existing framework of governance. Yao even rejects the idea of hereditary kingship, a move that puts him squarely and fundamentally at odds with the dynastic model of both Zhou and early imperial rule.[45]

The Narrative of Shun

The overall rhetorical representation of Yao in the first half of "Yao dian" differs considerably from the second part of the chapter, which in the ancient-text *Shangshu* forms a separate chapter, "Shun dian." As noted above, it is only this second part that furnishes the textual evidence allowing Gu Jiegang, Chen Mengjia, Jiang Shanguo, and others to date "Yao dian" (which they take always as a whole) to imperial Qin or Western Han times. While I would not suggest rehabilitating the ancient-text version, there is no evidence that before the empire, "Yao dian" and "Shun dian" together formed a single "Yao dian" chapter,[46] or that altogether, the modern-script version in any way represents

44 Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 2, 88. In the ancient-script version, the passage is in the "Yi ji" 益稷 chapter.

45 On the question of hereditary versus meritocratic kingship in early Chinese mythology and political debate, see Pines 2005, 2010; Allan 1981, 2006, 2015.

46 Interestingly, when *Mengzi* 9.4 explicitly quotes "Yao dian," it refers to a passage in the "Shun dian" part. While some may consider this to be strong evidence for the pre-Qin

some "original" *Shangshu* and not merely the text arranged in the early empire. Instead, I strongly suspect that the two were separate and, furthermore, that each contains its own diachronic textual layers. The earliest evidence for a unified chapter encompassing the accounts of both Yao and Shun is the so-called modern-script version, which may have taken shape at the Qin imperial court (if not later) and, from there, by way of the Qin "Erudite" (*boshi* 博士) Scholar Fu 伏生,[47] was passed down to Han times. Instead, the notable ideological distinction between the two parts suggests the original independence of "Yao dian" from "Shun dian." As I will show below, unlike Yao's archaic method of rulership, Shun's is fully compatible with the imperial ideology of Qin and early Han times.

Leaving aside the initial paragraph of the ancient-text chapter "Shun dian,"[48] there are two different readings of the first section of what we may call "Shun's text." In the first reading, the "emperor"—who must still be Yao—only exclaims "Respectful indeed!" (*qin zai* 欽哉) before the anonymous narrative voice sets in, now with Shun as the implied topic.[49] Yet again, a different reading can be offered, namely, to take the entire initial section as Yao's first speech to Shun, after he had given him his daughters in marriage:

> The emperor said: "Be respectful!
> [If you] cautiously harmonize the five statutory relations,[50]
> the five statutory relations can be observed.
> [If you] engage with the hundred kinds of governmental affairs,
> the hundred kinds of governmental affairs will proceed with timeliness.

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combination of the two parts, it may just as well be due to later (i.e., Han) editing of the *Mengzi* on the basis of the Western Han modern-script *Shangshu*. According to the citation index compiled by Chan Hung Kan and Ho Che Wah (2003: 17–47), *Mengzi* 9.4 is the only passage in all pre-Han literature that invokes a passage from "Shun dian" under the title "Yao dian"; it is, in fact, the only citation purportedly from pre-Han times that mentions the title "Yao dian" at all.

47 On the problematic construction of scholastic lineages for the classics in the Han, including Scholar Fu's role with regard to the *Shangshu*, see Cai Liang 2011.

48 Missing in the modern-script chapter, this paragraph of twenty-seven characters at the outset of the ancient-script "Shun dian" looks like an abbreviated imitation of the beginning of "Yao dian" (in the conventional punctuation: 曰若稽古，帝舜曰重華，協于帝，濬哲文明，溫恭允塞，玄德升聞，乃命以位).

49 This is the reading suggested by Sun Xingyan, Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, Qu Wanli, James Legge, and Bernhard Karlgren.

50 There is no consensus among the commentators as to the meaning of *wu dian* 五典, which is here—following the *Shiji* parallel—tentatively translated as "five statutory relations."

> [If you] formally receive those at the gates of the four directions,
> those at the gates of the four directions will be reverent, reverent."
> 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。

While this passage lacks any regular rhyme pattern, the diction is not that of narrative but of well-ordered speech, with the six tetrasyllabic lines being tightly organized through the triple use of anadiplosis and capped with the reduplicative binome *mumu* 穆穆 (reverent, reverent).[51] This is followed by a brief narrative before Yao once again turns to Shun:

> When [Yao] sent him to the foot of a mountain, blazing wind, thunder, and rain did not lead him astray.[52] The emperor said: "Come here, you Shun! When consulting with you about government, I have examined your words—and your words are well founded and can be followed. After [by now] three years, you shall ascend to the imperial position!"
> 納于大麓，烈風雷雨弗迷。帝曰：格汝舜，詢事考言，乃言厎可績。三載汝陟帝位。

It is only after these initial two speeches that the account of Shun turns into narrative. Aside from occasionally falling into a brief sequence of tetrasyllabic lines, this narrative shows none of the poetic features seen in some of Yao's speeches; and while Yao's speeches punctuate his entire account, it is unclear how much Shun gets to speak: according to the traditional reading, he remains silent through most of the chapter before finally engaging in interviews and making appointments. While it is possible that parts of what seems to be nar·

51 This reading finds support in the parallel *Shiji* account (*Shiji* 1.23), where the speech is introduced by the formula 堯 … 使舜 ("Yao made Shun" to "cautiously harmonize the five statutory relations …").

