Sino-Western Interaction and A Preliminary Deconstruction of the Tianxia Concept from 1600 to 1840

Zhang Jinghong

School of Literature and Journalism, Hunan First Normal University

Corresponding Author :

Zhang Jinghong

School of Literature and Journalism, Hunan First Normal University

Hunan First Normal University, No. 1015, Fenglin Road (the 3rd),

Changsha 410205, China

Email: peterchangchinghung2001@gmail.com

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Abstract

Sino-Western interaction began around 1600, mainly in terms of Western learning spreading to the East. Western missionaries led by Matteo Ricci imported Western artifacts into China. At the time, China offered creative feedback under the influence of Western learning. Tianxia is a historical Chinese cultural concept that denoted either the entire geographical world or the metaphysical realm of mortals, and later became associated with political sovereignty. A preliminary deconstruction of the Tianxia concept is evident in the feedback process. This paper uses David Easton's input-output analysis to explain preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia conceptualizing in four sections: 1) Tianxia internal logic as political system; 2) preliminary deconstruction of the Tianxia concept at the height of Sino-Western interaction; 3) preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia during a lull in Sino-Western exchange; and 4) The Tianxia concept in other East Asian cultural and political entities. Results were that preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia did not amount to complete disintegration, but included supplementing the original concept and changing its qualities by evolving into a new concept through quantitative change.

Keywords: Tianxia, Sino-Western interaction, Preliminary deconstruction, Input-output analysis

1. Introduction

The term Tianxia appeared during the Western Zhou Dynasty of China (1045 BC-771 BC), and even earlier. It describes a historical Chinese cultural concept denoting either the entire geographical world or the metaphysical realm of mortals, and later became associated with politics. Its multiple meanings include: 1) under heaven, its original usage, as in the phrase "The Tianxia below is ruled by the heavens"; 2) vassal states subject to the King of Zhou, as well as the political realm formed by adding the Kingdom of Zhou to its vassal states.

Since the concept of Tianxia emerged, its connotations have constantly evolved. Related Tianxia thinking gradually became a mainstream political philosophy in ancient China, long influential over ancient Chinese foreign policy and international choice of transaction processing method. It is related to the Mandate of Heaven and the Chinese worldview.

In the modern era, Tianxia thought was deconstructed and reconstructed. In describing these two phases, international researchers have differed. Mainland Chinese scholars offered definitions and explanations for the concept of Tianxiaism:

> Geographically, Tianxia refers to the entire earth under the heavens as the whole world… In terms of social psychology, Tianxia refers to the common deliberations of all the world's people—this is the "shared aspirations of the people" (minxin 民心): within the concept of Tianxia persons are more important than land… In the political sense, Tianxia refers to a world-political order: A world order defines the political whole of the world and its conception of sovereignty. (Zhao, 2021, pp. 49-51).
>
> Decentralization, de-hierarchy, creating a new universal world. (Xu & Liu, 2015, p. 7).
>
> A Tianxiaism that recognizes and respects the equality of different civilizations and promotes their peaceful exchanges. (Sheng, 2010, p. 47).
>
> In addition, there is also "New Cosmopolitanism" advocated by Liu Qing. (Xu & Liu, 2015)

These definitions of Tianxia and Tianxiaism and related concepts in terms of political philosophy, intellectual history, economics, and international relations share a tendency to reflect on the extant international order and status quo of international relations research, while considering and utilizing ancient Chinese political thought to construct international relations theory and political theory with Chinese characteristics. Yet these definitions and explanations remain incomplete.

First, concepts and derivative claims of Tianxia or Tianxiaism focus on discussion of the presupposed situation after reconstruction, with a relative lack of generalization on the ontological level.

Secondly, most definitions of deconstruction of traditional Tianxia thought remain based on a stimulus and response pattern proposed by John King Fairbank or the First Opium War (1840-1842) as the start of deconstruction of Tianxia thought. Fairbank noted:

> Yet one basic fact remains: the West was the homeland and inventor of the technological and other kinds of progress that convulsed the globe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The West could therefore modernize from within its own civilization, one nation learning from them all-without shame or self-doubt. China, however, given her own distinctive tradition, had to modernize from without. (Fairbank, 2009, p. 145)

Although Fairbank later modified this stance, he believed that the leading reason for Chinese development was its own economic and political growth, with only secondary and limited impact from the West. But Fairbank's approach was long influential in Chinese academic circles.

