

W6 (Week 2, Thursday)

Sate and Order

Tianxia 天下 (All Under Heaven) in China

HPAR4010

What makes civilisation?

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Idea of *tianxia* (天下)

- Has never been rigorously defined. Primary dispute is whether term refers to a culturally specific realm without set political boundaries, or rather primarily to China.
- Joseph Levenson: *tianxia* “a regime of value” in opposition to a political unit, *guo* (國).
- *Cihai* (辭海) and *Hanyu da cidian* (漢語大詞典) assert that *tianxia* was a political unit essentially synonymous with *Zhongguo* (the middle states 中國), with only a secondary sense of “the larger world” or “civilized world.”

Origins of the concept

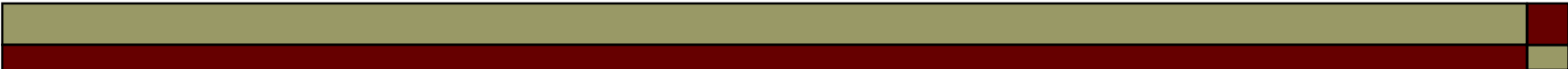
- ❑ “tianxia” as a major category of Chinese thought appears in political discourse relatively late in antiquity;
- ❑ Not figuring prominently until the emergence of the *Zuozhuan* (左傳) and, to a lesser extent, the *Lunyu* (論語); → not prominent prior to the fourth century BCE;
- ❑ *Tianxia* does not appear in Zhou bronzes; scarcely appears in the *Shi jing* 詩經 and the reliably early chapters of the *Shang shu* 尚書.

Zuozhuan and *Lunyu*

- 22 occurrences, featuring frequently in phrases indicating that a certain type of behaviour would be either praised or condemned by “all under heaven”, the part of the world that shares the values of the Zhou elite.
- *Tianxia* as the Zhou realm is specifically contrasted with the territory of the Rong (𡈼) or Di (狄) peoples; similar usage in the *Lunyu*

Mozi (墨子), late 4th century BCE

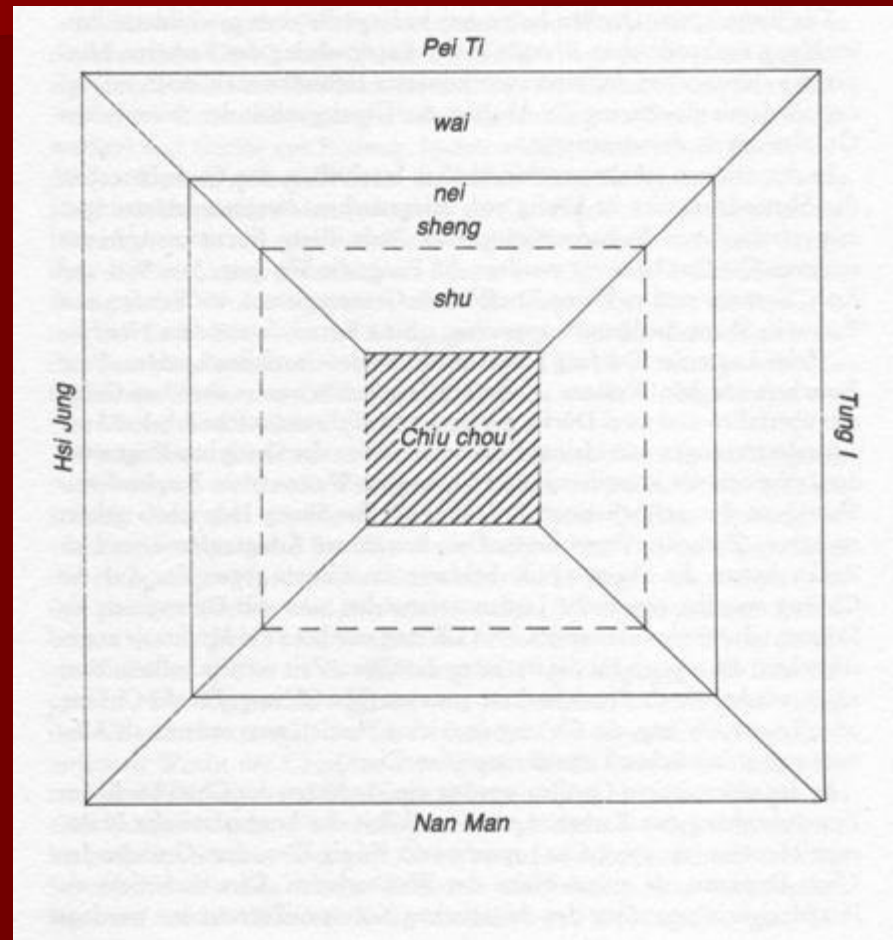
- Term occurs more than 400 times;
- *Tianxia* refers to a political unit → used in phrases such as
“possess all under heaven” (*you* 有天下)
“rule” (*zhi* 治天下)
“be a king over” (*wang* 王天下)
- Any true ruler should unify and rule all under heaven. This political unit should share a common set of cultural ideals.
- “Unifying Upward” (*shang tong* 尚同) chapter; elaborates the argument that *tianxia* should be united through the establishment of a single criterion of duty or propriety (*yi* 義).
- Repeated references to the “men of service and gentlemen of *tianxia*” (*tianxia zhi shi junzi* 天下之士君子) imply that *tianxia* possesses a single cultural elite who should share common values.

