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Diplomacy as Transgression in Early China

The transgressive potential of the diplomat

At base, diplomacy is driven by the aim for a non-militaristic negotiation of frequently competing interests, a negotiation that ideally should reinforce the definition of each party's sovereign realm and palliate any conflict between them. But this negotiation is also, by the very act of transacting across political and cultural boundaries, a kind of transgression, and thus a danger to the integrity of the state polity, for in diplomacy, the interests of the state can not only be unsuccessfully negotiated but intentionally undermined, just as, in military campaigns, the interests of the state can be subverted, and betrayed, by false, or careless, action, or even intentional inaction, as is so often depicted in the early Chinese narrative histories.¹ Indeed, the very reason for Sima Qian's brutal castration is his support of a general, Li Ling, who "treasonously" capitulated to the Xiongnu after a failed engagement.² As von Clausewitz's by now clichéed equation so aptly insinuates, military and diplomatic engagement are aspirationally congruent: War is the continuation of politics "by other means."³

1 Anne McClintock analogously asserts that sailors and explorers, as members of the liminal condition also were "dangerous": "There on the margins between known and unknown, the male conquistadors, explorers and sailors became creatures of transition and threshold . . . the dangers represented by liminal people are managed by rituals that separate the marginal ones from their old status, segregating them for a time and then publicly declaring their entry into their new status. Colonial discourse repeatedly rehearses this pattern – dangerous marginality, segregation, reintegration." Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 24–25.

2 For the most detailed *Shiji* accounts of the Li Ling failure, see *SJ* 110.2918 and *SJ* 109.2877–78. For lengthier accounts, one must peruse the *Hanshu*. See *HS* 54.2451–2457 and 62.2730.

3 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 119: "We see therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. All beyond this which is strictly peculiar to War relates merely to the peculiar nature of the means which it uses." This congruence is evident in various ministerial addresses and debates represented as part of the Warring States and Han eras. For my close, detailed analysis of these addresses and debates, see Garret Olberding, *Dubious Facts: The Evidence of Early Chinese Historiography* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2012), chapters six and eight.

For diplomatic interface, transgression resides not only in the possibility of betrayal and rearrangement or distortion of alliances, and thus state action, but also in the actual rhetorical reframing of one's diplomatic mission or of the representation of the current state of affairs.⁴ I argue that understanding the transgressive activity of the diplomat requires a nuanced understanding of a ritualized conceptualization of early Chinese diplomacy, which we can acquire through the examination of formal restrictions on ambassadorial exchange, obligations to and from guests, and the idea of the "alien" or "monstrous." To gain greater depth in these examinations, I hazard that an analogous diplomatic transgression of boundaries is that pursued by the *wu* 巫, "spirit mediums" (employed by the state as "invocators," *zhu* 祝) who act as diplomatic intermediaries between the physical and supernatural, their sacrifices cognate with monarchial tribute, their prayers with diplomatic pleadings.⁵ Using an invocator was to conduct diplomacy with the spirits. Indeed, rulers very clearly relied on assistance from the spiritual realms for not only maintenance of their realms, but also their expansion.⁶ According to Michael Puett, in the Shang, the ritual of the

4 As expressed by the figure of Confucius in the *Zhuangzi*, the conveying of messages between rival sovereign parties is very difficult and dangerous: "Whenever we are dealing with neighbours we have to rub along with each other on a basis of trust; but with people more distant we have to show our good faith in words, and the words must have some messenger. To pass on the words of parties both of whom are pleased or both of whom are angry with each other is the most difficult thing in the world. In the one case there are sure to be a lot of exaggerated compliments, in the other a lot of exaggerated abuse. Every sort of exaggeration is irresponsible, and if language is irresponsible trust in it fails, and the consequence of that is that the messenger is a doomed man. Therefore the book of rules says: 'If you report the straightforward facts and omit the exaggerated language, you will be safe enough.'" 凡交近則必相靡以信，遠則必忠之以言，言必或傳之。夫傳兩喜兩怒之言，天下之難者也。夫兩喜必多溢美之言，兩怒必多溢惡之言。凡溢之類妄，妄則其信之也莫，莫則傳言者殃。故法言曰：『傳其常情，無傳其溢言，則幾乎全。』 (*Zhuangzi*, "Renjian shi" 人間世 ("Worldly business among men"; *Chuang-Tzû: The Inner Chapters*, trans. A. C. Graham (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), 70; *Zhuangzi zhushu* 庄子注疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 86–87. *Analects* 14.25 also has Confucius ostensibly ruing the impolitic critique by an envoy of his lord.

5 One could say that among the most famous of Christian quotations is the request by Jesus of Nazareth who asks, in the position of the diplomat, for the monarch God not to punish those who are mistreating God's missionary representative, himself, Jesus: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. One could go even further to suggest that Jesus's performance of healing miracles is as one who transgresses the divide between the human and spirit world and that his actions are seen, in some way, as transgressions of the natural order, as its deformation, and thus, dangerous to it.

6 As the First Emperor of Qin stated in an edict: "Insignificant person that I am, I have called up troops to punish violence and rebellion. Thanks to the help of the ancestral spirits, these six kings have all acknowledged their guilt and the world is in profound order." 「寡人以眇眇之身，興兵誅

“guest” (*bin* 賓), in use for the “entertainment” of spiritual powers, was to both maintain a hierarchy and to bring alien deities, such as Di, into the ancestral pantheon.⁷ The spirits “descend” (*jiang* 降) into the world and involve themselves in its affairs through a spirit medium, a vertical journey that the monarch or his representatives replicate through ascent on natural or constructed elevations.⁸ But these deities, Puett maintains, could not be depended upon for any assistance and in point of fact, at least in the Shang, “the assumption seemed to be that spirits were capricious and quite possibly malicious.”⁹ Whether the relationship between the spirit and human worlds was later ever fully harmonized, there was necessarily a rift, and potential conflict, between the two, requiring the diplomatic intervention of spiritual mediators, however unreliable their own allegiances were. In view of this, we may ask, as Linda Feng does in her essay above, how does the religious organization of space impact its secular organization and, furthermore, what does any transgression of religiously sanctified boundaries effect?

The profession of the diplomat or envoy – either within the human world, or, I hypothesize, analogously as priests or spirit mediums toward the spirit world – involved manifold tasks that could conceivably, and very easily, compromise the sovereignty of and very concretely the territorial extent governed by the monarch. Succeeding is a partial list of the envoy’s commonly sanctioned activities: Pass messages; obtain information directly and indirectly, as the sovereign’s official informant; act as the monarch’s representative in ritual, political, and military fora; and, most invidiously, speak on the monarch’s behalf. It is not clear what plenipotentiary powers the envoys of the sovereign were afforded; one would suspect it would depend on the envoy’s politico-military status and the task at hand. Regardless, in their activities, they could covertly exceed their prerogatives, impinging on or brazenly usurping the monarch’s prerogative. Whatever their official charge, their powers abroad were, somewhat similar to the generals acting as the monarch’s representatives on the battlefield, potentially destabilizing, bringing “disorder” (*luan* 亂).¹⁰ Most

暴亂，賴宗妙之靈，六王咸服其辜，天下大定。」SJ 6.236; Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 42.

7 Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Asia Center Publications, 2002), 52.

8 Mark E. Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2006), 300.

9 Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, 53.

