

*Shu Jing*, Kang Gao

[Duke of Zhou's advice to Kangshu  
who was about to rule the newly conquered Shang territory]

Duke of Zhou spoke thus: Lord of lords, my younger brother Feng! Our illustrious ancestor king Wen has shown splendid virtues and prudence in punishments. He dared not despise widows and widowers. He employed the employable, respected the respectable. He was fearsome against the feared. He shined in the eyes of the people. He thus started our area, then it grew beyond our one or two regions and this is how we came to rule our western territory. All this while, he diligently sought counsel from the Ruler Above and the Ruler Above was pleased. Heaven therefore ordained king Wen to conquer the great Yin. The heavenly ordain reached its territory and its people and they are now happy. Our elder brother (king Wu) then continued the endeavour. Now, my little brother, you will be in this eastern territory.

Now, remember! Whether these people will remain decent or become crafty will depend on whether you seek counsel of our ancestor king Wen and follow his virtuous words. Go and do a comprehensive study of earlier sage kings of Yin so that you can govern their people well. You should also maintain close relationship with the elders of Shang [*zu*] so that you can understand their precepts. Exercise your judgement in seeking counsel of the ancient sage kings so that you can protect the people felicitously. When the virtues seeping through your body are great enough to cover the sky, you will not fail in carrying out the king's mandate.

My dear little brother Feng! Feel the pain of the people as if it is your own. Revere the Heaven's awesome power; aid the truthful people. Overall trend of the people may be easy to see but to protect each particular individual is not easy. Go and give all your heart. Do not indulge in leisure and pleasure but govern the people. I heard that grievance does not arise from abundance or shortage; it arises from lack of good principle and lack of industriousness. Yes, my little one, you must rule and preserve the Yin people which you have received from the great king, but you must also assist the royal house in fulfilling the heavenly mandate by making them a new people.

Oh, Feng, be reverent and intelligent in using punishments. Suppose a person commits a small misdeed which is not a mishap. If he did it intentionally in violation of the rules, though the misdeed may be small, he cannot but be put to death. Even when the misdeed is great, however, if it was not committed intentionally, it will be a mishap. Once a misdeed has been committed, if the full account is given, he shall not be put to death.

Oh, Feng, if the punishment is properly applied, you can govern splendidly. People will regulate themselves and strive for harmony treating the misdeed as if it is a disease. People will abandon their evil deeds as if to protect their own children. People will then be governed felicitously.

It is not you, Feng, who punish or execute people. Do not punish or execute them arbitrarily. It is not you, Feng, who cut the nose or ears of the people. Do not

arbitrarily cut the nose or ears of the people. When the 'external affairs' are presented to you, let the appropriate legal officer deal with them according to the punishments of Yin which stand to reason. When dealing with a prisoner, reflect for five, six or up to ten days before making the definitive decision. When legal cases [external affairs] are put to you, the punishments will be according to Yin law. You will thus be able to punish or execute appropriately. Do not use the punishment to suit your personal feelings, saying, 'I think this is proper', 'I think this is not warranted by the facts'. Feng, my little one, no one has a heart exactly like yours. My heart, my virtue, I only know.

Those who commit the crime of robbing, stealing, treachery, killing, laying hands on other's goods or committing violence without fearing one's life, are to be abhorred. But the greatest evil to be abhorred all the more is lack of filial piety and brotherly love. The son who does not serve his father with respect, but greatly hurts his father's heart; the father who does not love his son, but hates him; the younger brother who does not think of Heaven's brightness, and does not respect his elder brother; the elder brother who does not have compassion for his tender younger brother, and treats him coldly and suppress him: if we do not deal with the people who commit these crimes, the law which our people have received from the Heaven will be greatly annihilated and disturbed. I say, this is why these conducts need to be constrained. They must have the punishment or execution as set down by the king Wen without pardon.

When the great command is disobeyed; moreover, when junior lords, village chiefs, their deputies, and minor officers sent out [to Yin] entrusted with power give commands arbitrarily and cause havoc; and when people in general, without scruple, without diligence, plague their ruler, evils arise. And I abhor them. This is why you need to deal with them and put them to death if rightness warrants it.

Also, when the ruler and the heads cannot manage to control their own family members and when their small officers and retainers cause terror and commit cruelty, the king's mandate is of no effect and abused instead to rule without virtue. You too must not fail to hold the law in utmost respect; you can then make the people happy as king Wen made them happy through his respect and reverence for law: as he said, 'I just follow the rules and I am happy'.

Feng! I tell you, people should be guided by goodness and happiness. I mean, use the virtues of the earlier sage kings of Yin and govern the people felicitously. It is not good to make a forced attempt to resort to the august authority and dictate people rather than guide them. If the people do not follow, then the country is not governed at all.

Feng! I cannot but reflect upon and tell you these virtuous sayings about the administration of punishments. For the moment, those people are not quiet. A lot of them have not made up their mind to follow us. They have not yet become one with us. Only Heaven will punish those who kill us. We should not blame them as long as their crimes are not with their magnates, are not wide-spread. As the divination has it, 'All will become clear in Heaven'.

Oh, Feng! Be reverent. Do not cause grief. Do not use bad counsel, do not follow the crooked way. Truly, law is nowhere other than in the genuine mind. Brilliant virtues will lead to felicity. Scrutinise your own mind first, and then expand your virtues farther to bring comfort. Then the people will be well. You will not be cast off.

Oh, my little Feng! Our mandate is not permanent. Be careful so that we are not cast off. Once we have received it, we ought to follow it reverently. Pay heed to it and lead the people to the felicity.

Go, Feng! Do not ruin the revered law, listen to what I said to you. You will then be revered by Yin people generation after generation.