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祭鱷魚文 *A Notice Served on the Crocodiles*

The complete text, with a working English beside it. The English is literal where the Chinese is odd and leaves the seams showing on purpose: it is a floor to translate from, not a finished rendering. The paragraphing is matched between the two, so the shapes correspond. Textual notes at the end record the readings adopted and the variants they were adopted against.

THE TEXT

維年月日，潮州刺史韓愈，使軍事衙推秦濟，以羊一、豬一，投惡溪之潭水，以與鱷魚食，而告之曰：

昔先王既有天下，列山澤，罔繩擗刃，以除蟲蛇惡物為民害者，驅而出之四海之外。及後王德薄，不能遠有，則江漢之間，尚皆棄之，以與蠻夷、楚越。況潮，嶺海之間，去京師萬里哉？鱷魚之涵淹卵育於此，亦固其所。

今天子嗣唐位，神聖慈武，四海之外，六合之內，皆撫而有之。況禹跡所揜，揚州之近地，刺史、縣令之所治，出貢賦以供天地宗廟百神之祀之壤者哉！鱷魚其不可與刺史雜處此土也。

刺史受天子命，守此土，治此民，而鱷魚睥然不安溪潭，據處食民畜、熊、豕、鹿、獐，以肥其身，以種其子孫，與刺史亢拒，爭為長雄。刺史雖驚弱，亦安肯為鱷魚低首下心，忸忸睚睚，為民吏羞，以偷活於此邪！且承天子命以來為吏，固其勢不得不與鱷魚辯。

鱷魚有知，其聽刺史言：潮之州，大海在其南，鯨、鵬之大，蝦、蟹之細，無不容歸，以生以食，鱷魚朝發而夕至也。

今與鱷魚約：盡三日，其率醜類南徙於海，以避天子之命吏。三日不能，至五日；五日不能，至七日；七日不能，是終不肯徙也。是不有刺史，聽從其言也；不然，則是鱷魚冥頑不靈，刺史雖有言，不聞不知也。夫傲天子之命吏，不聽其言，不徙以避之，與冥頑不靈而為民物害者，皆可殺。刺史則選材技吏民，操強弓毒矢，以與鱷魚從事，必盡殺乃止。其無悔！

THE ENGLISH

On such a year, month and day, Han Yu, Prefect of Chaozhou, sends the military judicial officer Qin Ji to cast one sheep and one pig into the pool of the Bad Stream, to give the crocodiles to eat, and to announce to them, saying:

In the past, when the former kings had come into possession of all under Heaven, they burned off the hills and marshes, netted with cords and stabbed with blades, so as to remove the insects, snakes and evil creatures that were a harm to the people, driving them out beyond the four seas. When later kings came to have thin virtue and could not hold what was distant, then even the land between the Jiang and the Han was abandoned entire and given over to the Man, the Yi, the Chu and the Yue. How much more so Chao, lying between the ranges and the sea, ten thousand li from the capital! That crocodiles should lie submerged and breed their eggs here is, indeed, their proper place.

Now the Son of Heaven has succeeded to the throne of Tang, being divine, sagely, kind and martial; and beyond the four seas, within the six directions, all is soothed and possessed by him. How much more so a place covered by the tracks of Yu the Great, land close to Yangzhou, governed by Prefect and District Magistrate, soil that sends out tribute and tax to supply the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, to the ancestral temples, and to the hundred spirits! The crocodiles surely cannot dwell mixed together with the Prefect upon this soil.

The Prefect has received the command of the Son of Heaven, to guard this soil and to govern this people; yet the crocodiles, goggle-eyed, are not content with the stream and the pool, but occupy the place and eat the people's livestock — bears, pigs, deer and roebuck — so fattening their own bodies and seeding their own descendants, setting themselves against the Prefect and contending to be the

greater lord. The Prefect, though a poor and feeble nag, how should he be willing to lower his head and humble his heart before crocodiles — cringing and blinking, a disgrace to the officers and the people — and so live on here by stealth! Moreover, having come to serve as an officer under the command of the Son of Heaven, his position is such that he cannot but argue the matter out with the crocodiles.

Crocodiles, if you have understanding, hear the Prefect's words. As for the prefecture of Chao, the great sea lies to its south; and from the greatness of the whale and the peng down to the smallness of shrimp and crab, there is nothing it does not take in and give a home to, to live there and to feed there. Crocodiles, you may set out in the morning and arrive by evening.

Now an agreement is made with the crocodiles: within three days, lead your ugly kind south and remove to the sea, so as to give way before the officer commanded by the Son of Heaven. If three days cannot do it, then five; if five cannot, then seven; if seven cannot, that is to be finally unwilling to move. That is to hold that there is no Prefect, and to refuse obedience to his words. Or else it is that the crocodiles are benighted, obstinate and without spirit-intelligence, so that although the Prefect speaks, they neither hear nor know. Now those who defy the officer commanded by the Son of Heaven, who do not heed his words and do not remove and give way — together with those benighted and obstinate and without spirit-intelligence who are a harm to people and creatures — may all be put to death. The Prefect will then select officers and people of ability and skill, who will take up strong bows and poisoned arrows and deal with the crocodiles, and will not stop until all are killed. Let there be no regret!

TEXTUAL NOTES

- ★ 列山澤 printed as the witnesses have it, but read as 烈, "burned off," on the model of 孟子·滕文公 益烈山澤而焚之; some editions print 烈 outright. The two give quite different opening moves — burning the hills and marshes, or setting them in order. Unresolved; noted.
- 維年月日 is the formulaic blank of a sacrificial address: the date is left unfilled in the received text. Some witnesses open 某年月日 instead.
- 惡溪 appears as 惡谿 in 古文觀止. The same stream, later renamed 韓江.
- 揜 = 掩, covered, reached as far as.
- 無不容歸; two witnesses read 無不歸容.
- 亢拒 and 為民吏羞 follow the rear apparatus; other witnesses give 抗拒 and 為吏民羞.
- 邪 in 以偷活於此邪 — house form, matching 毛穎傳. An editorial choice, not a textual finding.