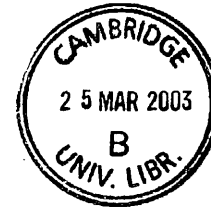


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# The Animal and the Daemon in Early China

*Roel Sterckx*  
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appropriate for armored animals . . . , and its people are white and lean. The fifth is called plains and marshes. It is appropriate for naked animals . . . , and its people are fleshy and short.<sup>40</sup>

The connection between the soil and the living creatures who inhabit it was apparent in various forms of social communication such as tallies and seals for the passage into different territories and military symbols such as army banners. The *Zhouli* distinguishes the realms of water, plains, and mountains. It states that tallies for circulation (*jie* 節) used by states in mountainous regions carried the image of a tiger, the states of the plains carried tallies with human images, and the states located near lakes or marshes carried dragon tallies.<sup>41</sup> As a potent military symbol, the tiger likewise graced tallies used to raise troops (*hufu* 虎符, "tiger tallies").<sup>42</sup>

Similar symbolism appeared on banners of an army on the march. The "Bing fa" 兵法 ("Methods of Warfare") chapter in the *Guanzi* includes among nine symbols the dragon for marching through water, the tiger for marching through forests, the crow for marching up slopes, the snake for marching through swamps, the magpie for marching over dry land, and the wolf for marching through mountains.<sup>43</sup> Dragon emblems may have been used as apotropaic images to ward off aquatic monsters. Several texts speak of troops meeting with water monsters. Sima Qian for instance records how a water goblin known as the "azure rhinoceros (or water buffalo)" (*cangsi* 蒼兕) was invoked to urge King Wu's 武 (1049/45–1043 B.C.E.) troops to cross the Meng 孟 ford in his campaign to conquer the Shang.<sup>44</sup> Wang Chong identifies this creature as the *cangguang* 倉光, a nine-headed monster that capsizes boats.<sup>45</sup> Another chronicle records that in the sixteenth year of King Zhao 昭 (r. ca. 977/75–957? B.C.E.) troops met with a huge rhinoceros while crossing the river Han 漢.<sup>46</sup>

The link between animals and territory is further attested in the *Liji*, which lists a series of animal designs on signal flags that vary according to the nature of the obstacles a funerary troop was facing:

When there is water in front, the flag with the green bird should be displayed. When there is dust in the front, the flag with the screaming kites is shown. When there are chariots and horsemen in front, the banner with the flying wild geese is shown. For a body of troops, a flag with tiger skin is shown. When a predatory beast is in front, a flag with a leopard skin is shown. On the march, the banner with the Vermilion Bird is in front; that of the Dark Warrior behind; that with the Green Dragon on the left; that with the White Tiger on the right.<sup>47</sup>

In this passage several creatures are linked to military symbolism and representations of territory. According to Zheng Xuan the relation between water and a blue-green bird refers to an aquatic bird named *qing que* 青雀 ("green water

fowl"?). The image of the kite to indicate dust is said to originate in a belief that the kite's screech causes an upsurge of wind. Geese fly in formations similar to an army troop, their image therefore serving to warn the coming of a hostile army. The use of tiger skin to indicate the passing of an infantry troop echoes a common identification of brave soldiers as tiger-men or tiger-warriors.<sup>48</sup> Martial symbolism was also associated with the use of tiger skin. For instance the *Zuozhuan* account of the famous battle of Chengpu 城濮 (632 B.C.E.) between the state of Chu and an alliance led by Jin records how a Jin general had his battle horses cloaked in tiger skins.<sup>49</sup> The use of a white leopard (*pixiu* 貔貅) hide to signal the presence of dangerous animals on the way may be based on the idea that the awesome leopard would scare away predatory animals. The Vermilion Bird, Dark Warrior, Green Dragon, and White Tiger were also known as the "four spirits" (*si shen* 四神) and refer to stellar constellations known by the same names.<sup>50</sup> Commentators state that the configuration of different army divisions was sometimes based on such astronomical configurations.<sup>51</sup> According to Wang Chong, these four spirits were the heavenly counterparts of four numinous animals also known as the *si ling* 四靈 (i.e., the dragon, unicorn, phoenix, and tortoise): "Heaven contains the essence of the four constellations and sends them down to produce the bodies of the four (numinous) animals."<sup>52</sup> The *si ling* also came to symbolize the four quadrants of the earth or any other microspace. Throughout this *Liji* passage the talismanic display of animal symbols appears to be based on the animal's correlation to the terrain on which the procession was advancing.<sup>53</sup>

The congruence between the soil and its inhabitants, both animals and humans, figured in a broader natural philosophy in which different regions were conceived as being subject to different "airs" (*qi*). In chapter 3 we saw how several texts presented the agency of "blood and *qi*" as the physiological basis or substrate for the emotions and temperament of living creatures. *Qi* was also thought to influence the temperament and character of living beings in its tangible form of wind (*feng* 風). This dialectic between *qi* and human behavior, for instance, figured as a key notion in Warring States theories of violence that argued that human physique, political action, climate, and natural environment were closely intertwined. Both social and physical aggression among living creatures were attributed to the nature of the configured cosmic or regional energies that influenced them.<sup>54</sup>