52 According to the paraphrase of the passage in *Shiji*, Yao sent Shun into the wilderness as a trial—another topos familiar from Lord Millet in "Sheng min." After Shun weathered all adverse circumstances, Yao considered him a sage; see *Shiji* 1.22. The story is paraphrased in various Han texts; see Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 102.

rative may have been speeches (see below), they are not marked as such, nor do they ever sustain the extended emphatic diction accorded to Yao. However formulaic and impersonal some of Yao's speeches may be, in the end he appears as a ruler of personal charisma—not least because of the forceful way in which he disagrees with his officials. Shun's narrative has nothing of this; when he finally engages in dialogues with his officials over whom to appoint to a range of specific administrative tasks, his responses to recommendations are without exception in the affirmative, presenting the emperor not as a decisive or individual force but as a compliant one. Where Yao's rule is based on the emperor's personal judgment that overrules flawed advice, the quality and success of Shun's rule rest with him not as a person but as the emperor, the pinnacle of a perfected, reliable, and authoritative administrative system. If the agency of Yao's rule lies with the emperor himself, in the account of Shun it shifts to the administrative ranks, or, at a minimum, to the overall unity between the emperor and his bureaucracy. Shun represents, again in Weber's terms, the routinization of the earlier charismatic power into bureaucratic and legal rule.

Although Shun may appear not as a charismatic and emotional persona but as a personified governmental function, in his imperial role he is nevertheless far more activist than his predecessor. More specifically, while Yao's officers of the Xi and He clans are concerned with the primordial order (in the end including the threat of the all-consuming flood) at the very beginning of history, it is with Shun that cosmic sovereignty is defined in much more specific social and political terms—and in terms that are fully congruent with the early empire. What is more, in his initial quest for cosmic order and his sovereignty over it, Shun does not delegate; he acts. Having received his imperial mandate on "the first day of the first month" (*zhengyue shangri* 正月上日) in the temple of "the accomplished progenitor(s)" (*wenzu* 文祖),[53] he begins his rule by offering sacrifices to an entire series of cosmic deities, including the spirits of mountains and rivers. This creation of, and appeal to, a cosmic pantheon in support of political rule matches the state religious system of two early emperors: the Qin First Emperor and Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) of the Han, both of whom greatly expanded the cosmic sacrifices of their time, creating a cultic system with a host of newly recognized deities that included, among others, Shun himself, who was now venerated as a natural spirit residing on Mount

53 It is unclear to what *wenzu* refers here, considering Shun's humble pedigree. The term may refer to Yao's ancestor(s) or even, as argued by some commentators, Heaven.

Jiuyi 九嶷山.[54] Both the Qin First Emperor (in 211 BCE) and Emperor Wu of the Han (in the winter of 107/106 BCE) performed the *wang* 望 sacrifice to him[55]—just as Shun himself had "performed the *wang* sacrifice to the mountains and rivers" (*wang yu shan chuan* 望於山川) immediately after his appointment, expressing his sovereignty over the entire realm.[56]

During all his ritual performances for the cosmic spirits following his enthronement, Shun does not speak a word—in fact, he is not even mentioned as the subject of his actions. The same is true for the following passage that narrates in the briefest terms his subsequent "tours of inspection" (to some extent parallel to the Qin First Emperor's series of tours between 219 and 210)[57] to the mountains of the four directions, undertaken during the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh months, the months of the equinoxes and solstices:

> In the second month of the year, [he] went eastward to inspect those under his protection. [He] arrived at Mount Daizong. [He] made a burnt offering and performed in correct order the *wang* sacrifices to the mountains and streams. [He] then received the lords of the east. He harmonized the season, the month, and the [first] day of the first month [i.e., the beginning of the year]. [He] unified the pitch pipes and the measures of length, capacity, and weight. He arranged the five kinds of rituals, the five kinds of jade, the three kinds of silk, the two kinds of living sacrificial animals, and the one dead sacrificial animal. The gifts were according to the five categories of nobility. When finished, [he] returned home.
> 歲二月。東巡守。至于岱宗。柴，望秩于山川。肆覲東后。協時月正日，同律度量衡。修五禮、五玉、三帛、二生、一死。贄如五器。卒乃復。

While Shun initiates cosmic and social order, all his ritual activities follow fixed patterns that are expressed in the form of seemingly comprehensive and in part numerically organized catalogs. The impression of Shun as an

54 See Bilsky 1975; Holladay 1967; Bujard 2000; Kern 2000b, 1997. For Emperor Wu's extensive travels, see Loewe 2004: 605–606.

55 *Shiji* 6.260; *Hanshu* 6.196.

56 As Bilsky (1975: vol. 2, 248) notes: "The *wang* sacrifice was offered by [the Qin First Emperor] at the most distant point the tour reached to the gods of still more remote natural features. Thus, the *wang* was used to show the enormous extent of the empire and of imperial power." By the time of the Qin First Emperor, the *wang* sacrifice was long established as the principal ritual of territorial sovereignty; see Kern 2000b: 115.