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- ❑ Mengzi, Xunzi, Hanfeizi follow Mozi's view
 - ❑ *Tianxia* predominantly a political realm (shift from culture to politics).
 - ❑ Political rule extending across an ever larger and larger space, rather than any common elite cultural practice, was seen as the basis for achieving a stable and enduring order.
 - ❑ Diminution of appeals to culture, states such as Chu and Qin increasingly denied their strong cultural ties to the old Zhou order.

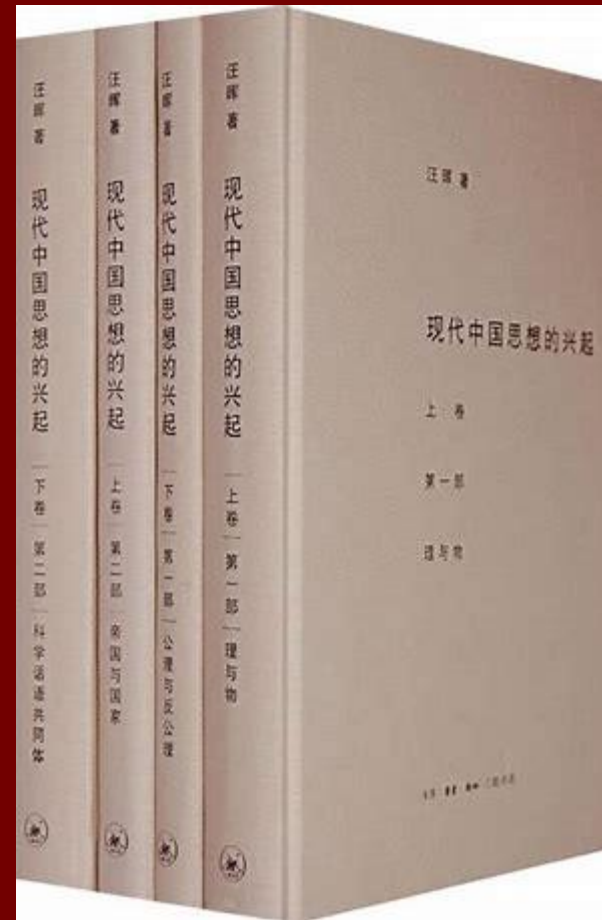
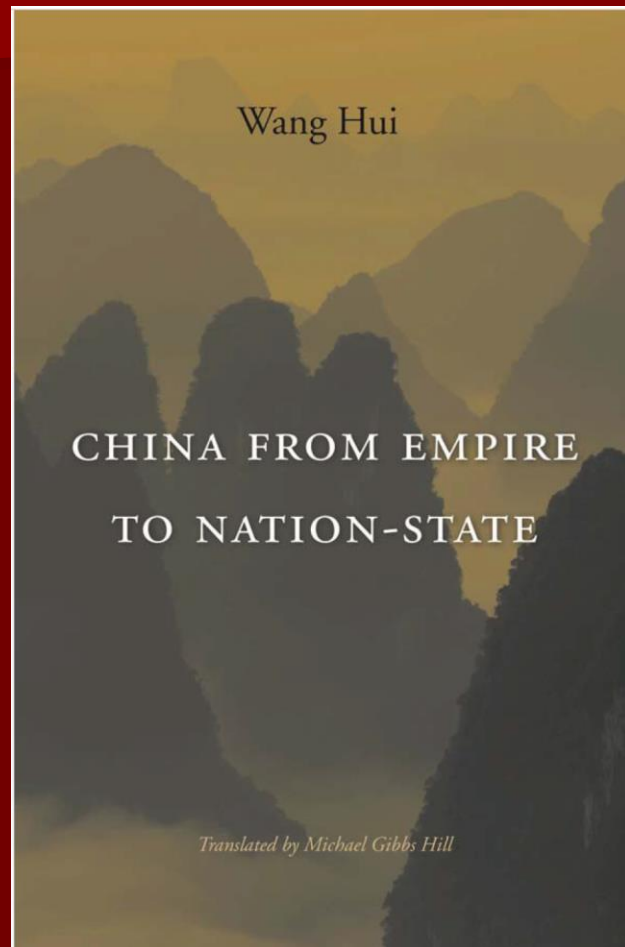
Geographic extension