10 “I, Your servant, have heard that when the high ancient kings dispatched generals, they kneeled and pushed the axle [to the generals’ carts], saying, ‘Within the city gates, I, the solitary person, make regulations, outside the city gates the generals make regulations. The

flagrantly, they would upend the monarch's sovereignty, intentionally eroding or abrogating his position in their negotiations with other powers. Such opportunities for misdeeds were certainly a reason for the monarch to secure "*immutable mobiles*" such as visual representations of distant areas, "representations which can be detached from the place (or object) which they represent," by which the monarch could, in Bruno Latour's phrase, "act at a distance."¹¹

But indirect undermining was more the rule: Envoys could have supposed "enemies" of the monarch dispatched, when these "enemies" were really those of the envoy or his associates; could make self-serving political and economic pacts; could embezzle, and thereby betray the economic order, or miscarry politico-legal justice, for instance by punishing without warrant. Even more frequent was their habit to distort messages to and from the monarch or to collude with the enemy in their presenting of sensitive information, as Jing Ke 荊軻 was to do in presenting what was taken to be a strategically valuable map of Yan 燕 territory to the first Qin emperor. It is furthermore plausible that, with the interaction with the spirits perceived as having manifest effect on the affairs of the human world, that the envoy, in his capacity as representative in ritual sacrifices,¹² could attempt to "negotiate" with the spirits against the interests of the sovereign.

degrees of merit, orders of honor, and material rewards to be awarded to members of the army are all determined abroad. Only when you return do you present them.' This is not an empty saying." 臣聞上古王者遣將也，跪而推轂，曰：『闔以內寡人制之，闔以外將軍制之；軍功爵賞，皆決於外，歸而奏之。』此非空言也。 See HS 50.2314; Olberding, *Dubious Facts: The Evidence of Early Chinese Historiography*, 64.

¹¹ Ola Söderström, "Paper Cities: Visual Thinking in Urban Planning," *Ecumene* 3, no. 3 (1996), 253.

¹² See, e.g., in HHS 3.14, "使使者祠唐堯於成陽靈臺" or HHS 3.144, "遣使者祠太上皇於萬年，以中牢祠蕭何、霍光。" David Schaberg, in an essay, associated the position of the envoy, or *shi* 使, with that of the *shi* 史, the professional ancestor of which conceivably was the spiritual medium or "shaman" (*wu* 巫). He notes that none of the typical terms for "envoy" – *shi* 使, *shizhe* 使者, or *xingren* 行人 – appeared "as such" in sources portraying the Western Zhou, whether the bronze inscriptions or received texts. In the *Zuozhuan*, Schaberg states, the most common duties of the *shi* 史 were "the duties relating to sacrifices, especially to natural spirits or in response to natural disasters. The *shi* 史 are responsible for identifying and responding appropriately to unknown spirits and for conducting sacrifices at such sites as the Luo river . . . Perhaps due to this responsibility for sacrifices to natural powers, they also serve frequently as interpreters of divinations (usually by milfoil), omens, and dreams and more generally as prophets of good and ill fortune." See David Schaberg, "Functionary Speech: On the Work of *Shi* 使 and *Shi* 史." In *Facing the Monarch: Modes of Advice in the Early Chinese Court*, edited by Garret Olberding (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Asia Center Publications, 2013), esp. 21, 23, and 27–28.

In short, like a passage in the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 asserts, envoys were the pivots of the state's survival, the crux of any gain or loss.¹³ It should therefore not be surprising that a classicist Warring States text devoted to expounding on proper governance, the *Xunzi* 荀子, dedicates a lengthy passage to the prescribed and proscribed behavior of official representatives. The official representative is not to deviate from his charge, not "to add or subtract." He is to have no inclination but to serve his lord properly. These officials must be trustworthy enough to be "employed in far away places to make clear [the lord's] intentions and resolve uncertainties."¹⁴ While they cannot abrogate the responsibilities associated with polite, formal interaction, they also must defend the state, and the monarch, against insults, to maintain its, and his, claims to sovereignty. Deference was to be shown to the monarch's representative, as would be shown to the monarch himself.¹⁵ Without such reliable representatives, the state, according to the *Xunzi*, will fall.¹⁶ But this faithful rhetorical

13 "Thus those advisors and assistants who serve as envoys, they are the crux of survival or demise, the essential point of gain or loss. This must not be ignored!" 故輔弼左右所任使者、有存亡之機，得失之要也，可無慎乎！ See Han Ying 韓嬰, *Hanshi waizhuan jishi* 韓詩外傳集釋 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2009), j. 5, zhang 18, 186.

14 Xunzi, "The Way to Be a Lord" 君道; *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 131–132; Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed., *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997a), 244–245.

15 "When a message from the ruler comes (to a minister), the latter should go out and bow (to the bearer), in acknowledgment of the honour of it. When the messenger is about to return, (the other) must bow to him (again), and escort him to the gate. If (a minister) send a message to his ruler, he must wear his court robes when he communicates it to the bearer; and on his return, he must descend from the hall, to receive (the ruler's) commands." 君言至，則主人出拜君言之辱；使者歸，則必拜送于門外。若使人於君所，則必朝服而命之；使者反，則必下堂而受命。 *Liji*, "Quli" A 曲禮上, *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge (New York: Oxford University Press, 1885), 86. In this aspect, the early Chinese envoy was akin to a medieval European *nuncius*: "Dealing with a *nuncius* was, for legal and practical purposes, the same as dealing with the principal . . . How complete the identification was between *nuncius* and principal can be further gauged from the fact that a *nuncius* could receive and make oaths that ought to be performed in the presence of the principal. It was also clear that the status of the *nuncius* was reflected in the immunity from harm which he was expected to be given. All diplomatic messengers from the earliest times had been accorded some kind of security for their persons, usually on religious grounds, and the special status of ambassadors was clearly understood. In the case of *nuncii*, there was a special sense that harming a *nuncius* was the same as harming his principal, as there was that a *nuncius* should be received with the ceremony that would be due to his principal." Keith Hamilton, and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 24–25.

16 "And so, the ruler of men must have people who will suffice for being employed in far away places to make clear his intentions and resolve uncertainties, and only then are they

adherence to monarch's prerogative was irregular. As David Schaberg acknowledges, representatives frequently spoke irreverently and impolitically.¹⁷ If advisers could be acidly condescending toward their rulers while at court, as envoys, they could easily be so. Even more dangerously, their transmission of the ruler's intentions, and relevant information, was also suspect.

This is likely a significant reason for the widespread regulatory controls pertaining to the preservation and recording of diplomatic missives, and their carriers, detailed in both received and excavated sources. Information in general was insecure and comparatively difficult to verify in the ancient world;¹⁸ this would be ever more the case when the information could be used to personal advantage. Jidong Yang has observed in the Xuanquan manuscripts that foreign envoys were under strict supervision, at all times accompanied by a Chinese official and required to carry a passport:

The original passport had to be carried by the foreign envoys at all times when traveling within the Han empire. On arriving at a postal station or a local government mansion, the envoy would show the travel document to the officials in charge in order to receive accommodation; the officials offering the service would furthermore make a copy of the passport for their own records.¹⁹

These diplomatic precautions are easily comprehensible for, as Yang mentions, most designated envoys (*shizhe* 使者) from Central Asia acted as merchants who rarely moved far beyond the empire's perimeter, interacting and socializing with the officials of these border areas. These interactions were monitored carefully, with the duration of the stay, the departing direction and time of

acceptable. Their demonstrations and persuasions must suffice to dissolve worries. Their wisdom and deliberations must suffice to resolve uncertainties. Their swiftness and decisiveness must suffice to ward off disasters. They must not circumvent protocols or act confrontationally toward other lords, but nevertheless their response to derogatory treatment and their defense against troubles must suffice to uphold the state's altars of soil and grain." 故人主必將有足使喻志決疑於遠方者，然後可。其辯說足以解煩，其知慮足以決疑，其齊斷足以距難，不還秩，不反君，然而應薄扞患，足以持社稷。 *Xunzi*, "The Way to Be a Lord" 君道; *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 131; Wang Xianqian 王先謙, ed. *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997a), 244–245.

¹⁷ David Schaberg, "Playing At Critique: Indirect Remonstrance and the Formation of *Shi* Identity," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Olberding, *Dubious Facts: The Evidence of Early Chinese Historiography*, 61.

