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***Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy: Studies in the Composition and Thought of the Shangshu (Classic of Documents).* Edited by Martin KERN and Dirk MEYER. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. Pp. vi+508.**

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The publication of a major English-language book on the *Shang shu* 尚書 (Elevated documents) or *Shu jing* 書經 (Classic of documents), the second of the Chinese classics, should surely count as a major milestone in the Western study of early China. As the editors note in their Introduction, the *Shang shu* has inspired all aspects of Chinese political philosophy for over two thousand years now. Yet, as they also say, “In some kind of reverse—and bizarre—correlation, the *Shangshu* is as important to the Chinese political tradition as it is neglected in Western scholarship” (p. 2). Their claim just above this that “major Western works on the *Shangshu* can be counted on two hands, with fingers to spare” is only a bit exaggerated.<sup>1</sup> In this volume we now have fourteen studies in just over 500 pages, that directly address at least fourteen different chapters of the *Shang shu*, not to mention two chapters of the

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1 True, I count only eight or nine such studies listed in the various bibliographies attached at the end of each chapter, but they do not even include mention of such classic studies as Paul Pelliot, “Le *Chou King* en caractères anciens et le *Chang Chou che wen*,” *Mémoires concernant l’Asie Orientale* 2 (1916): 123–77, or Benjamin Elman, “Philosophy (*I-Li*) versus Philology (*K’ao-cheng*): The *Jen-hsin tao-hsin* Debate,” *T’oung Pao* 2nd ser. 69.4–5 (1983):175–222, or even Michael Nylan, “The Many Dukes of Zhou in Early Sources,” in *Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History*, eds. Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 94–128, a study of the ways that the Duke of Zhou 周公 is represented in the *Shang shu* and the *Yi Zhou shu* and which was published in a book edited by one of the editors of the book under review. Still, the point is well taken.

*Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 (Leftover Zhou documents).<sup>2</sup> The volume is the product of two international conferences, one held at Princeton in 2013 and the second at Oxford in 2014, the published papers revealing considerable revision and strong editorial hands. The fourteen chapters also display the various contributors' different strengths, some engaging in deep reading of the text(s) in question, others soaring over several texts or even whole books. Different readers will come to different evaluations of the relative strengths and weaknesses of these offerings, but taken as a whole the volume surely makes the significant contribution promised in the editors' Introduction. Indeed, to my mind, the only significant failing of the book is the Introduction itself, which is marred by an unappealing self-congratulatory triumphalism, which simultaneously denigrates past scholarship—always without explicit attribution, while also suggesting that all of its contributors speak in a single voice, which is most certainly not the case. In the following remarks, I will first review the contents of the fourteen chapters, which after all constitute the heart of the book, before turning to consider the Introduction itself.

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Martin Kern is the author of the first contribution to the book: "Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the 'Canon of Yao,'" a study of the "Yao dian" 堯典. This is a revised version of a study by the same title published just two years earlier.<sup>3</sup>

2 The chapters are (in the order which they appear in the book, with the chapter number and the author of that chapter): "Yao dian" 堯典 (Canon of Yao; 1 Kern and 2 Vogelsang), "Gaoyao mo" 皋陶謨 (Counsel of Gaoyao; 2 Vogelsang), "Lü xing" 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü; 2 Vogelsang and 13 Sanft), "Gu ming" 顧命 (Testamentary charge; 3 Meyer), "Kang Wang zhi gao" 康王之誥 (King Kang's announcement; 3 Meyer), "Duo shi" 多士 (Many sires; 4 Gentz), "Duo fang" 多方 (Many regions; 4 Gentz), "Jin teng" 金縢 (Metal-bound coffer; 5 Gren and 6 Meyer), "Gan shi" 甘誓 (Harangue at Gan; 8 Kern), "Tang shi" 湯誓 (Harangue of Tang; 8 Kern), "Mu shi" 牧誓 (Harangue at Mu; 8 Kern), "Wu yi" 無逸 (Without ease; 10 Pines and 11 Hunter), "Bi shi" 費誓 (Harangue at Bi; 12 Khayutina), and "Yu gong" 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu; 14 McNeal), as well as *Yi zhou shu* "Shang shi" 商誓 (Harangue at Shang; 4 Gentz) and "Wang hui" 王會 (Royal convocation; 14 McNeal).

3 Martin Kern, "Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the 'Canon of Yao,'" in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology*, eds. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 118–151. It is unclear whether such prompt republication is meant to signal the essay's unique importance or its urgent need for revision. Kern says that this "version now supersedes the earlier one" (p. 23 \* note). However, a comparison of the first ten pages of the two versions shows them to be essentially identical—other than formatting changes—with the exception of an added paragraph on page 29 of the book under review, and deleted paragraphs at pages 125 and 126–27 of the previous version (the latter of which, at least, concerns primarily the *Shi jing* 詩經 [Classic of poetry] and thus would be out of place in the present book).

Apparently Brill was more lenient in terms of page number than are most presses, two other chapters in the book also being more or less similar republications of studies published within the last three years. However, since the book in which the earlier version of Kern's essay was published is probably no more readily available than the present book and as far as I can tell has not yet been reviewed, the essay deserves introduction here.

Kern makes two principal arguments regarding the "Yao dian": first that the text opens with a "performative speech," and second that the overall effect of the argument was understood in the Qin and Han—and perhaps was created in the Qin and Han—as an argument in favor of a particular view of kingship. He begins with a lengthy revisionist reading of the first sentences of the chapter (here presented without punctuation so as not to prejudice the reading):

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

This is usually translated as something like:

Examining into antiquity, Di Yao was called Fangxun. Respecting bright virtue and thinking peacefully, truly respectful he was able to yield, his radiance covered the four exteriors and he caused those above and below to arrive.

Kern argues instead that "Fangxun" 放勳, traditionally said to be the name of Yao 堯, should begin a speech by Yao, and mean something like "imitating [past] merits." In offering this revisionist reading, he admits that he flies in the face of all early readings, which he would date to the Han, as well as explicit evidence in two different passages of the *Mengzi* 孟子 that Fangxun was Yao's name.

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* (p. 28 n. 21).

It is not at all clear what Kern gains from denying all of this evidence. After all, other than the first two sentences, his punctuation, and indeed his