Thirdly, the evolution or transformation of thought cannot be completely seen as the effect produced after development. Fairbank posited that evolution or transformation of an idea has some signs or phenomena before it receives a stimulus, and a specific stimulating event plays a catalytic role in the process of evolution or transformation. Therefore, the First Opium War was a direct factor in deconstruction of Tianxia thought, but not the sole factor.

To define concepts discussed in this article, semantically there are two Tianxia: the scope of the emperor's actual rule and of his theoretical control. This article attempts to integrate these two semantic Tianxia, by arguing that Tianxia retains dynamic boundaries, in terms of the explicit, actual control limit and implicit border of the cultural influence area.

To define a timeline, this article analyzes the era from around 1600 to 1840 before the outbreak of the First Opium War, instead of taking 1840 as the beginning of deconstruction of Chinese traditional Tianxia thought.

The goal is to study preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought more cautiously in terms of previous research results, and try to analyze historical facts from different methodologies and perspectives.

Political system theory and a history of political thought methodology and perspectives will be combined to better explain preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought in modern times.

2. The internal logic of Tianxia thought as a political system

David Easton proposed political systems theory in his 1965 book *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. He theoretically divided the policy decision-making process into five main structures: input, transformation, output, feedback, and environment. The political system

comprised three parts: political community, management mechanism, and authority.

If we regard the Tianxia thought as a political system, the political system contains these details.

1. Environment

Around 1600, the Jesuit missionaries Michele Ruggieri, Matteo Ricci, and Alfonso Vagnoni settled in China, and introduced Western science, technology, and ideas. The trend of Western learning spread to China gradually started and Sino-Western interaction from 1600 to 1840 constituted the environment as the operative premise for this political system.

2. Inputs

Based on content described in the environment, as input of the political system, science, technology, and ideas brought by Western missionaries to China constituted the main input content.
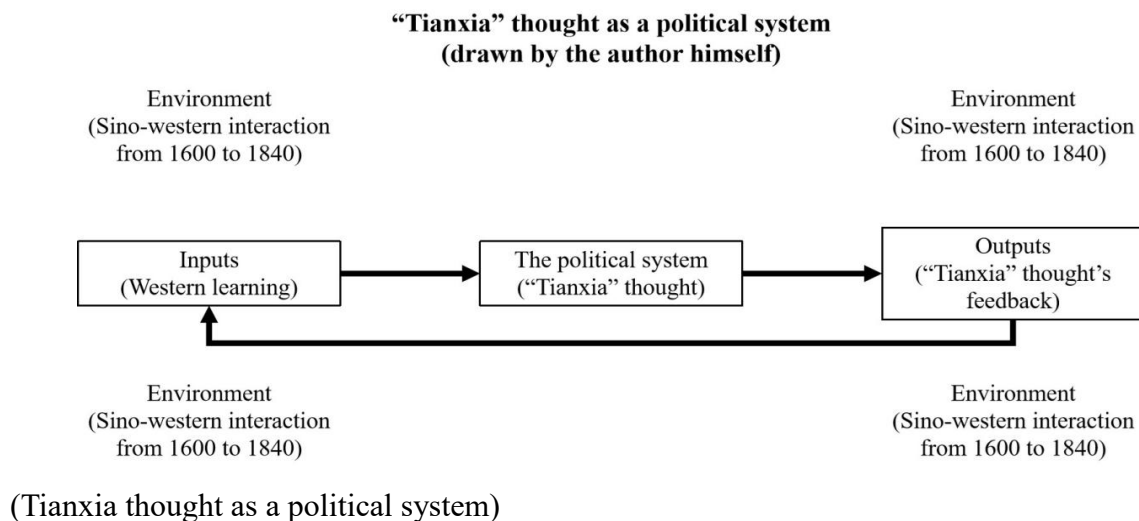
3. The political system

