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**17/law01/268**

**IRD 106**

QUESTION: In not more than 5 pages discuss the Ancient Chinese Diplomacy

The first records of Chinese and Indian diplomacy date from the 1st millennium BC. By the 8th century BC the Chinese had leagues, missions, and an organized system of polite discourse between their many “warring states,” including resident envoys who served as hostages to the good behavior of those who sent them. The view in late [medieval](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/medieval) [Europe](https://www.britannica.com/place/Europe) that the first diplomats were angels, or messengers from heaven to earth, is perhaps fanciful, but some elements of diplomacy predate recorded history. Early societies had some attributes of states, and the first [international law](https://www.britannica.com/topic/international-law) arose from intertribal relations. [Tribes](https://www.britannica.com/topic/tribe-anthropology) negotiated marriages and regulations on trade and hunting. Messengers and envoys were accredited, sacred, and inviolable; they usually carried some emblem, such as a message stick, and were received with elaborate ceremonies. [Women](https://www.britannica.com/topic/women) often were used as envoys because of their perceived mysterious sanctity and their use of “sexual wiles”; it is believed that women regularly were entrusted with the vitally important task of negotiating peace in cultures.

The sophistication of this tradition, which emphasized the practical virtues of [ethical](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethical) behavior in relations between states (no doubt in reaction to actual amorality), is well documented in the Chinese classics. Its essence is perhaps best captured by the advice of [Zhuangzi](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Zhuangzi) to “diplomats” at the beginning of the 3rd century bce. He advised them that if relations between states are close, they may establish mutual trust through daily interaction; but if relations are distant, mutual confidence can only be established by exchanges of messages. Messages must be conveyed by messengers [diplomats]. Their contents may be either pleasing to both sides or likely to engender anger between them. Faithfully conveying such messages is the most difficult task under the heavens, for if the words are such as to evoke a positive response on both sides, there will be the temptation to exaggerate them with flattery and, if they are unpleasant, there will be a tendency to make them even more biting. In either case, the truth will be lost. If truth is lost, mutual trust will also be lost. If mutual trust is lost, the messenger himself may be imperiled. Therefore, I say to you that it is a wise rule: “always to speak the truth and never to embellish it. In this way, you will avoid much harm to yourselves.”

This tradition of equal diplomatic dealings between contending states within [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) was ended by the country’s unification under the [Qin](https://www.britannica.com/art/qin-musical-instrument) emperor in 221 bce and the consolidation of unity under the [Han dynasty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Han-dynasty) in 206 bce. Under the Han and succeeding [dynasties](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dynasties), China emerged as the largest, most populous, technologically most-advanced, and best-governed society in the world. The arguments of earlier Chinese philosophers, such as [Mencius](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mencius-Chinese-philosopher), prevailed; the best way for a state to exercise influence abroad, they had said, was to develop a [moral](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral) society worthy of emulation by admiring foreigners and to wait confidently for them to come to China to learn.

**Diplomacy in Ancient China**

Dženita Čizmić

Imperial China had a long tradition of foreign relations. From the Qin dynasty until the Qing dynasty, Chinese culture had influenced neighboring and distant countries, while gradually being transformed by outside influences as well.

Imperial China had a long tradition of foreign relation

In pre-modern times, the theory of foreign relations of China held that the Chinese Empire was the Celestial Dynasty, the center of world civilization, with the Emperor of China being the leader of the civilized world. This view saw China as equivalent to "all under heaven". All other states were considered to be tributaries, under the suzerain rule of China. Some were direct vassals. Theoretically, the lands around the imperial capital were regarded as "five zones of submission", - the circular areas differentiated according to the strength of the benevolent influence from the Son of Heaven.

There were several periods when Chinese foreign policy

There were several periods when Chinese foreign policy took on isolationist tones, because of the view that the rest of the world was poor and backward with little to offer.

Nevertheless, China was a center of trade from early on in its history. Many of China's interactions with the outside world came via the Silk Road. This included, during the 2nd century AD, contact with representatives of the Roman Empire, and during the 13th century, the visits of Venetian traveler Marco Polo. Chinese foreign policy was usually aimed at containing the threat of so-called "barbarian" invaders (such as the Xiongnu, Mongols, and Jurchen) from the north. This could be done by military means, such as an active offense (campaigns into the north) or a more passive defense (as exemplified by the Great Wall of China). The Chinese also arranged marriage alliances known as heqin, or "peace marriages."

Chinese officers distinguished between "matured/familiar barbarians" (foreigners influenced by Chinese culture) and "raw barbarians".

In many periods, Chinese foreign policy was especially assertive. One such case was exemplified by the treasure voyages of Admiral Zheng He during the Ming dynasty..

First Sino-Japanese War 1894-1985

Second Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945

Diplomacy through dynasties

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Period of disunity

**Qin Dynasty**

Although many kings of the Shang and Zhou dynasties ruled beforehand, in 221 BC, the ruler of the Qin state, Ying Zheng (Qin Shi Huang), was the first to conquer the different vassal states under the Zhou dynasty, as well as other non-sinicized states. He was able to transform these different states into a relatively unified and uniform empire, the Qin Empire. Under his leadership and a society modeled around strict adherence to legalist philosophy, his once backwater western frontier state conquered all of the rivaling Warring States in ancient China. The Chinese domain was also extended into Inner Mongolia and Manchuria to the north, and with naval expeditions sent to the south, the indigenous Baiyue of modern-day Guangdong and northern Vietnam were also quelled and brought under Chinese rule.

