



**Enemies of Civilization: Attitudes towards  
Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and  
China (SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and  
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*Mu-chou Poo*

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Ancient civilisations came into contact with one another through various channels, including trade and exchange, and warfare, which inevitably led to differentiation between 'us' and 'them'. The ways in which ancient societies conceived of this difference, and how it manifested itself in their culture, is the subject of this comparative history of attitudes towards foreigners in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and China. Rather than examining each civilisation in turn, Mu-chou Poo approaches the subject thematically exploring primarily textual evidence for key concepts such as 'self', ethnic identity, prejudice, cultural consciousness, and asks where these attitudes originated, why they came about and on what grounds they were based. What he finds is that, unlike today, foreignness was not thought of as a racial or biological difference, but was the result of cultural difference, involving issues of geography, language, religion and socio-economic development.

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