This political system included two parts: civilizational and organizational entities. This point refers to the psychoculturology methodology of Shang Hui-peng. He introduced the relationship between civilizational and organizational entities in detail in an article "Man, Civilizational Entity, and International Relations":

> From the perspective of composition, the organizational entity is a functional body (it is what mainstream international relations theory calls structure) composed of social groups, state forms, political systems, etc., while the civilizational entity is the carrier of cultural information, which is composed of human constant, values, behaviors, shared knowledge, and other information communities. (Shang, 2013, p. 13)

In the Tianxia political system, the civilizational entity includes the concept of Heavenly Empire, a differential order pattern, and the relationship of reciprocity between people, and political entities. The organizational entity includes a centralized political system, an imperial examination system for selecting talents, and tributary relations.

4. Outputs

There are two kinds of output of Tianxia thought (political system); the first is output of importing Western learning to the East, as the feedback focusing on Chinese local ideology and culture; the article does not address Chinese learning spread to the West, focusing instead on export of Chinese indigenous science, technology, and ideas.

"Tianxia" thought as a political system
(drawn by the author himself)

Environment
(Sino-western interaction
from 1600 to 1840)

Environment
(Sino-western interaction
from 1600 to 1840)

| Inputs (Western learning) | → | The political system ("Tianxia" thought) | → | Outputs ("Tianxia" thought's feedback) |

Environment
(Sino-western interaction
from 1600 to 1840)

Environment
(Sino-western interaction
from 1600 to 1840)

(Tianxia thought as a political system)

Based on the structure in the figure, this model will be used to analyze and discuss preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought from around 1600 to 1840.

3. Preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought at the height of Sino-Western interaction

3.1 The period's historical background of China

Around 1600, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was declining. From the perspective of the history of philosophy, the Cheng-Zhu school became the main source of knowledge for imperial examinations and the guiding ideology of rural governance.

In terms of politics and thought, the debate between Yi and Xia was a principal idea of the Ming government in handling foreign affairs as well as the legal basis for founding the Ming Dynasty. In the early years of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuan-zhang punished scholars loyal to the Yuan Dynasty, who were unwilling to serve in the Great Ming. During Ming treasure voyages (1405-1433), Zheng He once awarded the King of Japan gold seal to the Japanese shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and ordered him to exterminate pirates. In 1407, the Translators' College (*Siyi guan*) was established to translate foreign languages. Languages involved in this organization included Mongolian, Jurchen, Tibetan, Sanskrit, Persian, Chagatai, Dai, and Burmese, and foreign language types have continuously increased since then.

However, due to frequent sea bans in the Ming Dynasty, civilians were not allowed to go to the sea for private business. Pirates were always rampant, referred to by officials and people as *wokou* (literally, Japanese pirates). Early on, these were mostly Japanese, and in the middle and late stages, the maritime group, mainly composed of Han people mixed with North Korean, Indochinese, and Southeast Asian sailors, cooperated with a few Japanese to raid Chinese coastal areas. It also paved the way for the Jiajing wokou raids from the 1540s to 1567.

In 1567, Longqing Emperor, the ruler at that time, opened a port in Fujian province which legalized private overseas trade, and overseas trade on the southeast coast rose again quickly. However, many restrictions remained on this initiative; only Quanzhou and Zhangzhou merchants were allowed to conduct foreign trade. Simultaneously trade with the Japanese was explicitly banned due to their perceived role in the Jiajing wokou raids. It also provided an opportunity for numbers of Western missionaries to arrive in China.

Deconstruction of traditional Tianxia thought was not entirely due to the First Opium War that broke out in 1840, but the first phase of Western learning spreading to China. From around 1600 to 1840 before the First Opium War, there was the germ of deconstructing traditional Tianxia thought. A symbolic event was the arrival of Western missionaries represented by Matteo Ricci, one of the typical examples of input.