The time of the Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) was a groundbreaking era in the history of Imperial China's foreign relations, during the long reign of Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BC), the travels of the diplomat Zhang Qian opened up China's relations with many different Asian territories for the first time.

After his travels, the famous land trading route of the Silk Road leading from China to the Roman Empire was established. Yet Chinese trading missions to follow were not limited to travelling across land and terrain. During the 2nd century BC, the Chinese had sailed past Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean, reaching India and Sri Lanka by sea before the Romans. This sea route became well traveled not only by merchants and diplomats, but also Chinese religious missionaries in search of further Indian Buddhist texts to translate from Sanskrit to Chinese.

**Han dynasty**

The first diplomatic contact between China and the West occurred with the expansion of the Roman Empire in the Middle-East during the 2nd century; the Romans gained the capability to develop shipping and trade in the Indian Ocean. The first group of people claiming to be an embassy of Romans to China is recorded in 166, sixty years after the expeditions to the west of the Chinese general Ban Chao.

It came to Emperor Huan of Han China, "from Anton (Emperor Antonius Pius), king of Daqin (Rome)". Although, as Antonius Pius died in 161, leaving the empire to his adoptive son Marcus Aurelius (Antonius), the convoy arrived in 166, and the both Emperor being "Antonius" the confusion arises about who sent the embassy.

Sui dynasty

Sui dynasty

The Grand Canal was completed during the Sui dynasty, enhancing indigenous trade between northern and southern China by canal and river traffic.

One of the diplomatic highlights of this short-lived dynastic period was Prince Shōtoku's Japanese embassy to China led by Ono no Imoko in AD 607.

**Tang dynasty**

The Tang dynasty (618-907) represents another high point for China in terms of its military might, conquest and establishment of vassals and tributaries, foreign trade, and its central political position and preeminent cultural status in East Asia.

Chinese trade relations during the Tang dynasty was extended further west to the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and Egypt. Many contemporary writers from foreign countries described Chinese ships, Chinese goods brought to foreign ports, as well as Chinese seaports.

The seaport at Guangzhou in southern China became one of the largest seaports in the world, hosting foreign travelers throughout maritime Asia. At the time, Guangzhou was a major port along the maritime silk road and involved in heavy trade with Japan.[4] The Tang capital city of Chang'an became well known as a multicultural metropolis filled with foreign travelers, dignitaries, merchants, emissaries, and missionaries.

Although the 9th century was politically turbulent, the economy of China actually continued to thrive, bolstered still by foreign trade. The Japanese were sending embassies to the Tang Empire as late as 894, which was finally halted by Emperor Uda by the persuasion of Sugawara no Michizane.

**Song dynasty**

The Chinese political theory of China being the center of world diplomacy was largely accepted in East Asia, except in periods of Chinese weakness such as the Song dynasty (960-1279).

With powerful sinicized kingdoms to its north such as the Tangut-led Western Xia, the Song dynasty was forced to engage in skillful diplomacy. The famous statesmen and scientists Shen Kuo (1031–1095) and Su Song (1020–1101) were both sent as Song ambassadors to the Liao dynasty in order to settle border disputes.

There were several notable diplomatic missions sent to China from foreign countries during the Song dynasty.

**Yuan dynasty**

Genghis Khan

One of the diplomatic highlights of this period was the Chinese embassy to the Cambodian Khmer Empire under Indravarman III, led by the envoy Zhou Daguan (1266–1346) from the years 1296 to 1297.

**Ming dynasty**

The Ming dynasty (1368–1644), after the Han and Tang dynasties, was another high point in Chinese power.

The greatest diplomatic highlights of the Ming period were the enormous maritime tributary missions and expeditions of the admiral Zheng He (1371–1433), a favored court eunuch of the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–1424).

**Qing dynasty**

One issue facing Western embassies to China was the act of prostration known as the kowtow. Western diplomats understood that kowtowing meant accepting the superiority of the Emperor of China over their own monarchs, an act which they found unacceptable.

The Chinese worldview changed very little during the Qing dynasty as China's sin centric perspectives continued to be informed and reinforced by deliberate policies and practices designed to minimize any evidence of its growing weakness and West's evolving power.

**Period of Disunity**

Although introduced during the Han dynasty, the chaotic, divisionary Period of Disunity (220-589) saw a flourishing of Buddhism and travels to foreign regions inspired by Buddhist missionaries

There were Indian monks such as Kumarajiva (344-413) from Kucha who traveled to China in order to translate Sanskrit texts into Chinese. There were also many Chinese who traveled abroad in order to obtain and translate Buddhist sutras into Chinese

Marked by three periods:

Three Kingdoms

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Three Kingdoms

Jin dynasty

Southern and Northern dynasties

**REFERENCE**

<https://prezi.com/p/gwtq6oz43ze2/diplomacy-in-ancient-china/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy/History-of-diplomacy>