- Ideal of a united world articulated in Mozi's chapters "Caring for Each and All" (*jian ai* 兼愛) and "Unifying Upward";
- Universal, transcending the boundaries of the old Zhou realm;
- The sage Yu 禹 praised for "bringing order to tianxia" by ending the great flood;
- Aliens on the fringes of Zhou civilization benefited equally with the Xia people of the middle states → *Zhongguo* as only one part of the broader, universal realm defined as *tianxia*.

Division of the world according to *Erya* 爾雅 (3rd cent. B.C.)



Wang Hui's 王晖, Introduction 导论 to *Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi*.



Wang Hui's critique of the 'empire' – 'nation' binary

- ❑ Concepts rooted in 19th/20th century Europe
- ❑ Concept of 'nation' linked to claim to polit. independence and self-determination; reaction against Holy Roman Empire; nation-state birthright of a linguistic community
- ❑ → juxtaposition between Europ. 'nations' (modern, homogeneous, self-determined) and Asian 'empires' (backward, autocratic, limitless)
- ❑ “structural antithetical relationship” and teleological view of time translated into geographical terms (Europe vs. Asia)

View of Chinese historians

- ❑ Binary is not applicable to China
- ❑ Rejection of assumptions of binary model (= empire is intrinsically backward and autocratic)
- ❑ Chinese empire is different from other empires (Roman, Mongol, Ottoman, Japanes)
- ❑ Model of assimilation through culture, ritual and ‘kingly transformation’ (*wang hua* 王化)

Cont.

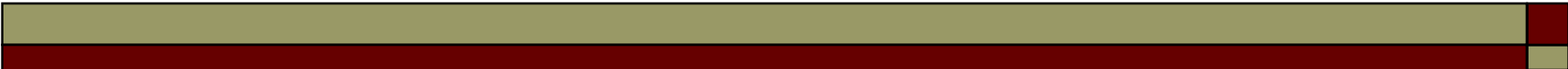
- ❑ ‘empire’ *diguo* 帝国 interpreted as:
- ❑ a political community with specific values and forms;
- ❑ going back to mythical ideal emperors of antiquity; founded on virtue rather than power; different from the states of kings and hegemons;
- ❑ not based on struggle for power and military conflict

The “Son of Heaven” *tianzi* 天子

- The **emperors of the Qin and Han: essential position in the cosmic order; link the** institutions of the empire to those of the cosmos.
- “The son of heaven sacrifices to the famous mountains and great streams All under Heaven, regarding the five peaks as his three high ministers, regarding the four streams as his feudal lords. The feudal lords sacrifice to the famous mountains and great streams within the borders of their territory.”
(*Shi ji* 史記 28.1357)

tianxia 天下 and *guo* 国

- ❑ **Models for this transformation**
- ❑ complete sovereignty for non-Chinese people
- ❑ resurrection of the old imperial model → China as a transformative power with the primitive periphery as its objective
- ❑ forced assimilation, creating a single unified citizenry (nation state; European and American model)



Characteristics of empire

- ❑ Hybrid system of control between enfeoffment and central administration; porous boundaries
- ❑ Multinational ethnic relations
- ❑ Multiple structures of power (state, family, bureaucracy)
- ❑ Culture representative of civilisation; hybrid, universal in aspiration (limitless), not monolithic

Literature

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