Liu Yao

Liu Yao, courtesy name Yongming, was a clan nephew of Yuanhai. Orphaned at a young age, he was raised by Yuanhai. In his youth, he was intelligent and possessed extraordinary character. At age eight, while hunting with Yuanhai in the western mountains, they encountered rain and took shelter under a tree. When lightning struck the tree, while others fell down, Yao remained composed. Yuanhai, impressed by this, said: "This is my family's rare talent; with such a cousin, our lineage shall not perish!"

He grew to be nine chi and three cun tall, with arms so long his hands reached below his knees. He was born with white eyebrows, his eyes emitted a red glow, and though he had only about a hundred beard hairs, they were each five chi long. His nature was unrestrained and noble, setting him apart from others. In his studies, he focused on broad learning rather than detailed analysis of texts. He was skilled in composition and proficient in both cursive and clerical scripts. His martial prowess exceeded others; he could shoot through inch-thick iron, earning him the title of divine archer. He particularly enjoyed military treatises, which he could recite from memory. He often dismissed Wu and Deng while comparing himself to Yue Yi, Xiao, and Cao. While contemporaries did not acknowledge these claims, only Cong would say: "Yongming is of the caliber of Shizu and Wei Wu; why even mention those others?"

At the age of twenty, Liu Yao traveled to Luoyang, where he faced execution for an offense but fled to Joseon. He returned after receiving amnesty. Believing his unusual physical features would make him unwelcome in society, he secluded himself in Mount Guancen, occupying himself with the zither and books. One night while alone, two young boys entered and knelt, saying: "The King of Guancen sends his servants to pay respects to Emperor Zhao and present this sword." They placed it before him, bowed twice, and departed. Examining it by candlelight, the sword was two chi long with extraordinary luster, had a red jade handle, and bore an inscription on its back reading: "Divine Imperial Sword, Dispeller of All Poisons." Yao then kept it. The sword would change into five different colors according to the four seasons.

Under Yuanhai, Yao held prominent positions, later becoming Chancellor of State and Commander-in-Chief of Military Affairs, stationed in Chang'an. During Jin Zhun's rebellion, he marched from Chang'an to respond. At Chibi, Grand Protector Huyan Yan and others fled from Pingyang to join him, and along with Grand Tutor Zhu Ji and Grand Commander Fan Long, they presented him with imperial titles. In the first year of Taixing (318), Yao usurped the imperial throne, declared a general amnesty throughout his domain, with only Jin Zhun's clan excluded, and changed the era name to Guangchu. He appointed Zhu Ji as Minister of Education, Huyan Yan as Minister of Works, and Fan Long and others retained their original positions. He dispatched Liu Ya, Commander of the Northern Conquest, and Liu Ce, Protector of the North, to station at Fenyin, forming a pincer position against Shi Le.

Jin Zhun sent Attendant Bu Tai to surrender to Shi Le, but Le imprisoned Tai and sent him to Yao. Yao told Tai: "In the late emperor's final years, great principles were violated, eunuchs interfered with governance, and loyal officials were executed. It was indeed time for righteous men to seek rectification. The Minister of Works showed loyalty and valor, wielding power like Yi Yin and Huo Guang, saving people from catastrophe, enabling me to reach this position - his merit surpasses the ancients, his virtue matches heaven and earth. As I am managing great difficulties, I shall not harm worthy men unjustly. If the Minister of Works maintains loyalty and welcomes the imperial presence early, governance shall remain with the Jin clan, while I shall only conduct sacrifices. Convey this message to the Minister of Works and announce it to the court officials."

Tai returned to Pingyang and conveyed Yao's message. Zhun, having killed Yao's mother and brother, hesitated to comply. Soon after, Qiao Tai, Wang Teng, Jin Kang, Ma Zhong and others killed Zhun and promoted Director of the Imperial Secretariat Jin Ming as their leader. They sent Bu Tai to surrender to Yao with the Six Imperial Seals. Yao was greatly pleased and told Tai: "You have enabled me to obtain these divine seals and become emperor." When Shi Le heard this, he was furious and increased his forces to attack. After several defeats, Ming sent envoys requesting aid from Yao, who dispatched Liu Ya and Liu Ce to receive him. Ming led 15,000 civilians from Pingyang to Yao, who then ordered Ming's execution and killed all members of the Jin clan regardless of age or gender.

He sent Liu Ya to retrieve his mother Lady Hu's remains from Pingyang and reburied them in Suyi, designating the tomb as Yangling and posthumously honoring her as Empress Dowager Xuanming. He posthumously honored his great-grandfather Liang as Emperor Jing, his great-great-grandfather Guang as Emperor Xian, his grandfather Fang as Emperor Yi, and his father as Emperor Xuancheng. He moved the capital to Chang'an, building the Guangshi Palace in front and the Ziguang Palace behind. He installed his wife Lady Yang as Empress and his son Xi as Crown Prince. He enfeoffed his sons: Yi as Prince of Changle, Chan as Prince of Taiyuan, Chong as Prince of Huainan, Chang as Prince of Qi, Gao as Prince of Lu, and Hui as Prince of Chu. All royal clansmen were promoted to commandery princes. He restored the ancestral temple, altars of soil and grain, and southern and northern suburban altars. Following the succession of elements, with water succeeding Jin's metal, he named his state Zhao. Black was favored for sacrificial animals and banners. Modu was paired with Heaven, and Yuanhai with the Supreme Deity. He declared a general amnesty throughout his domain for all crimes short of capital offenses.

In Huangshi, Lu Songduo of the Tuge raised an army in Xinping and Fufeng, gathering several thousand followers and allied with Prince of Nanyang Bao. Bao appointed his general Yang Man as Inspector of Yong Province, Wang Lian as Governor of Fufeng, stationed at Chencang; Zhang Yi as Governor of Xinping, and Zhou Yong as Governor of Anding, stationed at Yinmi. Songduo descended from Caobi, and many Di and Qiang people from Qin and Long regions submitted to him. Yao sent his cavalry commander Liu Ya and Pacifier of the West Liu Hou to attack Yang Man at Chencang, but they failed to capture it after twenty days. Yao led his elite forces to respond, and when reaching Yong City, the Grand Astrologer Bian Guangming advised Yao: "Last night, an ill-omened star crossed the moon; the army should not advance." Thus he halted. He ordered Liu Ya and others to maintain the siege and fortifications while awaiting the main army.

There was an earthquake, particularly severe in Chang'an. At that time, Yao's wife Lady Yang was especially favored and participated in political affairs, which was a sign of excessive yin influence.

In the third year, Yao set out from Yong to attack Chencang. Man and Lian discussed: "Our spies have just returned reporting that their Five Ox Banner is raised, suggesting the barbarian leader has come himself. We may not be able to withstand their assault. Our provisions are low and cannot last long. If they besiege us for a hundred days, we will perish without even fighting. Better to lead our forces into battle now. If we win, the entire Guanzhong region will submit without need for proclamations; if we lose, death is death, sooner or later makes no difference." They then deployed all their forces with their backs to the city walls, but were defeated by Yao. Wang Lian died in battle, and Yang Man fled to the southern Di people. Yao then attacked Caobi and captured it. Songduo fled to Long city, and Yao proceeded to capture Anding. Bao became fearful and relocated to Sang city. The Di and Qiang people all followed him. Yao returned victoriously to Chang'an and appointed Liu Ya as Grand Minister of Education.