A similar notion of territorial *qi* underlay perceptions of *locus* and human and animal habitat. Local customs, human passions, and animal instincts were believed to be stimulated by regional "airs." The soil on which humans and animals lived provided the primary material for the formation of their physiology and character. The *Huainanzi* summarizes the idea that the nature of the soil determines the physical shape of its living inhabitants by stating that "each category of land generates according to its kind (*tu di ge yi qi lei sheng* 土地各以其類生)." Following this logic mountainous *qi* is said to produce mainly males, while the *qi* of swamps will produce many females. The *qi* of hot places produces many

reliable is the evidence for the Han period which confirms that hunting parks were used for the provision of sacrificial meats. For instance within the annual cycle of state ceremonies during the Han, a sacrifice known as the *chuliu* 獮獵 ritual took place at the onset of autumn. In essence the *chuliu* ceremony was the killing by the emperor of game, usually young deer, whose meat was then offered to the ancestors at the imperial tombs and the ancestral temple within the capital. It functioned both as a hunting festival and military exercise.<sup>96</sup>

More important than the park's role as a breeding ground for the ruler's culinary and sacrificial needs was its symbolic role. The seclusion of wild animals into a confined space such as a park or a court garden was in the first place an endeavor to sanctify the numinous powers of the ruler. In imperial times, parks provided "the most tangible image of the emperor as a cosmic figure, an earthly simulacrum of the all-embracing Heaven."<sup>97</sup> Quests for animal exotica to fill these preserves as well as the organization of territorial hunting campaigns to celebrate a ruler's political authority are already associated with the Shang and Zhou rulers. While some voices condemn an overindulgence in the hunt for animal exotica as a sign of dynastic extravagance on the part of the ruler, others present it as an endorsement of a ruler's all-encompassing powers. According to Sima Qian Shang tyrant Zhou 紂 not only fought wild animals with his bare hands, his insolence was further shown by the fact that he "collected an excessive number of dogs, horses and strange creatures to fill his palace, expanded his pastures and terraces at Shaqiu 沙丘, and gathered many wild beasts and birds to put in them."<sup>98</sup> One account describes how the conquest of the Shang was accompanied by the bloody capture of great numbers of wild animals including tigers, panthers, rhinoceros, yaks, bears, boars, badgers, and numerous herds of stag and deer. The campaign was sealed with the sacrifice of over five hundred oxen to Heaven and Hou Ji as well as offerings of nearly three thousand sheep and boar to other spirits.<sup>99</sup> The observation, hunt, and sacrifice of strange creatures as a *tour de force* of the ruler can be seen most notably in the description of the itineraries undertaken by Zhou King Mu (956?–918? B.C.E.). At several stages during his legendary journey King Mu is reported to have participated in hunts. In one campaign he is portrayed catching white foxes and black badgers and sacrificing them to the spirit of the Yellow River. On another occasion he surveys a mountainous landscape with its multifarious birds and beasts during a period of five days. Often the king receives pastoral goods and herds of cattle and sheep in exchange for precious artifacts from the Chinese heartland.<sup>100</sup> A contemporary of King Mu, King Yan 儼 of Xu 徐, is also described as a lover of exotica. One source states that he would dive into deep waters to find strange fish and enter the depths of the mountains to find strange animals, which he would then display in his courtyard.<sup>101</sup>

While both elites and common people in Warring States and Han China engaged in animal sports such as cockfighting, bullfighting, racing hounds and horses, and setting dogs on hares, the collection of exotic breeds in nature pre-

serves and the wild animal chase were more than a testimony to a devotion to rural pursuits among its leading social classes.<sup>102</sup> Parks served as scenes in which rulers staged symbolical conquests of the natural world through the means of ritual hunts and staged animal combats. Hunts in animal enclosures and pens as well as the ritual killing and consumption of game during banquets afterward constituted important insignia of ritual and political prowess.<sup>103</sup> Such acts assisted rulers in the symbolic assertion of their dominance over distant regions and their human and animal subjects. Similar to natural landscapes and their inhabiting wildlife, parks and artificial gardens were a sacred space, and engaging in the pursuit of exotic creatures within its boundaries amounted to partaking in the sacred aura of this topographic microcosm.