¹⁹ Jidong Yang, "Transportation, Boarding, Lodging and Trade Along the Early Silk Road: A Preliminary Study of the Xuanquan Manuscripts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135, no. 3 (2015), 428.

departure, and the number of meals offered recorded,²⁰ conceivably to inhibit collusion between border officials and foreign powers, just as the fastidious recording of each article of mail passing through the Xuanquan station²¹ probably also in part aimed to do. Envoys were to act as spies for their lords,²² but, as mentioned above, they also acted as informants for the lord's rivals.

The envoy's moving into a non-state space, without the protections, such as they were, of state protocols and laws, was in itself dangerous. Indeed, a passage in the *Liji* advises rulers be cautioned about leaving the state with the admonishing query, "Why are you leaving the altars of the spirits of the land and grain?" suggesting not only a danger to the state but also to the ruler himself.²³ To be exiled, to be sent abroad without state protections was for this reason a punishment, for it could very readily mean death or serious injury. Non-state territory was *defined* by this very lack of administrative oversight, and was a place where societal cast-offs, where the socially "dead" could be sent.²⁴ This area of the unknown and unprotected was the place of the symbolically monstrous and the effaced. Indeed, as Martin Kern has noted, the sovereign space was measured by "the terminal points to which all crime is relegated." According to Han commentators of the "Canon of Shun" (*Shundian* 舜典) in the *Canon of Yao* 堯典, the "four 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

20 Yang, "Transportation, Boarding, Lodging and Trade Along the Early Silk Road: A Preliminary Study of the Xuanquan Manuscripts," 428–429.

21 Yang, "Transportation, Boarding, Lodging and Trade Along the Early Silk Road: A Preliminary Study of the Xuanquan Manuscripts," 426.

22 "Upon arriving at Jinyang, [Liu Bang, the future Han emperor] heard that Han Xin together with the Xiongnu wished to attack the Han armies. Liu Bang was very angry and sent an envoy to the Xiongnu. The Xiongnu hid their strong soldiers and fat cows and horses, only revealing the old and weak and the young herd animals. The envoy came ten times and always said the Xiongnu could be attacked." 至晉陽，聞信與匈奴欲共擊漢，上大怒，使人使匈奴。匈奴匿其壯士肥牛馬，但見老弱及羸畜。使者十輩來，皆言匈奴可擊。 *SJ* 99.2718.

23 *Liji*, "Quli" B 曲禮下: "When the ruler of a state (is proposing to) leave the state, they should (try to) stop him, saying, 'Why are you leaving the altars of the spirits of the land and grain?'" 國君去其國，止之曰：「奈何去社稷也！」 *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, 107; *Liji jiji* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2010a), 125.

24 According to Danielle Allen, casting out the dead from the city, from the acculturated center, was practiced very literally by the ancient Greeks. A return to civilized space, to the city, was a return to the world of the living. See Danielle Allen, *The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 207.

in the East.”²⁵ For those not being punished, being sent into the wilds, as Shun himself was by Yao,²⁶ was a perilous trial, of one’s person and one’s loyalties.

Ritual obligations involved in travel abroad

Oddly enough, comparatively little has been written on the general form of pre-modern diplomacy, whether in China or even in Europe, apart from broader concerns of foreign relations. At base, diplomacy assumes a secure source of political power that can actually be represented, for which negotiations can be made and agreements secured. If there is no secure source of power, if power is too fragmentary, diplomats naturally have no one stable subject or entity to represent. Between diplomatically symmetrical entities, that is, between those polities that are treated as of reciprocally recognizable structure, diplomats are treated as representational metonyms of their supporting polities; between asymmetrical entities, the “superior” polity condescends to demand for tribute or obeisance but will not offer corresponding duties to the “inferior.” Thus when the Han opposed the Xiongnu polity organized under the *shanyu*, they engaged in high-level diplomatic exchanges and negotiations, with both sides treating the diplomatic representatives according to protocols. According to the *Shiji*, the Xiongnu’s protocols for interacting with diplomats depended on the diplomat’s status. Early idealizing literature such as the *Zhouli*, *Yili*, and *Liji* preserves ritualized protocols for diplomatic interface but whether any approximation of such was properly and fully applied to foreign, non-Chinese adversaries cannot be certain. As will be discussed later, if the debate of 51 BCE about the status of a Xiongnu *shanyu* in relation to the Han aristocrats is any indication, full application was probably the exception. What is clear, from the Zhangjiashan legal texts, is that there were strict regulations about who could travel abroad, and with what objects they could travel. Metal tools, for instance, were tightly regulated, presumably because of the danger of their being transformed into weaponry. Even coffins were inspected for illegal items, though

²⁵ Martin Kern, “Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the ‘Canon of Yao,’” in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 140.

²⁶ Kern, “Language and the Ideology of Kingship in the ‘Canon of Yao,’” 135.

this was ruled improper.²⁷ When there were disagreements, each side would hold the other's emissaries hostage.²⁸

Ritual obligations impinged heavily on travel abroad for those with official status. When travel was not properly sanctioned, the itinerant could face severe consequences, a loss of title, or worse, a loss of identity, becoming essentially stateless. As Wang Haicheng notes, travelers were expected to pass forts located at "strategic points such as ferries and mountain passes."²⁹ The Han ordinances on fords and passes discovered at Zhangjiashan detail punishments for commoners who cross frontiers without permission, including tattooing, building walls for men, pounding grain for women, and amputation of the left foot.³⁰ For county officials, fines were assessed.

Especially for representatives of the sovereign state, such as diplomats, crossing boundaries without permission was in effect the nullifying of one's position, one's subjecthood.³¹ In the *Zuozhuan*, for instance, were a nobleman to flee, "as long as he had not crossed the border, the ruler could stop him and request his return, and presumably his status would be unaffected."³² Were a nobleman to flee his home state, the news would be formally passed to other regional rulers:

In any case of a nobleman of the regional lords departing, it was reported to the regional lords, saying, "The lineage head, So-and-so of Such-and-such a clan, has failed to keep watch over the ancestral temple. We dare report it." (Zuǒ, Xuān 10, 706).³³ 凡諸侯之大夫違, 告於諸侯曰:「某氏之守臣某, 失守宗廟. 敢告。」

Crossing a state boundary without proper sanction, Newell Ann van Auken has noted, was equal to the "abandonment of state altars, that is, with abdication

²⁷ Osamu Oba, "The Ordinance on Fords and Passes Excavated From Han Tomb #247, Zhangjiashan," *Asia Major* 14, no. 2 (2001), 124.

²⁸ *SJ* 110.2911.

²⁹ Haicheng Wang, *Writing and the Ancient State: Early China in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 204.

³⁰ In Wang, *Writing and the Ancient State: Early China in Comparative Perspective*, 207. See also Oba, "The Ordinance on Fords and Passes Excavated From Han Tomb #247, Zhangjiashan," 122–3.

³¹ In a reversal of this power, as Paul J. Kosmin details, in the Seleucid empire, borders could also be the point at which one's status was augmented; for instance, from prince into king. See Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 131–134.

³² Newell Ann Van Auken, "What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139, no. 3 (2019), 581.

³³ Van Auken, "What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China," 581.

of religious responsibilities as head of state.”³⁴ Indeed, according to a passage in the *Zuozhuan*, ritual invocators were not permitted to cross a frontier borderland (*jing* 竟), “if the domain’s altars do not move.”³⁵ Van Auken observes that “Similar language was used in reference to nobility, but instead of abandoning the state altars, a nobleman was said to have ‘failed to keep watch over the ancestral temple’ 失守宗廟.”³⁶ Those eastern Zhou officials or aristocrats who left their states without sanction relinquished their noble status by leaving the state, becoming a threat – or just officially “dead” – to the state.³⁷ As van Auken suggests, this transgression was not simply one toward the living but also toward the spiritual world.³⁸

Van Auken has also mentioned that in the *Zuozhuan*, before any official interstate travel a ruler had to give sanction (*ming* 命), with specific religious ceremonies held and reports (*gao* 告) rendered to the ancestors, presumably in the temple, before departure.³⁹ This requirement, van Auken observes, is reflected in the “Pin li” 聘禮 (“Rites for Peer Visitation”) section of the *Yili* 儀禮 (*Book of*

34 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 580.

