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Steppe Nomads as a Philosophical Problem in Classical China

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One of the purposes of the “scapes” approach to anthropological inquiry is to deconstruct the nation-state and see through its otherwise rigid contours; by focusing on “ethnoscapes,” “technoscapes,” “ideoscapes,” and so on, one can observe both coherence across national boundaries and diversity within them. It stands to reason, then, that societies before nation-states should exhibit the same conceptual flexibility that the notion of “scapes” offers us today—as is well-illustrated by Chinese attitudes toward their neighbors, especially those dwelling on the steppes to the north, and the profound changes that these attitudes underwent during the establishment of the first Chinese empire. The prevailing philosophical view in pre-imperial China was that all human beings are essentially alike, but that divergent habits and customs make them appear dissimilar. This meant that the Chinese conceived of their northern neighbors as *mutatis mutandis*, identical to themselves. To be sure, these neighbors were taken to be greedy and primitive but only because they had not benefited from the transformative influence of sage teachers (Pines 2005:63–75). They were not, in other words, condemned as intrinsically or irremediably evil. The ancient Chinese model of the world was one of concentric circles, with the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), that is, the Heaven-ordained ruler on earth, at the center shining like a beacon over the urbane Central States (*zhongguo*

中國). His enlightening influence, however, diminished as one moved further away, past the less urbane peripheral states, through the riotous frontier zones, to the darkest wastelands where morality was unknown and human beings resembled beasts (Dikötter 1992:2; Meserve 1982:54f.; Miller 1980:52–53; Lien-sheng Yang 1968:21f.).¹ The classical text most clearly exemplifying this idealized geography is the “Lives of Yu” (“Yugong” 禹貢) chapter of the *Exalted Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書).²

According to this reasoning, if a sage were to take the barbarians under his wing—and in the past, it was sometimes averred, sages had done just that³—the barbarians would no longer be barbaric at all but would be made indistinguishable from the most accomplished citizens of the world. It goes without saying that the criteria of civilization were one-sided; as we shall see, many centuries would pass before there would be any record of a Chinese person who granted that foreigners might possess an alternative culture that was valid on its own terms.

Some of the clearest source material documenting these attitudes is found in the Confucian *Analects*; the ancient collection of the most authoritative statements attributed to Confucius (called “The Master” in the text). This example comes from the *Analects* 9.14: “The Master wished to dwell among the Nine Yi. Someone said: ‘They are crude; what would you do about that?’ The Master said: ‘If a noble man dwelt among them, what crudeness would there be?’” (Cheng 1990:604–5; cf. the translation in Lau 1992:81).⁴

Yi 夷 was a name given indiscriminately to barbarians in the eastern regions; the use of the generic term “Nine Yi” reflects the awareness that there were various tribes in the area (as well as an inability, or unwillingness, to tell them all apart). Such pseudo-ethnonyms were all derogatory and never denoted any specific ethnic group; hence they can freely be rendered into English as “barbarian” (Di Cosmo 2002:100; Müller 1980:52).⁵ The Yi, true to their name, were considered rude, but Confucius indicates that this condition is not inherent; were a noble man to dwell among them, they would swiftly be refined.

The idea that barbarians do not differ from the civilized Chinese with respect to their inborn nature is expressed in the general statement that all people are, by nature, similar (*Analects* 17.2): “The Master said: ‘[People] are close to one another by nature; they become distant from one another through their habits’” (Cheng 1990:1177; cf. the translation in Lau 1992:171).

This is often thought to be a late addition to the text for several reasons. Most noticeably, it contains the term *xing* 性 (human nature), which is found only in one other passage in the *Analekts*. This comes in 5.12, where the word is mentioned precisely because Confucius is reported there never to have used it: “Zigong 子貢 said: ‘One can hear of the Master’s cultural splendor, but not of his sayings about human nature or the Way of Heaven’” (Cheng 1990:318). Zigong was right: arguments about *xing* were alien to Confucius’s discourse and belong to a later period of Chinese philosophy. There is a conspicuous parallel to *Analekts* 17.2 in the *Xunzi* 荀子,⁶ where arguments about *xing* are right at home, raising the possibility that a follower of Xunzian philosophy might have inserted this item into the *Analekts* centuries after Confucius’s death. Finally, the passage appears in Chapter 17, which has long been dismissed as part of a spurious chunk of material (Chapters 16–20), displaying many late linguistic and rhetorical features, at the end of the book (Brooks and Brooks 1998:201f.; Makeham 1996:9f.; Lau 1992:265–70).

Still, the conviction that it is our habitude rather than our inborn nature that causes us to diverge from other people is consistent with the most important statement concerning barbarians in the *Analekts*: “Were it not for Guan Zhong 管仲, we would be wearing our hair loose and buttoning [our clothes] to the left” (14.17). This appears as part of a larger discussion that warrants close reading:

Zigong said: “Guan Zhong was not humane, was he? When Lord Huan 桓公 [of Qi 齊; r. 685–643 BCE] killed [his brother,] Ducal Son Jiu 公子糾, [Guan Zhong] could not bring himself to commit suicide, but even served [Lord Huan] as chief minister.”

The Master said: “When Guan Zhong served Lord Huan as chief minister, he made [Lord Huan] hegemon over the feudal lords and united the world under one dominion. To this day, the people have reaped the benefit of this. Were it not for Guan Zhong, we would be wearing our hair loose and buttoning [our clothes] to the left. How could this be compared to the petty fidelity⁷ of common men and women, who hang themselves in a ditch, so that no one knows about it?” (Cheng 1990:988–92; cf. the translation in Lau 1992:137)

Properly judging the famous statesman and strategist Guan Zhong, who united the civilized world but did not always heed inconvenient moral

principles, is a matter of some solicitude in the *Analekts*, and Confucius is careful never to speak of him with unqualified praise. Nevertheless, he cannot agree with Zigong’s argument that it would have been better for Guan Zhong to kill himself (like his more punctilious associate Shao Hu 召忽) when his patron was dispatched by the ambitious Lord Huan. As Confucius emphasizes, it takes no special talent to commit suicide, but by explicitly switching his allegiance and thereby maximizing the opportunity to apply his exceptional skills, Guan Zhong was able to accomplish something that few others could have done: by unifying the squabbling Chinese states, he prevented them from collapsing under the pressure of barbarians who would have otherwise overrun them and forced them to adopt strange customs. Confucius never explains precisely what is wrong with “wearing one’s hair loose and buttoning one’s clothes to the left,” but uses the phrase as an elegant synecdoche for the whole array of barbarian mores, which are, one is given to understand, inferior to the Chinese ways.