57 See Kern 2000b.

impersonal function of government—as opposed to a charismatic, disruptive leader—is further cemented by the repetition of his "tour of inspection" another three times; abbreviating the accounts of Shun's specific activities, the text simply notes each time that the rituals were the same as before—a series of identical repetitions devoid of any particulars. Finally, the text invokes an even larger structure of order, of which the imperial tours are only a part: "Once in five years [he inspected] those under [his] protection. [In between,] the many lords visited for audience four times" (五載一巡守，群后四朝). This matter-of-fact line is then followed by a set of formulaic phrases strangely at odds with the preceding diction—a rhythmic chant to express the seamless and uniform order followed by the subordinate lords:

> They broadly submitted reports by their words;
> they were clearly examined according to their merits;
> they were given chariots and robes according to their services.
> 敷奏以言。 *-an
> 明試以功。 *-uŋ
> 車服以庸。 *-uŋ

Considering how alien, in formal terms, these lines are to the preceding narrative, and that their subject is not made explicit, one might be tempted to read them rather differently, namely, as a chant performed *to* the subordinate lords. Furthermore, the final line can be read as the result of the first two:

> You have broadly submitted reports by your words;
> you were clearly examined according to your merits;
> [thus,] you are given chariots and robes according to your services.

Nothing proves this interpretation. However, the very fact that the three lines are so clearly marked and separated as emphatic speech raises doubts about their being a mere continuation of the previous narrative. What is more, they also appear nearly verbatim in another *Shangshu* chapter, namely, "Yi ji" 益稷 (or "Gao Yao mo"), and there in a direct speech by Yu.[58] In addition, in an explicit quotation from "Xia shu" 夏書 (i.e., the first section of the *Shangshu*) in *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, the three lines are invoked in isolation from their context in either *Shangshu* chapter.[59] All this suggests that they formed some kind of

58 Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 2, 109; Legge 1991: 83. In the modern-script *Shangshu*, "Yi ji" is part of "Gao Yao mo"; in the ancient-script version, the two are separate chapters.

59 Yang Bojun 1993: Xi 27, 445–446.

independent proverb-like saying that circulated on its own and was incorporated wholesale into early texts, including twice into the *Shangshu*.

The next section continues in formulaic fashion, and once again without a subject:

> [He] initiated the twelve provinces,
> raised altars at the twelve mountains.
> [He] deepened the rivers.
> [He] made representations of the statutory punishments:
> banishment mitigates the five [principal] punishments;
> the whip is the punishment at the magistrates' courts;
> the stick is the punishment at schools;
> money is the punishment for redeemable crimes.
> Inadvertent offenses and those caused by misfortune are pardoned;
> brazen and repeated offenses receive the punishment for miscreants.
> "Be respectful! Be respectful!
> Be cautious with punishments!"
> 肇十有二州，
> 封十有二山。
> 濬川。
> 象以典刑：
> 流宥五刑，
> 鞭作官刑，
> 扑作教刑，
> 金作贖刑。
> 眚災肆赦，
> 怙終賊刑。
> 欽哉欽哉！
> 惟刑之恤哉！

All commentators take the highly emphatic final two lines as Shun's exhortation to his officials—simply because they cannot be part of the anonymous narrative voice. Yet note that nothing separates them from the preceding catalog of punishments (which, incidentally, is at least in part reminiscent of Qin and early Han law).[60] The final line of five characters once again—just like the concluding six-character line in Yao's initial speech—caps the entire tetrasyllabic passage while still adhering to the four-beat meter (as the particle *zhi* 之

60 For recent studies, see Sueyasu 2009: 112–121; Zhang Jinguang 2004: 553–560; Cao Lüning 2006; Zhu Honglin 2007.

does not count metrically). Moreover, the extensive catalog of punishments, always ending with the word *xing* 刑, is dramatic rhetoric and emphasized through the single line that breaks the formal pattern: the one line that speaks of the relief from punishment ("Inadvertent offenses and those caused by misfortune are pardoned") is also set apart formally by ending on a different word (*she* 赦), mimetically reflecting the escape from punishment (*xing*) also on the linguistic level.[61]

In terms of contents, we witness the same conflict already seen above: the representation of government as comprehensive, systematic, and impersonal is capped by what must be taken as direct speech. At the same time, nothing suggests that this speech—presumably Shun's own—begins only with the final exclamation; instead, it may just as well encompass the entire tetrasyllabic catalog of punishments. Once again, the traditional habit of reading the chapter as a continuous narrative "document" may well obscure the possibly original nature of the text as largely performative, or perhaps as a collection of shorter performative utterances—perhaps even from diverse sources—now hung upon the skeleton of mythological narrative. One rhetorical characteristic of the text that contributes much to the uncertainties engulfing the question of voice is the fact that from Shun's acceptance of the throne all the way to the moment of Yao's death, when Shun once again goes to the ancestral temple, he is not mentioned once throughout the entire narrative—for some 270 characters. (By contrast, the final section, where Shun appoints his officials, is entirely dialogical, with the frequent use of "The emperor said.") Since some lines are clearly distinguished as direct utterances, one may well assume that others, though less visibly, may represent speech as well.

Following the admonition to be cautious with punishments, the text enters into another catalog, this time of the "four criminals." As before, the subject is only implied. In the following, I use the conventional "he" although it may just as well be "I":

> [He] banished Gong Gong to Dark Province,
> exiled Huan Dou to Exalted Mountain,
> expelled the San Miao [people] to Threefold Precipice,
> sent Gun to the terminal point at Feathered Mountain—
> after these four sanctions, All-under-Heaven became submissive.
> 流共工于幽州，

61 To have linguistic structure mimetically represent the topic of speech is a feature of early Chinese rhetoric as seen in the Han dynasty *fu* 賦 as well as in early speeches of political persuasion; see Kern 2003.

