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Assignment: Discuss Ancient Chinese Diplomacy

Diplomacy served for most part of history as a non-violent means of achieving the foreign objectives of monarchs, Empires, Polis or States.

Ancient china has its boundary in modern day peoples republic of china.

China has a history that covers 4,000 years ruled by numerous dynasties and emperors, China gave birth to one of the four greatest civilisations of the world. early societies had some attributes of states, and the first international law arose from inter tribal relations.

In 1840 Britain launched the opium war and forced open the door of china with its warships and cannons, after that other western powers did the same. As a result the country lost almost all of its national sovereignty, the history of china’s relations during that time was filled with humiliation. Catharine Pagani (2001). *“ Eastern Magnificence & European Ingenuity”: Clocks of Late Imperial China* p. 446.

The Chinese people after some time stood up and became masters of their own destiny, and Chinese diplomacy started a new chapter.

The greatest knowledge of early diplomacy comes from the middle east, the Mediterranean, China etc

The very first record of Chinese and Indian diplomacy date from the 1st millennium BCE, by the 8th century the Chinese had an organized system of polite discourse between their many “warring states”

The foreign relations of the imperial era of Chinese history from the quin dynasty until the qing dynasty encompassed many situations as the fortunes of dynasties rose and fell. Chinese culture had influenced neighbouring countries and distant countries, while being transformed by outside influences as well as being conquered.

In ancient China there existed diplomats, he/she were representatives of the Emperor and Empire, they were also called envoys, and they must not have been from the China Ministry of Rites which was the ancient Chinese section in charge of foreign relations but could have been anybody both knowledgeable, well-suited and eloquent for the job.

In ancient Chinese Diplomacy they had two types of envoys;

The emissary envoy: which were appointed in the event of if a diplomatic message needed to be carried out or if there were diplomatic functions.

The resident envoy: this was what was in use when china was not unified and there existed warring states in China.

The ancient Chinese diplomacy system called the tributary system, it was used to conduct and handle trade, diplomacy, military, and religious relations, there was a hierarchy established with china and its emperor at the top, the tributary system was a system whereby subordinate states were called tributary states, they sent envoys to the emperor to give tribute and recognize the higher status of the kingdom and the emperor in their international relations. The Manchu inherited the tributary system of foreign relations from previous dynasties, this system assumed that china was culturally and materially superior to all other nations, and it required those who wished to trade and deal with china to come as vassals to the emperor, who was the ruler of “all under heaven” the tributary system was used by the Quing board of rites to deal with the countries along china’s eastern and southern borders and with the European nations that sought trade at the ports of south and southeast china. CateFromArcadia, (2020, June 19). *Foreign relations of imperial china* /en.m.wikipedia.org/

The emperor was accorded such high rank due to the mythic belief of the mandate of heaven which according to the Chinese is an authority of recognition of the emperor by heaven to rule the people as the son of God, this was the highest authority in ancient Chinese history.

Some functions of a diplomat from ancient China;

* To uphold the ethical status of the Chinese emperor
* To promote the national interests of the empire
* To promote the interests of the Emperor
* To deliver messages from the emperor’s court to other warring states.

References

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Paul Rule, “The Chinese Rites Controversy: A Long Lasting Controversy in Sino-Western Cultural History.” *Pacific Rim Report* 32 (2004): 2-8.