The set phrase “wearing one’s hair loose and buttoning one’s clothes to the left” was endlessly repeated in following centuries, and the entire passage is treated to liberal annotation by traditional commentators, but none, as far as I know, ever pointed out that the most important word in Confucius’s saying lies elsewhere. It is the word “we” (吾 吾).⁸ Though it is often observed that the classical Chinese language has no word meaning “Chinese” (e.g., Pines 2005:59nn2, 63) we can see from this one syllable that there yet existed a *concept* of Chineseness. The word is especially significant, moreover, in view of Confucius’s own ancestry, which has always been murky and must have included non-Chinese blood (or, more precisely, the blood of people who would have been regarded as aliens).⁹ In order to have a notion of “Them,” naturally, one must have a notion of “Us.” We are civilized, and They are not; but just as They might become civilized under the right circumstances, We might become uncivilized under the wrong ones. Once again, birth and blood do not seem to have anything to do with one’s course of life; what matters is how one acts.¹⁰

This is, of course, a core Confucian belief, and later admirers of Confucius’s philosophy echoed his view that barbarians were merely unfortunate souls waiting to be civilized. Mencius (372–289 BCE), for example, notes straightforwardly (4B.1) that the sages Shun 舜 and King Wen 文王 were originally barbarians who were “able to carry out their aspirations in the Central States” (Jiao 1987:537–40).¹¹ Although the philosophers of the

Warring States period rarely seemed to be able to agree on anything, virtually everyone granted that barbarians differed because of their habits rather than their nature. Yuri Pines (Pines 2005:64ff.)¹² has carefully documented this attitude in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, and shown that it extends even to eclectic texts such as the *Springs and Autumns of Mr. Lü* (《左氏春秋》): “The Man and Yi are nations with chirping¹³ tongues, divergent customs and differing habits; their clothes, caps, girdles, palaces, dwellings, boats, carts, instruments, sounds, colors, and tastes are all different. But insofar as what they desire, they are as one [with us]” (Chen 2002:1303; cf. the translation in Knoblock and Riegel 2000:497f.).

The Man and Yi may speak incomprehensible languages (the very definition of “barbarians” in the West), but neither language nor taste is conceived in this text as inborn. The chapter goes on to add: “The sage kings grasped the One, and the barbarians of the four directions all arrived [in homage].” Although nearly three centuries had passed since Confucius, and although the authors of *Springs and Autumns of Mr. Lü* did not accept Confucian philosophy uncritically, their view of barbarians, and the possibility of civilizing them, was essentially the same.¹⁴

ENTER THE XIONGNU

The relatively late date of *Springs and Autumns of Mr. Lü* is noteworthy: in its treatment of barbarians, it must be considered backward-looking, for its postface is dated 239 BCE (Chen 2002:654),¹⁵ by which time some Chinese courts had probably come into contact with the steppe power known as Xiongnu 匈奴.¹⁶ And the Xiongnu changed everything. Two crucial themes are detectable in early imperial writing about the Xiongnu: their inborn nature was judged to be fundamentally different from that of the Chinese; and they were reckoned as merely the most recent incarnation of nomadic peoples who had populated the steppe zone since time immemorial. The first theme marked a radical departure from the pre-imperial discussions of non-Chinese peoples surveyed above, and the assertion that China had fought off mounted, warlike nomads long before the Xiongnu, though demonstrably incorrect, has, through its subtle influence on modern scholarship, immensely confused investigations into the nature and origins of the Xiongnu power that arose in the late 3rd century BCE.

The opening lines of the treatise on the Xiongnu in *Records of the*

Historian (《史記》) illustrate both motifs. Sima Qian 司馬遷 begins¹⁷: “The progenitor of the Xiongnu was a descendant of the Xiahou clan 夏后氏 named Chunwei 淳維. Since before the time of Tang 唐 and Yu 虞 [i.e., the sages Yao 堯 and Shun], there have been [such tribes as the] Mountain Rong 山戎, Xianyu 獫狁, and Xunyu 薰粥 dwelling in the northern badlands, moving in cycles with their herds of domesticated animals” (Sima 1959:2879; cf. the translations in Watson 1993[II]: 129; Perras 2003:77f.; and de Groot 1921–26[II]: 1f.).

There are several problems with this passage that have been insufficiently appreciated. Most obviously, the chronology is self-contradictory. The founder of the Xiahou clan was Yu 禹, the sage king who established the legendary Xia dynasty. (Xiahou means “ruler of Xia.”) But Yu came after Yao and Shun; if the ancestor of the Xiongnu was a descendant of Yu, how could they have been dwelling in the northern badlands since before the time of Yao and Shun?

Traditional commentators evidently sensed that this statement is confusing; for they have supplied historical notes, which, however, only confuse matters more. Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (ca. 656–720 CE), for example, reproduces a passage from a lost geographical text called *The Register Encompassing All the Lands* (《輿地記》) by the otherwise unknown Yue Yan 樂彥:¹⁸ “Because Jie 桀, [the last King] of Xia, was without the Way Tang, [founder of the Shang dynasty] expelled him at Mingtiao 鳴條; he died within three years. His son, Xunyu, married Jie’s concubine²⁰ and withdrew to dwell in the northern wilderness, where he wandered with his herds. The Central States called [his tribe] Xiongnu” (Sima 1959:2880n1; cf. the translation in de Groot 1921–26[II]: 1f.). Sima Zhen goes on to conclude: “Thus the Chunwei who is their progenitor and this Xunyu are probably one and the same.”²¹

The traditions regarding Xunyu, who manifested his barbarous character by appropriating his father’s concubine—a capital offense under the Han dynasty (Goldin 2002:168nn 66, 92)—and then devoted the rest of his days to an undivilized life, are supposed to elucidate Sima Qian’s statement that “since before the time of Tang and Yu, there have been such tribes as the Mountain Rong, Xianyu, and Xunyu dwelling in the northern badlands.”²² Of course, this does not resolve the chronological difficulties, because Xunyu, the son of Jie, would have lived many generations after Yao and Shun. Thus it seems likely that the phrase “since before the time of Tang and Yu” is not meant to be taken literally but is simply a literary trope

meaning roughly "for as long as anyone can remember."²³ And this is how commentators understood the thrust of the passage. Sima Zhen quotes another earlier source, Fu Qian 服虔 (2nd century CE), who tried to clear up the farrago of exotic names by declaring simply: "In the time of Yao, they were called Xunyu; in the Zhou 周, they were called Xianyun; in the Qin 秦, they were called Xionggu."²⁴ These were, in other words, construed as different names that had emerged over the centuries for essentially the same people.²⁵

Today we know that this cannot be the case. The best evidence comes from archaeology: excavations undertaken over the past few decades show that very few cultures displaying signs of regular contact with Chinese states before the 4th century BC were nomadic (Di Cosmo 2002:59–87; and Di Cosmo 1999: esp. 893–944). All the available evidence indicates that the Xionggu were the first mounted nomads that Chinese historians ever chronicled (Daffinà 1982:38–42), and the dates are strikingly late: the first solid textual reference reports an attack in 318 BCE (Sima 1959:207)²⁶; the second narrates events that took place around 245 BCE (Sima 1959:2449f).²⁷ Moreover, all references to the Xionggu, it should be stressed, appear in texts from the Han dynasty or later. Remarkably, no Warring States writer ever seems to have noticed them.²⁸ The reason for this is not mysterious: before the 4th century, Chinese states had not yet penetrated far enough to the north to encounter pastoral nomads, though this method of subsistence had flourished on the steppes for centuries (Di Cosmo 1999:892 and 926).