Jin general Li Ju raided Jinyong and captured it. Yao's Left Palace Attendant Song Shi and Zhenwei General Song Shu surrendered to Shi Le. Yao had appointed his Grand General and Prince of Guangping Yue as Grand General of the Eastern Conquest, stationed at Luoyang. At that time, a severe epidemic broke out among the three armies, so Yue withdrew to camp at Mianchi. Shi Le sent Shi Sheng to support Song Shi and others, and their military force became very powerful. Yao's generals Yin An, Zhao Shen and others surrendered Luoyang to Sheng, whereupon Yue withdrew his forces and stationed at Shaan city.

Inside the Ximing Gate, a large tree was broken by wind. After one night, the broken tree transformed into a human shape, with hair one chi long and eyebrows and beard three cun long, all yellowish-white in color. It appeared to have clasped hands and legs wearing a skirt, but lacked eyes and nose. Every night it made sounds, and after ten days, branches and twigs grew from it, eventually becoming a large tree again with luxuriant branches and leaves.

The Colonel of Changshui, Yin Che, plotted rebellion and secretly allied with Ba chieftain Xu Kupeng. Yao executed Che and imprisoned Kupeng and over fifty others at Epang, intending to execute them. Grand Master of Splendid Happiness You Ziyuan strongly remonstrated, but Yao refused to listen. Ziyuan kowtowed until his head bled, which greatly angered Yao. He imprisoned Ziyuan and executed Kupeng and the others, leaving their bodies in the streets for ten days before throwing them in the river.

As a result, all the Ba and Di people rebelled, supporting the Ba-King of Guishan, Juqu Zhi, as their leader. Over 300,000 Qiang, Di, Ba, and Jie people from the four mountains joined the rebellion. The Guanzhong region fell into chaos, with city gates closed even during daytime.

Ziyuan sent another memorial from prison to remonstrate. Yao became furious, destroyed the memorial and said: "This slave from Dali doesn't worry about his imminent death, yet still dares to act like this. Is he eager to die?" He ordered his attendants to kill Ziyuan quickly.

Liu Ya, Zhu Ji, Huyan Yan and others remonstrated: "Ziyuan still offers advice while imprisoned - this shows his loyalty to the state, regardless of death. Even if Your Majesty won't heed his advice, why kill him? If Ziyuan dies in the morning, we shall die in the evening to expose Your Majesty's error. All people under heaven will abandon Your Majesty and flee to the Western Sea to die. With whom will Your Majesty then rule?"

Yao's anger subsided and he pardoned Ziyuan. He then ordered strict security measures inside and outside the palace, preparing to personally campaign against Zhi. Ziyuan stepped forward and said: "If Your Majesty truly accepts this humble servant's plan, you need not personally go to battle. The situation can be resolved within a month."

Yao said: "Tell me your plan."

Ziyuan replied: "The rebels have no great ambitions or unrealistic hopes; they were merely driven to revolt by Your Majesty's harsh policies. While the dead cannot be brought back, we can pardon the elderly and weak family members of the rebels who were enslaved, let them care for each other, allow them to resume their livelihoods, and grant a general amnesty for a fresh start. Once a path to survival is opened, why wouldn't they surrender? If Zhi doesn't submit immediately because his crimes are too grave, grant me 5,000 weak troops and I will capture him for Your Majesty without troubling your generals. Otherwise, with the rebels now numerous and spread across valleys and rivers, even with imperial might, I fear it cannot be resolved within years."

Yao was greatly pleased and appointed Ziyuan as General of Chariots and Cavalry, Commander with Equal Authority to the Three Excellencies, and Supreme Commander of Military Affairs for the Yong and Qin regions' punitive expeditions. He declared a general amnesty throughout his territory. When Ziyuan arrived at Yong city, over 100,000 people surrendered. He then advanced to Anding, where all the Di and Qiang people submitted. Only the Ju clan and their followers, numbering over 5,000 households, remained fortified at Yinmi. He attacked and pacified them, then led his troops along the western Longshan region, where Chen'an came out to welcome him.

Previously, over 100,000 Di and Qiang people in Shangjun had held out in defensive positions and refused to surrender. Their chieftain Daxuchu Quanqu had declared himself King of Qin. When Ziyuan advanced his troops to their fortifications, Quanqu led his forces to resist but was defeated in five battles. As Quanqu was about to surrender, his son Yiyu boldly declared to the crowd: "Even when Liu Yao came himself before, he couldn't defeat us. Why should we surrender to this small force?" He led 50,000 elite troops to press against the camp gates at dawn.

When advisors urged him to fight, Ziyuan said: "I've heard that Yiyu's bravery is unmatched today, and his troops and horses are superior to ours. Moreover, his father was recently defeated, so their anger is intense. The Western Rong are swift and fierce, their sharp attacks cannot be matched. Better to wait them out until their energy is exhausted before attacking." So he fortified his position and refused to engage. Yiyu showed signs of arrogance.

Ziyuan waited until they let their guard down, then at night, he had his troops eat their morning meal. At dawn, there was strong wind and fog. Ziyuan said: "Heaven aids us!" Leading his troops personally, he swept out from the fortifications. By daybreak, they had overwhelmed the enemy, capturing Yiyu alive and taking all his forces prisoner. Quanqu was terrified and surrendered with disheveled hair and self-inflicted facial wounds.

Ziyuan recommended to Yao that Quanqu be appointed General Who Conquers the West and Duke of Western Rong. He relocated Yiyu's brothers and their tribal groups, over 200,000 people in total, to Chang'an. Among the Western Rong, Quanqu's tribe was the strongest, and all others followed his lead in raiding and plundering. Once Quanqu surrendered, none failed to submit.

Yao was greatly pleased and held a banquet for his officials in the East Hall. When discussing past events, he became tearful and issued an edict saying:

"Honoring virtue and remembering old relationships is what sage rulers prioritize; showing kindness to orphans is a constant principle of wise kings. Thus, when the Founding Emperor established his base north of the Yellow River, he bestowed titles on Yan You's grandson; when Wei Wu led troops to Liang and Song, he mourned at Lord Qiao's tomb. Previously, the late Grand Minister of Education and Duke of Liemin Cui Yue, Palace Secretary Cao Xun, Governor of Jinyang Wang Zhong, and Imperial Prince's Tutor Liu Sui - some knew me in my childhood, others helped me in times of extreme hardship. Thinking of these gentlemen truly pains my heart. Does the Book of Poetry not say: 'I keep it in my heart, how could I ever forget!'

Although Yue received honors at the beginning of Hanchang, during those difficult times proper ceremonies were lacking. Now Yue shall be posthumously appointed as Envoy of the Imperial Insignia, Palace Attendant, Grand Minister of Education, and Duke of Liaodong. Xun shall be Grand Minister of Works and Duke of Nanjun. Sui shall be Grand Master of Ceremonies and Duke of Pingchang. Zhong shall be General Who Guards the Army and Marquis of Anping. All shall additionally receive titles as Imperial Guard Cavalry Officers. Since their graves are in ruins and there is no way to express condolences, officials should quickly locate their descendants and grant them lands to fulfill my intentions."

Earlier, when Yao had fled, he escaped with Cao Xun to Liu Sui, who hid him in an old chest and transported him to Zhong, who then sent him to Joseon. After a year of hunger and hardship, he changed his name and worked as a county soldier. Cui Yue, who was the Magistrate of Joseon, saw him and found him unusual, investigating his background. Yao kowtowed, confessed his identity, and tearfully begged for mercy.

