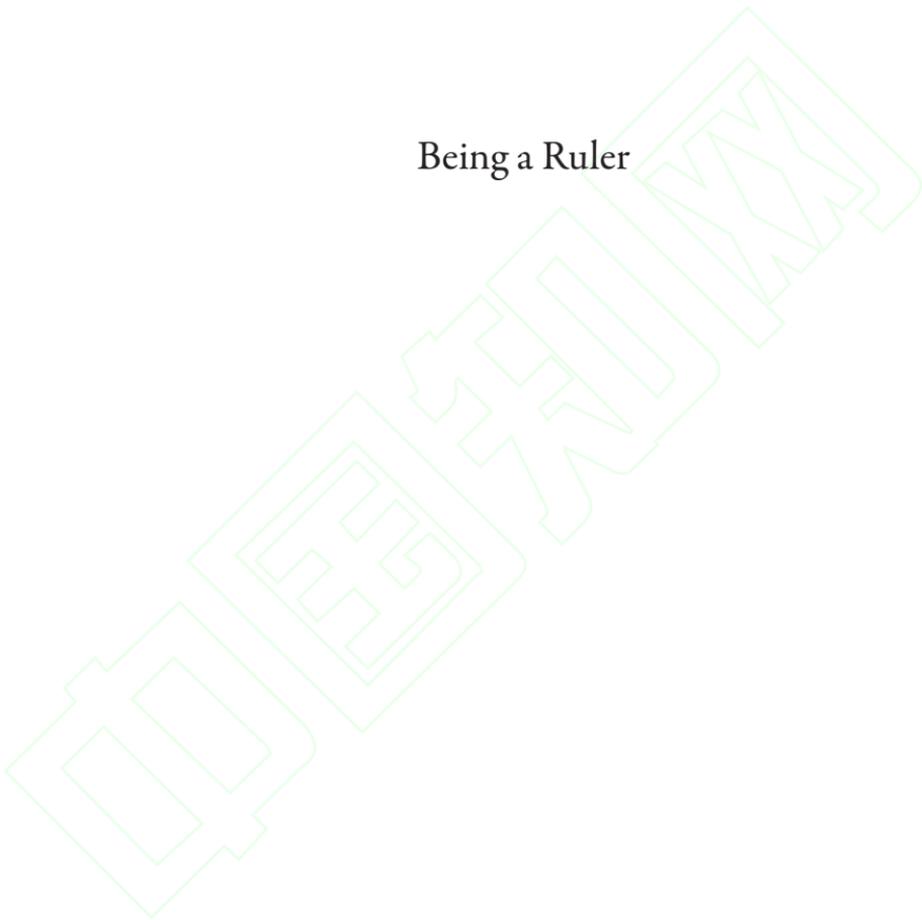


TALE 73

Being a Ruler



By nature, a man's nails and teeth are not enough to defend himself, his muscles and skin are not enough to ward off cold and heat, his tendons and bones are not enough to seek after gains and avoid harm, and his courage is not enough to repel or stop a fierce and wild creature. But man is still the master of all things who is able to subdue ferocious birds and wild beasts and overpower poisonous creatures. Cold and heat, drought and flood cannot harm him.

This is not only because he prepared against them, but also because he lives in groups. People live in groups because they can all be benefitted by doing so. Because they are benefitted by living in groups, the principle of having a ruler thus becomes established. As the principle of having a ruler becomes established and benefits are gained by living in groups, relationship in human affairs is perfected.

In remote antiquity, people lived in groups and knew only their mothers but not their fathers. There was no distinction between father and mother, elder and younger brothers, husband and wife, men and women, no ethics governing the high and the low, the elder and the younger, no sense of propriety, no conveniences provided by clothes and ribbons, palaces, houses and savings, no instruments and tools, boats and vehicles, city walls and structures of defense. This was all because there was no ruler. Therefore, the righteous relationship between ruler and subjects must be clearly understood.

Since ancient times, many states in the world have perished, but the principle of having a ruler still exists because it benefits the world. The rulers who perished were those who did not act like a ruler, and the rulers who became established were those who followed the way of the ruler. What is the way of the ruler? It is the principle of benefiting the people and not oneself.

Yu Rang intended to assassinate Xiang Zi of the state of Zhao. He shaved off his beard and eyebrows, disfigured his face and disguised himself as a beggar to beg at the house where his wife lived. His wife said, "This man does not look like my husband, but his voice is my husband's voice." So he swallowed charcoal to change his voice. A friend said to him, "The way you have chosen to do it is a very difficult one and will achieve no result. It is right to say that you have the determination to do it, but it is not right to say that you are wise. With your ability, you can apply for a post to serve Xiang Zi, who will then be close to you. When he is close to you, you can do what you intend to do. It will become very easy and you will certainly succeed."

Yu Rang smiled and said in reply, "Your way of doing it will be avenging on one who appreciates you later for the sake of one who appreciated you before or killing a new ruler for the sake of an old ruler. There will be no greater disruption of the righteousness between ruler and subject than this. My purpose for doing what I intend to do will be lost. What I intend to do is to clarify the righteousness between ruler and subject and not to choose an easier way of doing it."



When Zhu Li Shu was serving Duke Ju Ao, he thought he was not appreciated by the duke. So he left the duke to live by the sea. He ate waternuts and Gorgon fruit in summer and acorn in winter. When Duke Ju Ao met with misfortune, Zhu Li Shu

parted with his friend and wanted to go and die for the duke. His friend said, "You left the duke because you thought you were not appreciated. Now you want to go and die for him. You are making no distinction between being appreciated and not being appreciated."

Zhu Li Shu said, "No. I want to go because I know I was not appreciated. He is now dead. If I do not go and die for him, it will show that he knew what kind of a man I am. If I die for him, later rulers will feel ashamed not to understand their subjects. My death will prompt later rulers to square their conduct and preserve their integrity. When their conduct is squared and their integrity preserved, they will be able to understand their loyal subjects. When they can understand their loyal subjects, the way of the ruler will become consolidated.