The sacred character of animal enclosures can be seen in an ode in the "Greater Elegantiae" (*Da ya* 大雅) section of the *Shijing* where the royal park of King Wen 文, founder of the Zhou, is described as a *ling you* 靈囿, a "numinous" or "divine" park:

The King was in the Divine Park,  
Where does and bucks were lying down.  
The does and bucks, so sleek and fat;  
White birds were glistening.  
The King stood by the Divine Pond;  
How full was it of fishes leaping about!<sup>104</sup>

The Mao preface to this poem states that when King Wen received his mandate from Heaven, the people rejoiced in the fact that he possessed numinous virtue (*ling de* 靈德), which reached the birds, beasts, and insects.<sup>105</sup> In the *Mengzi* the ode is quoted in an answer to an inquiry by King Hui 惠 of Liang 梁 (370–319 B.C.E.) as to whether sages should find pleasure in the seemingly trivial observance of geese and deer. Mencius argues that a ruler has to be good and wise first before he can enjoy these sights. He also suggests that a ruler's subjects should be able to share the delight of observing the ruler's exotica: "Even if one possesses towers, ponds, birds and beasts, how could they be enjoyed alone?"<sup>106</sup> In this sense Mencius portrays the spontaneous labor devoted by his subjects to the construction of parks as a celebration of a ruler's virtue and thus attributes the emergence of such parks to moral leadership rather than the violent conquest of the animal world. While King Wen's park spanned a surface of seventy *li* square, it was only natural according to Mencius that his people thought it too small. This was the result of the king's willingness to share it with woodcutters and catchers of pheasants and hares alike.<sup>107</sup> Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 B.C.E.) comments on King Wen's virtue reflected in this poem by stating that "at the place where sage rulers are present, fish, turtles, birds and beasts also find their place. How much more then should this be the case for the human populace!"<sup>108</sup>

The symbolic function of parks as microcosms celebrating the ruler's encompassing power over all living creatures came to the forefront in early imperial times. Han political imperialism went coterminous with the biological expansion of empire, and parks in the capital region gathered representative species from every region of the emperor's universe.<sup>109</sup> Rhapsodic descriptions of Han Wudi's Shanglin park by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 180–117 B.C.E.) and Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139 C.E.) portray these preserves as a microcosm of all fauna and flora under heaven. They describe how strange animal species from all quarters were concentrated into an enclosed space in the metropolitan Chang'an 長安 region, the epicenter of the empire.<sup>110</sup> In the newly emerging genre of the Han rhapsody, novel fauna and flora were celebrated with a novel vocabulary. As Yves Hervouet has pointed out, a great deal of the animal nomenclature in Sima Xiangru's poems consists of imaginary species that Sima could hardly have seen himself. Some animal names are neologisms, and small-sized species, such as insects or worms, are remarkably absent. Hence the majesty and grandeur of the emperor and his park are reinforced by the enumeration of large and awesome animals, rocks, plants, and the like.<sup>111</sup> In the same style, the *Hanshu* records Han Wudi's expansionist glory in the western regions with a vivid depiction of his newly acquired animal mirabilia. Upon hearing about the famous heavenly horses and after having established a corridor to Dayuan 大宛 and Anxi 安息 (ca. 101 B.C.E.), "the *pushao* 蒲梢, dragon-stripes, fish-eye, and blood-sweating horses filled the Yellow Gate; groups of great elephants, lions, ferocious hounds and ostriches were reared in the outer parks; and exotic goods from different directions were brought from the four quarters of the world."<sup>112</sup>

With the increase of empire over a vastly expanded territory, some exogenous creatures presented to the Han court underwent a process of sinicization. Certain animals were adapted, in image and in name, to the indigenous and familiar fauna. Han jade carvings of felines for example may have been Chinese versions of the western Asian lion, as Jessica Rawson has suggested. Late Warring States and Han artisans turned the image of animals originating from the steppes in the border areas into tigers or other local creatures to fit local perceptions.<sup>113</sup> Descriptive enumerations of animal exotica generally emphasized that these animals came from remote places and had crossed or covered large territories. Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92 C.E.) "Western Capital Rhapsody" mentions imperial enclosures and a "forbidden park" that housed unicorns from Jiuzhen 九真, horses from Dayuan, rhinoceros from Huangzhi 黃支, and ostriches from Tiaozhi 條枝, "crossing the Kunlun 崑崙 mountains, traversing the vast seas, strange species from various directions arrived from thirty thousand *li*."<sup>114</sup>

Having crossed territorial boundaries over vast distances, within the parks the spatial distribution of these animals was linked to their place of origin. Accounts of royal hunts within the preserves describe how game animals symbolically represented all species within the ruler's realm.<sup>115</sup> For example, in an

exposition of the ancient hunting rituals, Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166 C.E.) states that before the hunt "animals from the nine marshy preserves were gathered together," hereby reiterating the connection with the Nine Provinces.<sup>116</sup> By roaming through a park and contemplating or hunting exotic beasts in artificial landscapes, the ruler symbolically paced through his empire in the same way that he engaged in "inspection tours" (*xunshou* 巡守) of his political realm. The collection of exotic animals provided "a vivid rhetorical means of re-enacting and extending the work of empire."<sup>117</sup> It was a ritual display of the physical symbols of conquest and acquisition. Within the parks, Edward Schafer notes, a sense of cosmic and geographic order prevailed. "Mammals are distinguished in the poems by their places of origin, especially as to whether they represented the north or the south, and seem to have been placéd symbolically in the corresponding parts of the park."<sup>118</sup> Watery creatures are associated with the east in Sima Xiangru's rhapsody on the Shanglin park:

In the vast lakes of the east . . .  
horned dragons and red female dragons,  
Sturgeon and salamanders,  
Carp, bream, gudgeon, and dace,  
Cowfish, flounder, and sheatfish  
Arch their backs and twitch their tails,  
Shake their scales and flap their fins.  
Diving towards the deep crevices;  
The waters are loud with fish and turtles.  
A multitude of living things.<sup>119</sup>

A number of passages suggest that distinctions were made between the symbolic value of killing animals from the wilds as opposed to slaughtering domesticated breeds. The catch of game animals from the wilds was mainly a prerogative of the ruler. He exerted his authority beyond his domestic realm through hunting nondomestic animals. In the *Zuozhuan*, Zi Chan 子產 (d. ca. 522 B.C.E.) refuses to grant leave to an official for a hunting expedition in preparation of a sacrifice arguing that only the ruler is permitted to use "fresh animals" (*xian* 鮮); that is, wild animals caught in nature.<sup>120</sup> The *Zhouli* contains a statement stipulating that among the common people those who do not raise animals are not permitted to use animal victims in sacrifice.<sup>121</sup> It is plausible that such taboos were associated with the idea that hunting was a form of sacrifice and therefore subject to ritual regulations of hierarchy. This is not to say that the lower classes, servants and slaves stayed away from the breeding of meats and fish or the hunt of animals for domestic consumption. A slave contract dated to 59 B.C.E. for example gives a long list of instructions for a domestic servant that includes hunting and raising animals. While not being allowed to mount a

horse or ride in a carriage, the contract stipulates that the servant should make bird nets to trap sparrows and crows, weave fishing nets, shoot geese and wild ducks, climb mountains to shoot deer, and dive into the waters to catch turtles. Further the slave is ordered to raise several hundreds of geese in the backyard, expel malign birds such as owls, herd swine, rear piglets and colts, feed cattle and horses, plaster the stable walls, and engage in other menial jobs.<sup>122</sup> That the unauthorized chase of animals in the wilds and in parks was punished is attested in legal codes. Several articles regarding "forbidden parks" (*jin yuan* 禁苑) among the Qin legal documents excavated at Longgang (Yunmeng county) deal with trespassing in parks and with hunting.<sup>123</sup>

Descriptions of animal parks suggest that the condensation of various animal species into one geographical space figured as a testimony of a ruler's numinous power. Similar ideas applied to the use of animals in ritual. On at least one known occasion, a collection of animals was released on the mountain top where a ritual sacrifice took place. This occurred in 110 B.C.E., when Han Wudi performed the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices on Mount Tai 泰.

To complete the ritual all sorts of strange animals and flying creatures, white pheasants and other animals from distant regions were set free. Animals such as rhinoceroses and elephants were not set free, but brought to Mount Tai and taken away again (after the sacrifices).<sup>124</sup>

Emperor Wu symbolically released exotic animals from cages on Mount Tai, thereby creating an omen in the hope that the good fortune that correlates with such omen would be stimulated. The omen created symbolizes the idea that the radiance of an emperor's virtue causes the arrival of exotic animals from all quarters of the empire to flock spontaneously around the sacrificial *locus*. Geographical boundaries diffuse and all animal species mix and roam the peaks of Mount Tai to celebrate the emperor's virtue. As in descriptions of parks and animal enclosures, free and unbound movement rather than *stasis* characterizes the animal portrayals.

Similar symbolism can be found in decorative motifs on the so-called Han hill censers (*bo shan lu* 博山爐) used to burn incense. In addition to depicting domestic and hunting scenes in which humans and animals interact, these mountain censers displayed a microcosm of freak and magical animals that swirl around a mountain peak shrouded in clouds. The earliest textual reference to these hill censers emphasizes both the exotic nature of the animals represented and the naturalness and spontaneity of their movements: "Carved on this (censer) are exotic birds, strange animals. Exhaustively represented are all spiritual prodigies. All these move in a spontaneous manner."<sup>125</sup> Confined to a single microcosmic space, the compact assemblage of animals evoked numinous influence and magical power. The spirit mountain presents itself as a cosmic wilderness

where all creatures intermingle in the intermediary space between heaven and earth. The same image inspired depictions of animals on walls of palaces, temples, and tombs. A good example occurs in Wang Yanshou's *Lu Lingguang dian fu* 魯靈光殿賦 ("Poetic Exposition on the Numinous Radiance Basilica in Lu"), which presents a pictorial exposition on the decorations of the pillars and roof of a palace built by a son of Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 B.C.E.).<sup>126</sup> The poem guides the spectator's eyes on an upward voyage along the columns to the roofs of the palace. It first depicts a moving jungle of bipeds, quadrupeds, tigers, dragons, red birds, snakes, deer, reptiles, hares, monkeys, and bears curling around the palace pillars. Higher up the column, barbarians are pictured. Again higher up between the ridge-poles, spirits and immortals dwell on mountain peaks. The poem proceeds:

Suddenly all turn hazy like echoes and shades,  
and mingle and disperse like ghosts and spirits.  
Portrayed in picture are Heaven and Earth,  
all species and classes of living beings,  
various creatures and prodigies,  
mountain spirits and sea phantoms.  
Recorded in sketch are their shapes,  
embodied in vermilion and greens.  
A chiliar transformations and myriad changes,  
all and each in different forms.<sup>127</sup>

This finale concludes a progressive description that debouches into a realm where all species are blurred and where animals, ghosts, and spirits diffuse in a universal rhythm of transformation. Concrete species turn into spiritual categories, physical territory becomes a numinous space. Another less detailed account is recorded for the Jianzhang 建章 palace constructed by Han Wudi in 113 B.C.E. In this immense palace complex, a tall "phoenix tower" was placed in the east, a tiger park in the west, a great lake to the north with replica of islands, holy mountains, tortoises, and fish, and a Jade Hall to the south with gigantic bird statues at the gates.<sup>128</sup>

Another consequence of rulers transcending the boundaries of their political habitat was the traffic of animals as tributary tokens of exchange between states. This exchange of animal tributes shared similarities with organized hunts during which it was common to reserve the most precious animals as game for the ruler and his guests or as food for the spirits. Descriptions of rulers traveling their real and imaginary empires such as King Mu's journey in the *Mu Tianzi zhuan* further suggest that the exchange of goods and animals often occurred in conjunction with hunting and sacrifice. As a result of the system of animal tributes, animals were made to transcend their regional habitat, albeit passively. While tributary exchanges sometimes had a considerable economical role, their

symbolic function was very similar to the collection of animals in enclosures and parks. The tributary offering of exogenous breeds to a central ruler sealed a ruler's political dominance by exemplifying that his influence encompassed geographical boundaries and extended to human and animal species beyond the visible territorial epicenter. By accepting the gift of representative exotic species and mirabilia from all directions, the ruler claimed dominion over their indigenous habitats.

A passage in the *Xunzi* describes the perfect world order or "Great Divine Order" (*da shen* 大神) as one wherein the central kingdoms would put to use the indigenous products of the barbarian periphery:

It is by the Northern Sea that there are fast horses and barking dogs; nonetheless the Central States acquire them, breed them, and put them to work. It is by the Southern Sea that there are feathers and plumes, elephant tusks, rhinoceros hides, copper ores, and cinnabar; still the Central States obtain and process them. It is by the Eastern Sea that there are purple-dye plants, fine white silks, fish, and salt; nonetheless the Central States acquire them and use them for food and clothing. It is by the Western Sea that there are skins and hides and multicolored yak tails; still the Central States obtain them and put them to use. . . . Therefore, even though the tiger and leopard are ferocious beasts, the gentleman can have them skinned for his own use. Thus, all that Heaven shelters and Earth supports is brought to its ultimate refinement and its fullest utility; so that the refined is used to adorn the worthy and good, and the useful is employed to nourish the Hundred Clans and peace and contentment are brought to them.<sup>129</sup>

This passage portrays the successful use and deployment of exogenous animals and goods as a hallmark of moral civilization. While recognizing that a fixed geographical order befalls all species, the Central States, and by extension its sage ruler, are capable to put to good use everything that lies beyond its immediate periphery. The wild, bestial, and unknown can be "skinned" to serve the development of the civilized center, and barbarians, who are compared to ferocious beasts, will submit to the civilizing control of the center.

In the *Zuozhuan*, the concept of a ruling center that exerts a socioreligious dominance over its wild periphery is traced back to Yu the Great's original division of the world into nine regions and his casting of the nine talismanic cauldrons. The following passage provides the earliest description of a process in which "animalia" beyond the ruling center are symbolically centralized:

Anciently, when the Xia (territory) was marked by virtue, the distant regions made pictorial (representations) of the creatures (in their region), and tributes of metal (were sought from) the Nine Herdsmen. Tripods were then cast with those creatures represented on them. All creatures (being thus revealed), (instructions were

given) of preparations (to be made), so that the people would know these spirits and evils. Therefore when people would enter rivers, marshes, hills and forests, they would not meet nor follow them, and the *chimei* or *wangliang* 罔兩 would not meet with them. Hereby they could harmonize high and low, and enjoy the favors of Heaven.<sup>130</sup>

Parallel to the aforementioned mapping out of the Nine Provinces with their fauna and flora, this passage describes how the ruler commissioned ambulant rulers ("shepherds") of the periphery to identify (con-tribute) images of unknown creatures to the center. These strange images of demons and spirits cast in bronze function as the iconic key to the ruler's knowledge and control of the inhospitable surrounding domains. The central region symbolically encompasses its distant surroundings and its creatures. Once represented in name or image by the center, symbolical power and control has been established over the unknown.<sup>131</sup>