Yue said: "Do you think Cui Yuansong is inferior to Sun Binshuo? Why are you so afraid? Although the search for you is intense, you cannot be safe among common people. This county is remote and I can help you. Even in dire circumstances, I would at most resign my position and leave with you. My family line is declining with no brothers to worry about, and I am unfortunate to have no sons. You are like my younger brother, so don't worry too much. When a great man lives in this world, even when birds and beasts seek refuge with people, one should help them - how much more so for a gentleman!" He provided Yao with clothes and study materials. Yao then followed Yue, discussing and resolving his doubts, receiving great care and consideration.

Yue calmly said to Yao: "Young Liu, your bearing and spirit are extraordinary - you have the talent of a generation! If there should be even a slight wind stirring across the four seas, among the heroes of the age, you would be the leader." Although they were in difficult circumstances, Cao Xun had maintained proper etiquette between ruler and minister in serving Yao, and thus Yao was grateful to them all.

Yao established the Imperial Academy (Taixue) east of the Changle Palace and a lower school (Xiaoxue) west of the Weiyang Palace. He selected 1,500 commoners between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five who showed potential for learning. He chose respected court scholars and learned Confucian scholars to teach them. He appointed Liu Jun, the Supervisor of the Imperial Secretariat, as Chancellor of the National University. He also created the position of Libationer of Literary Studies (Chongwen Jijiu), which ranked below the National University. Dong Jingdao, who was a Gentleman Attendant at Court, was promoted to Libationer of Literary Studies due to his profound understanding of the classics. You Ziyuan was appointed as Grand Minister of Education.

Yao ordered the construction of the Fengming Observatory, a Western Palace, and the Lingxiao Tower at Huo Pool, and planned to build his mausoleum southwest of Baling. Palace Attendants Qiao Yu and He Bao submitted a memorial advising against this:

"We have heard that when rulers undertake construction, they must follow heaven's patterns above and accommodate human circumstances below. When Duke Wen of Wei inherited his state after chaos and destruction, with ancestral temples and state altars scattered, he still first planned the construction of the Chu Palace. Even in such urgent times he was like this, thus he was able to follow in the footsteps of Kang Shu and Duke Wu, extending blessings for 900 years.

We received the edict to build the Fengming Observatory, but people in the marketplaces all criticize it, saying its cost could pacify Liangzhou. Now we receive another order to build a Western Palace modeled after Epang Palace and a Lingxiao Tower modeled after the Jade Tower - this would cost ten times more than Fengming, with labor costs a hundred times more than previous projects. With such expenses, we could conquer Wu and Shu, or defeat Qi and Wei. Why does Your Majesty follow the path of fallen states during this time of restoration?

Among ancient sage kings, who was without fault? But this project is truly excessive. While it is admirable to correct mistakes, completing this would be truly difficult.

We also heard of plans to build a mausoleum four li in circumference, twenty-five zhang deep, with copper coffins adorned with gold - we fear the empire cannot afford such expenses. We have heard that Yao was buried in Gulin without disrupting the markets, and Zhuanxu was buried in Guangyang without reaching the water table - this was how sage kings handled their final affairs. The First Emperor of Qin sealed three springs and built a tomb seven li in circumference, but after his death it was destroyed almost immediately - this is how unenlightened rulers end.

There has never been a state that did not fall or a tomb that was not looted. Sage kings knew that lavish burials invite harm, so they avoided them. Though ministers and sons might wish their rulers' and fathers' tombs to be as grand as mountains, preserving them for all time is more important. The lessons of rise and fall, extravagance and frugality are clear before us. We hope Your Majesty will consider this."

Yao was greatly pleased and issued an edict saying: "These two Palace Attendants show the noble character of ancient worthies - they are truly ministers who care for the state. If not for these two gentlemen, how would I have heard such words! Even Emperor Xiaoming, during peaceful times when all under heaven was secure, accepted Zhongli's single suggestion and halted construction of the Northern Palace. How much more should I, in my limited wisdom and during these difficult times, respectfully follow such wise counsel! I hereby order all work on the mausoleum to stop and to follow the standards of the Baling tomb instead. Does the Book of Poetry not say: 'No word goes unrewarded, no virtue goes unrecompensed'? Therefore, let Yu be enfeoffed as Duke of Anchang, and Bao as Duke of Pingyu, both serving as Grand Masters of Remonstrance. Let this be announced throughout the realm so all may know that this court earnestly seeks to hear of its faults. From now on, regarding policies and laws that are unsuitable for the times or harmful to the state, come forward and speak freely without reservation."

He then reduced the size of the Fengshui Garden and distributed the land to poor households.

When Mount Zhongnan collapsed, a Chang'an resident named Liu Zhong found a piece of white jade one chi square at the collapse site, bearing an inscription: "The Emperor falls, the Emperor falls, defeated by the prospering Zhao. When the well water dries up, five beams are built; in the year of Geyou, decline and death amid chaos. Alas! Alas! When the red ox strains at its bridle, all shall end!"

At the time, all court officials offered congratulations, seeing it as an omen of Shi Le's destruction. Yao was greatly pleased and, after fasting for seven days, presented it at the Imperial Ancestral Temple. He declared a general amnesty and appointed Zhong as Grand Master of Auspicious Omens.

However, Liu Jun, the Supervisor of the Imperial Secretariat, stepped forward and said: "I have heard that mountains and rivers belong to the state, and when mountains collapse and rivers dry up, it bodes ill for the ruler. Mount Zhongnan is the guardian mountain of the capital, watched over by the whole nation. Its unexpected collapse is an extremely ill omen! Such disasters occurred during the decline of the Three Dynasties. While other court officials speak of good fortune, I alone disagree. Though this may offend Your Majesty and go against popular opinion, I cannot agree with their interpretation.

Why? Jade within mountain rock is like the relationship between ruler and subject. A mountain's collapse and rocks' destruction symbolize state upheaval and civil disorder. 'The Emperor falls, defeated by the prospering Zhao' suggests the imperial house will be defeated by Zhao, leading to Zhao's prosperity. Now, Great Zhao rules in Qin and Yong, while Shi Le controls all of Zhao's territory - this prophecy of Zhao's prosperity applies to Shi Le, not us.

'When the well water dries up, five beams are built' - the well refers to the Eastern Well, Qin's territory; 'five' refers to Wuche, and 'beam' refers to Daliang, both in Zhao's territory. This suggests Qin will be exhausted and destroyed to build up Zhao.

'Ge' refers to the year designation Geyou, predicting military defeat and deaths of generals. 'Kun' refers to Kundun, the designation for the year of Zi, while Xuanxiao is also a celestial position, suggesting state destruction in the year of Zi.

'Red ox straining at bridle' refers to Chifenruo, the designation for the year of Chou. 'Ox' refers to Qianniu constellation in the northeast, associated with Chou, suggesting complete annihilation in the year of Chou.

These warnings are urgent, hoping Your Majesty will diligently cultivate virtue to avert them. Even if this were an auspicious omen, I still wish Your Majesty would remain vigilant in response. The Book of Documents says: 'Even in times of peace, do not rest easy.' I hope Your Majesty will follow the virtuous example of the Duke of Zhou at Mengjin, and reject the ill fortune of Duke Guo's temple dream. I humbly submit myself to punishment for speaking of ill omens."