3.2 Western input: The Western missionary Matteo Ricci in China

On 7 August 1582, Matteo Ricci arrived in Macau and began missionary work. After his arrival, he realized that the first priority was to legalize Christianity in China. Subsequent contacts with Qu Tai-su prompted him in 1594 to grow a beard and wear Hanfu. He wrote:

> All of us were dressed in the Chinese style, but with square hats representing crosses. This year (1594) I no longer wear such hats. (Ricci, 2018, pp. 139-140)

After settling in Nanchang for several years, Matteo Ricci gradually established an approach to preaching Christianity in China: using Confucianism as a platform for Christianity to communicate with Chinese culture, combining Confucianism with Christianity, and no longer summoning believers for public prayers. Ricci's rules may be further summarized: learning the lifestyles of Chinese scholar-bureaucrats; using Confucian terms to explain Christian ethics; blurring or ignoring content difficult to accept into traditional Chinese moral concepts such as translating *Deus* as *Shangdi*). He noted:

> It is to our advantage that the Chinese fail to recognize that we are of the same religion as those Spaniards, because the Chinese there pronounce the name of God, Dio, as Dios in Spanish. And we pronounce it Deus in Portuguese. (Ricci, 2018, p. 223)

In addition, Christians were allowed to retain ancestor worship customs and Confucius, interpreting them as non-religious labels of being filial and sincere and respecting Confucius as a model for others, respectively. By combining missionary methods with Chinese national conditions, Matteo Ricci also introduced Western science and technology, philosophy, political thought, and art to China.

3.3 Chinese output: preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought and internal development of germination of nationalism

At this time, Chinese output manifested itself in preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought and internal development of budding nationalistic thought. Manifestations of preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought may be divided into two types: relatively explicit reflections in geography and cartography methods; and more implicitly in claims by some intellectuals especially the political class.

Before Matteo Ricci, Chinese cartography overall reflected characteristics of guarding against barbarians or foreigners (Yi Xia Zhi Fang), round sky and square earth (Tian Yuan Di Fang), and self-occupied in the center of the world. After Matteo Ricci's visit, Western missionaries to China gradually extended the new drawing method to the Chinese scholar-bureaucrat class, gradually guiding the latter to shift from the idea of Tianxia to consciousness of "global nations". (Ge, 2011)

Some intellectuals of the time promoted political ideas with an embryonic form of nationalism. Simultaneously, Alfonso Vagnoni, an Italian missionary, introduced part of Western political philosophy to China, affecting the formation of their respective political thoughts. Hsiao Kung-chuan observed:

> The Catholic priest Matteo Ricci traveled to Macau from Europe and arrived in Nanjing in thirteen years. After three years, he arrived in Peking. Western religious studies began to be imported into China in large quantities and were accepted by some literati. Thus, for the first time, Eastern and Western cultures were introduced into China. Large-scale contact, and China's political thought, with the stimulus from the outside world, may also undergo a complete transformation. (Hsiao, 2010, p. 387)

Among them, political thinking of five late Ming and early Qing dynasty masters (Huang Zong-xi, Gu Yan-wu, Fang Yi-zhi, Wang Fu-zhi, Zhu Zhi-yu) was most typical, revising traditional Tianxia thought:

First, criticizing and revising the traditional concept of guarding against barbarians and foreigners. Wang Fu-zhi distinguished Chinese (Huaxia) from barbarians and foreigners (Yi Di) based on philosophical concepts, geographical environment, and ethnic group and tribe dwelling places. He then proposed "category theory" (dividing Yi and Xia according to geographical environment and habitat, and adopting the value neutrality principle) and "temperament theory". (Chu, 1994) Compared to the race/value division method, the division standard adopted by Wang Fu-zhi was relatively objective. Wang Fu-zhi newly interpreted the

concept of Yidi, critically inherited the Confucian view of nationality with culture as standard, (Hsiao, 2010, p. 55) and expanded the scope of Huaxia from a single area inhabited by Han people to the entire Jiuzhou. Ethnic minorities inhabiting Jiuzhou were no longer barbarians as before, with civilization and barbarism further distinguished, and diverse views on traditional legitimacy proposed. (Chu, 1994)

