Who is the Barbarian in Zuozhuan?

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It has often been said that the difference between “Chinese” and “barbarians” is cultural (pertaining to, for example, the adoption or rejection of ritual standards) rather than ethnic. However, the notion of cultural transformation cannot contain the sense of malleable boundaries between “us” and “them” in Zuozhuan. In this talk, I will explore questions of cultural identity and cultural difference in Zuozhuan from three perspectives: the need for differentiation when differences seem tenuous and arbitrary, the function of historical retrospection in establishing claims of cultural identity or difference, and the rhetorical contexts of moralizing cultural difference. I will conclude with preliminary thoughts on the grounds of comparison between Zuozhuan and other Warring States texts on the question of barbarians.

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1754 Boardroom, 3rd floor, Faculty House
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