Yao's expression became troubled and changed. The Censors then accused Liu Jun of mad ravings and false interpretations that defamed the auspicious omen, requesting he be charged with great disrespect.

Yao responded: "The true meaning of this omen cannot be known for certain. It deeply warns me of my lack of virtue, and I have received much loyal counsel from him - what crime has he committed?"

Yao personally led a campaign against the Di and Qiang peoples. Yang Nandi of Qiuchi led his forces to resist, but was defeated by Yao's vanguard and retreated to defend Qiuchi. Many Di and Qiang people from Qiuchi then surrendered to Yao.

Later, Yao launched another western campaign against Yang Tao in Nan'an. Tao, frightened, surrendered to Yao along with Liang Xun, the Governor of Longxi, and others. They were all enfeoffed as marquises. Yao sent Palace Attendant Qiao Yu with 5,000 soldiers to relocate Tao and over 10,000 households from Longright to Chang'an.

Yao then advanced to attack Qiuchi. At this time, Yao was ill, and an epidemic was severe among his troops. There was discussion of withdrawing the army, but fearing Nandi would pursue them, Yao sent his Secretariat Officer Wang Guang, appointed as General of Enlightening the State, to negotiate with Nandi. As a result, Nandi sent envoys to declare himself a vassal.

Yao was greatly pleased and appointed Nandi as Envoy with Imperial Insignia, Palace Attendant, Acting Bearer of the Battle-axe, Commander-in-Chief of Military Affairs of Yining, South Qin, Liang, Liangzhou, Ba (six provinces in total), Longshang and Western Regions, Grand General, Shepherd of Yining and South Qin (three provinces), Protector of Southern Di, General of Pacifying the Qiang, and King of Wudu. Fifteen of Nandi's sons and brothers were made dukes, marquises, generals, and officials with salaries of 2,000 shi.

Chen An requested an audience, but Yao declined due to severe illness. Angry and believing Yao to be dead, An plundered the area and returned home. As Yao's illness worsened, he returned by carriage, leaving General Huyan Shi to oversee the supply train. Chen An led elite cavalry to ambush them on the road. Shi had no escape route and was captured along with Chief Clerk Lu Ping.

An imprisoned Shi and said to him, "Liu Yao is already dead. Whom will you serve now? I shall carry you along to establish a great enterprise." Shi berated An: "You dog! You've enjoyed honors and trust, yet you first betrayed Sima Bao and now do this again. How do you compare yourself to our lord? I worry you'll soon have your head displayed on Shanggui's main road - what great enterprise? Kill me quickly and hang my head on Shanggui's east gate to watch the main army enter the city."

Enraged, An killed him. He made Lu Ping his Army Advisor and sent his brother Ji and General Zhang Ming with 20,000 cavalry to pursue Yao. However, Yao's guard commander Huyan Yu counterattacked, killing them and capturing their forces. Frightened, An fled back to Shanggui. After Yao returned from Nan'an, Chen An sent his generals Liu Lie and Zhao Han to raid Qian city, capturing it. The Di and Qiang peoples of the Western Provinces all joined An.

With powerful forces numbering over 100,000, An declared himself Envoy with Imperial Insignia, Grand Commander-in-Chief, Acting Bearer of the Battle-axe, Grand General, Governor of Yong, Liang, Qin and Liang Provinces, and King of Liang. He appointed Zhao Mu as Chancellor and Left Chief Clerk.

Lu Ping wept before An, saying "I cannot bear to see Chen An's death!" Angered, An ordered his execution. Ping said, "Death is my fate. Hang my head in Qinzhou's main street to watch Zhao behead Chen An." He was then killed.

When Yao heard of Ping's death, he grieved: "Worthy men are the hope of the world. To harm them is to block the world's sentiment. Even rulers in peaceful times dare not alienate their servants' hearts, let alone in troubled times! Chen An, at a time when he should be recruiting the worthy and wise, instead harms good men and cuts off contemporary hope. I know he cannot succeed."

The Xiutu King Shi Wu surrendered Sangcheng to Yao, who was greatly pleased. Yao appointed Wu as Envoy with Imperial Insignia, Commander-in-Chief of Military Affairs for Qinzhou, Longshang and Various Barbarian Tribes, Grand General of Pacifying the West, and Inspector of Qinzhou, and enfeoffed him as King of Jiuquan.

Yao's empress Lady Yang died and was posthumously titled Empress Xianwen. Lady Yang had enjoyed special favor within the palace and participated in court politics from behind the scenes. She bore Yao three sons: Xi, Xi, and Chan.

Yao instituted several new regulations:  
- Those without official positions were forbidden from riding horses  
- Only wives of officials with salaries of 800 shi or above were allowed to wear brocade and embroidery  
- Drinking alcohol was only permitted after the autumn harvest was complete  
- Cattle could only be slaughtered for sacrifices to ancestral temples and the gods of land and grain  
- All violators of these laws were to be put to death

Yao also visited the Imperial Academy and appointed the top-performing students as Palace Gentlemen.

Su Fu, a man from Wugong, and Wu Changping, a man from Shaan, both transformed into women. In Shaan, stones were said to have spoken, warning people not to go east.

Yao went to Suyi to plan the burial of his father and wife. The planned tomb mound had a circumference of two li. Workers had to labor by torchlight, and their cries of complaint filled the roads.

You Ziyuan submitted a remonstrance saying: "I have heard that for sage rulers, loyal ministers and filial sons, burials need only have: a coffin large enough for the body, an outer coffin large enough to contain the inner coffin, and a tomb chamber large enough for the outer coffin - nothing more. They didn't build mounds or plant trees, planning for perpetuity. Your Majesty is known for frugality and caring for the people, with state resources as the foundation. Yet these two tombs will cost millions, requiring 60,000 workers for 100 days, totaling 6 million work days. Both tombs extend three springs deep and rise hundred chi high, piling stones into mountains and earth into hills. Thousands of ancient tombs were excavated, workers cry in anguish, bones are scattered across fields, and wailing fills the streets. This brings no benefit to the late emperor and empress while wasting state resources. If Your Majesty were to follow the ways of Yao and Shun, the work would not exceed a million labor days and costs would be in the thousands. There would be no resentment below or above, your parents would rest peacefully, and Your Majesty would enjoy the virtuous reputation of Shun, Yu and the Duke of Zhou. Please consider this."

Yao rejected this advice and sent General Liu Yue with 10,000 cavalry to receive his father's and brother Hui's remains from Taiyuan. A plague broke out, killing 30-40% of people. In Shangluo, a man named Zhang Lu who had been dead for 27 days came back to life when grave robbers opened his tomb.

Yao buried his father in the Yongyuan Tomb and his wife Lady Yang in the Xianping Tomb. He issued a general amnesty for all crimes below capital offenses, granted people two ranks of nobility, and distributed silk to the poor, elderly and sick according to their circumstances.

In the first year of Taining, Chen An attacked Liu Gong (Yao's General of the Western Expedition) at Nan'an. The Xiutu King Shi Wu left Sangcheng to attack Shanggui in order to relieve the siege at Nan'an. When An heard of this, he fearfully rushed back to Shanggui and encountered Wu at Guatian. Wu, being outnumbered, retreated to Zhang Chun's old fortress.