At the same time, Gu Yan-wu analyzed the relationship between Tianxia and State; Tianxia is the highest level culturally as a source of State political legitimacy, while State signifies political dynasty. If Tianxia disappears, the State loses legitimacy to exist. Compared with Wang Fu-zhi's view of the nation, Gu Yan-wu's subjugation of the State and of the Tianxia are about cultural, rather than national, supremacy. (Dan, 2006)

Secondly, revisions made to traditional differential sequence patterns included the traditional relationship between monarch and ministers, focused on serving a paternalistic emperor, criticized by Wang Fu-zhi and Huang Zong-xi. Wang Fu-zhi tried to discard the traditional Confucian concept of likening monarch-minister and father-son relationships, and personal dependence on the autocratic political system to reestablish a new notion of personal and political monarch-ministerial equality. (Xu, 2012) Huang Zong-xi proposed this in *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince (Ming Yi Dai Fang Lu),* but did not advocate complete elimination of class differences.

Thirdly, amending the organizational entity, Huang Zong-xi once proposed that the school discusses politics, with emperor and officials disciples of a school where principal and local academic officials are elected. Public right and wrong were see as deriving from the school, from which all governing instruments must originate. (Xu, 2012) However, the idea of a school discussing politics did not signify that Huang Zong-xi sought to overthrow the feudal autocratic monarchy, but merely limit royal power. His school remained an advisory body for government-administrative decision-making, rather than a representative body with legislative power. In this sense, such schemes were aimed at encouraging a wise monarch to implement enlightened autocracy. This was the apogee of traditional Chinese people-oriented thought, rather than a precursor of modern Chinese democratic politics.

Finally, in terms of international relations, the scope of Tianxia expanded from China (Ming and Qing dynasties) to the East Asian cultural circle. Zhu Zhi-yu moved to Mito in his later years, believing that orthodox Huaxia or Tianxia was found in Japan, not the Qing Dynasty.

However, intellectual appendices and amendments to Tianxia thought and the political thought of modern nationalism advanced by these intellectuals were still based on traditional

Huaxia-Yidi order/Tianxia thought. Despite Wang Fu-zhi's attempt to expand the single Han political entity to multi-ethnicity with Jiuzhou, his definition of Huaxia identified the Han Chinese community as the main populace. In addition, the Treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689 between the Tsardom of Russia and the Qing dynasty used China as the title of a sovereign State for the first time in foreign affairs. But at that time, the Qing Dynasty ruling class did not fully transcend Tianxia consciousness.

To sum up, Tianxia thought at this stage was preliminarily and partly deconstructed and newly interpreted, but had not yet attained complete disintegration as it would after 1840. Late Ming and early Qing dynasty intellectuals updated Tianxia connotations and helped germinate modern nationalist consciousness by pathfinding for pre-modern China from Tianxia to modern nation-state. Hsiao Kung-chuan asserted:

> The most intense and progressive political theory in the Ming Dynasty still could not go beyond the scope of "autocratic Tianxia" to reach the realm of the "modern state". (Hsiao, 2010, p. 386)

4. Preliminary deconstruction of Tianxia thought in the trough phase of Sino-western interaction

4.1 Historical background

In the 1600s, the Ming Dynasty collapsed in the face of famine and invasion from the northern Manchu tribes, who conquered China and established the Qing Dynasty (1636–1912). After the 18th century, a large-scale literary inquisition paled beside political persecution of Donglin Party members by Wei Zhong-xian at the end of the Ming Dynasty. In ideological circles during the reign of the Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors (1662-1722 and his 1736 to 1796), intellectuals opted for philological research after implementation of a literary inquisition, not entirely because of political taboos. Other factors were the gradual disintegration of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties and intellectual ferment at the demise of the Ming Dynasty. Benjamin A. Elman stated:

> What we see in the eighteenth-century inquisitions is the dark side of an education policy in which tuition support, academic prizes, and scholarly recognition reinforced the status-conferring function of education and rewarded scholarship. By providing the institutional preconditions for the growth of philology into an exact discipline, Manchu policies in fact made k'ao-cheng research possible on a large scale. (Elman, 1984, p. 17)