In the same vein, although the names that Sima Qian lists in the opening lines of his treatise sound close to "Xionggu" today (and may have in Sima Qian's time as well), Old Chinese reconstructions show that they would not have been confused in the Warring States. "Xionggu" would have been *xon-NA in Old Chinese; "Xunyu," *xur-ɬuk; and "Xianyun," *hram-ɬun.²⁹ The names are manifestly unrelated.³⁰ Phonological change would have made these names seem more similar than they really are by the time of the famous commentators and must have induced them to explain the superficial affinity by declaring that the names referred to the same people and merely came from different epochs. But no one alive during the Warring States could have been misled in this manner.

A significant conclusion is to be gleaned from these recent insights: when pre-imperial authors mentioned the Rong, Di, and so on, they were not referring to nomads.³¹ Scholars writing without the benefit of modern

archaeology, understandably, were not always aware of this and produced hypotheses that have to be discarded today.³² For example, in his famous article on "The Greed of the Northern Barbarian," Denis Sinor concluded that "the *topos* of 'barbarian greed' may be a natural outgrowth of the unresolved opposition between nomadic and sedentary economics" (1978:179). It is clear that this assessment needs to be refined since it can hold true only for the Xionggu and after. Sinor used demeaning characterizations of the Rong and Di in the *Zuo zhuan* as part of his evidence, and for such pre-imperial examples of the *topos*, a different explanation is needed.

Lingering confusion about the origin and nature of the Xionggu has undetermined contemporary research in more insidious ways. What for example, is meant by "Xionggu archaeology" before the inception of Modu's 冒頓 empire?³³ The very phrase reflects a category mistake. From the beginning, the semantic domain of the term "Xionggu" was *political*: there is no reason to assume that it ever denoted a specific ethnic group³⁴—and, indeed, plenty of reason not to. Even outstanding scholars have sometimes avoided delving into this problem. The redoubtable Rafe de Crespigny for example, writes: "It seems sensible to recognise that the expression *Xionggu* in texts of the Han period possesses a double meaning. On the one hand, *Xionggu* referred to a specific tribal group, of specific ethnic origin, language and culture. At the same time, in extended meaning, *Xionggu* refers to the political entity which was established under the dominance of that tribe" (1984:174).³⁵

That may seem sensible, but if there is any evidence of this "specific tribal group, of specific ethnic origin, language and culture," it is not to be found in any hard sources, be they textual or archaeological. Excavations in the areas that came to be dominated by the Xionggu have uncovered a wealth of distinct cultures (Di Cosmo 1994).³⁶ Some were agriculturalists who had settled in the region for centuries and accommodated themselves to the changing geopolitical realities by affiliating themselves with the latest hegemon—willingly or not, one cannot tell (Xie 2004[II]:1027–65; Erdélyi 1994:555f.; Tang 1981; see also Schurr's chapter, this volume). It seems a near certainty that they did not all speak the same mother tongue. The folly of trying to reconstruct the "Xionggu language" was elucidated long ago (Doerfer 1973:2ff.), but the same arguments cast serious doubt on the idea of a "Xionggu people." It is one thing to call a site in Mongolia with artifacts from the 2nd or 1st centuries BCE (such as Noin Ula)³⁷ "Xionggu," since there is little reason to doubt that the region would have been under

Xiongnu control at the time. That is no more objectionable than calling Lungdunum "Roman," even though the area had been cultivated by non-Romans for centuries. It is quite another matter, however, to use the name in connection with sites from earlier periods (such as Taohongbala 桃紅巴拉, in the Ordos; Tian 1976; Tian and Guo 1986) when, for all we know, the concept of the "Xiongnu" (whatever the derivation and original meaning of this slippery term) did not yet even exist. Ethnicity is, after all, as much a matter of identity and self-consciousness as of genetics and linguistics (Jones 1997). In the absence of any Xiongnu documents testifying to the authors' sense of self, it is imprudent to make assumptions about the ethnic allegiances of the people buried in the cemeteries of the ancient Ordos. Scholars have begun to appreciate this problem and approach the archaeological record with more sophistication (Lin Yun 1998:377–81; Psarras 2003:78ff.).³⁸

"THEIR HEAVEN-ENDOWED NATURE"

After the opening two sentences of his treatise, fraught as they are with interpretive hazards, Sima Qian goes on to describe the basics of nomadic life. This section, though it contains some demonstrable inaccuracies, may have been based on the testimony of informants with firsthand information, if not on the author's own experience (Di Cosmo 2002:272). For readers accustomed to the Warring States view that all people are fundamentally alike, the text packs a big surprise at the end.

The majority of their animals consist of horses, oxen and sheep, but they also have strange animals such as camels, asses, mules, *jieti* 馱騾, *taotu* 駝駒, and *dianxi* 騾騾.³⁹ Though they move their abodes in pursuit of water and grasslands, and though they have no walls or fortifications, no permanent dwellings, and no agriculture, they do divide their lands into individual [territories].⁴⁰ They have no literature or writing⁴¹ and seal their covenants with oaths and speeches. As children, they can ride sheep and shoot birds and rodents with their bows; once they have grown a little, they shoot foxes and rabbits, which they use for food. The men are all strong enough to bend a bow and serve as armed cavalry in cases of emergency. According to their custom, when [affairs] are relaxed, they follow their herds and shoot wild animals for subsistence; when there is a crisis,

the people are accustomed to attacking and raiding. This is their Heaven-endowed nature. (Sima 1959:2879; cf. the translations in Watson 1958[II]:129; Psarras 2003:76; de Groot 1921–26[1]:2f.)