An pursued Wu, shouting: "Rebellious barbarian slave! I must capture this slave alive before executing Liu Gong!" Wu closed the fortress and resisted. Meanwhile, Gong defeated An's rear forces, killing and capturing over 10,000 men. When An hurried back to help, Gong met and defeated him. Soon after, Wu's cavalry arrived in force, causing An's forces to completely collapse. An gathered 8,000 cavalry and fled to Longcheng. Gong then left Wu to command the rear forces while personally leading troops at the front. They repeatedly defeated An's forces and ultimately besieged him at Longcheng.

A prolonged heavy rain caused thunder that damaged the gate building of Yao's father's tomb, and a great wind blew his father's memorial hall more than 50 steps beyond the wall. Yao avoided the main hall, wore plain white clothes and mourned in the east hall for five days. He ordered Liu Xi, the Garrison Commander, and Liang Xu, the Grand Master of Ceremonies, and others to repair the damage. The pine and cypress trees that had grown into a forest had all withered by this time.

He appointed his Grand Marshal Liu Ya as Grand Chancellor, granting him special privileges:  
- Permission to wear a sword and shoes in the palace  
- Exemption from having to hurry when entering court  
- No need to announce his name during ceremonies  
- Command of 1,000 soldiers and 100 cavalry  
- 100 armed guards allowed to enter the palace  
- An additional 60 sword-bearing attendants  
- Two bands of musicians both in front and behind

Yao personally led a campaign against Chen An, besieging him at Longcheng. An repeatedly came out to challenge them but was defeated multiple times, with over 8,000 of his men killed or captured. The Right Army commander Liu Qian attacked and captured Pingxiang, and all counties in the Longshang area surrendered. Yao issued a special amnesty for all crimes below capital offenses in Longyou, except for Chen An and Zhao Mu.

An left Yang Bozhi, Jiang Chong'er and others to defend Longcheng, while he broke through the siege with several hundred cavalry, intending to gather forces from Shanggui and Pingxiang to relieve Longcheng. After breaking out, he learned that Shanggui was under siege and Pingxiang had fallen, so he fled south to Shaanzhong.

Yao sent his generals Ping Xian and Qiu Zhongbo to pursue An with elite cavalry. They repeatedly defeated him, killing or capturing over 400 men. An fought back with about ten strong warriors in Shaanzhong. He wielded a seven-chi great sword in his left hand and an one-zhang-eight snake spear in his right hand. In close combat, he would strike with both weapons, killing five or six men at a time. At range, he would shoot arrows while riding. Ping Xian, who was also exceptionally strong and swift, fought with An three times and managed to seize his snake spear before retreating.

As night fell and heavy rain came, An abandoned his horse and fled on foot with five or six followers into the mountains, hiding in a valley. The next day they couldn't find him. When the rain finally stopped, Fu Wei Huyan Qing tracked his trail and killed An in a valley bend. Yao was greatly pleased.

Chen An was skilled at managing people, sharing both good and bad times with his troops. After his death, people in the Long region sang a song about him:

"On the Long hills there was a brave man named Chen An,  
Though small in stature, he had a big heart,  
He loved and nurtured his soldiers like his own flesh and blood.  
With his black steed and iron-trimmed saddle,  
He wielded a seven-chi great sword swift as a torrent,  
And an one-zhang-eight snake spear that coiled left and right,  
Ten strikes, ten victories, none could stand before him.  
In the third clash of battle, he lost his snake spear,  
Abandoning his black steed, he fled into the mountains,  
He became our external support, but now his head is hung.  
The western waters flow east to the river,  
Once gone, never to return, what can we do for you!"

When Yao heard this song, he was moved and ordered the Music Bureau to set it to music.

Yang Bozhi executed Jiang Chong'er and surrendered Longcheng. Song Ting executed Zhao Mu and surrendered Shanggui. The major clans of Qinzhou, including the Yang and Jiang families, totaling more than 2,000 households, were relocated to Chang'an. All the Di and Qiang peoples submitted and sent hostages as a pledge of loyalty.

At that time, Liu Yue and Zhang Mao, the Inspector of Liang Province, were in a standoff along the Yellow River. Yao marched from Long to Western River with 285,000 troops, setting up camps along the river for over a hundred li. The sound of bells and drums was so loud it shook the earth and river - such a magnificent military display had never been seen before. Zhang Mao's riverside garrisons all fled at the sight.

When word spread that they would cross the river at multiple points straight to Guzang, Liang Province was terrified and people lost their resolve. While all the generals wanted to cross quickly, Yao said: "Although our army is strong, it doesn't surpass Wei Wu's eastern campaign. Two-thirds of those who came did so out of fear. The central army's veteran guards are already tired and unusable. Since we just defeated Chen An, Zhang's forces will be intimidated by our strength and numbers. Their five commanderies cannot resist us. They will surely submit and become our vassals - what more do we need? Test what I say - if Zhang Mao's submission doesn't arrive within half a month, I'll admit I was wrong."

As expected, Zhang Mao, frightened, sent envoys to submit as a vassal, offering:  
- 1,500 horses  
- 3,000 cattle  
- 100,000 sheep  
- 380 jin of gold  
- 700 jin of silver  
- 20 female performers  
- Countless precious jewels and local goods

Yao was greatly pleased and through his Grand Herald Tian Song, appointed Zhang Mao to multiple titles including:  
- Envoy with Imperial Insignia

- Bearer of the Yellow Battle-axe  
- Palace Attendant  
- Commander of Various Military Affairs  
- Grand Preceptor  
- Grand Marshal  
- Governor of Liang Province  
- Protector-General of the Western Regions  
- Commander of Di and Qiang Affairs  
- King of Liang

After returning from the western river, Yao ordered Hu Yuan to increase his father's and wife's tomb heights to 90 chi.

Yang Nandi, feeling threatened and fearful after Chen An's defeat, fled to Hanzhong. Liu Hou, the Defender of the West, pursued and attacked him, capturing over a thousand of his carts and more than 6,000 of his soldiers and civilians, then returned to Qiuchi.

Yao appointed Tian Song, the Grand Herald, as the Grand General Who Guards the South and Inspector of Yi Province, stationing him at Qiuchi. Liu Yue was made Palace Attendant and Commander of All Military Affairs Within and Without, and was promoted to Prince of Zhongshan.

Initially, during Jin Zhun's rebellion, Yao's heir apparent Yin was lost to the Black Ni Yuju tribe. When Yin identified himself, the Yuju were greatly surprised and provided him with clothes and horses, sending their own son to escort him back. Yao wept upon seeing Yin and, appreciating Yuju's loyalty, appointed them as Envoy with Imperial Insignia, Cavalry Attendant, General of Loyalty and Righteousness, and Left Wise Prince.

Yin, whose courtesy name was Yisun, was handsome and quick-witted. At age ten, he was already seven chi and five cun tall, with eyebrows like paintings. Liu Cong was impressed and said to Yao: "This child's spirit is surely different from Yizhen! He should be your heir apparent. You should consider King Wen's precedent of replacing Boyi Kao with King Wu."

Yao replied: "My vassal state only needs to maintain ancestral sacrifices; we cannot disrupt the order of seniority."

Cong responded: "Your merits reach heaven and earth, your domain spans hundreds of cities. As Grand Preceptor of this age with authority to campaign independently - among the Five Marquises and Nine Earls with such authority - how can you compare yourself to ordinary vassal states! Since Yizhen cannot emulate Taibo's noble yielding, I will simply grant him a state."

