

課文 (Text)

楚有祠者，² 賜其舍人卮酒。³ 舍人相謂曰：⁴ 「數人飲之不足，⁵ 一人飲之有餘。⁶ 請畫地為蛇，先成者飲酒。⁷」一人蛇先成，引酒且飲之，⁸ 乃左手持卮，⁹ 右手畫蛇曰：「吾能為之足。¹⁰」未成，¹¹ 一人之蛇成，奪其卮曰：¹² 「蛇固無足，¹³ 子安能為之足？」¹⁴ 遂飲其酒。¹⁵ 為蛇足者，終亡其酒。¹⁶

《戰國策·齊策》¹⁷

註釋 (Annotations)

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| 1. 丁 | dīng | fourth of the Heavenly Stems. |
| 添 | tiān | to add; to increase. |
| 足 | zú | foot. (A noun.) |
| 2. 楚 | Chǔ | a state during the Zhou Dynasty, located in present-day Húběi 湖北. |
| 祠 | cí | a place of worship; temple. (A noun.)
to worship or offer sacrifice. (A verb.) |
| 3. 賜 | cì | to give (from a superior to an inferior); to grant. |
| 舍人 | shè rén | a retainer; a houseguest. |
| 卮 | zhī | a goblet; a large cup. |
| 4. 相 | xiāng | to each other; mutually. (An adverb.) |
| 5. 數 | shù | several. |
| 飲 | yǐn | to drink. |

特
 為
 未
 奪
 固
 子
 安

足	zú	sufficient; adequate. (An adjective.)
餘	yú	excess; abundance.
為	wéi	to do; to make. (But in different contexts it may indicate various different actions, for example, 為國 means "to govern a state"; 為學 means "to do research"; etc.)
先	xiān	first.
成	chéng	to complete; to finish.
引	yǐn	to draw or pull (toward oneself).
且	qiě	to be about to. (An adverb.)
乃	nǎi	then. (An adverb.) (The adverb 乃 means far more than simply "then". It implies that the speaker himself feels, or the people he speaks to may feel, that the expression it modifies represents a rather unexpected turn of events. So it should be translated here as "then, unexpectedly, ...".)
持	chí	to hold; to grasp.
10. 為	wèi	for. (A preposition.)
11. 未	wèi	not yet.
12. 奪	duó	to grab; to seize (something from others, usually by force).
13. 固	gù	solidly; absolutely. (An adverb.) 本來 in Modern Chinese.
14. 子	zǐ	sir. (An honorific form for "you".)
安	ān	how; by what; from where? (An interrogative particle.)

15. 遂 suì then; subsequently. (An adverb.)
16. 終 zhōng finally; in the end.
- 亡 wú to lose.
17. 戰國策 Zhànguó cè *The Intrigues of the Warring States*. Title of a book. It is a collection of anecdotes dealing with events in the Warring States period. It is classified by state.
- 齊策 Qí cè "Intrigues of Qi". Title of a chapter from the *Zhànguó cè*.

文法闡釋 (Grammar Notes)

I. 畫蛇添足

This is a frequently quoted idiomatic expression. Its full form should be 畫蛇而添足 "when (somebody) drew a snake, (he) added feet (to it)". Figuratively, it means "to do something absolutely redundant and unnecessary".

II. 賜其舍人卮酒

The meaning of the sentence is "(he) bestowed upon his houseguests a goblet of wine". (Note that in the syntax of Classical Chinese, the direct object of verbs like 賜 is always the intended recipient, while the thing handed over is the indirect object which is sometimes introduced with the particle 以. Also note that when a measure word or a container [or a "classifier" in later Chinese] does not have a number in front, "one" is always implied as the amount.) The sentence reflects the social hierarchy of the feudal (or "class") Chinese society. Different verbs can be used in the same sentence structure so as to convey the same meaning of "giving". For example, 賜, 與, 獻 ... all these verbs mean "to give". The main difference among these verbs is in terms of their implication of the relative social status of the people involved in the action. Take the verb 賜 used in the sentence as an example. It is used when a person of higher status gives something to a person of lower status. Besides, it can also be used as a courtesy word, when the speaker tries to be humble and assumes himself a lower status. Since 舍人 means "people who stay

in a house under the patronage of its owner", they are considered to be of lower status, hence the verb 賜.

III 數人飲之不足

This sentence consists of two clauses. The main clause 不足 does not have a subject and it means "(it) is not sufficient", while 數人飲之 is the subordinate clause, meaning "when (or if) several persons drink it". (Normally, the conjunction 則 is required between the two clauses.)

IV. 請畫地為蛇

Unlike in Modern Chinese where it is a simple polite term like "please" in English, the word 請 in Classical Chinese is a courtesy verb, meaning: "beg for your permission (or approval) to do (something)". So "I" is normally its implied subject. 畫地為蛇, as a clause, serves as the object of that courtesy verb. The implied subject of this clause is "we". The focus of the predicate is on the second VO phrase "to make a snake". So the whole sentence means literally, "(I) beg for your permission to suggest that (we all) make a snake by drawing on the ground", or idiomatically, "with your permission, I would like to propose that we each draw a snake on the ground". (In later Chinese usage, the implied subject of the clause which serves as the object of 請 changed from the speaker [or a group including the speaker] to the people spoken to, i.e., "you". This is why 請 in Modern Chinese can be translated simply as "please".)

V. 子安能為之足

The word 安 here is an interrogative like 焉, "in what (way)" or "how". It therefore turns the sentence into a rhetorical question. 足, a noun by itself, functions in this sentence, however, as a verb, "to add a foot or feet". So the sentence means: "how can you, sir, add feet to him?"