"This is their Heaven-endowed nature"—a remarkable statement, for two reasons. First, if we are really meant to believe that the Xiongnu are sons of the Xiahou clan, their Heaven-endowed nature should be no different from that of any other descendants of Yu—a group that includes, naturally, all Chinese people. Second, there could scarcely be a more radical repudiation of the traditional belief that foreigners differ in their habits rather than their inborn nature. According to this new viewpoint, nomads' habits differ *because of* their inborn nature. The consequences, for both philosophy and policy, are thoroughgoing. The Xiongnu can never be regarded as equals because they are constitutionally unsuited to civilized life and must be treated as permanent enemies with whom, under the best of circumstances, one can only hope for an uneasy détente.⁴²

Sima Qian concludes this section with more ethnographic information, which, whether accurate or not, could only have been received negatively by Han readers.

Their long-range weapon is the bow and arrow, their short-range weapons daggers and spears. In advantageous situations, they advance; in disadvantageous situations, they retreat. They are not ashamed to flee. Only profit attracts them; they know nothing of ritual and righteousness. From the rulers on down, they all eat the meat of the herd-animals and use their skins and hides for clothing, covering themselves in felt and fur. Those who are hardest eat the fattest and choicest [pieces]; the aged eat the remnants. They value hardness and vigor and depreciate age and weakness. When a father dies, [the son] takes his step-mother as his own wife, and when their brothers die, they take their [brothers'] wives as their own. It is their custom to have personal names, but no taboo-names or clan names.⁴³ (Sima 1959:2879; cf. the translations in Watson 1958[II]:129f.; Psarras 2003:76; de Groot 1921–26[1]:3f.)

The key statement here is that the Xiongnu "know nothing of ritual and righteousness"; all the other details are designed to illustrate that basic

indictment. They do not fight with honor; they do not dress with dignity; they do not honor their elders; they do not properly observe the sexual restrictions imposed by marriage; they do not even name themselves in a genealogically organized way (Wang Mingke 2006:188; Tao 1987:204ff.). If, in earlier times, barbarians were considered uncivilized, they have now become uncivilizable (Bauer 1980:11).

Indeed, knowledge of the Xiongnu practice of marrying widowed stepmothers led to the fanciful Chinese notion that Xiongnu men married their birth mothers too. In a surviving fragment of *Handling the Late* (*Qincao 琴操*)—widely, but not securely, attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192 CE)⁴⁴—Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, a Chinese palace lady given in marriage to the Xiongnu overlord Huhanye⁴⁵ 呼韓邪 (r. 58–31 BCE), asked her son upon her husband's death whether he intended to live as a Chinese or as a Xiongnu. When he replied that he wished to live as a Xiongnu, she committed suicide by swallowing poison (Yu Jiayi 1974:665; Tao 1987:208ff.). But this was evidently written to trillate. The more mundane truth is that Huhanye was succeeded by his eldest son, by a different wife. This son then wished to follow the Xiongnu custom and marry Wang Zhaojun, his stepmother; Zhaojun promptly petitioned the Chinese court to return home but was told to stay and obey. She did and bore her new husband two daughters (Ban et al. 1962:3807; Fan et al. 1965:2941).

Sima Qian's treatment of the Xiongnu, however defamatory it may seem to modern readers, was actually among the most sympathetic accounts of the Xiongnu that the Han dynasty produced; as Nicola Di Cosmo (2002:271) has astutely noted, "It is possible that Su-nua Ch'ien might have been regarded as a 'barbarophile' by his contemporaries." The later historian Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) went far beyond Sima Qian in disparaging the Xiongnu and their intractable savagery:

Thus the former kings measured the earth; in the center, they demarcated the royal demesne, divided the nine provinces, and arrayed the five service-domains,⁴⁶ where offerings [to the sovereign] were made according to the produce of the earth.⁴⁷ They hewed the outer and the inner [regions]. Some they disciplined with punishments and regulations, while shining upon others with culture and virtue; these were the different expedients for those who were far and those who were near [i.e., the barbarians and the Chinese, respectively].

Therefore, according to the *Spring and Autumns*, the various Chinese [feudatories] are in the inner [regions], the Yi and Di in the outer. The Yi and Di are greedy and fond of profit; they wear their hair loose and button their clothes to the left; they have human faces but bestial hearts. Compared to those of China, their badges and clothing are different; their habits and customs divergent. Our food and drink are dissimilar, our languages mutually incomprehensible. They dwell in the remote northern frontier, in wildernesses where one must encamp in the cold; they pursue pasturelands and follow their herds, hunting in order to survive. Heaven and Earth dissevered the inner and outer [regions] by separating them with mountains and valleys, and blocking them off with sandy deserts. For this reason, the sage kings regarded [the Yi and Di] as birds and beasts, and neither made covenants with them nor attacked them. If [the sage kings] had made covenants with [the Yi and Di], they would have wasted their subsidies, and would have been cheated; if they had attacked [the Yi and Di], they would have wearied their armies and invited banditry. The land of [the Yi and Di] cannot be plowed so as to produce food; their people cannot be made subjects and tamed. Thus they are of the outer, not the inner; they are distant and not intimate. No rectification or teaching will penetrate their people; no official calendar will be attached to their nation. If they approach, we must chastise them and defend ourselves; if they depart, we must prepare for them and protect ourselves. But if they make offerings respectfully and appropriately, we may receive them with ritual and courtesy; we may "keep them on a loose rein,"⁴⁸ without breaking [the relationship], so that any crookedness will be on their side. This is, I submit, the constant way of the sage kings for controlling the Man and Yi. (Ban et al. 1962:3833f.; cf. the translations in Pines 2005:79f.; and Tsinos 1983–85:197)

Where Sima Qian took pains to identify the Xiongnu with specific tribes known from earlier history—even though closer scrutiny reveals these as undifferentiated Yi and Di barbarians. With the operative assumption that the Xiongnu are no better than birds and beasts, he explains why it is imprudent either to negotiate with them or to conquer them; fundamentally

uneducable, they can never become homogenized subjects of the empire. The best method is to keep one's hand firmly on the bridle and reins, responding to them courteously if they render due homage, but always being ready to defend oneself if they revert to their true nature and attack (Tsinos 1983-85:192; Wang Gungwu 1968:40f.).⁴⁹

CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

How long before Sima Qian can one detect this uncompromising and historically unprecedented attitude toward the Xiongnu? Some scholars identify the early Han statesman Jia Yi 賈誼 (201-169 BCE) as one of the first militantly ideological opponents of the Xiongnu (e.g., Di Cosmo 2002:201f.), but a review of his strategies shows that they were, in fact, more in line with the pre-imperial idea that the best way to deal with barbarians is to try to sway them with moral charisma. Jia Yi's slogan was "three guidelines and five baits" (*sanhiao wu'er* 三表五餌), which meant impressing the Xiongnu with one's moral excellence (three guidelines) while at the same time seducing their senses with China's opulent exports (five baits); under such pressure, the Xiongnu would naturally come to recognize the superiority of Chinese culture and reject their own ruler.⁵⁰ Jia Yi even anticipated the objection that this entailed welcoming the Xiongnu into the Chinese *okumene*, and asserted that the entire human race properly belonged under the Chinese emperor's dominion⁵¹:

Someone might say: "The Son of Heaven condescends to oversee someone else's people; we are concerned about this."