Yizhen was the courtesy name of Yao's son Jian. Thus, Jian was made Prince of Linhai, and Yin was established as heir apparent. Although Yin had experienced hardship and exile in his youth, he grew to be distinguished and brilliant. He was eight chi and three cun tall, with hair reaching to his feet, possessed great strength, was skilled in archery, and was as swift as wind and clouds. Yao valued him highly, and his court officials also favored him.

Yao then addressed his officials: "Yisun can be said to be one who remains unchanged in winter's cold and unstained by mud. Although Yiguang was established first, he is young and overly cautious - I fear he may not be suitable as heir in these times. This would neither secure the state above nor benefit Yiguang below. Yisun is older, virtuous, and was the original heir. I wish to follow the examples of King Wen of Zhou and Emperor Guangwu of Han, to ensure the ancestral temples' security and Yiguang's endless fortune. What do you all think?"

His Grand Tutor Huyan Yan and others all replied: "Your Majesty's emulation of Zhou and Han dynasties plans for the state's eternal future. Not only will we benefit from it, but it will bring fortune to the ancestral temples and all under heaven."

Left Director of the Imperial Clan Bu Tai and Grand Guardian of the Crown Prince Han Guang stepped forward and said: "If Your Majesty believes this change is right, there would be no need to seek counsel from your subjects. If you have doubts and wish to hear our differing opinions, we believe deposing the Crown Prince would be wrong. Why? King Wen of Zhou chose his successor before establishing his rule, so selecting a sage was appropriate. Emperor Guangwu's decision to change heirs based on maternal favor should not be a model for a sage court! Though Guangwu seized power from Donghai, how could he compare to Emperor Ming?

Prince Yin has military talent and broad vision, uniquely outstanding in this age, worthy of comparison to Zhou Fa (King Wu). However, the Crown Prince is filial, friendly, benevolent, and refined - also capable of supporting the imperial foundation and being a worthy ruler in peaceful times. Moreover, the position of heir apparent is the focus of attention for both humans and spirits throughout the realm and cannot be changed lightly. If Your Majesty truly intends this, we can only die rather than accept such an order."

Yao remained silent. Yin came forward weeping: "A father's love for his children should follow the benevolence of the Shijiou (Classic of Poetry). How could you replace Xi (Crown Prince) with me! If Your Majesty shows such misplaced favor, I would rather die here to show my true heart. If Your Majesty overlooks my unworthiness and thinks I am capable, I should help guide Yiguang and follow your sacred path." He sobbed deeply, moving the court officials.

Yao, considering that the Crown Prince was born to Lady Yang who was favored, could not bear to depose him and thus stopped the proceedings. He posthumously honored his former wife Lady Bu (Yin's mother) as Empress Yuan Dao. Bu Tai, Yin's uncle, was appreciated by Yao and appointed as Senior Grand Master of the Palace with Equal Authority as the Three Excellencies and Grand Tutor of the Crown Prince.

Yin was made Prince of Yong'an and appointed as Palace Attendant, Great General of the Guards, Commander of Palace Guard Forces, Official with Equal Authority as the Three Excellencies, Recorder of the Imperial Secretariat, and Grand Tutor of the Crown Prince, with the title of Imperial Son. Xi was ordered to treat Yin with familial respect.

At that time, a phoenix with five offspring appeared and flew around the former Weiyang Palace for five days. They cried sorrowfully, did not eat, and all died. Yao then established Lady Liu as his empress.

Shi Le's general Shi Ta set out from Yanmen and entered Shangjun, launching a surprise attack on Pen Juchu, the General Who Pacifies the State and King of the Northern Qiang. Shi Ta captured over 3,000 households and seized more than a million cattle, horses, and sheep before returning.

Yao was furious upon hearing this news, throwing his sleeves in anger as he rose. That day, he was stationed at Weicheng and sent Liu Yue to pursue the enemy. Yao himself moved to Fuping to provide support for Liu Yue.

Liu Yue engaged Shi Ta in battle along the banks of the Yellow River. He defeated Shi Ta, beheading him along with 1,500 of his armored soldiers. Over 5,000 of Shi Ta's men drowned in the river while trying to escape. Liu Yue recovered all the captives and livestock, then returned triumphantly with his troops.

Yang Nandi returned from Hanzhong and attacked Qiuchi, capturing it and seizing Tian Song, bringing him before himself. Yang Nandi's attendants ordered Tian Song to bow, but Song glared at them and shouted: "Di dogs! How could a minister of the Son of Heaven bow to rebels!"

Yang Nandi said: "Zidai (Tian Song's courtesy name), I want to accomplish great things with you. You think one can only be loyal to the Liu family - why not to me?"

Tian Song, with a fierce expression, declared loudly: "You rebellious Di slave, how dare you aspire to such undeserved ambitions! I would rather be a ghost for the state than become your subject. Why don't you just kill me quickly!"

He then pushed aside one person, grabbed their sword, and lunged forward to stab Yang Nandi. He missed, and Nandi killed him.

Yao sent Liu Yue to attack Shi Sheng in Luoyang, providing him with 5,000 armored soldiers from nearby commanderies and 10,000 elite palace guards. They crossed the river at Mengjin. The Defender of the East, Huyan Mo, led troops from Jing and Si eastward through Xiao and Mian.

Liu Yue attacked and captured Shi Le's two fortresses at Mengjin and Shiliang, beheading over 5,000 enemies. He then advanced to besiege Shi Sheng at Jinyong. Shi Jilongs led 40,000 infantry and cavalry through Chenggao Pass. Liu Yue arranged his troops to face them.

They battled west of Luo, where Yue's army was defeated. Yue was hit by an arrow and retreated to defend Shiliang. Jilong then surrounded them with trenches and palisades, cutting off all communication.

Yue's troops were starving and had to eat their horses. Jilong also defeated Huyan Mo and beheaded him. Yao personally led an army to rescue Yue, but Jilong came with 30,000 cavalry to oppose him.

Yao's vanguard under Liu Hei greatly defeated Jilong's general Shi Cong at Bate Slope. Yao camped at Jingu, but that night his army was inexplicably thrown into panic and scattered. He retreated to Mianchi. Another panic occurred at night, causing soldiers to flee, so he returned to Chang'an.

Jilong captured Liu Yue, Wang Teng, and over 80 other officers, along with more than 3,000 Di and Qiang people, sending them to Xiangguo. He buried alive 16,000 soldiers. When Yao returned from Mianchi, he wore plain clothes and wailed at the outskirts for seven days before entering the city.

In Wugong, a pig gave birth to a dog; in Shanggui, a horse gave birth to a cow; and there were countless other strange omens and abnormal occurrences. Yao ordered each of his ministers to recommend one knowledgeable and outspoken scholar. Minister of Works Liu Jun recommended his military advisor Tai Chan. Yao personally went to the East Hall and sent palace attendants to question him. Chan spoke frankly about the causes of these occurrences. Yao read his response and was pleased, summoning him to the East Hall to consult him about state affairs.

Chan wept and sobbed as he thoroughly explained the disasters portended by these omens and the deficiencies in governance. His words were honest and direct. Yao's expression changed and he treated Chan with respect, immediately appointing him as Erudite and Libationer, Grand Master of Remonstrance, and Director of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau.

His subsequent predictions all proved accurate, and Yao valued him even more. Within a year, he was promoted three times, serving successively as Imperial Secretary, Grand Master of Splendid Happiness, Junior Tutor to the Crown Prince, and was given the rank of Special Advanced.