In this environment, Dai Zhen used Mencius as the ideological basis for critical theory to construct a philosophical system, criticize Neo-Confucian orthodoxy during the Song and Ming Dynasties and contend with Zhu Zi's theory. Dai Zhen criticized Song and Ming Dynasty Neo-Confucianism, but his research methods and discourse paradigm still bore traces of this precedent. However, his ideological circle was still restricted. Qianjia Puxue was limited to exegesis, phonology, history, and other disciplines, gradually declining after the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Western thinkers were relatively favorable towards China, although this changed during the 19th century. Some scholars complained of ideological stagnation. Western authors such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Vico offered exotic, not always accurate views of Chinese history. These viewpoints were inseparable from cosmopolitanism and the linear view of progress adopted during the Enlightenment in Western intellectual circles. (Sheng, 2015)

The Scottish Enlightenment also played a role, with David Hume defining civilization as achieved through interaction of economic, cultural, social, and political elements:

> Economically, it has transformed from primitive agriculture to developed industry and commerce. Culturally, a shift from military preferences and "pristine hospitality" to a preference for luxury, genteel society, and the liberal arts. In society, a binary/polarized society has transformed into a stepped society. In this stepped society, there is a middle class composed of gentlemen, businessmen, and professionals. Politically, the political order has transformed from autocratic politics and monarch/big lord-led security to a political order with democratic politics and government-led security. (Zhou, 2004, pp. 144-145)

Influenced by the utilitarian philosophy of his father James Mill and Jeremy Bentham, John Mill advanced a "civilization-barbarism" dichotomy to form his own view of China. In this optic, China had stagnated due to dictatorship of thought and social customs.

In terms of Sino-Western exchanges, the Qing government briefly implemented a maritime ban policy to eliminate anti-Qing and Ming elements, the Revolt of the Three Feudatories (1673-1681) in the south, and the Ming Zheng regime (1661-1683) in the southeast. Immediately following the rebellion and surrender of the Ming and Zheng regimes to the Qing Dynasty, Qing Dynasty finances were somewhat strained, so the sea ban was abolished. Western learning spread to the East until the mid-to-late 17th century, finally ebbing after the Chinese Rites controversy peaked during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor. In 1721, the Kangxi

Emperor banned missionary work. In 1724, the Yongzheng Emperor banned Catholicism. Different problems arising from the Chinese Rites controversy remained unresolved, with controversies only temporarily suspended.

During this trough in Sino-Western interaction, the West saw China as in a state of stagnation and isolation. Historians and international relations experts perceived Qing Dynasty foreign policy from Emperor Qianlong's 1793 letter to King George III:

> Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim in view, namely, to maintain a perfect governance and to fulfil the duties of the State: strange and costly objects do not interest me. If I have commanded that the tribute offerings sent by you, O King, are to be accepted, this was solely in consideration for the spirit which prompted you to dispatch them from afar. Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures. (Backhouse & Bland, 1914, pp. 324-325)

Chinese scholars, especially those who experienced the 1911 Revolution, placed this document alongside the Record of Ten Days in Yangzhou (Yang Zhou Shi Ri Ji) as legitimizing the revolution and overthrowing the Qing Dynasty. After the 1911 Revolution, Sir Edmund Backhouse coauthored a work with John Otway Percy Bland that included a complete translation of the imperial document. Some readers criticized it as an expression of arrogance and ignorance by the Qianlong Emperor, justifying the British invasion of China. (Harrison, 2017)