I say: "If there are any who are not the Son of Heaven's people, is he still the Son of Heaven? It is said in the *Odes* 詩: 'Under billowing Heaven, there is nothing that is not the King's land. Along the sea-boundaries of the land, there is no one who is not the King's servant.'⁵² 'The King' is the Son of Heaven. Wherever boats or carts may go, wherever the footprints of human beings may reach, even if it be Man, Mo, Rong, or Di [territory], what is there that is not the seat of the Son of Heaven? Now the arrogant chieftain [of the Xiongnu]⁵³ leads a sizable portion of the Son of Heaven's people; by not heeding the Son of Heaven, that arrogant chieftain commits a great crime. Now for the Son of Heaven to bring himself to

embrace his people—that is the Son of Heaven's occupation; how is that 'condescending to oversee someone else's people?' (Yan and Zhong 2000:139)

At most, one could accuse Jia Yi of unrealistic policies or cultural chauvinism, but it is evident that he did not accord with, and may not have even heard of, the opinion that the Xiongnu were too uncouth ever to be assimilated.

A more plausible antecedent is found in the person of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (fl. 152-119 BCE), who is quoted by Ban Gu (if he is to be trusted) as having written that "those like the Xiongnu cannot be persuaded with humanity and righteousness; one can persuade them only with rich profit" (Ban et al. 1962:3831). Ban Gu goes on to criticize Dong Zhongshu's specific recommendations as impractical, but he shares the presupposition that incorporating the Xiongnu into the Chinese empire is an unattainable goal because of their refractory nature (Tsinos 1983-85:186ff.; Lien-sheng Yang 1968:28; Yü 1967:38).

But the likeliest source is a memorial by Dong Zhongshu's political rival Zhuñfu Yan 主父偃 (d. 127 BCE). After a survey of Chinese failures against the Xiongnu, Zhuñfu writes "Ours is not the only generation that has found the Xiongnu difficult to control. They make it their business to practice robbery, raiding and invading; this is so because of their Heaven-endowed nature. As far back as Shun and the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, surely no one placed limits on them or supervised them. [These rulers] regarded them as birds and beasts, for they do not belong to the category of mankind" (Sima 1959:295; cf. the translation in Watson 1958[III]: 195f.).

This passage is remarkable not for its content but for its date (ca. 130 BCE), for it contains the same crucial phrase, "Heaven-endowed nature," that Sima Qian later adopted in his own account of the Xiongnu.⁵⁴ Inasmuch as Sima Qian himself quoted this section of the memorial in his biography of Zhuñfu Yan, it can plausibly be regarded as one of his primary sources. Moreover, the document may shed light on the much-discussed question of Sima Qian's political motivations. Zhuñfu Yan presented this uncompromisingly negative portrayal of the Xiongnu as part of a larger argument dissuading the Emperor from waging campaigns of conquest into the steppe. Why waste manpower and material trying to subjugate shadows? By borrowing Zhuñfu's phrasing,⁵⁵ Sima seems to be subtly casting his lot with the pacifist side as well.

One is forced to ask, however, why the new and hardened view that the Xiongnu were different because of their inborn nature would suddenly be so persuasive. Grim reality must have played a role. Whereas, over the course of centuries, literally dozens of distinct ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups had become amalgamated into the nascent Chinese culture, the Xiongnu would not yield to this process of acculturation; it is easy to see how their stubborn autonomy—rooted, no doubt, in their distinctive methods of extracting economic value from their land and possessions⁵⁶—engendered the notion that they *could not* be acculturated (Pines 2005:90f.; Lattimore 1940:277 and 407–9).⁵⁷

The histories are replete with tales of Chinese captives and defectors among the Xiongnu (Wu 1995), and Sima Qian claims to reproduce the advice of the most influential of them, Zhonghang Yue 中行說 (Di Cosmo 2002:269f.; Jagchid and Symons 1989:25; Tao 1987:254, 335f.; Daffinà 1982:63–67; Yü 1967:37f.; de Groot 1921–26[I]: 80–83), a eunuch originally sent to accompany a Chinese princess given in marriage to Laoshang 老上 (c. 174–160 BCE), the second great Xiongnu overlord (*chanyu* 單于).⁵⁸ Zhonghang reminded Laoshang that the Xiongnu customs were uniquely suited to their terrain and way of life, and warned against the temptations of Han silks and other finery. He even justified the Xiongnu tendency to venerate the young instead of the old, which was judged ghastly by the standards of the Chinese doctrine of filial piety (*xiao* 孝); Zhonghang argued that it was a more appropriate attitude for a warlike people. For his service, he was branded a traitor by his compatriots back home, but Sima Qian concludes, with a tinge of admiration, that Zhonghang helped the Xiongnu avoid succumbing to Chinese luxuries and thus continue to bargain from a position of strength (Sima 1959:2898ff.). If it is true that Heaven made the Xiongnu different, perhaps this was because the peculiar attributes of the Xiongnu are more appropriate to the place where Heaven chose to locate them.

This may be the first historical example of a Chinese person who believed that Chinese customs were not necessarily best for all the people of the world. Surely there were other advisors, both Chinese and non-Chinese, who also encouraged the Xiongnu rulers not to conform to Chinese protocols, which could not benefit them in the long run.

But the power of imagination also has a hand in the formation of monumental empires, and it cannot be a coincidence that Chinese thinkers began to create an absolute philosophical boundary between China and the steppe

just as the Qin and Han dynasties were constructing the Great Walls along the same verge (Waldron 1990:13–29; An and Meng 2005:276ff.). Before this, the frontier zone had always been fluid and permeable. The salient achievement of the First Emperor of Qin was not that he defeated the remaining challengers to his supremacy (for they were already tottering when he inherited his vast kingdom as a boy), but that he bequeathed to his nation the *idea* of a Chinese empire, something that would have been unthinkable in Shang and even Zhou times, when what we now call “China” was a mosaic of diverse peoples and principalities. The story of pre-imperial history is the story of an emerging Chinese identity, which finally took hold only when a Chinese lord—disputed ancestry and all (Goldin 2002:81ff.)—claimed the entire Chinese world as his own. But as there is no Self without an Other, calling oneself Chinese meant calling someone else non-Chinese; the new China had to invent an irreconcilable opponent, and the Xiongnu were in the right place at the right time.