放驩兜于崇山，
竄三苗于三危，
殛鯀于羽山，
四罪而天下咸服。

What Shun performs here is more than the punishment of particular criminals (including an entire people). As commentators since Han times have pointed out, these criminals and their places of exile or execution were associated with the barbarian areas of the four directions: Dark Province in the north, Exalted Mountain in the south, Threefold Precipice in the west, and Feathered Mountain in the east.[62] Once again, the text suggests a catalog that is both complete and systematic, this time measuring the physical space of the empire by the terminal points to which all crime is relegated. Furthermore, in choosing four different verbs, the passage applies a different type of punishment to each of the four criminals, creating a trifold catalog of different criminals, different punishments, and different locations that again suggests the absolute totality of Shun's rule, after which "All-under-Heaven became submissive." Expressed in such diction is the very claim for totalizing sovereignty historically associated with the Qin First Emperor and his mission to make the realm both unified and uniform. Note also how the catalog culminates: after "banishing" (*liu* 流), "exiling" (*fang* 放), and "expelling" (*cuan* 竄) the other criminals, the emperor finally "sends to the terminal point" (*ji* 殛, here read as *ji* 極) the last offender, Gun, who is thus condemned to die in the liminal space between civilization and barbarism.[63]

Shun's all-encompassing cosmology of the four directions continues through the next passage of unbound prose, before the text falls back into yet

62 As made explicit in *Da Dai liji*; see Wang Pinzhen 1983: VII.62.121 ("Wu di de").

63 Not all commentators take *ji* 殛 as *ji* 極, even though the substitution (*a*) is perfectly acceptable within the limits of the *ji* 亟 *xiesheng* 諧聲 series and (*b*) fits the other terms exactly. See Duan Yucai 1988: 4B.10a–11a; the extensive discussions in Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 1, 57; Pi Xirui 2004: vol. 1, 68–69; and Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 183–185; and the entries, with further references, in *Hanyu dazidian* 1986: 1391; and Feng Qiyong and Deng Ansheng 2006: 386–387. Karlgren's (1946: 249n1) laconic argument against this substitution (and in favor of reading *ji* 殛 simply as "to kill") is unconvincing. That said, the idea is still that Gun ultimately died at Feathered Mountain. The same is true for the other criminals, such as the San Miao (by commentators often understood as "the Three Miao Tribes"), who, in the parallel narratives in both *Mengzi* 9.3.212 ("Wan Zhang, shang") and *Da Dai liji* (Wang Pinzhen 1983: VII.62.121 ["Wu di de"]), were "killed" (*sha* 殺) at Threefold Precipice.

another instance of an entirely formulaic idiom that is at least partly in direct speech:

> Twenty-eight years [after Shun had taken the throne], the emperor [Yao] expired.[64] The [noble officials of the] hundred surnames mourned as if for a deceased father or mother. For three years, they stopped and silenced the eight musical notes in the realm within the four seas. On the first day of the first month, Shun went to the temple of the accomplished progenitor(s).
> 二十有八載，帝乃殂落。百姓如喪考妣。三載，四海遏密八音。月正元日，舜格于文祖。

> He deliberated with the [Officer of the] Four Peaks—
> to open the gates of the four [directions],
> to clear the vistas of the four [directions],
> to penetrate what could be heard from the four [directions].[65]
> 詢于四岳：
> 闢四門，
> 明四目，
> 達四聰。
> [He] said:
> "Alas, pastors of the twelve [provinces]![66]

64 In a series of traditional sources, beginning with *Mengzi* 9.4, the subject here is given not as *di* 帝 (the emperor) but as *fangxun* 放勳, here clearly understood as Yao; see Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 1, 58; Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 187–188. Note also the unusual term 殂落 ("went into decline," i.e., "perish," also written 徂落) for Yao's death, which seems to define his death as a cosmic event.

65 These lines may well be constructed as another speech: "He deliberated with the [Officer of the] Four Peaks: 'Open the gates of the four [directions], clear the vistas of the four [directions], penetrate what can be heard from the four [directions]!'"

66 For the character *zi* 咨 (usually "to consult" or "to plan"), the parallel in *Shiji* 1.38 has *ming* 命 (to command). While *Hanshu* (83.3406) has *zi* 咨, *Jinshu* 晉書 (14.418, 423, 425, 428, 430, 436; 15.449, 453) consistently writes *zhi* 置 (to establish). This seems to be an interpretive extension of *ming* rather than a variant of *zi*, as *zi* (*tsij) and *zhi* (*trək-s) are not phonologically close. Elsewhere in "Yao dian," *zi* 咨 repeatedly appears as an initial exclamation in Yao's and Shun's speeches, which in the *Shiji* parallels is consistently rendered (and clarified) as *jie* 嗟 (alas!). The way in which the *Shiji* resolves the seemingly different uses of *zi* in the same text is a typical case of providing an easier reading of an initially more obscure phrasing. While Chinese commentators have accepted this easier reading (see, e.g., Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 194), it must be rejected according to the philological principle of *lectio difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is the stronger).