Yao appointed Liu Yin as Grand Marshal and promoted him to Prince of Nanyang, granting him thirteen commanderies of Hanyang as his domain. He established the Chanyu Platform at Weicheng and appointed himself as Grand Chanyu, setting up positions of Left and Right Wise Princes and other titles below them, filling these positions with prominent leaders from the Hu, Jie, Xianbei, Di, and Qiang peoples.

After returning to Chang'an, Yao had fallen ill due to anger and frustration. When he recovered from his illness, he granted amnesty in Chang'an to all criminals except those sentenced to death. He appointed his Prince of Runan, Liu Xian, as Grand Commander and Supervisor of the Imperial Secretariat, appointed Liu Sui, the Grand Master of Splendid Happiness, as Grand Minister of Education, and Bu Tai as Grand Minister of Works.

Yao's wife, Lady Liu, became gravely ill. Yao personally visited her and asked if she had any final words. Lady Liu wept and said: "My uncle Chang has no son. I was raised by him in my youth, and he showed me great kindness. I have no way to repay his kindness, so I wish Your Majesty would honor him. My uncle Ai's daughter Fang possesses virtue and beauty; I wish she could serve in the imperial harem." Yao agreed to these requests.

After speaking these words, she died. She was posthumously honored as Empress Xianlie. Liu Chang was appointed as Envoy with Imperial Insignia, Palace Attendant, Grand Minister of Education, and Supervisor of the Imperial Secretariat. He was promoted to Duke of Henan Commandery, and his wife Lady Zhang was made Lady of Cixiang. Liu Ai's daughter Fang was installed as Empress, fulfilling Lady Liu's final wish.

Shortly after, he appointed Cavalry General Liu Shu as Grand Minister of Education and made Liu Chang Grand Guardian. He summoned the brave and capable sons of his ministers and officials to serve as Personal Guard Officers, who wore armor and rode armored horses, accompanying him everywhere to serve as his personal protection force.

Imperial Secretary Hao Shu and Water Conservation Director Zhi Dang and others strongly remonstrated against these appointments, but Yao became furious and had them poisoned to death.

In the third year of Xianhe (329), Yao had a night dream where three figures with golden faces and red lips faced east, bowed respectfully, and retreated without speaking. Yao bowed and followed their footsteps. At dawn, he summoned his ministers to discuss this dream. The court officials all congratulated him, considering it an auspicious sign.

However, the Director of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau, Ren Yi, said: "Three represents the ultimate limit of historical cycles. East is the position of Thunder, the beginning position for rulers. Gold represents the position of Lake, indicating decline. Red lips without speech signifies the end of matters. Their respectful bowing represents the way of withdrawal. Your bowing to them suggests submission to others. Following their footsteps indicates staying within boundaries. The Eastern Well is Qin's constellation, and the Five Chariots is Zhao's constellation. Qin's forces will surely rise suddenly, the ruler will be lost and armies defeated, leaving destruction in Zhao's territory. This will happen within three years, or as soon as seven hundred days. The response is not far off. I hope Your Majesty will consider this and take precautions."

Yao was greatly frightened. He personally performed sacrifices at the suburban altars, renovated temples, made offerings to mountains and rivers, leaving nothing undone. He granted amnesty to all except those condemned to death and reduced the people's taxes and levies by half. From spring until the fifth month, Chang'an experienced no rainfall.

Yao sent his military guard Liu Lang to lead 30,000 cavalry in an attack against Yang Nandi at Qiuchi. The attack failed, but they captured and brought back over 3,000 households.

When Zhang Jun heard that Yao's army had been defeated by the Shi clan, he abandoned Yao's official titles and resumed using the Jin dynasty titles of Grand General and Shepherd of Liang Province. He then sent Zhang Lang, the Administrator of Jincheng, along with Xin Yan, the Military Protector of Fuhan, General Han Pu, and others to lead several tens of thousands of troops from Daxia to attack and plunder various commanderies in Qin Province.

Yao dispatched Liu Yin to lead 40,000 infantry and cavalry to counter them. The armies faced each other along the Tao River for over 70 days. The Champion General Huyan Naji led 2,000 Personal Guard cavalry to cut off their supply routes. When Yin's forces crossed the river to press the attack, Pu's army completely collapsed and fled back to Liang Province. Yin pursued them to Lingju, where he beheaded 20,000 soldiers. Zhang Lang and Xin Yan, leading tens of thousands of troops, surrendered to Yao. They were all appointed as generals and enfeoffed as marquises.

Shi Le sent Shi Jilong to lead 40,000 troops westward through Zhi Pass. More than 50 counties in Hedong responded by supporting them, and they advanced to attack Puban. When Yao planned to go east to rescue Puban, he feared that Zhang Jun and Yang Nandi might take advantage of his absence to attack Chang'an, so he sent his Prince of Hejian, Shu, to station Di and Qiang troops in Qin Province.

Yao led all his elite forces by land and water to respond, crossing north of Wei Pass. Jilong became fearful and withdrew his forces. Yao pursued them to Gaohou, where a major battle took place. He defeated them, killing their general Shi Zhan, with corpses stretching over 200 li, and captured enormous amounts of military supplies. Jilong fled to Zhaoge.

Yao then crossed at Dayang and attacked Shi Sheng at Jinyong, using the Thousand-Gold Dam to flood them. However, Yao neglected his troops and spent time drinking and gambling with his favored officials. When his advisers remonstrated, he became angry, condemned it as treasonous talk, and executed them. There were strong winds that uprooted trees, and fog blocked all directions.

When he heard that Jilong had advanced to occupy Shimen, and later learned that Le had personally led a large force across the river, he finally discussed reinforcing the Xingyang garrison and blocking Huangma Pass. Soon after, his scouts engaged Le's vanguard and captured a Jie soldier. Yao questioned him: "Did the Great Barbarian come himself? How large is his army?" The Jie replied: "The Great Barbarian came himself, and his army is too mighty to resist." Yao's expression changed. He ordered the siege of Jinyong to be lifted and arranged his forces west of the Luo River, stretching north-south for over ten li.

Yao had been fond of drinking since youth, and it had gotten worse in his later years. When Le arrived and Yao prepared for battle, he drank several dou of wine. His usual red horse suddenly stumbled for no reason, so he switched to a smaller horse. Before setting out, he drank another dou of wine.

When he reached the Xiyang Gate and arranged his battle formation, Le's general Shi Kan took advantage of the situation, and Yao's army completely collapsed. Yao fled in his drunken state, his horse got stuck in a stone ditch, and he fell onto ice. He suffered more than ten wounds, three of which were severe, and was captured by Kan who sent him to Le.

Yao said: "King Shi! Do you remember the covenant at Chongmen?" Le had Xu Guang tell Yao: "Today's events are Heaven's will, what more can be said!" Yao was imprisoned in the Henan Assistant's office, where the wound doctor Li Yong was sent to treat him, before being taken to Xiangguo.

Yao's wounds were severe, and Le had him transported in a horse-drawn carriage with Li Yong accompanying him. Sun Ji, an elder from the North Garden market, requested to see Yao, which Le permitted. Ji offered wine to Yao and recited: "Pugu King, who proclaimed himself emperor west of the passes. Should have maintained stability and protected his territory. Rashly used military force, lost at Luoyang. His destiny exhausted, Heaven abandoned him. Now let us share this final cup."