35 “The rules for officials stipulate that an invocator does not cross the border if the domain’s altars do not move. When the ruler travels with the army, he performs a purification sacrifice at the altar of earth, and he anoints the drums with blood; the invocators accompany him to attend to their duties, and in this way the group crosses the borders.” 社稷不動，祝不出竟，官之制也。君以軍行，被社、鼙鼓，祝奉以從，於是乎出竟。 See *Zuo Tradition (Zuozhuan): Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, trans. Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016c), Ding 4.1b, 1746–1747; Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981d), 1535.

36 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 580; Zuǒ, Xuān 10, 706. Yuri Pines notes a similar tension in his study of Qin almanacs, in the making of offerings before travel, with the area beyond state boundary walls becoming a dangerous space: “A special exorcist ritual had to be performed upon leaving the state, similar to the ritual performed upon leaving one’s native settlement.” Yuri Pines, “The Question of Interpretation: Qin History in Light of New Epigraphic Sources,” *Early China* 29 (2004), 41.

37 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 583.

38 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 584.

39 These religious ceremonies announcing the departure of a potentially politically destabilizing force, the diplomat, are somewhat similar to those held by military officials before embarking on a campaign or engaging in battle: “[A]ccording to a passage in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, the army commander received his orders in the ancestral temple (*miao* 廟).” See Albert Galvany, “Signs, Clues, and Traces: Anticipation in Ancient Chinese Political and Military Texts,” *Early China* (2015), 4.

Ceremony and Rites),⁴⁰ as well as in the “Zengzi wen” 曾子問 (“The Inquiries of Zengzi”) section of the *Liji* 禮記 (*Record of Rites*). For my analysis, the passage in the *Liji* bears particular notice. It speaks of the regional lord, when setting out to pay court to the son of Heaven or another regional ruler, making reports to not only his father’s shrine but to the altars of grain and soil and to the spirits of mountains and rivers.⁴¹ Ritual activities furthermore surrounded arrivals in another state as well as returns to one’s home state.⁴²

If we can adopt the official travels abroad of those who were deemed *shi* 使 – commonly translated as “emissary” or “diplomat” – in the early histories as being somewhat representative of diplomatic engagement, we can get a sense of the range of the duties of early Chinese diplomats. David Schaberg provides the following list:

Besides their ritually scheduled visits and occasional trips for wedding preparations, funerals, and the recognition of newly acceding rulers, there were also journeys to meetings (*hui* 會), whether for covenants or for joint military action. Battlefield confrontations with enemies also brought states together and required sensitive communication through intermediaries. Prisoners taken in battle and hostages – sometimes envoys detained in the course of their missions – were yet another part of the web, as were noble brides and the retinues accompanying them to their new home.⁴³

40 *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 356–375.

41 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 579; *Liji*, “Zengzi wen” 曾子問: “Confucius said, ‘When princes of states are about to go to the (court of the) son of Heaven, they must announce (their departure) before (the shrine of) their grandfather, and lay their offerings in that of their father. They then put on the court cap, and go forth to hold their own court. (At this) they charge [the liturgist or invocator] and the recorder to announce (their departure) to the (spirits of the) land and grain, in the ancestral temple, and at the (altars of the) [mountains] and rivers.’” (孔子曰:「諸侯適天子,必告于祖,奠于禩,冕而出視朝。命祝、史告於社稷、宗廟、山川。 . .」) *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2010b), 510–511) When state princes visit one another, they too are obliged to inform (and presumably ask permission of) the spirits, both at home before they leave, through an invocator, and while enroute, to the spirits of the hills and rivers they pass: “[T]hey charge the [liturgist or invocator] and the recorder to announce (their departure) at the five shrines in the ancestral temple, and at the altars of the hills and rivers which they will pass.” (命祝、史告于五廟、所過山川。 *Liji jijie* 禮記集解, 511.) In both of the above instances, travelers are also to present sacrifices to the spirits of the roads. For the above translations, see *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, 314–315.

42 Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 579. As she mentions, “for a description of the rites involved when a *pin* mission crossed the border into another state, see *Yi li* 儀禮, “*Pin li*” 聘禮, SSJZS, 19.9ab (230); trans. Steele, 193–195.” Van Auken, “What If Zhào Dùn Had Fled? Border Crossing and Flight Into Exile in Early China”, 579n36.

43 Schaberg, “Functionary Speech: On the Work of *Shi* 使 and *Shi* 史,” 32.

Schaberg also acknowledges the connection between the religious and non-religious duties of the *shi* 使, captured in their cognate relationship to the *shi* 史 (commonly translated as “scribe”), but he phrases this connection in terms of a mastery of “specialized speech” and their exercising “some discretion in determining the appropriate speech to use on specific occasions.”⁴⁴ There is a further cognate association: that of acting as intermediaries across boundaries, whether secular or sacred, with the leadership of other states, or the spiritual powers, particularly, as Schaberg notes, natural spirits, that have a hand in matters of state.⁴⁵ These transactional interfaces across boundaries, political and spiritual, were within the purview of the envoy.

The ritual status of the guest

The envoy being received, his status and treatment was that due to a “guest,” *bin* 賓 or *binke* 賓客.⁴⁶ Thus the ceremonial protocols due the guest give a sense to what was ceremonially due an envoy while abroad. With the offices they undertook religiously sanctified, the diplomat himself was sacralized. As Hugo Grotius (1583–1615) states in “On the Right of Legation” relating to Roman norms, “Pomponius says: ‘If any one has struck the ambassador of an enemy, it is thought that a crime has been committed against the law of nations, because ambassadors are considered sacred.’ Tacitus calls this right which we are treating ‘the right of enemies and sanctity of embassy and divine law of nations.’”⁴⁷ Like the spirit medium, who interceded on behalf of others with the spiritual powers, or military generals paying tribute at the altar before starting battle,⁴⁸ the diplomat’s secular office was to pay tribute and intercede on behalf of others with earthly powers. The attention directed to the conduct between host and guest in the *Liji* suggests their relationship is almost as significant as the mourning rites, or any number of other basic social relationships, such as between father and son, or husband and wife. In the twilight of one’s life, release from duties to

44 Schaberg, “Functionary Speech: On the Work of *Shi* 使 and *Shi* 史,” 39.

45 Schaberg, “Functionary Speech: On the Work of *Shi* 使 and *Shi* 史,” 27–28, 30.

46 This equation is sometimes explicitly rendered, as in this passage from the *Shiji*: 諸侯賓客使者相望於道. *SJ* 85.2513.

47 G. R. Berridge, ed. *Diplomatic Classics: Selected Texts From Commynes to Vattel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 107.

48 Tamara Chin draws this analogy between the general and the diplomat. Tamara Chin, *Savage Exchange: Han Imperialism, Chinese Literary Style, and the Economic Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 173.

guests comes late, at seventy, with only mourning responsibilities left to endure, according to the “Royal Regulations” (*Wangzhi* 王制). All other duties requiring any physical exertion had by then been abrogated.

For the *Liji*, embedded within the duties between hosts and guests were the norms of *yi* 義, often translated thickly as “righteousness,” but which more conservatively could be simply and broadly translated as “social propriety,” the moral attitude that shapes proper social interaction, especially in formal contexts. Duties between foreign guests of noble peerage and their hosts were articulated in the “Pin yi” 聘義 chapter, this chapter title mostly explicitly rendered as “social propriety with regard to visiting dignitaries of noble peerage.” But non-peerage foreign visitors were also treated as “guests,” as numerous texts, such as the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年) reveal. In the *Bamboo Annals*, many foreign tribes “come to court as guests,” *lai bin* 來賓.