The image of pastors or shepherds gathering images from the wild periphery and tributing them to a sedentary heartland further reflects a view of geographical space that pictured the center as static, domesticated, and in a state of sociopolitical permanence, while its concentric outskirts, both the nomadic borderlands in the north and the neighboring jungles in the south, were viewed as increasingly unstable, wild, and in a state of motion.<sup>132</sup> A similar division between a fixed center and a moving periphery that echoes the aforementioned notion of a soil habitat is reflected in the terminology used to distinguish between sedentary tribes who are aboriginal and "stick to the soil" (*tu zhu* 土著) and nomadic people who "move with or follow their domestic animals" (*sui chu mu* 隨畜牧).<sup>133</sup> The emperor or ruler-king was portrayed as a cosmic shepherd of all under heaven. This image of shepherding frequently occurs as a craft analogy for ruling a state. One Han text links a ruler's tour of inspection (*xun shou*) with the image of shepherding and refers to Tang and Yu as shepherds.<sup>134</sup> The tribute of animals as well as the explanation of the appearance and behavior of new creatures that had been imported from these distant territories or could be encountered on expeditions beyond the heartland constituted a practical and mental attempt to ascertain the social, political, and religious supremacy of the ruler-king who saw himself as the center of the universe.

A similar link between rulership and cosmographic collection through the representation and ordering of the world in image or text has been associated with the composition of the *Shanhaijing*. This work, which dates at least partly to the Warring States or Qin period, is presented in one source as a written record of the unknown creatures Yu confronted on his demiurgic tour of the empire. The *Wu Yue chungiu* 吳越春秋 states that Yu summoned the spirits of famous mountains and great marshlands to "question them about the mountain ranges, river courses, metals and jades, the species of birds, beasts and insects present there." Next he ordered Bo Yi 伯益 to explain (*shu* 疏) and record them in writing (*ji*

記).<sup>135</sup> The preface accompanying Liu Xin's edition of the *Shanhaijing* reiterates the link between Yu's ordering of the universe and its classification into a written record. Topography is here characterized as a mental act of pacing through unknown lands, and identifying and controlling its creatures by incorporating them by name in a text.<sup>136</sup> The *Shanhaijing* therefore embodies the idea that the world can be ordered through naming on two levels: first, in the act of naming unknown creatures in the text itself (discussed in chapter 1) and, second, in the textual representation of the world as a whole. As an enterprise of textualization, the entire work presents itself as a continuation of the cosmic act of naming and recording, a project that had been initiated by sages such as Yu and Bo Yi.

Evidence suggests that throughout the Warring States and Han period contending views were at play as to whether or not rulers should engage in the deployment and collection of foreign animal species. The celebration of exotic animals in Han parks appears to be far removed from the admonitions against the import of foreign or extraterritorial breeds in the "Lü ao" or Sima Qian's condemnation of tyrant Zhou's indulgence in exotica. Criticisms against an overzealous devotion to the collection of exotic animals were often part of discussions on human and economic expenditure, not in the least during the Western Han when the tributary system had started to contribute considerably to the depletion of Han's treasuries. A written account of a court conference summoned in 81 B.C.E. to discuss contemporary political problems and recorded by Huan Kuan 桓寬 as the "Discourses on Salt and Iron" (*Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論) contains a telling critique:

In ancient times one did not use human strength in favor of birds and beasts, and one did not deprive the people of their resources in order to feed dogs and horses. Therefore resources were plentiful, and there was abundant physical strength. But wild animals and exotic beasts cannot be used to cultivate the land; instead they cause those who should be plowing and weeding to devote their efforts to raising and feeding them. While the common people don't even have short sleeves to wear, dogs and horses are dressed in ornate embroidery. While the black-haired people don't even manage to get the chaff and dregs of grain, birds and beasts are eating millet and meat.<sup>137</sup>

Elsewhere in the *Yantie lun* the use of exotic animals is the subject of a dispute between the great secretary representing the Han government and worthies staged as critics of Han's policies. The spokesman for the government argues that the display of strange animals and exotic goods serves to impress the barbarians and demonstrates the virtues of the emperor, but his critics retort that the establishment of imperial authority should depend primarily on upholding the rites and practicing virtue. The Duke of Zhou, according to the worthies, was able to bring the barbarians to submission by showing them the virtues of

filial piety rather than by offering them the spectacle of wild beasts and bears. Next the notion of exoticism itself is questioned:

Rhinoceros, elephants, water buffaloes and tigers exist in great numbers among the southern barbarians. Mules, donkeys, and camels are raised on a permanent basis by the northern barbarians. Animals looked upon as being rare by the Middle Kingdom are looked down upon by foreign states.<sup>138</sup>

Another caution for frugality in the gathering of strange animals within the confines of the ruler's domain reverberated toward the end of the Western Han. Among measures proposed in a memorial issued in 7 B.C.E. designed to curb excess government expenditure was the stipulation that commanderies and kingdoms should no longer be allowed to present "famous (wild) animals" (*ming shou* 名獸) to the imperial court.<sup>139</sup> Since the tributary system required the Han court to reciprocate such gifts, the underlying motive for the prohibition on the import of exotica here seems mainly economical. Implicit in these criticisms is a moral undertone suggesting that a devotion to animals at the expense of human welfare undermines moral government. As chapter 5 will show, the same theme was a topic of debate in critiques on hunting.