4.2 Western input: actions by Western missionaries in Macau and Guangzhou

During the trough, the Qing government did not closed communication channels between China and Western countries, nor did China lock down completely. In addition to the Thirteen Factories, Western artifacts in the Old Summer Palace, and the Qianlong imperial edict during the Macartney Mission to China, some Anglo-American Protestant missionaries remained before the outbreak of the First Opium War. They used Macau as a platform for entering the mainland to preach. However, political pressure remained strong. In May and July 1811, the Jiaqing Emperor promulgated special regulations on sanctioning Western missionaries and strictly prohibiting Western missionaries, respectively. And in 1812, the Jiaqing Emperor reaffirmed the prohibition of preaching. This environment hindered activities of Anglo-American Protestant missionaries in China, causing them to blame the failure of their mission

on prohibition policies as Samuel Wells Williams (Wei San-wei) charged. Missionaries began to turn their attention to diplomacy to advance the Christian cause. Most Anglo-American Protestant missionaries in China served as Chinese translators for foreign business groups. After 1840, when foreign troops entered the colonies, these missionaries also served as government diplomats. (Tan, 2020)

During the reign of the Daoguang Emperor (1821-1850), Western medical technology was further spread in the port of Guangzhou. In May 1835, missionary and medical doctor Peter Parker opened a pioneering Ophthalmic Hospital in Guangzhou. In February 1838, Peter Parker, Thomas Richardson Colledge, and Elijah Coleman Bridgman cofounded a medical association. These beneficent actions altered some Chinese prejudices against foreigners. (Dong, 2002)

4.3 Chinese output: self-awareness and actions by intellectuals

Meanwhile, the Qing Dynasty still maintained limited tributary trade and mutual market trade with foreign countries. Shigeki Iwai observed that the tribute trade was "central to the emperor" and "dangerous", while the mutual market trade was "marginal" and "central". This limited tributary trade and mutual market trade was accompanied by long-term diplomatic passivity. This gradually improved after the outbreak of the Sino-Russian Battle of Yaksa and signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor, which impacted Qing Dynasty foreign affairs approaches. (Iwai, 2022)

Before 1840, officials and scholars realized that traditional Tianxia concepts were no longer timely. In 1815, Gong Zi-zhen expressed grief and indignation at ideological depression and rigidity in The Ninth Discussion at the Time of Yibing. (Xiao, 2022) Another example occurred when Lin Ze-xu served as imperial envoy in Guangzhou. He organized a team to translate international legal works and Macao newspapers, and used *Le droit des gens ou Principes de la loi naturelle appliqués à la conduite et aux affaires des nations et des souverains* (London, 1785) by Emer de Vattel to oppose Charles Elliot, Administrator of Hong Kong. During Lin Ze-xu's tenure, he encountered foreigners and traveled to Macao to investigate foreign affairs. His traditional concept of Hua-Yi also changed. However, due to limitations of the times, his evolving concepts of Chinese and barbarians could not be rid of traditional stereotypes.

With the destruction of opium at Humen, the Lin Weixi case, and other incidents, the First Opium War between China and Britain began. The signing of the Treaty of Nanking made China gradually degenerate into a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society, and deconstruction of

traditional Tianxia and its philosophy further accelerated. By signing the Treaty of Nanking, the United Kingdom applied Western international relations practices in handling Sino-foreign relations. This accelerated deconstruction mainly affected traditional Tianxia at the level of organizational entity. At the time, Chinese response to the West was a short-term rejection lasting until the Second Opium War. The complete deconstruction of Tianxia thought would await the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895).

Deconstruction of Tianxia thought comprised external factors such as Western input and on internal ones, consisting of Chinese output and feedback). As for accelerating deconstruction, Chinese sovereignty declining after the Opium War among other factors awaits further research.

5. Tianxia thought of other political entities in the East Asian cultural circle

After the demise of the Ming Dynasty, some East Asian cultural circle political entities no longer regarded the Qing Dynasty as China, and had their own Little China ideology. Tianxia thought based on Little China may be seen as common to these political entities. Emperor at home, king abroad was a system of conducting relations between states within the Chinese cultural sphere shared with Japan, Korea, and Vietnam with differing choices and expressions at different times.