We may find further insight into the character of “guests” by the territories prescribed to them. The duties prescribed for those whose territory, and thus political association, is described as being in the “guest realm” *binfu* 賓服, are distinct from those in more associationally distant realms, such as the *yaofu* 要服 or the *huangfu* 荒服. The *binfu* is the second distant from the central monarchial *dianfu* 甸服, following after the *houfu* 侯服, the realm of the aristocrats or lords. The *binfu* is substituted in two early texts, the *Shangshu*’s “Levies of Yu” (*Yugong* 禹貢) and the *Shiji*’s “Annals of the Xia” (*Xia benji* 夏本紀), replaced by the *suifu* 綏服, the “Security” or “Pacification” Realm. In the *Xunzi*, the *Guoyu* 國語, and the *Shiji*’s “Annals of the Zhou” (*Zhou benji* 周本紀), the *binfu* is the third realm from the center. Each of these realms is denoted by their relation to the central court, in what manner their “submission” (*fu* 服) can be characterized.

“Guests” are those who are submissive, are associationally considered somewhat reliable but who are at the liminal edge of the perimeters of loyalty. As the *Shangshu* states about its Security/Pacification Realm, its denizens were enjoined to cultivate the “virtues” (*de* 德) or prepare military defenses⁴⁹ – two activities meant to protect against internal disloyalty and external incursions. Beyond the “guest” realm lies the realms regularly associated with non-Chinese tribes whose loyalties were unreliable, suspect. According to the *Xunzi*, the

49 五百里綏服：三百里揆文教，二百里奮武衛。（Xueqin 李學勤 Li, ed. *Shangshu Zhengyi* 尚書正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), “Yu gong” 禹貢, 168–169) Kong Yingda’s (574–648 CE) commentary interprets the activities of those in this zone to be aimed at pacifying and keeping at bay those hostile elements in the adjacent “Guard” zone: 要服去京已遠，王者以文教要束使服。

Man 蠻 and Yi 夷, southern tribespeople collectively,⁵⁰ lay in the fourth *yao* 要 realm (the “Guard” realm, not infrequently the zone of somewhat allied non-Chinese); the Rong 戎 and Di 狄, northern tribespeople, in the last, distant *huangfu* 荒服, the realm of the “wilds.”⁵¹ It was in the *huangfu* in which the Xiongnu would later be located in the *Shiji* chapter devoted to them, the “Account of the Xiongnu,” *Xiongnu zhuan* 匈奴傳.

The symbolism of these realms naturally does not exclude the extension of the term “guest” to those visiting from beyond any “guest” realm. And yet the treatment of guests most certainly depended on their politico-cultural associations. Guests who were perceived to be from within accepted cultural groups were handled – or at least were *expected* to be handled – differently from those who weren’t. Arguably the status distinctions across peers or apparent supporters and sympathizers in their treatment as guests remained in some manner even between those considered foes – in other words, status distinctions were more important than loyalty. Evidence for this is vividly present in the debate of 51 BCE surrounding the ritual obligations, including the awarding of gifts and bestowing of a title, to the visiting Xiongnu *shanyu*. The status of those who felt themselves internal and integral to the sovereign realm of Han was impugned, threatened by the inclusion and elevation of the *shanyu*. In the 51 BCE debate, two high-level officials, Imperial Counselor Huang Ba 黃霸 and Chancellor Yu Dingguo 于定國 contended that because of his cultural exteriority, the political standing of the *shanyu* needed to be below that of the Liu family kings, a position they justified using the above realm divisions. Arguing the adverse, Xiao Wangzhi 蕭望之 nevertheless situates his contention to place the *shanyu* in a position superior to the Liu kings in the very ritualized exteriority Huang Ba and Yu Dingguo utilized to demote him.⁵²

50 Erica Brindley notes that the the southern Yue were employed historiographically as foils of the Chinese self, “but instead of being a lesser or odious ‘other’ (aka ‘barbarian’), they often served in varying roles as an exaggerated reflection of the self or instantiation of human existence at the remote corners of both the world and individual psyche. Especially in contexts that do not provide a strong articulation of the notion of Hua-xia cultures and polities, the Yue other appears to be a foil used to critique or shed light on the nature of the localized self.” The Yue were associated with “the extremity of common ideals.” Erica Brindley, *Ancient China and the Yue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 121–122.

51 This outermost region within this “wild” zone was that to which convicts were to be sent. One might hazard that the locating of particular tribespeople in the zones may reveal how much of an issue their associated area might be at the time of that particular text’s composition.

52 HS 78.3282. For a discussion of this debate, see Luke Habberstad, “How and Why Do We Praise the Emperor? Debating and Depicting a Late Western Han Court Audience,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60, no. 5 (2017).

According to protocol manuals such as the *Zhouli* (*The Rites of Zhou*), guests, such as envoys, were to receive strictly ritualized treatment, but they also were intimately connected with other ritual activities in the texts. In the *Liji*, for instance, the rendering of sacrifices (*jisi* 祭祀) and the receiving of guests (*binke* 賓客) are frequently paired. Powerful and potentially destabilizing social relationships, such as host and guest, father and son, husband and wife, or the spiritual relationship between the living and dead, which itself mirrored social relationships, were treasured and monitored because of their potential to enhance or damage socio-political structures. The lack of due deference could signal or effect drastic changes impacting the welfare of the state. Without ritualized social interactions between host and guest, and prescriptions on the guest's speech and behavior, restrictions imposed both by the host and the official delegating the guest abroad, envoys would free themselves uninhibitedly from codes that preserved the privileges and responsibilities of group membership. Andrea Nightingale quotes an observation by C. A. Morgan about ancient Greek official trips abroad to religious festivals: "For the individual as citizen of a state, going 'beyond the bounds' was a dangerous move, since community boundaries mark the extent of the security and status conferred by group membership. Yet for the individual, it allowed the freedom to act in whatever way he might deem to be in his own interest." As Nightingale quotes further in a footnote, "the sanctuaries and institutionalized cults within [community boundaries] served (to some extent) to 'limit the actions of individuals to those acceptable to the city'."⁵³ Intrinsically, the guest was also an intruder, the bringer of the "monstrous" foreign unknown, dangerous outside, even when integrated into known norms.

Of course, in early China, ritual prescriptions for behavior toward guests was not limited to the Chinese, nor were the concerns about envoys' pernicious influence. According to the *Shiji*, the Xiongnu had protocols for managing the potential manipulations and conniving of arriving Chinese diplomats. They were keenly aware of the kinds of speech to expect from different types and statuses of Chinese guests – palace eunuchs versus classicists, young strivers versus seasoned elders.⁵⁴ One can presume that concerns about visiting envoys

53 From Andrea Wilson Nightingale, "The Philosopher at the Festival: Plato's Transformation of Traditional *Theōria*," in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, ed. Ján Elsner, and Ian Rutherford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 161, quoting Catherine A. Morgan, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*, ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg (London: Routledge, 1993), 31.

54 In Enno Giele's (modified) translation: "It is a Hsiung-nu habit that, when they receive a Han envoy and he is not a palace eunuch, but a Confucian scholar, they assume that he wants

and the need to keep any nefarious influence in check governed such Xiongnu protocol responses as deeply as they governed Chinese ones.