Yao replied, "How vigorous you are! I should drink to you, old man." When Le heard this, his expression changed to one of sadness and said, "A man who has lost his kingdom, yet makes an old man reproach him."

Yao was confined in the small city of Yongfeng in Xiangguo, provided with his concubines but strictly guarded by soldiers. Le sent Liu Yue, Liu Zhen, and others, mounted on horses and accompanied by their attendants, dressed in mourning clothes to see Yao. Yao said to them, "I long thought you had all turned to dust. King Shi has shown great mercy in sparing you until now. I killed Shi Ta and gravely broke our covenant. Today's misfortune is only what I deserve." They stayed and feasted for the entire day before leaving.

Le instructed Yao to write to his crown prince Xi, urging him to surrender. However, Yao only commanded Xi: "Work with the ministers to maintain the state, and do not change your resolve because of me." Le read this and was displeased. Later, Yao was killed on Le's orders.

Xi, Liu Yin, Liu Xian and others discussed retreating west to defend Qin Province. The Minister of Documents Hu Xun said, "Although we have lost our ruler, the state remains intact, and the military's morale is unified with no signs of rebellion. We can join forces to defend strategic positions - it's not too late to escape." Yin disagreed and, angry that Hu Xun was discouraging the troops, executed him. Yin then led the officials to flee to Shanggui. Liu Hou and Liu Ce abandoned their posts to join them. Guanzhong fell into chaos, and Generals Jiang Ying and Xin Shu, commanding several hundred thousand troops, occupied Chang'an and sent envoys to submit to Le. Le dispatched Shi Sheng to lead troops from Luoyang to respond.

Yin and Liu Zun led several tens of thousands of troops from Shanggui to attack Shi Sheng in Chang'an. The Chinese and barbarian populations from various commanderies - Longdong, Wudu, Anding, Xinping, Beidi, Fufeng, and Shiping - all raised armies to support Yin. Yin stationed at Zhongqiao while Shi Sheng firmly defended Chang'an.

Le sent Shi Jilong with 20,000 cavalry to oppose Yin. They fought at Yiqu, where Jilong defeated them, killing over 5,000 men. Yin fled to Shanggui, but Jilong pursued and continued fighting, leaving corpses for a thousand li until Shanggui fell. Jilong captured the false Crown Prince Xi, Prince of Nanyang Liu Yin, various princes, ministers, and over 3,000 officials and nobles, all of whom were executed.

He relocated over 9,000 people to Xiangguo, including civil and military officials, refugees from the east, and prominent families from Qin and Yong. He also executed over 5,000 nobles and people from five commanderies in Luoyang. Yao had reigned for ten years before his defeat.

The dynasty had begun when Yuanhai usurped power in the fourth year of Emperor Huai's Yongjia reign (303). It lasted through three generations over 27 years, until its destruction in the fourth year of Emperor Cheng's Xianhe reign (330).

Commentary

The Historian Comments:

Those barbarians have human faces but bestial hearts. They abandon their lords and kin when they see profit, and forget benevolence and righteousness when faced with wealth. Even when kept at a distance, we fear their invasions; when allowed within our borders, they look for our internal weaknesses. In the past, when King You lost control, barbarian dust darkened the Xi waters; when King Xiang failed in governance, barbarian horses bred in Guan and Luo. In calculating strength and weakness, mastering military strategy, understanding rise and decline, and knowing advantage and disadvantage, their capabilities against our China cannot be underestimated.

Moreover, Yuanhai was an exceptional talent who was destined for greatness; given his extraordinary abilities, he could not remain in a lowly position. Thus, he rode forth with grand ambitions, seized opportunities like a changing leopard, and with the five tribes cheering, he suddenly rose to power. With imperial relatives harming each other, none could compete with him.

Yi Zhi initiated the strategy of kingship, Gudu discussed the time of establishment, the Chanyus had no thoughts of looking north, and the Xianyun performed sacrifices in the southern suburbs - how vast are Heaven and Earth, yet how lacking in benevolence this was!

Although they adopted Chinese customs and learned refined manners, when combined with their old traditions, they rarely achieved proper form. Even though Shi Le claimed vassalage and Wang Mi showed loyalty, they remained barbarian states that did not properly understand the positions of ruler and subject. When they claimed to embrace Confucian ways and maintain uprightness, they were what the ancient worthies called "those who steal benevolence and righteousness while practicing them."

The false ruler perished, and Xuanming usurped the succession. Though he cultivated favor with the military and held total power, with territory stretching across the Yellow River region and forces surpassing his predecessors, his loyalty did not come from within. Diverging from grand aspirations, his superficial beauty made it difficult to complete endeavors.

He exhausted military force, destroyed the loyal and upright, while sycophants drove his chariots alongside. Eunuchs wielded power like they could turn the heavens, and harsh laws exceeded the severity of burning punishments. He sent wolf-like generals and hawk-dog armies, their banners hanging over the Wei River and dividing at Luoyang. Iron horses crossed mountains, and barbarian flutes played along riverbanks. The loyal were destroyed by barbarian hands, and officials' heads were displayed at the corpse mounds. The ancient kings' well-field system became merely mulberry fields, and the old palace halls turned to overgrown grass. Travelers shed tears as dew dampened their clothes.

In ancient times, leaders were honest and did not favor their own sons, achieving merit then yielding to the virtuous. Only after three campaigns did they resort to weapons, to save those in chaos and respectfully receive Heaven's Mandate. How noble was King Wu of Zhou - when the Yin ruler fell, there was nothing more to be said. Yet this light military action and three shots from the red bow - how could it compare to the imperial procession through proper gates, or golden chariots at Shanyang Lodge!

Thus we know the common people yearn for the past while living in the present; the white banners displayed in markets show the present cannot match the past. The barbaric invaders were inhuman, like wolves and boars, making the Son of Heaven serve wine and hold parasols. Yu Shi’s tears were exhausted, and Xin Bin added blood to them.

While life is precious and death is difficult, they expanded the meaning of the Three Bonds but forgot the importance of human dignity. The grief of serving a ruler led to sharing the same fate. Of all usurpations throughout history, this was the most severe. Thus disaster signs appeared, treacherous ministers caused chaos, government declined and people scattered - leading to inevitable downfall. That Liu Cong died naturally was not fortunate.

Yao possessed a naturally fierce and brave disposition, but encountered difficult times. In military affairs, he was comparable to Wang Jian, and in his penchant for killing, he was second only to Duke Dong. Though he inherited a base from an unsavory lineage, there were some praiseworthy aspects. When Ziyuan offered loyal advice, his banner was temporarily lowered; when He Bao spoke frankly, the Fengming Observatory was closed.

However, wherever his armies went, thorns and thistles grew. He cut off powerful allies, creating formidable enemies for himself. What Heaven detests, human affairs reflect. He frightened his soldiers into fleeing at night and drank from barbarian cups without sobering up. It was as if he handed over his power, making it as easy as picking up a mustard seed. How could the Shi clan rise in such circumstances? How could he be so unsupported!

Eulogy

When the Emperor failed to set standards,  
Nearby lands became the center of power.  
Like Danzhu who rarely succeeded,  
And Modu who competed for supremacy.  
Barbarian banners raised against the moon,  
Northern horses galloped with the wind.  
Dust covered the Huai River banks,  
Fierce cries filled the River Palace.  
Weiyang Palace fell silent at court,  
The palace gates emptied by dawn.  
Guo Qin's worries proved true,  
Xin You understood the barbarians well.