NOTES

1. Aihue Wang traces the development of this cosmology through the Shang and Zhou dynasties (2000:23–74).
 2. Text in Kong (1817:153). See also James Legge’s (1815–1897) perspicuous chart (Legge 1893–1895[III]: 149). The date of the “Yugong” is disputed, but Qu Wanli argues lucidly for a date in the mid-to-late Springs and Autumns (Qu 1969:116–60). More recent Chinese scholars seem eager to show that the idea has roots in China’s prehistory; for example, Zhao Chunqing suggests that it goes back to the Longshan Culture 龍山文化 of Neolithic times (2006), whereas Yue Hongqin associates it with the Xia dynasty (2006).
 3. For example, *Menzius* 3B.9, where it is said that the Duke of Zhou 周公 pacified the barbarians. Similarly, *Menzius* 1B.11, 3B.5, and 7B.4 relate that the barbarians in all directions yearned for sages to conquer and civilize them.
 4. All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise indicated, but for each extended quotation from primary sources, I provide a reference to an alternative translation for the reader’s convenience.
 5. These pseudo-ethonyms included Rong 戎, “bellicose,” for the barbarians of the west; Di 狄/翟, “feathered,” for those of the north; Man 蠻, “savage,” for those of the south; Yi, “nocturnal,” for those of the east; also Mo 貊, “wild beasts, somewhat like bears, that eat iron”; Hu 胡 “jowled (or bearded)”; and others. The root meanings of such names are, in my view (despite, e.g., Dikötter 1992:4), more significant than the fact that they are often written with animal radicals (豸, 犛, 豸, etc.). These terms not only date to long before the standardization of the writing system but also would have had pejorative connotations even for a nonliterate audience.
- Christopher I. Beckwith is well-known for his objections to the use of the word “barbarian” (e.g., Beckwith 1987:173n1). Michael R. Drrompp points out that in later

- imperial usage, such terms as *rong* and *di* had lost much of their pejorative tinge (2005:174f).
6. "The children of the Gan, Yue, Yi and Mo peoples all make the same sounds when they are born. When they are grown up, they have different customs; teaching causes this to be so" (Wang Xiangqian 1988:2).
 7. Following the commentary of Huang Kan 皇侃 (488–545 CE), Cheng (1990:993).
 8. Conceivably, *wu* could mean "I," for Confucius's language does not routinely distinguish between the first person singular and plural. But in the context of this conversation with Zigong, even that would have to mean "you and I," not simply "I."
 9. For an overview of the problems and some ingenious, if speculative, suggestions, see Eno (2003).
 10. The one negative assessment of foreigners appears in 3.6: "The Yi and Di with rulers are still not as good as the several Xia without them" (Cheng 1990:5:147), where "the several Xia" refer to the various Chinese feudatories. But this statement is vague and has not been interpreted by the tradition as a categorical indictment of non-Chinese peoples; one commentarial trend, in fact, turns the saying on its head and reads it as a criticism of Chinese rulers who are acting like barbarians. See the rich selection of commentary in Cheng (1990:147–50).
- Frank Dikötter tries to debunk what he calls "the delusive myth of a Chinese antiquity that abandoned racial standards in favor of a concept of cultural universalism" (Dikötter 1992:3), and presents instead evidence of "racial discrimination," but his readings are often forced; for example, he renders the statement *wu zhidu, qi xin bi yi* 非我族類, 其心必異 (Zhang Bojun 1990:818) as "if he is not of our race, he is sure to have a different mind." *Zhidu* means simply "kind," not "race" in any modern sense.
11. Consider also 3A.4 (Jiao 1987:393), where Mencius cites the renowned Chen Liang 陳良, a native of Chu 楚 who "delighted in the way of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius" and went on to become a scholar unrivaled by any of the native Chinese, as an example of the principle that barbarians can adopt Chinese customs. Elsewhere, Mencius is cited by Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282 CE) as having declared that the sage Yu 禹 was of barbarian birth, too (Sima 1959:686n1; cf. Hinsch 2004:90).
 12. Pines did not address this theme explicitly in his earlier study of the *Zhaozhuan* (Pines 2002).
 13. Following the gloss on *fanshe* 反舌 by Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 (1744–1819), Chen (2002:114n6—the first appearance of the term).
 14. As far as one can infer from its scattered references, the *Huiananzi* 淮南子 appears to be in the same mold; e.g., "The Xiongnu produce coarse pelts; the Gan and Yue make clothes of fine kudzu. They each make what they need to equip themselves for their climate; they each protect themselves against heat or cold in accordance with their habitations. Everyone obtains what is appropriate; one's material goods are expedient for one's location" (Zhang 1997:47). That is, material culture is a function of people's livelihood, not their inborn nature; the Sage, it is implied, can rule all the peoples of the world by recognizing, and then responding to, their disparate needs. This is not surprising in view of the text's larger claims of universal rulership (Vankeerberghen 2001:111–18).
 15. Knoblock and Regal (2000:19f.) discuss the date.
 16. In English, Psarras (2003, 2004) is the only extended study of Chinese relations with the Xiongnu incorporating archaeology. See also Holotová-Szink and André 2003. Other Western works rely entirely on Chinese texts (Yü 1967, 1990; Barfield 1989).