The duties to one's guests, and the guests' acknowledgement of and respect for these duties are all symbols of soft sovereign power, of the power to regulate action and attitude across the various lines of power – economic, political, and otherwise. The diplomatic jostling between sovereign entities – encapsulated in letters between the Han emperor and the *shanyu* – reveals unadulteratedly how the powers of state, and their territorial boundaries, required careful, intricate negotiation. In contrast to the negotiations of diplomat-persuaders whose allegiances to the state are ever dim and uncertain, in the negotiations between heads of state, in the persons of the state *themselves*, we can lay bare the possible transgressions of diplomatic boundaries, and thus the boundaries of state power itself. In these direct interactions, traded insults, sarcasm, borrowed marks of tradition, and purposeful omissions themselves are the actual diminution of the other's sovereignty. A potent instance of this is found in the diplomatic exchanges between Emperor Wen and the Xiongnu *shanyu*.

According to the *Records*, in 179 BCE, the first year of the reign of Emperor Wen of Han, the Xiongnu and the Han attempt to reclaim a peaceable, diplomatic relationship. Two years earlier, in 181 BCE, a Xiongnu king, the Worthy King of the Right, invaded and occupied the region south of the Yellow River, marauded and robbed non-Chinese people (*Manyi*) at the Bao Barrier 葆塞, murdering and kidnapping them. Thereupon Emperor Wen issued an edict to the Chancellor Guan Ying 灌嬰 to send out 85,000 units of chariots and cavalry to travel to the Gaonu 高奴 district and attack the Worthy King of the Right. The Worthy King of the Right fled beyond a military barrier. Because of revolts elsewhere, these attacks were broken off. The next year, the *shanyu* sent the Han emperor a letter, which is followed by a response by the emperor craftily excerpting from the *shanyu's* missive. The underlined passages are those quoted by the Han emperor in his later reply:

The great Xiongnu *shanyu*, established by Heaven, respectfully inquires whether the August Thearch is free from worry. In past the August Thearch spoke of the matter of peaceful negotiations (*heqin*), promoting the notions of the [agreement] document. [In this we are in] friendly accord. The Han frontier officials invaded the area of and insulted the Worthy King of the Right. The Worthy King of the Right, not requesting

to [persuade] and [skew] his [distinctions]; when he is a youth, they assume he wants to [make his words] sting and [skew the substance of what he is saying]." 匈奴俗，見漢使非中貴人，其儒先，以為欲說，折其辯；其少年，以為欲刺，折其氣。 SJ 110.2913; Ssu-ma Ch'ien, "Xiongnu," in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, ed. William H. Nienhauser Jr. (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 294–295.

[permission], listened to the plans of [the Xiongnu general] Yilu Hounanzhi, among others, to repulse the Han officials, abrogate the agreement of the two leaders (i.e., the Han emperor and Xiongnu shanyu), and cool the close relationship between older and younger brother. The August Thearch's chastising letters [related to this issue] repeatedly arrived, and [We] dispatched envoys to deliver letters in reply, but they did not return, nor did Han envoys come. If because of this the Han is not in harmony [with Us], other neighboring states will not support [the Han]. Now, though [Your] petty officials are the reason for our agreement being ruined, [We] have punished the Worthy King of the Right and dispatched him to the west to request [territory from] the Yuezhi and to attack them. Having Heavenly fortune, good officials and infantry, and strong horses, [the Worthy King of the Right] used [Our] barbarians to crush the Yuezhi tribes, completely cutting them down, killing or subjugating them. He subdued the Loulan, Wusun, Hujie, and their bordering twenty-six states, all of whom became Xiongnu. [Because of his success,] all of the bow-drawing common people have now joined together into one household. With the northern regions being subdued, [We] wish to allow the troops to rest, to release the officers and infantry and pasture the horses, to have done with the earlier matter [involving the King of the Right] and return to our old agreement, in order to give peace to the common people on the frontier and to accord with the [state of] earliest antiquity, to allow the young to reach their maturity and the elderly to live peacefully in their domiciles, generation upon generation tranquil and happy. Not having received the August Thearch's envisioned intentions, [We] are sending Palace Attendant Xiyu Qian to present a letter requesting [a response], offering one camel, two cavalry horses, and two outfitted chariots. If the August Thearch does not desire the Xiongnu to approach the barriers, He should immediately issue an edict commanding the officials and common people to reside more distantly [from the barriers]. After the envoy has arrived [to deliver this message], immediately dispatch him [with a reply]."

「天所立匈奴大單于敬問皇帝無恙。前時皇帝言和親事，稱書意，合歡。漢邊吏侵侮右賢王，右賢王不請，聽後義盧侯難氏等計，與漢吏相距，絕二主之約，離兄弟之親。皇帝讓書再至，發使以書報，不來，漢使不至，漢以其故不和，鄰國不附。今以小吏之敗約故，罰右賢王，使之西求月氏擊之。以天之福，吏卒良，馬彊力，以夷滅月氏，盡斬殺降下之。定樓蘭、烏孫、呼揭及其旁二十六國，皆以為匈奴。諸引弓之民，并為一家。北州已定，願寢兵休士卒養馬，除前事，復故約，以安邊民，以應始古，使少者得成其長，老者安其處，世世平樂。未得皇帝之志也，故使郎中系零淺奉書請，獻橐他一匹，騎馬二匹，駕二騊。皇帝即不欲匈奴近塞，則且詔吏民遠舍。使者至，即遣之。」⁵⁵

The Han emperor's excerpts underscore a perception of Xiongnu self-interested disingenuousness in their confrontation with the Yuezhi. The emperor's letter also removes references to traditional Chinese religio-moral standards, whether to "Heaven" or to "ancient" precedents, to any "accord with the origins of antiquity" (應始古). Indeed, as if to stress how little Chinese religio-moral norms pertain to their interaction, no mention is made to Heaven in Emperor Wen's letter at all, an absence made all the more pregnant when placed in comparison

55 SJ 110.2896.

to the manifold references to “Heaven” in communications to Chinese peers. When the early precedents of the sage rulers are referred to, it is done so patronizingly, in approving the *shanyu*’s appreciation of their wisdom. In his summary judgment, the Han emperor caustically, sarcastically indicts the *shanyu* for any abrogation of peaceful, “brotherly” relations:

The Han and the Xiongnu agreed to be as brothers; thus we have been very generous to the *shanyu*. Yet those who have repudiated the agreement and abandoned the close relation of brothers have frequently been among the Xiongnu. If the matter of the Worthy King of the Right occurred before the imperial amnesty, the *shanyu* should not condemn him too strongly. Were the *shanyu* to want to promote the [agreement] document’s notions, he would openly instruct his many officials [to do so], directing [everyone] not to go back on the agreement, to faithfully [adhere to it], to respectfully [act] in accord with the *shanyu*’s [agreement] document. My envoy states that the *shanyu* himself led attacks against states [hostile to the Han] and was successful, and is deeply pained by military affairs [and thus would be reluctant to take them up against the Han].

漢與匈奴約為兄弟，所以遺單于甚厚。倍約離兄弟之親者，常在匈奴。然右賢王事已在赦前，單于勿深誅。單于若稱書意，明告諸吏，使無負約，有信，敬如單于書。使者言單于自將伐國有功，甚苦兵事。⁵⁶

At the end of his missive, Emperor Wen lists various gifts his intermediaries are to present to the *shanyu*, in accord with the “meaning” of the station of the *zhongdafu* 中大夫, to which, in the emperor’s eyes, the *shanyu* belongs. Thus the list of gifts themselves are symbolic insults, gifts for a station far below that of a formidable leader.