Be respectful indeed in this matter:[67]
if you are gentle to those who are distant, kind to those who are near,[68]
generous to those of virtue, trusting to those who lead the good ones,
yet causing difficulties for the cunning men—
then the Man and Yi tribes will be submissive and obedient."
咨十有二牧曰：
食哉惟時，
遠柔能邇。
惇德允元，
而難任人，
蠻夷率服。

After this speech, Shun makes nine appointments, some by merely issuing directives to individuals, others after asking his advisers for recommendations; in four cases, the appointee first declines but is then simply told to take up his duties. Altogether, Shun's catalog of officials includes twenty-two persons—the twelve pastors, the Officer of the Four Peaks, and the nine appointed functionaries—whom he then finally admonishes to support him in his Heaven-ordained duties. Every three years, the achievements of the appointees are examined; after three such examinations, promotions and demotions are conducted. In Shun's speech, the subject of examining, promoting, and demoting remains anonymous: the system of bureaucratic government is depicted as running its inevitable course, and it is framed according to the notion of "performance and title" (*xingming* 刑名) associated with Shen Buhai 申不害 (fourth century BCE) and Han Fei 韓非 (ca. 280–ca. 233 BCE).[69]

Most of Shun's appointment speeches are short—between just a few characters and four tetrasyllabic lines; of the speeches followed by an initial refusal from the appointee, the longest is just three lines. While none of Shun's

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I follow Karlgren's (1970: 96, gloss 1275) suggestion that the *yue* 曰 in this line has been mistakenly transposed; in accordance with all parallels in the chapter, the line should read 曰咨十有二牧 instead of 咨十有二牧曰.

67 Much has been argued about this line; see Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005: vol. 1, 194–196; Karlgren 1970: 96, gloss 1276. With Karlgren, I follow the Qing scholar Xu Zongyan 許宗彥, who reads *shi* 食 as *qin* 欽 (respectful); at the same time, I follow Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu, who argue to preserve the overall structure of tetrasyllabic lines here. *Shi* 時 is, as often, to be read as the emphatic demonstrative *shi* 是 (this).

68 The same phrase appears in the "Daya" 大雅 hymn "Min lao" 民勞 (Mao 253). For a lengthy discussion, see Karlgren 1964: 85–87, gloss 917.

69 Goldin 2013: 8–11. See also Makeham 1990–1991, 1994: 67–83; Creel 1974: 119–124.

speeches are rhymed, two stand out for their length and rhetorical patterns: the speech to Gao Yao and the speech to Kui 夔:

> The emperor said: "Gao Yao!
> The Man and Yi tribes bring disorder to [our] Xia [realm].
> There are robbers and bandits, the crafty and the treacherous—
> you shall take charge!
> The five kinds of punishments shall have their [determined] applications,
> the five kinds of applications shall have three kinds of gradations;
> the five kinds of banishments shall have their [determined] localities,
> the five kinds of localities shall have three kinds of [specific] places—
> it is clarity that makes [you] trustworthy!"
> 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。

Aside from the regular meter, the striking feature of this speech is its emphasis on numerological concepts and hierarchical order. Here, numbers are not just numbers; what are discussed are not some "five punishments," "five applications," and "three gradations" or some "five banishments," "five localities," and "three places," but *the five kinds* and *the three kinds* of punishments, applications, and gradations and of banishments, localities, and places. Moreover, for both punishments and banishments, we are given an increasing order of specificity, where an overall phenomenon (punishments or banishments) is determined with regard to its general execution (applications or localities), which in turn is further specified with regard to its concrete implementation (gradations and places). In other words, these phrases present the *system* of punishments in definite and comprehensive fashion. The speech to Kui is different and yet similar: instead of the tetrasyllabic meter, it employs conventional rhetorical patterns of expository prose, "A and yet B" and "A without being B," together with a series of brief apodictic statements in trisyllabic form. Once again, the impression is one of comprehensive and perfect order—and of an order not described but prescribed:

The emperor said: "Kui! I command you to codify a system of music to teach our successive sons.
They shall be upright and yet gentle,
broad-minded and yet firm,
hard without being cruel,
grand without being arrogant.
Poetry shall express intent,
song shall extend the words,
melody shall follow from [such] extension,
and the pitch pipes shall harmonize melody.
When the eight notes are made consonant,
they will not encroach upon one another—
by this means spirits and humans will be in harmony!"
帝曰：夔！命汝典樂，教胄子。
直而溫，
寬而栗，
剛而無虐，
簡而無傲。
詩言志，
歌永言，
聲依永，
律和聲。
八音克諧，
無相奪倫，
神人以和。

In sum, because Shun's two major appointment speeches outline, first, the system of punishments and, then, the system of music, neither speech would be confused with poetry, unlike Yao's two speeches—the first his praise of antiquity, the second his address to Shun—which share the diction of the "Daya" hymns. It is their very specificity that makes us read these lines as prose; they are dominated by their contents, not by their emphatic poetic diction in the service of some more general pronouncement. Unlike Yao, Shun never appears as a charismatic speaker or personality.