5.1 Japan's Little China

In Sino-Japanese relations, China had multiple identities. Ng Wai-ming explained:

> China had unique functions in Tokugawa thinking. On the one side, it served as a model, or a kind of cultural homeland. On the other side, it was used to boost Japan's own identity. From the perspective of a Sinophile, China was Japan's tutor… However, in Sino-Japanese comparisons, China also played the role of "the other" to glorify Japan. (Ng, 2014, pp.66-67)

In the 17th century, when Jurchen tribes conquered the Ming, Japan severed all contact with China and pursued a Japanese version of Sino-centrism based on cultural superiority. (Si, 2019, p. 346) Zhu Zhiyu, commonly known as Zhu Shunshui, one of the greatest scholars of Confucianism in the Ming dynasty and Edo Japan, moved to Mito in his later years. After his death, Tokugawa Mitsukuni, second lord of the Mito Domain, compiled the *Dai Nihonshi* (History of Great Japan) to further develop Zhu's political thought on sonnōron (royalism). It provided ideological guidance for launching the Sonnō jōi movement (revere the Emperor,

expel the barbarians) in 19th century Japan. The Battles of Coxinga, a puppet play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon first staged in Osaka, told of the adventures of Coxinga (based on the adventures of the historical figure Koxinga) in fighting the Qing Dynasty and restoring the Ming Dynasty.

Japan during the Tokugawa shogunate had other ways of naming China. Ng stated:

Influenced by the concept of *kai hentai*, many Tokugawa Japanese believed that China degenerated into a barbaric nation under the Manchu and that Japan replaced China as the center of Confucianism. Tokugawa Confucians valued ancient China more than Ming-Qing China, whereas Shintoists and *kokugaku* scholars did not rate the Chinese tradition highly at all. The Shintoist Tani Shinzan called the Chinese "barbarians" because Chinese history was full of rebellions and chaos. He argued that Japan had been the central kingdom in Asia for more than a thousand years, therefore it was more legitimate for his country than for China to bear the name *Chūgoku*. (Ng, 2014, p. 72)

Some scholars also adopted a comparable approach to naming China (Qing Dynasty) at this time. Generally speaking, the Tokugawa shogunate still used different names for China alluding to diverse naming methods.

5.2 Korean Little China

The Great Joseon, the last dynastic kingdom of Korea, was defeated by Jurchen in 1636 and became a vassal state (Qing Dynasty) after the fall of the Ming Dynasty. Yet some scholar-bureaucrats, as well as Hyojong of Joseon, seventeenth king of the Joseon Dynasty of Korea, were dissatisfied with the Qing Dynasty, believing that Joseon represented Chinese orthodoxy. For example, Hong Daeyong (1731-1783), a scholar of the Northern School of Practical Studies in Korea, put forward a concept of Hua and Yi consistency in the context of Western learning spreading to the East. Another example is that Hyojong of Joseon once secretly planned a Northern Expedition to the Qing Dynasty. Although finally unimplemented, it increased government fiscal revenue.

5.3 Vietnamese Little China

After the Qing Dynasty replaced the Ming Dynasty, Vietnam would refer to itself as Han people and referred to Han people under the Qing Empire as Qing people and Tang people. In addition, Vietnam also tried to establish a Vietnam-centered tributary system in the Indochinese Peninsula.

6. Conclusion

After large-scale importation of Western learning into China around 1600, China's feedback was selective, rather than outright rejection. Tianxia was the world from the Chinese viewpoint. With continuous development of transportation, commerce, and mapping technology, the scope of this world constantly expanded, with definitions of Tianxia constantly updated. Deconstruction of Tianxia thought occurred through vitalization from long-term Western learning spreading to the East and dynamic balance from early stages to dynamic imbalance in middle and later stages. Matteo Ricci's arrival in China and the First Opium War played catalytic roles in this dynamic process. Deconstruction was not complete, but included supplementing the original concept and changing qualitatively and quantitatively into a new concept.

Eastern civilization continuously learned and adjusted from Western learning input. After the First Opium War in 1840, China gradually transformed from traditional Tianxia to a modern nation-state. Some Chinese scholars suggested reconstructing the Tianxia ideal, not from nostalgia for the Heavenly Empire or melodramatically seeking cosmopolitanism. Instead, actively exploring a new ideal became a guiding ideology for Chinese international relations. The goal was to break the Western-centric logical paradigm and explore a method for peaceful coexistence among state actors. Only this way could permanent peace be a possibility.

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