Tianxia in Comparative Perspective:
Alternative Models of Geopolitical Order

Conference of Berggruen Research Center

in Tsingtao from May 18th till 19th 2019

A perfect storm is gathering on the horizon: climate change, food and water shortages, environmental degradation, pandemics, energy shortage, terrorism, unprecedented population migrations, nuclear pro-liferation, gross income inequities, massive species extinction, and so on. Humanity as a species to respond effectively to this human exacerbated predicament will require a radical change in our values, our intentions, and our practices. At the same time, with the precipitous rise of China over the span of just one generation, we are experiencing the effects of a dramatic and accelerating reconfiguration of economic and political power in the world.

The rise of Asia, and China in particular, has ushered in a new geopolitical order, but what about the prevailing cultural order long dominated by a powerful liberalism? Question: What impact will Confucianism—a philosophy that begins from the primacy of vital relationality—have on the evolving world culture in the ensuing decades? How will its values play into the ongoing transformation of the geopolitical order?

The idea *tianxia* 天下—conventionally translated as "all-under-Heaven"—is a familiar term in everyday Chinese parlance that simply means "the world." But *tianxia* is also a geopolitical term found throughout the canonical literature that has a deeper philosophical and historical meaning. Over the past few decades, the meaning of this technical term—sometimes referred to as "All-under-the-World System" (*tianxiatixi* 天下体系)—has been much debated, primarily but not only in the Chinese literature, as a possible Chinese framework for thinking about a new and evolving world order and a new model of world governance.

In March 2018, the Peking University Berggruen Research Center, seeking to address the issue of the influence of the exponential rise of East Asia on the world economic and political order, convened a conference entitled "What is *tianxia*? The East-Asia Context." At this conference, the core invitees were primarily representatives of the East-Asian Confucian cultures in which the shared notion of *tianxia* is understood in importantly different ways.

At this second conference convened at the Qingdao campus of Shandong University, our main theme is "*Tianxia* in Comparative Perspectives: Alternative Models of Geopolitical Order." In this second conference, we want to complement our initial cadre of East Asia colleagues with an additional group of international scholars representing different cultural traditions who are doing research in alternative models of geopolitical order, with *tianxia* as one among them. Some of the subthemes for this conference are:

1. What are the comparable ideas/ideals to *tianxia* within the context of other major cultural traditions?
2. What are the alternative visions of global justice that inspire the Western, Indian, Islamic, Buddhist, and African cultural traditions?
3. Is *tianxia* one Chinese model of cosmopolitanism among many?

The *Tianxia* Organizing Committee
Roger T. Ames (Co-Chair Academic Advisory Committee, Peking University Berggruen Research Center)
Song Bing (Vice President, Berggruen Institute, Co-Director, Peking University Berggruen Research Center)
Liu Zhe (Co-Director, Peking University Berggruen Research Center)
Zhao Tingyang (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Berggruen Fellow)
Gan Chunsong (Peking University, Berggruen Fellow)
Daniel A. Bell (Shandong University, Berggruen Board of Advisers)
Viren Murthy (University of Wisconsin, Berggruen Fellow)

For any queries please contact Shelley Hu at shelleyhu@berggruen.org.

May 18th, 2019, Saturday	
08:00 - 08:30	Registration
08:30 - 09:00	Opening Session
Session Chair	QIAN Chendan | Peking University
09:00 - 09:30	**Does *Tianxia* Need the Nation-State?** WANG Ban | Stanford University
09:30 - 10:00	**The Problem with *Tianxia*** Anne CHENG | Collège de France
10:00 - 10:20	Discussion
10:20 - 10:40	Coffee Break
Session Chair	LIU Zhe | Peking University
10:40 - 11:10	***Tianxia* and Islam** Mustapha Kamal PASHA | Aberystwyth University
11:10 - 11:40	**Without War and Conquest: The Idea of a Global Political Order in Asoka's Dhamma** Rajeev BHARGAVA | Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi
11:40 - 12:00	Discussion
12:00 - 14:00	Lunch
Session Chair	SONG Bing | Berggruen Institute, Peking University Berggruen Research Center
14:00 - 14:30	***Tianxia*: A Multiverse of Practices** QIN Yaqing | China Foreign Affairs University
14:30 - 15:00	**From *Tianxia* to Tianxia: A Step in the Internationalization of Chinese Political Thought.** Salvatore BABONES | The University of Sydney
15:00 - 15:20	Discussion
15:20 - 15:40	Coffee Break
Session Chair	ZHAO Tingyang | Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
15:40 - 16:10	**Friendship Under Heaven: A Comparative Study of Friendship in Chinese and Western Traditions of Thought** Astrid NORDIN | Lancaster University Graham M. SMITH | University of Leeds
16:10 - 16:40	**Conflicting Visions of World Order? Hidden Facets of the Encounter between the Globalizing Catholic Church and 17th-Century China** Dominic SACHSENMAIER | Georg-August University Göttingen
16:40 - 17:00	Discussion
Session Chair	Daniel A. BELL | Shandong University
17:00 - 17:45	Open Discussion