Yao and Shun as Competing Models of Kingship

There are other differences between the two sections of "Yao dian." As noted above, Yao embraces the principle of meritocratic succession and appoints

Shun as his successor while rejecting his own son. Across a range of Warring States and early Han texts, Shun is likewise portrayed as having appointed Yu 禹 as his successor, once again elevating meritocratic over hereditary rulership—an idea gravely at odds with both Zhou and imperial rule. Yet "Yao dian"—the very text that stands at the core of the Shun legend—does not make this claim at all. In fact, it never touches on Shun's succession; Shun never retires from the throne, never speaks of handing over his government, and merely appoints Yu as one functionary among others.[70] Considering the significance of the topic of abdication, this difference between the first and the second half of "Yao dian" may not be accidental. If "Yao dian"—or at least its second half, "Shun dian" of the ancient-text version—dates to late Warring States or early imperial times, it cannot have been authored and transmitted in complete isolation from, and ignorance of, the entire range of texts that portray Shun as the second great champion of abdication and meritocratic succession.[71] If the authors of the text decided to leave aside this central element of Shun's legend, it was probably on the grounds of a particular ideological agenda—an agenda that was compatible with the ideology of the early empire. Shun was a model to follow and a spirit to address with the *wang* sacrifice. Yao was not. Or put in different terms: Shun adheres to the imperial perspective on rulership in ways that Yao does not. In Western Han political philosophy, the reference to Yao created a profound dilemma: while in Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 (ca. 195–ca. 115 BCE) model of dynastic succession according to cosmological cycles, the Western Han could claim Yao as its typological prefiguration and derive its right to rule from him, an appeal to Yao's model of abdication in favor of a new sage unrelated by blood was tantamount to treason. When, after the appearance of a series of strange portents in 78 BCE, the court scholar Sui Hong 睢弘 suggested that the Han dynasty had run its cosmological course and was now destined to follow Yao's model of abdication, he was charged with rebellion and put to death.[72]

70 Sun Xingyan 1986: vol. 1, 61–63.

71 The prevalence of the theme of abdication and its application to both Yao and Shun have been archeologically confirmed by the bamboo manuscript "Tang Yu zhi dao" 唐虞之道 found at Guodian 郭店, Hubei. For the text, see Jingmenshi bowuguan 1998: 39–41, 157–159. For a translation and discussion, see Allan 2006. For further analysis, see the excellent study by Pines (2005, with extensive references to Chinese scholarship). In addition, the bamboo manuscripts "Zi Gao" 子羔 and especially "Rong cheng shi" 容成氏 in the Shanghai Museum corpus discuss the issue of abdication; see Pines 2005, 2010, again with a wealth of references.

72 *Hanshu* 75.3153–3154. See Arbuckle 1995: 588–589; Sukhu 2005–2006: 103–106.

After Sui Hong, the next figure to identify the Western Han with Yao in order to present Yao's abdication to Shun as a historical model was none other than Wang Mang 王莽 (ca. 45 BCE–23 CE). When governing as the de facto ruler—before putting an end to the Western Han by proclaiming his new Xin 新 dynasty and himself its founding emperor—Wang had asserted repeatedly that he was occupying the position of the Duke of Zhou (周公之位), that is, of the regent who protected the dynasty at the time of an infant emperor.[73] Yet when Wang was on the verge of establishing himself officially as emperor, he reversed his purported identity: now he declared himself the "descendant of Emperor Yu [= Shun]" (虞帝之苗裔) who ruled because the spirit of the Han founding emperor, Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE), had abdicated his dynasty in Wang's favor.[74] After assuming the throne, Wang continued to invoke the abdication to him, the new Shun, on various occasions not only in speech but also in ritual and administrative activities where he imitated the purported government structure of Shun's reign, enshrined Shun in the imperial ancestral temple as his ancestor, and, in the hour of his death, carried Shun's ceremonial knife.[75] In short, the one person at the late Western Han imperial court who could invoke Yao's abdication to Shun as a political model was the man who ended the existing dynasty to set up his own. To all others, the historical example of Yao's abdication was fraught with ambiguity and peril.

Nevertheless, and regardless of the core problem of abdication, the overall vision of Yao as presented in "Yao dian" was acceptable to Han thinkers because it represented a historical time of kingship before the organization of an actual state. Yao was both charismatic and archaic; his refusal to follow his advisers evinced a political structure that was at best incipient, and his principal task at the dawn of history was to harmonize the primordial state of humanity with the course of nature. Shun, by contrast, was the ruler not merely of the next historical period but of a radically different stage in the development of human social, legal, and political organization.

Shun appoints a set of administrators all with specific tasks; the result is a catalog of functionaries to run a system of government. This system is characterized by a number of features. First, it has no place for the ruler's individuality; unlike Yao, Shun operates as the head of a functioning order.

73 See the various passages in *Hanshu* 99A.

74 *Hanshu* 99A.4095. See also Sukhu 2005–2006: 120–124. For the complete genealogical construction, see *Hanshu* 98.4013.

75 See *Hanshu* 99B.4105–4108, 4111, 4131, 4144; 99C.4162, 4174, 4190. For a full account of Wang Mang's claim to be Shun's descendant, see the excellent study by Michael Loewe (1994).