- Barfield's (1989:8–16) prominent thesis is that the Xiongnu become powerful only as a consequence of the foundation of the Chinese Empire, which they shrewdly raided and extorted. For the defects of this view, see Psarras 1992.
17. At least, this is the nearest approximation we have of what Sima Qian wrote. For the most recent study of the textual problems involving this chapter, see Honey 1999.
 18. This name is persistently misread as "Xunzhou" in Hinsch (2004:87).
 19. Or perhaps Le Yan; the surnames Le and Yue were distinct, even though they were written with the same character.
 20. Despite Psarras (2003[?]:78), "concubine" must be singular because the text says that Xunyu made her his *qi* 妻 (principal wife), and in Chinese usage a man can have only one *qi*.
 21. Also see Fang Xuanling et al. (1974:264).
 22. The names are written somewhat differently: Xunyu in Yue Yan's account is 薰粥; in Sima Qian's treatise, it is written 薰粥. But these were homophones even in Old Chinese (*xur-*luk*). Moreover, this is probably the same name as both Xunyu 薰粥, which appears in *Mencius* 1B.3 (Jiao 1987:111), and Xunyu 薰育, which is found in "Zhou benji" 周本紀 (Sima 1959:113).
 23. Sima Qian implies as much when he states that the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, with whom he begins his sweeping narrative, chased the Xunyu to the north (Sima 1959:6). This would mean that the Xunyu antedated even the Yellow Emperor.
 24. Pei Yin 裴駰 (fl. 438 CE) attributes the same gloss to Jin Zhao 晉灼 (Sima 1959:2880n3). Sima Zhen attributes a similar quote ("In the time of the Shang, they were called Xunyu, which was changed to Xiongnu") to *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, by Ying Shao 應劭 (fl. 189–194 CE), but this is no longer found in the received text (Wang Lidi 1981:489).
 25. This view persisted into the 20th century. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) was the most eminent Chinese scholar to accept it (Wang 1936; more recently see Liu Xueyao 1987:1–9; and Lin Gan 1986:4). For an example of a Western scholar, see Pritsak 1959. To his credit, Pritsak was one of the first writers to recognize that Xiongnu was not the name of an ethnic group; see below.
 26. In identifying this as the first textual reference to the Xiongnu, I rely on the chronological arrangement of the material in Lin Gan (1988[?]: 149). Hinsch (2004:88) is alone in placing the formation of the Xiongnu polity as far back as "the eighth or seventh century BC." On China's first military encounters with mounted nomads, see generally Larimore (1940:386–90).
 27. This is the third item in Lin Gan's table; the second, from the *Shiyouyan* 說苑, is not credible as a historical source.
 28. The lone possible exception is "Yan taizi Dan zhi yu Qin wangyu" 燕太子丹質於秦亡歸, an item in *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 relating an event sometime around 228 BCE (Lin Xiang 1978:1129), but it is by no means certain that this text was written before the Han. As is well known, the same story is repeated nearly verbatim in the "Cike liezhuan" 刺客列傳 chapter of *Shiji* (Sima 1959:2529), and therefore may have been added to the text of the *Zhanguo ce* in Han times (if not later).
- Two other early notices are likewise dubious (Lin Gan 1986:48). The "Wanghui jie" 王會解 chapter of the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 includes the Xiongnu in a list of tribes living in the north (Fhang Hsueh-in et al. 1995:980). The passage is set as a discussion between King Tang 湯, the founder of the Shang dynasty, and his wise minister Yi Yin 伊尹, but

- the presence of the terms *taoru* 騊駼 and *jiexi* 駃騠 (Huang Huaxin et al. 1995:982), which denote Xiongnu herd animals and are otherwise unattested before the Han dynasty (see below), is a strong indication that this is a late text. The "Haidai nanjing" 海內南經 chapter of the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 mentions "the country of the Xiongnu and Kadu" 開題, but the commentator Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324 CE) immediately notes that one edition has the older name "Xiangyun" for "Xiongnu" (Yuan 1996:333). A different chapter of *Shanhai jing*, incidentally, also mentions the *taoru* (Yuan 1996:294).
29. My reconstructions are based on the system in Sagart (1999), with the main distinction that I indicate the type A and B syllables using majuscule and minuscule, respectively. I am indebted to Wolfgang Behr for help with reconstructing some of these names.
30. Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) observed as early as 1945, on phonological grounds, that "Xiangyun" and "Xiongnu" cannot be related (1945:142). Kaha erman Muhlan does enough linguistic legwork to show the same thing, yet never abandons his assumption that these are all merely different ways of writing the same name (Muhlan 2000).
31. Sometimes the comment in the *Zhuozhuan* (Yang Bojun 1990:939) that the Rong "value goods and deprecate land" (*gui hao yi tu* 賈貨易土) is interpreted as an indication that they were nomads (Yü 1967:5; Meserve 1982:54). The phrase *yi tu* could mean "they change their lands," but in this context probably means "they make light of land", since this would be the only pre-imperial reference to nomads (perhaps centuries before the next securely attested one). I doubt that the statement means anything more than that the Rong undervalued their land.
32. Less excusable, considering the date of publication (and a telling example of the Chinese habit of ignoring Western scholarship), is the work of Lin Gan, who asserts that the Xuyun, Guifang 鬼方, and Xiangyun were all nomadic ancestors of the Xiongnu going back to Xia times (2003:2f.). Jaroslav Průšek had long since demonstrated that the Bronze Age enemies of the various Chinese states could not have been nomads (Průšek 1971).
33. In this connection, one must reconsider the old, but never disproven, hypothesis that the name Modu (Old Chinese *MUK-TAK/MUK-TJUNS/MUK-TUTY) corresponds to Old Japanese *moro, "root, foundation," and thus means something like "the progenitor" (Fang 1930:1425–26). If this identification is correct—phonetically it does not seem like a perfect fit—it would indicate that the idea of Xiongnu before Modu is a contradiction in terms. (Fang's larger thesis was more speculative: all the names of the Xiongnu rulers, he argued, were numbers, and thus represented an imitation of the Qin dynasty's convention of naming their emperors "First" and "Second.")
- Competing glosses of the name make it difficult to reconstruct with confidence. Sima Zhen (Sima 1959:2889n1) says that it can be pronounced Modun or Maodin (音墨, 又如字), i.e., Old Chinese *MUK-TJUNS or *MUKS-TJUNS, respectively; but Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061) reads it as Modu (音音墨, 頓音墨), i.e., *MUK-TAK (Wang Xiangqian 1995:94A, 5a). And there is yet a third distinct gloss: Mao Huang 毛晃 (12th century) reads 頓 as the equivalent of *TUT 僣沒切 (Huang Gongshao 1781:26.24b). My understanding of the significance of these various glosses has benefited from correspondence with David P. Branner.
34. Despite Lin Gan, who assumes, curiously, that the Xiongnu must have been either Turks or Mongols and concludes that they were Turks because physical remains in some Xiongnu graves suggest that the deceased might have had big noses (Lin Gan 2003:37–38; also Lin Gan 1986:149ff.; 1983). Aerdingfu (2000) objects to Lin Gan's