Both arguments in favor of and against the deployment of animals and other mirabilia from foreign lands indicate an underlying tendency to view the regular order in nature as being based on territoriality. One text that elaborates on the importance of territoriality in tributary missions is the chapter on "Royal Meetings" (*Wang hui* 王會) in the *Yi Zhoushu*.<sup>140</sup> This chapter contains a detailed description of the layout of exotic animals and other products sent as tribute to the Zhou court by peripheral countries and foreign tribes following a directional symbolism. Each animal is named, and often its physical shape and behavior are identified.<sup>141</sup> This is followed by a subsection, possibly added later, in which Shang founder Tang instructs his minister Yi Yin 伊尹 (fl. 1542?-1536? B.C.E.) on a general principle regarding court tributes:

When the feudal lords come to present tribute, some of them (come from regions) where no horses and cows are born, yet they present things (animals) from distant places. This practice contradicts reality and is not beneficial. Now I wish that they would present tributary goods that are innate to their physical regions (*yin qi dishi suo you* 因其地勢所有). When they present something, it must be easy to obtain and not precious (*yi de er bu gui* 易得而不貴).<sup>142</sup>

Next Yi Yin is commissioned to create "Statutes on the tributary goods from the Four Directions," which would regulate their content and decree which specific tributes should be donated by each region (east-south-west-north). Tang's statement implies that the tribute of exotic beasts and products should be orga-

nized according to the notion of territory. While maintaining the ideal that a ruler should gather exotica around him, Minister Yi is charged to rectify the arbitrary tribute of exotic animals according to the principle that they should be distinctive and native to each particular region. Although the collection of species that transcended the territorial habitat was a device to ascertain the ruler's symbolical power over their native regions, this text suggests that a notion of territorial order should apply even to the tribute of these exotica, an idea reminiscent of the topographical layout of the various animal species in parks and preserves. Only when exogenous breeds and products were perceived to be representative of the soil or region they came from—hence “easily obtainable and not precious” for the indigenous inhabitants—did their symbolical collection make sense, since it was through the collection of “moveable” animal species that the ruler symbolically exerted his power over “fixed” territorial regions beyond his central polity.

#### Conclusion

Writings from the Warring States and Han period often insisted on the idea that there existed an immediate correspondence between the internal organization of the animal world and the creation of order in human society. While the origins of human culture were viewed as the direct result of the physical or moral conquest of a primitive or bestial order by legendary sages and heroes, patterns derived from the animal world at the same time provided the inspiration for cultural foundations such as the trigrams, writing, and clothing.

Central to the perception of an initial order in the natural world was the notion of territory. The natural world in early China was ordered on spatial rather than species principles. Consequently the early Chinese perceived a close physical and moral concordance between the soil and the living creatures that shared the waters and airs of the region. This congruity between animals and territory was reflected in various practices such as the consumption of animal meats, the use of animals as sacrificial victims or for military purposes, and even agricultural thought. Animals that transcended the boundaries of their native localities were instrumental in the creation of social models of authority. The collection of animals in hunting parks and the exchange of animal tributes by kings and rulers provided the political symbolism for claims to cosmic rule. Hence the symbolic and numinous powers associated with certain animals were not seen as the result of magical or transcendent properties inherent to the species; rather, they resulted directly from the perception of a fixed territorial unity between each living creature and its native soil, and from the belief that a transgression of this territorial order empowered these creatures to the benefit or awe of the human ruler and his subjects.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRANSFORMING THE BEASTS

Perceptions of locality and territorial habitat did not provide the only rationale behind the explanation of natural and cultural links between humans and animals. In addition to advocating a moral consonance between events in the animal world and human activity, Warring States and Han writings also sought to unveil this congruence as part of a philosophy that placed the concept of change and transformation at the heart of the human-animal relationship. The idea that civilization emerged from the separation of humans from the wilds meant that the fundamental distinctions between humans and animals were based on moral rather than biological premises. Descriptions of the interaction between humans and animals therefore often maintained that biological animal conduct could be appropriated into the world of the social or, reversibly, that human ethics could influence the workings of the animal realm. Accordingly, a proper understanding of the contingency between the human and animal world was said to be instrumental for a sage-ruler to achieve a moral dominance over the natural world. Just as wild animals could be domesticated to be employed in husbandry, transport, and sacrifice, they could also be civilized and transformed into cultured beings. Hence the domestication of the animal world and the triumph of human governance over the natural world at large were presented as a process of moral transformation rather than an act of physical conquest. Like their human counterparts, animal instincts, so it was claimed, were subject to changes that could be instigated by the laws of nature, human principle, or both. The same moral devices that transformed human beings into civilized creatures would exert their influence over the animal realm.