Second, it is particularized, regulated, and comprehensive, as seen not only in the unification of weights, measures, and rituals but also in its dealings with the different types of criminals, their punishments, and their places of exile. Third, it reveals a strong sense of order, manifest in the continuous use of numerological organization. Fourth, it is connected to a pantheon of cosmic spirits whose support is regarded as essential to the stability of the state. This stability is guaranteed not by a single deity such as Heaven; instead, it rests on a network of local spirits across the vast physical realm of the empire that could now, as an expression of his territorial sovereignty, be addressed by a cosmic ruler. This, as opposed to appeals to the single deity of Heaven, is also characteristic of Qin and early Han rule.[76] Fifth, the appointments handed out by the emperor are invariably successful; the few cases where an appointee attempts to refuse are entirely formulaic, and they are immediately resolved by the emperor's unquestioned command.

Remarkably, this overall representation of Shun matches exactly how his successor Yu is portrayed in the long "Yu gong" 禹貢 chapter of the *Shangshu*, where the name Yu appears exactly twice: in the very first sentence and in the very last: "Yu laid out the land" (禹敷土) and "Yu presented [*or:* was presented with] the dark scepter to announce that his work was accomplished" (禹錫玄圭告厥成功). Everything in between is a completely impersonal and totalizing account of the systematic organization of the realm that is merely initiated by the emperor but that otherwise just seems to fall into place.[77]

The features of Shun's (and Yu's) system of government are eminently compatible with, and quite possibly a reflection of, the political ideology in the service of the Qin and early Han imperial court. What is more, "Yao dian" does not merely describe the ancient rulers—through the very nature of the text, it stages them rhetorically. This is reflected in the different types of speeches attributed to Yao and Shun and even more profoundly in how Shun's rule is depicted: for the most part, the emperor is never present or even mentioned. What has traditionally been read as a narrative with Shun as the implied subject is a largely subjectless text par excellence—a text that does not distinguish between the actions of the ruler and the successful workings of the anonymous bureaucratic state. Monarchs like the Qin First Emperor or Emperor Wu of the Han could not have failed to realize how much the representation of Shun was also their own.

Thus, while a host of other early texts make us see Yao and Shun as the two primordial sages standing for the same political ideals of antiquity, "Yao dian"

76 See Loewe 2004: 421–440.

77 See Legge 1991: 93–150.

sharply differs in their representation, most prominently with regard to the question of imperial succession. No learned man of the Qin and Han would have missed this point, which may once again confirm the unique status of the *Shangshu* as a truly imperial text—monopolized, edited, and possibly in parts written or rewritten at the imperial courts of the Qin and Han.[78]

One may wonder how to interpret the striking differences in the representations of the two mythological emperors. One way to understand "Yao dian" (including "Shun dian") is to take the two emperors as two types of rulers—or, rather, as personifications of two different types of rulership: here the archaic persona of the charismatic emperor who sings of antiquity, there the more recent and largely invisible technocrat who creates, as part of his comprehensive order, the very system of music in which singing has its place. To push this one step further, Yao and Shun may have been viewed not just as two different types after which a monarch could model himself. Instead, Yao and Shun could have been understood as representing two complementary aspects of imperial rule that could be alternately actualized according to the situation.

In fact, at least for the Qin and early Western Han, we find not only accounts of bureaucratic government (i.e., Shun's model) but also representations of charismatic leadership (Yao's model). This includes a number of political heroes and emperors who on occasion burst into impromptu song performances, including Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BCE) and Liu Bang 劉邦 (Han Emperor Gaozu).[79] In positive terms, such a list would also include Emperor Wen 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE) with his emotional deathbed edict expressing his care for the people;[80] in pejorative terms, the figure of the charismatic revolutionary would include first and foremost the Qin First Emperor, whose erratic megalomania and random acts of violence are juxtaposed to the solemn texts of his mountain inscriptions in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE) *Shiji*.[81] Strictly speaking, in the early historical imagination, both the Qin First Emperor and Emperor Wu of the Han appear as monarchs of, at once,

78 Chen Mengjia 1985: 135–136, 144–146; Jiang Shanguo 1988: 28; Kanaya 1992: 236–240; Kern 2000b: 183–196. Thus, Wang Chong 王充 (27–ca. 100) was only half right when praising the stele inscriptions erected by the Qin First Emperor: "Those who contemplate and recite them see the beauty of Yao and Shun" (觀讀之者，見堯、舜之美); see Huang Hui 1990: 20.855.

79 For the early Chinese historiographic function and rhetoric of song in the depiction of tragic heroism, see Kern 2004.

80 *Hanshu* 4.131–132.

81 See Kern 2000b: 154–163.

charisma and bureaucratic legalism: fearsome, idiosyncratic authoritarians who also run a ruthless state machinery.[82]

Yet another way to look at the different representations of Yao and Shun in the *Shangshu* is to take the account of Shun as a response to that of Yao—that is, to read the account of Yao as merely leading up to that of Shun. In this reading, the new rulership of Shun truly effaces the old one of Yao, replacing the ideal of archaic rule from the onset of history—a history initiated by Yao—with the new ideal of a cosmic ruler who commands a well-functioning state. There are some indications that this political effacement of Yao is indeed what happened in the minds of the Erudites who studied, edited, and controlled the *Shangshu* at the imperial court.[83] First, for unexplained reasons the modern-script version contains under the header "Yu Xia shu" 虞夏書 ("The Yu and Xia Documents") the first four chapters: "Yao dian," "Gao Yao mo," "Yu gong" 禹貢, and "Gan shi" 甘誓; by contrast, the ancient-text version assigns the title "Tang shu" 唐書 to the account of Yao. As the terms "Tang shu," "Yu shu" 虞書, and "Xia shu" 夏書 refer to the dynastic designations of Yao, Shun, and Yu, respectively, the modern-script version does not regard Yao to have constituted a dynasty of his own but includes him under Shun's dynasty of Yu 虞.[84] In this, however, the modern-script version may not reflect the *Shangshu* transmitted by Scholar Fu in Qin and early Western Han times: the received text of his *Shangshu dazhuan* 尚書大傳—reconstituted by Qing dynasty scholars—treats "Yao dian" (including "Shun dian" of the ancient text) under the rubric "Tang zhuan" 唐傳,[85] and no text before the Eastern Han appears to refer to the