- arguments but on the grounds that the Xiongnu were really Mongoloids without big noses, not that the term is at all problematic as an ethnic designation.
- Physical anthropology in the People's Republic of China is not always this unreined, but even the most expert studies (e.g., Zhu 1994) still begin with the unquestioned premise that the Xiongnu were an ethnic group (*minzu* 民族) (see Sheath, this volume).
35. De Crespigny supports this assertion only by referring to the parallel of the Mongols and Manchus—who, naturally, lived fourteen to twenty centuries after the Xiongnu—as though it were a sort of truism that all Inner Asian political entities must have had a tribal origin.
36. My one quibble with Di Cosmo's path-breaking study is that he frequently refers to the relationship between mounted nomadic warriors and settled agrarian societies as "symbiotic," without specifying which indispensable goods or services the nomads would have provided (Di Cosmo 1994:1115).
- Wang Qingxian infers, on the basis of textual evidence alone, that the Xiongnu Empire must have been ethnically diverse, adding, persuasively, that it never would have become powerful otherwise (Wang Qingxian 2003; see also Hinsch 2004:88; Tao 1987:300ff.).
37. The foremost study is still Rudenko (1969). See also Umechura 1960. Silyi Antonini (1994:295) emphasizes that the Noin Ula tombs could have belonged to any nomadic group in the area.
38. Tian and Guo (1986) seemed to classify all non-Chinese cultures in the Ordos region, regardless of their date, as Xiongnu or "early Xiongnu." Since then, they have tried to refine their controversial views, now they concede that the name Xiongnu is not known until the end of the Warring States, but still maintain that "the Xiongnu were an ancient people in China's northern regions; before the name Xiongnu ever appeared, they had already gone through a long process of historical development" (Tian and Guo 2005:448).
- Wang Mingke discusses many of the pre-imperial sites reported by Tian and Guo and is careful not to associate them with the Xiongnu (2006:73–93).
39. The fullest discussion of these animals is still Egami (1951); see also Knechtges (1979:106nn12–14).
40. These statements are inaccurate (Kradin 2005; Psarras 2003:125f.; Di Cosmo 2002:251; Tao 1987:225ff.). Ancient steppe nomads did in fact engage in agriculture, though to a limited degree, and archaeology has revealed several Xiongnu fortifications. The best-known example is probably the so-called *Ivolga gorodishche* (Davydova 1995–96).
41. Tao Keruo entertains the possibility that the Xiongnu may have eventually devised a writing system of their own (1987:306ff.), but no example has ever been found. Li Simian 呂思勉 (1884–1957) argued that the Xiongnu must have adopted Chinese writing for diplomatic and political purposes (Li 1982:601–3).
42. Despite Wang Mingke, who writes that "Chinese people of the Han period ... basically did not have any pejorative opinions regarding [the Xiongnu]" (2006:189). This view is not uncommon among contemporary Chinese researchers.
43. The claim that the Xiongnu had no clan names is probably false (Psarras 2003:124; Honey 1999:84f.; Tao 1987:209).
44. On the authorship of *Qincao*, see Ma 2005. It seems likely that there was more than one text by that name in antiquity, and sorting out which fragment belongs to which author may well be impossible with our limited knowledge today.

45. I am not aware of any ancient phonetic gloss elucidating this name, which could conceivably be read Hühányé, Hühánxié, Hühányá, Hühánxi, or Hühánshé.
46. An allusion to "Yugong" (Kong 1817:153).
47. Following the commentary of Yan Shigu 顏師古 (381-645), in Ban et al. (1962:383-4n4).
48. On the concept of *jimi* 鷓鴣 ("'loose reins" or, more literally, "bridle and reins"), see Lian-sheng Yang (1968:31-33).
49. Tsimos argues compellingly that much of Ban Gu's rhetoric in this passage is borrowed from the great scholar and statesman Xiao Wangzhi 蕭望之 (ca. 107-47 BCE).
50. Most studies of the "three guidelines and five baits" strategy are perfunctory. Barfield (1989:51ff.), for example, calls it simply "Five Baits" and fails to note that it was devised by Jia Yi—whom he then mischaracterizes as an advocate of total war against the Xiongnu; Tsimos's otherwise thorough study is no less superficial (1983-85:186). Wang Xingguo has the most sustained use of primary texts (1992:69-77); see also Lei 2006:284-88; Yu 1967:11f. and 36ff.
51. On "the concept of the universal state," see Li Zhaojie (2002:27-29).
52. Mao 205, "Beishan" 北山. The received text of the *Odes* reads *putian* 溥天 where Jia Yi writes 普天.)
53. Following the commentary in Yan and Zhong (2000:4.152n140).
54. As far as I can tell, the only other comparable uses of this term in the *Shiji* are references to the cleverness of the people of Qi and the literary aptitude of scholars from Qi and Lu; both are ascribed to *tanxing* (Sima 1959:1513, 3117). I am indebted to Michael J. Hunter for the first reference.
55. Sima Qian's erroneous report that the Xiongnu had no walls or fortifications (see note 41, above) also appears to be taken from a memorial (Sima 1959:2954). Zhuftu's phrase 李斯 (d. 208 BCE) earlier in the same memorial (Sima 1959:2954). Zhuftu's phrase *qinshou chu zhi* 禽獸之, incidentally, was later borrowed by Ban Gu.
56. Realist statesmen in the mold of Chao Cuo 韞錯 (d. 154 BCE) recognized this (Lewis 2006:298); see Chao's memorial on border affairs (Ban et al. 1962:2284f.).
57. Müller suggests that these chauvinistic developments are due to increased Chinese contact with "noticeably different races" (1980:68). Psarras (2003:70f.) observes that archaeology has demonstrated coexistence at a number of sites, belying Han rhetoric. She also notes that Han attitudes toward the Xiongnu may have softened as some of them began to accept the trappings of Chinese culture (2004:75f.).
58. The likeliest explanation of this title (*dar-wa in Old Chinese) is still that of E. G. Pulleyblank (1962:256-57), who associates it with the later steppe titles *tarqan*, *tarxan*, and so on. See also Psarras (2003:128).

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11

Mapping Foreign Policy Interests: Mongolia's Case

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The traditional area studies approach is important for better understanding different societies and peoples. Such an approach can be compared to changing a two-dimensional picture into a three-dimensional one. The result is not only expanding the study of human societies and making it more interesting but also improving the practical use of the knowledge thus gained.

In the course of this conference's intellectual exercise, we have compared the degree of utility and effectiveness of different approaches for better examining the situation of a given country or nation at a time when the world is rapidly integrating and globalizing. The approaches include area studies and the concepts of “scapes” and “hot spots.” We cannot rule out that some sort of combined approach might prove to be practically more useful to understanding various nodes and “scapes.”

I welcome choosing Mongolia as a case study for the mapping exercise—not only because it is my country but also because it is one of the countries in the post-Cold War period that is trying to find its niche in the Asian region and the world. Because it is geopolitically sandwiched between two regional/global powers—Russia and China—Mongolia is relatively physically isolated from other small and medium countries with which it shares many common interests. In this transitional period from socialist to post-socialist