This exchange distorts, makes mockery of a more respectful diplomacy. Within the exchange there is little mutual feeling or understanding, the alienated distance expressed pointedly through the ease in which negotiations were abrogated, with only the pretense of ritual civility on display. Indeed, the emperor’s ignoring the *shanyu*’s (possibly sarcastic) use of traditional religio-moral references in his response clearly denies the assertion of any ritual connection, whether genuine or not, by the *shanyu*. The disingenuously offered list of gifts, a common feature in ritualized negotiations, similarly signaled such a denial. The assertion or denial of ritual norms is a sign for or against the acceptance of diplomatic parity. For the Xiongnu side, when Han diplomats did not accede to Xiongnu diplomatic norms, such as tattooing his face with ink (the tattooing of the face in the Chinese realm being the mark of a criminal and thus starkly transgressive), the envoy would not be allowed to enter the Xiongnu yurts and treated

with diplomatic parity.⁵⁷ Each side attempts, through barbed remarks and gestures, to reduce the other's claims to sovereign action and status, to treat the other as foreign, unworthy of ritual propriety. On the Chinese side, this informs the sense of the wilds, the areas of the strange and the monstrous.

The alien

Among the earliest passages about the perils of venturing into the wilds, the world beyond civilized space, is that in the *Zuozhuan* about the casting of depictions of various beings into the nine bronze tripods:

In the past, just when Xia possessed virtue, men from afar depicted various creatures, and the nine superintendents submitted metal, so that cauldrons were cast with images of various creatures. The hundred things⁵⁸ were therewith completely set forth, and the people thus knew the spirits and the evil things. That was why when the people entered rivers, marshes, mountains, and forests, they would not meet what could harm them, and the sprites of the hills [i.e., trees and rocks]⁵⁹ and waters could not get at them. Thus, they were able to harmonize with those above and below them and to receive Heaven's blessings.⁶⁰

昔夏之方有德也，遠方圖物，貢金九牧，鑄鼎象物，百物而為之備，使民知神姦，故民入川澤山林，不逢不若，螭魅罔兩，莫能逢之，用能協于上下，以承天休。

The attribution to the Xia fits with the common flood narratives regarding Yu's labors to distinguish the human from the animal world.⁶¹ In these diagrammatic

⁵⁷ SJ 50.2913.

⁵⁸ Robert F. Campany notes that the traditional interpretation of the “many things,” propounded by the likes of Du Yu 杜預 (222–284) and Wang Chong 王充 (27–100), is that they are strange. (Robert Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1996), 103n3) Certainly this accords with several references to this passage in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, such as those in the “Xianshi lan pian” 先識覽篇 and the “Shiwei pian” 適威篇. *Lüshi Chunqiu jishi* 呂氏春秋集釋 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2011), 398, 532; *Annals of Lü Buwei*, trans. Jeffrey Riegel and John Knoblock (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 376, 496.

⁵⁹ Harper, “A Chinese Demonography,” HJAS 1985, 481. *Wangliang* is a tree and rock sprite.

⁶⁰ *Zuo Tradition (Zuozhuan): Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, trans. Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016a), 600–603; Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981b), Xuan 3, 669–671.

⁶¹ Yu is explicitly named as their creator in the *Shuowen*'s entry for the character, *dīng* 鼎: 昔禹收九牧之金，鑄鼎荆山之下，入山林川澤者，螭魅罔兩，莫能逢之，以協承天休。(Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 319a.) For

definitions, Yu's labels not only distinguish but also demonize, casting the world of the spirits, of sprites and other "evil things" as perils to be avoided. Concomitantly, the bronze cauldrons themselves, as avatars of the civilized world, stand stalwartly and stolidly against the unknown multifariousness of the natural world – the world in which monsters roam untrammelled – as patriarchal, monarchical protectors of the basis of sovereign power, the common people. Robert F. Campany argues that the many strange, "evil" things are represented on the cauldrons "to neutralize their danger, allowing safe passage for 'civilizers' from the center and thus securing Heaven's favor for the people of these liminal zones."⁶² From the identifying and locating of strange beings we can see where boundaries are uncertain: "the presence of monsters not only marks boundaries, but also indicates where lines or demarcation are problematic, with weird hybrid bodies the signs of a breach or a crossing, or of some other uncommon connection between worlds."⁶³

Clearly, as evident in the designs of Shang and Zhou bronzes, which often include depictions of natural and "strange" beings, there is a connection to and concern with the natural world, a connection that perhaps suggests a concern with managing or controlling its powers. However, nowhere in early Chinese texts mentioning the nine bronze tripods is there any insinuation that the common people are wanting or needing broad, apotropaic protection from central powers in defense against the natural world, that they are frightened of or imperiled by it, and covetous of their leaders' protection. Just as likely, the dangers are fabricated, or the fictions reinforced, to dissuade commoners from straying too far from the civilized, settled areas, and their economic duties to these areas. This connection between natural forces and the strange is also demonstrated in sacrifices and portents. In the *Liji* essay, "The Method of Sacrifices," natural places – mountains, forests, streams, valleys, hills, and mounds – at which one might perform sacrifices, would manifest their powers in the production of climatic events, such as clouds, wind and rain, but also in the appearance of "strange things," *guaiwu* 怪物. Only to those natural powers within their realms were the many lords to perform sacrifices.⁶⁴

Lewis's observations about these labors, see Mark Edward Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2006), 71.

⁶² Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, 104.

⁶³ Karin Myhre, "Monsters Lift the Veil: Chinese Animal Hybrids and Processes of Transformation," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012), 222.

⁶⁴ *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2010c), 1194–1196.

The *Zuozhuan* passage I just cited spatializes the notion of *de*, identifying it with the area of sanctioned sovereign control. By passing beyond the frontiers, into the wilds, the traveller, or exile, was penetrating into the fearsome unknown, into the “disordered” (*luan* 亂) “wilds” (*ye* 野). The wilds are where the monarch attempts to broaden his influence, through sacrifices and enforced cultural integration.⁶⁵ Those areas that are defined as wild are those that to some extent remain imperfectly attached or integrated. The farther away from the “central” regions, the more unpredictable, uncertain, and unstable. This sentiment is captured most picturesquely and frighteningly in those texts portraying mysterious, monstrous phenomena, including spiritual phenomena. Until the spirits themselves were included ritually by official processes into the central order, they remained dangerous and malevolent toward that order.

The most conspicuous example texts of monstrosities would be those detailing the strange and unnatural, whether the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 or chapters from a large number of other books, such as the *Lunheng* 論衡, *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, or *Baopuzi* 抱朴子, among others.⁶⁶ But there also exist any number of passages from a host of texts – historical, philosophical and literary – that speak of animalia in terms that suggest the references are actually, or associationally, to “bestial” human cultures, the most widely referenced being the analogizing of Qin with predatory animals.⁶⁷ Conversion into or being affected by “bestial,” uncivilized peoples was to be converted into the unrecognizable, the monstrous, the fearsome. Such was the risk for the envoys and other representatives of the state, military or not, who passed over into the “beyond,” the distant wilds, just as would possession or being affected by unknown or unintegrated

65 For a recent analysis of the integration of southern non-Chinese peoples in the early Han dynasty, see Alexis Lycas, “Représenter l’espace dans les textes du haut moyen âge chinois: Géographie politique, humaine et culturelle de la région du Jingzhou,” diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2015).

66 For a sampling list of texts on anomalous occurrences, see Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, 32–99.

67 Karin Myhre observes this associational phenomenon in her discussion of the generations of commentaries attempting to identify the referent of *yu* 域: “The identification of the word *yu* as a place, a people, a creature, and a food recalls images of the shifting and illusionistic *taotie* as well as presaging critical thinking about ‘others’: those beings definitively distinct which simultaneously express most perfectly the essential nature or values of the group from which they are circumscribed.” Myhre, “Monsters Lift the Veil: Chinese Animal Hybrids and Processes of Transformation”, 223. Similar associational identification were made between humans and animals in Warring States and Han writings, “according to natural criteria such as geography, climate, and biotype.” Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2002), 93.

spirits. Being possessed or simply affected by the beyond, as both spirit mediums and earthly diplomats were, was to become, in a sense, strange and monstrous. Possession by external powers was not just a loss of the representative but was the possibility of bringing the infection of chaos, both literally and figuratively, into the state.