82 Seen from a different angle, the tensions between their personal ambition (including their purported desire for personal immortality) and their governmental actions display "the king's two bodies"—the "body natural" and the "body politic"—described in Ernst H. Kantorowicz's classic study (1957) of medieval European sovereignty.

83 Note that the copies of the classics in the hands of the court Erudites were exempted from the infamous bibliocaust in 213 BCE, and that the *Shangshu* was transmitted into the Han by the Qin court scholar Fu 伏 (only later known as Fu Sheng 伏勝, as shown in Cai 2011). See Kern 2000b: 184–194 (with further references).

84 For "Yao dian" as part of "Yu shu," see Chen Mengjia 1985: 90–91.

85 See *Shangshu dazhuan* 1B.1a–10a. Griet Vankeerberghen (personal communication, July 2016) suggests that the passage here goes back to Wang Yinglin's 王應麟 (1223–1296) *Kunxue jiwen* 困學紀聞 2.4b: "Since the [*Shangshu*] *dazhuan* discusses the 'Yao dian' under 'Tang zhuan,' Scholar Fu did not consider ["Yao dian" part of] 'Yu shu'" (大傳說堯典謂之唐傳，則伏生不以是為虞書). Wang evidently wrote on the basis of an early *Shangshu dazhuan* edition available to him (while our reconstituted text dates many centuries later); if Wang's (lost) edition can be trusted, then we may conclude—against the transmitted modern-script *Shangshu*—that in the early Western Han, "Yao dian" was still part of a "Tang shu" and only later, post–Wang Mang, was shifted to the "Yu shu" section.

"Yao dian" proper as "Yu shu." In other words, the subjugation of "Yao dian" under Shun's dynasty may be a distinct Eastern Han phenomenon, as seen, for example, in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字.[86]

Second, it appears that in early imperial texts, direct references to Shun's account (i.e., "Shun dian" of the ancient-text version) outnumber those to Yao's account ("Yao dian" without the "Shun dian" part) by roughly two to one.[87] While this is not an entirely accurate measure of the relative importance accorded to Yao and Shun, it does suggest a general tendency of early imperial writers to pay considerably more attention to Shun's rule than to Yao's—not because they necessarily shared the imperial vision of rulership but because that vision had been propagated by the Qin and Han courts.

It would go far beyond the scope of the present essay to examine in detail how each and every Qin and Han source refers to Yao and Shun. However, any such attempt to understand early imperial views concerning the two primordial sages would have to begin with their remarkably different representations in the text that stands at the very center of their legends, the *Shangshu*. For now, I would hypothesize that it may have been precisely its status as a court-sponsored and court-controlled classic that separated the *Shangshu* from other representations of Yao and Shun (especially with regard to the all-important issue of abdication), and that much early imperial writing and debate outside the court might have responded, in one way or another, to the imperial vision advanced by "official learning" (*guanxue* 官學). The imperial vision of rulership as idealized in the "Yao dian" account of Shun may not have resonated well with those intellectuals who wrote, taught, and debated at a critical distance to the court—and who were the true victims of imperial persecution not only in 213 BCE (by the Qin First Emperor) but then once again in 136 BCE (by the Han emperor Wu).[88]

At the same time, the imperial view of rulership, with the emperor in the role not of an autocrat but of a largely impersonal government function, reflected the interests of the official court scholars. The idealization of an emperor who delegated much of his power, followed the advice of his subordinates, and abstained from personal activism driven by his own convictions was precisely in the interest of the learned men who governed the state—and who could point to the model of Shun very effectively when asking their ruler for personal restraint. To praise one's emperor as a sage always imposed on him

86 See Chan Hung Kan and Ho Che Wah 2003: 1–16; Liu Qiyu 2007: 156–158. Of eighteen *Shuowen* quotations listed there, sixteen include the reference "Yu shu."

87 Chan Hung Kan and Ho Che Wah 2003: 1–47.

88 As argued in Kern 2000b: 190–191.

the obligation to emulate the ancient model—that is, the very sage whose image had been created by the classical scholars serving in office. To this end, abandoning the idea of abdication and supporting a hereditary dynasty not only was a small price to pay but also helped to sustain the political stability that guaranteed the constant reproduction of the scholarly elite at court. Unsurprisingly, the two most activist and idiosyncratic rulers of the early empire—who also boasted the most monumental accomplishments—ended up with a decidedly negative press in the historical records, written by the scholars: the Qin First Emperor and Emperor Wu of the Han. Across the table, the court scholars who tended so well to their own interests in drawing up and perpetuating images of sagely governance were the salaried *ru* 儒, the group conventionally called "Confucians" in English.

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