The idea that one could draw the bestial into the social or extrapolate social values from the animal world reflected a mode of organic thought that focused on condensing or expanding the categories of the human and the bestial. Instead of picturing the animal world as the allegorical or metaphorical double of human society, theories of change and transformation emphasized the interdependence and mutual influence among all animated species. This hermeneutic process was also crystallized around the idea that one could “expand the categories” or “extrapolate the species,” an idea which, as I mentioned in chapter 3, was sometimes understood as a process of *tui lei*. Several Warring States and Han texts insisted that events and feats of behavior among one group of living creatures would have



occurred necessarily needs to be interpreted as prefiguring a break in succession or genealogy. Since turtles and humans are a different species, a turtle would never be attracted by a palace girl to "emit its vapor":

Having intercourse with a black turtle was not regular. Therefore Bao Si caused calamities whereby the Zhou perished. When one has reckless intercourse with (a creature) that does not belong to one's species, there will be offspring which is unprincipled and mischievous. Now the mothers of Yao and Gaozu had illicit intercourse [with dragons]; why then did these two emperors become worthy and sage men? Is this any different from the Bao Si case?<sup>189</sup>

Finally Wang Chong's critique links physical metamorphosis with the idea of immortality and the preservation of the body. For instance, in his interpretation of Gongniu Ai's transformation into a tiger, he states that animals can metamorphose into a human body only if this body is still alive with quintessential *qi*. Once the body is dead and has decayed "no strength of a rhinoceros, nor a tiger's ferocity could make it change again."<sup>190</sup> When creatures have metamorphosed they will not return to their previous state: "Once a chrysalis has changed into a cricket, and once its wings are fully developed, it cannot change into a chrysalis again."<sup>191</sup> Despite its internal inconsistencies Wang's skeptical evaluation of the subject reflects the gradual development of a belief in bodily transformation connected with immortality throughout the late Warring States and early Han period and prefigures the intensified growth of such beliefs throughout the Eastern Han into early medieval times.<sup>192</sup> The image of reptiles, metamorphosing amphibians, and cicadas emerging from the pupa would soon be linked to escapist aspirations for immortality, transcendence, bodily transformation, and ideas about the "release from the corpse" (*shi jie* 尸解).<sup>193</sup> Thus testify the opening lines of a poem by Zhong Changtong 仲長統 who wrote at the end of the Eastern Han:

Flying birds leave behind their traces,  
Cicadas shed off their exuviae (skin),  
Mounting snakes leave behind their scales,  
The spirit dragon drops off its horn,  
The perfect man is able to metamorphose,  
The comprehensive gentleman transcends the vulgar.<sup>194</sup>

Indeed, documentary evidence of animal transformations in the ancient texts shaped a precedent for theories developing in the post-Han era which claimed that humans, like their counterparts in the animal world, could undergo bodily transformations leading to physical immortality. Thus while references to animal metamorphosis in the original texts may have been lapidary, fragmen-

tary, and scattered within different contexts and genres of writings, they nevertheless provided a canonical patchwork from which later authors would select and conjecture examples in support of their theories of physical change and bodily transformation. To illustrate this, I end this chapter with a passage from Ge Hong's 葛洪 (ca. 280–342 C.E.) *Bao Puzi*, a text that recollects many of the animal transformations documented in Warring States and Han writings.

If you claim that all creatures endowed with *qi* have one and the same fixity, your thesis cannot be sustained, for the pheasant turns into a bivalve, the sparrow into a clam, earth worms assume wings, river frogs come to fly, oysters become dragonflies, *xingling* 荇荇 plants become maggots, field mice become quail, rotting grass turns into fireflies, alligators become tigers, and snakes become dragons. If you claim that humans, unlike ordinary creatures, have a regular nature . . . how can you account for cases where Niu Ai became a tiger, the old woman of Chu a tortoise . . . the dead coming back to life and males and females changing sex?<sup>195</sup>

### Conclusion

Against the background of a cosmogony largely devoid of ontological separations or structural differences between living beings, several texts from the Warring States and Han period asserted that living creatures in the natural world, along with plants and minerals, originated through a process of constant transformation and metamorphosis. As a result, the observation of "changing animals" and metamorphic imagery in the natural world was firmly embedded in these texts. The observation that living species could undergo varying forms of metamorphosis was not an isolated theme. It figured within a broader discourse on change and transformation that pervaded early Chinese thought.

Various forms of animal metamorphosis were documented in early China. They ranged from demonic human-to-animal transformations resulting from moral retribution, to animals that metamorphosed according to the cycle of the seasons or changes in their habitat. Other forms included species whose physique was subject to spontaneous mutations, hybrids who incorporated bodily parts of different species in one, and humans who identified themselves with the animal world through the symbolical enactment of animal behavior and the use of animal masks and animal hides. Finally a number of animal transformations were identified as portents signaling changes in the course of human events or impending alterations to the cosmic cycle.

To be sure, the thematic distinction between these forms of metamorphosis as presented in this chapter—demonic, functional, autonomous, symbolic and portentous—is *sui generis* rather than the product of a theoretical classification in the texts themselves. The contexts in which reference was made