Across cultures, the wild power of nature, of feral creation, and the monstrous are intimately intertwined. The roots of misogyny, particularly of the male fear of female fecundity and thus her sexual attractions, pass through much of world literature. As with other wildnesses – disease, foreign cultures – the female symbolizes a savagery that can contaminate and destroy the order prepared and cultivated by patriarchies. According to C. R. Whittaker, in relation to ancient Greece and Rome, “The boundary was a magico-religious line between the sacred and the profane, between the outside and the inside, and it was often signalled by sexual landmarks, such as the phallus, Hermes or Priapus. Such symbols possessed power to mediate the act of crossing the threshold, but also to penetrate or pierce the feminized, often dangerous unknown.”⁶⁸ Many Greek monstrosities – harpies, gorgons, medusas – are either described as female or have aspects that are symbolically associated with female physicality. For instance, according to D. Felton, in early Mediterranean societies, serpents are associated with chthonic forces, Greek harpies ooze fluids in ways that suggest menstruation, and medusas have serpentine hair and lower bodies, and freeze their male combatants by their (gendered) gaze.⁶⁹ But it is also the case that Greek monsters are often representing or are located in wild areas, not infrequently near mountains and rivers.⁷⁰ Similarly, in early China, as Mark Lewis points out, mountains were the “homes and the topographic equivalents for the hybrid creatures who blended elements of the human and the unearthly, and who moved as omens and messengers between the world of spirits and that of men.”⁷¹ It is no coincidence that the taming of waters and appropriation of the products and

68 Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire*, 127.

69 In a footnote, C. R. Whittaker refers to A. McClintock’s list of how many gendered boundary phenomena there are: sirens, mermaids, female ship figure-heads, et cetera. See Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire*, 140n50. McClintock states: “. . . the feminizing of terra incognita was, from the outset, a strategy of violent containment.” McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, 24.

70 D. Felton, “Rejecting and Embracing the Monstrous in Ancient Greece and Rome,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012), 105.

71 Mark E. Lewis, “The Feng and Shan Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of Han,” in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph P. McDermott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56.

spiritual powers of mountains is a repeated theme in the civilizing of the world by sages, whether Moses, Jesus of Nazareth (whose walking on water and pacifying winds and waters demonstrates his control over these natural powers), or the Chinese sage-king Yu 禹.

The conquering or subjection of wild forces, in pre-history or history, in nature, female forces, or “bestial” peoples, is represented as a triumph of civilization. Indeed, as Mark Lewis observes, the very founders of civilization “appear as progenitors of the most distant peoples . . . and as actors at the remote periphery.”⁷² One of the four reasons Lewis cites for the sages’ appearance as such is their aim to separate humans from animals. In primordial time, humans lived in common with animals, physically and morally intertwined. The Chinese sages “created the tools and introduced the moral and ritual practices that rescued people from their animal condition and created distinctions where none had existed before.”⁷³ Non-Chinese peoples, from the enforced central perspective, can be defined by their closer association with animality, with the wearing of animal skins, furs, and feathers, with their animal morals and practices, and their animistic religions.

To reiterate, occasionally when early texts speak of animals, it is not certain whether they are literally speaking about non-human animals, or more figuratively about those peoples who are perceived as being animalistic or bestial.⁷⁴ In the three instances in which the term, *qinshou* 禽獸, appears in the *Zuo-zhuan*, it is employed analogously, for the “bestial” non-Chinese people who are not sufficiently civilized. In the first instance, in the chapter for Duke Xiang’s 襄公 third year, the Rong are simply defined as “animals,” or, more precisely,

⁷² Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China*, 70.

⁷³ Lewis, *The Flood Myths of Early China*, 71.

⁷⁴ Indeed, Mark Lewis mentions, “As noted in Roel Sterckx’s discussion of the early Chinese discourse on animals, local custom and animal character formed a single complex tied to their places of origin. The extreme form of this discourse was accounts of barbarians in distant lands who took on the attributes of the animals with whom they lived.” Lewis, *Construction of Space in Early China*, 235. Sterckx writes, “Numerous sources portray barbarians who shared the habitats of the exotic bestiaries in the periphery of the Chinese cultural epicenter as having the inner disposition of animals. The bodily function and behavioral features of foreign tribes and exogenous peoples were said to have undesirable animal associations. Their temperaments and desires were equated with those of animals.” Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, 159. Additional support for the identification of the barbarian Other with animals can be found in Roderick Campbell’s *Violence, Kinship, and the Early Chinese State*, when he argues that the word *qiang* 羌 in Shang sacrificial inscriptions instantiates “a process of ‘pseudo speciation’ rendering captives available for ancestral consumption along with cattle, sheep, pigs and dogs.” See Roderick Campbell, *Violence, Kinship and the Early Chinese State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 206–210.

animals of feather and fur (*Rong qinshou ye* 戎禽獸也). The second and third, in the entries for Duke Xiang's twenty-first and twenty-eighth year, insults various people by comparing them to animals, the speakers declaring that they would eat them and sleep on their skins.⁷⁵ One might argue this is only analogy, but in other texts, the analogy seems to suggest that there are peoples who are in the same class as animals, so far removed from what is civilized that they can be categorized simply as animals of "feather and fur." Indeed, the defining feature of most animals in texts such as the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi* is their lack of civilizing, ritual habits.

If this is broadly the case, then the distinction is not only of species but of civilized versus non-civilized, of those close, integrated, settled peoples who are under the influence of Chinese ritual culture and those distant, non-Chinese peoples who are not. This distinction is the definitional constant both in classicist, "Confucian" literature and in Daoist literature. To have a heart of a beast is just identifiable with not having the requisite ritual and social habits to be considered fully "human." But beasts can be redeemed and educated, as Roel Sterckx explains.⁷⁶ Are we to believe that this education was meant literally, or simply, for animals, or also, and more especially, for those who are analogous with animals, those who are not sufficiently enculturated? I would suggest that the insufficiently civilized peoples are perhaps the truer referent of these attempts at enculturation, and thus of the "civilizing," normalizing aspirations of the Chinese court, pursued through their diplomatic representatives.

Conclusion

The above observations and analyses highlight the dangers to the sovereignty of the state of the adventures of the diplomat beyond the bounds of the state, bounds whose ritual force is symbolic of devotion to its cultural norms and political structures. In his very occupation, the diplomat is in the exceptional position to ignore and even undermine such norms and structures, whether through nefarious revelation and rhetorical reframing, or simply inept representation. The more stark the ritual divide, the more unable the parties to see each other as peers, the more "monstrous" the opposing side can appear to be, and the more perilous to one's state of contact. The "Chinese," however defined, were not alone in their

75 Xiang 21: 「臣為隸新，然二子者，譬於禽獸，臣食其肉而寢處其皮矣。」 Xiang 28: 盧蒲癸曰：「譬之如禽獸，吾寢處之矣。」 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981c), 1063–1064, 1146.

76 Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, 137–147.

diplomatic and sovereign vulnerabilities; their non-Chinese counterparts felt them as well.

It is in the diplomat's transgressive negotiations that one can view the liminal aspect of state sovereignty and the dangers in the very contact with the foreign. Thus through analysis of diplomatic exchanges, we can perceive yet another definitional and also very much spatialized aspect of the parameters of political sovereignty, an aspect that can affect immediately the maintenance of past and establishment of additional areas of sovereignty. These diplomatic exchanges are not just with terrestrial others but with spiritual powers. Diplomacy's transgressive aspect inheres an uncertain effect, the uncertainty of a multiplicity of outcomes. It is a discourse that involves intimately not only possible future action but ritualized systems of knowledge and their negotiations, producing movements of territorialization and de-territorialization, with realities being not "a matter of the absolute eyewitness, but a matter of the future."⁷⁷

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77 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, 53.

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