May 19th, 2019, Sunday	
08:30 - 09:00	Registration
Session Chair	WANG Binfan | University of Toronto
09:00 - 09:30	仁爱的多重性：血缘亲情和普遍之爱的张力 GAN Qunsong |Peking University
09:30 - 10:00	*Tianxia* **and Global Distributive Justice** TAN Sor-hoon | Singapore Management University
10:00 - 10:20	Discussion
10:20 - 10:40	Coffee Break
Session Chair	Hans FEGER | Freie Universität Berlin
10:40 - 11:10	**Universalizing** *Tianxia* **in East Asian Context** NAKAJIMA Takahiro | The University of Tokyo
11:10 - 11:40	**Separate But Connected: Vietnam's** *Tianxia* **in the Nineteenth Century** Liam KELLEY | Universiti Brunei Darussalam
11:40 - 12:00	Discussion
12:00 - 14:00	Lunch
Session Chair	Viren MURTHY | University of Wisconsin-Madison
14:00 - 14:30	**Comparing the Ancient Chinese** *Tianxia* **Order During the Spring Autumn Period and the Modern International Order: Prospects and Problems** WANG Qingxin | Tsinghua University
14:30 - 15:00	**Humanity and Political Meritocracy without Family and State: Kang Youwei's Ideal of Confucian Cosmopolitanism in** *Book of the Great Unity* Binfan WANG | University of Toronto
15:00 - 15:20	Discussion
15:20 - 15:40	Coffee Break
Session Chair	GAN Chunsong | Peking University
15:40 - 16:10	**Veiling Ideology or Enabling Utopia? On the Potentials and Limitations of the Debate about** *Tianxia* **as a Model for a New World Order** Christian UHL | Ghent University
16:10 - 16:40	**"We choose the Moon" for truth, justice and peace: a dialogue between** *ubuntu* **and** *pu jen* Mogobe B. RAMOSE ｜ Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, South Africa
16:40 - 17:00	Discussion
Session Chair	Roger T. AMES | Peking University
17:00 - 17:45	Open Discussion

Abstracts

WANG Gungwu | Reading *Tianxia* Against the Grain
National University of Singapore

Recent discussions about *tianxia* have compared the ancient concept with the world order that we have; some have wondered if re-imagining it for the 21st century might provide us with a less aggressive or more harmonious future. I suggest a historical approach that looks at analogous *tianxia* equivalents elsewhere in the past to see how some of them had been unpacked and re-integrated to shape current global structures, including those that have become sources of discontent. This will move us away from efforts to see the Chinese *tianxia* as exceptional and a possible alternative to the dominant narrative. Instead, it focuses on exploring past developments to see if enduring parts of the concept could contribute to saving, improving, and enriching what our human progress has brought us to so far.

Anne CHENG | The Problem with *Tianxia*
Collège de France

The problem with *Tianxia* which, from a very ordinary term in ancient Chinese textual sources has made its way up front in recent years with China's rise to power and global attention, is that it is usually and implicitly taken in the singular, and in a vertical top-down representation of the world order. Couldn't we talk about many diverse *tianxia*s, and couldn't we reverse the heaven-down pattern into an earth-up (*dishang* 地上) pattern? In fact, if we take the famous sentence from the *Mencius* IV A 5, which quotes a "common saying" linking up *tianxia* (the world), *guo* (the country) and *jia* (the family) in a typically Confucian continuity, it does reverse the top-down pattern by specifying that "the root of the world is in the country, the root of the country is in the family and the root of the family is ultimately in oneself". 孟子曰：「人有恆言，皆曰『天下國家』。天下之本在國，國之本在家，家之本在身。」Such a reversal opens the possibility for a plurality of persons, of families, of countries and ultimately of *tianxia*s, as opposed to the closure on the singular oneness formulated in the « Liyun » chapter of the *Liji*: 以天下為一家，以中國為一人 « Treating the world as one single family, and the Middle Kingdom as one single man ». I will argue against all odds that the pattern of a plurality of countries and of worlds linked up between them to form one common *oecumene* is actually illustrated by the European union which, in spite of all its present tensions and difficulties, is made to work by a shared determination from the grassroots to constitute a real political entity. I do not mean to claim that Europe as it is now should be taken as a model, but only to recall that any contemporary conception of *tianxia* cannot possibly avoid the construction of a political, democratic, and pluralistic space.

Mustapha Kamal PASHA | *Tianxia* and Islam
Aberystwyth University

Apparent divergences often conceal latent points of contact, dialogue, and convergence. *Tianxia* congeals an immanentist cosmological principle devoid of theological pretensions. Islam relies on Transcendence. The registers of *Tianxia* and Islam, on this reading, present opposing horizons. This paper offers an alternative picture. An intimate connection is visualized between universalisms produced within *Tianxia* and Islam. The universal community promised in *Tianxia* avoids parochial attachments to Westphalia, nation, or tribe. Islam offers a horizontal nexus to humankind secured by a vertical relation to the One. Both *Tianxia* and Islam affirm ontological parity. However, both depend upon cosmological hierarchy to instantiate universalism. The problem for both *Tianxia* and Islam is the difficulty of reconciling inclusion with otherness. Conquest and conversion are established modes of addressing Otherness. Are there alternate pathways that can affirm universalism within *Tianxia* and Islam? This paper suggests the possibility of absorbing difference without erasure or marginalization. Both *Tianxia* and Islam present resources to rethink the problem of universal community.

Rajeev BHARGAVA | Without War and Conquest: The Idea of a Global Political Order in Asoka's Dhamma
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi

Physical conquest and warfare were the principal constituents of royal political ethic. It was the duty of a good king to exhibit military prowess, physical courage in the battlefield and territorial expansion. This must be virtually true everywhere in the world but it was certainly the case in the 5-6th centuries before the common era in India, precisely the period of empire formation. Asoka who lived in the late 3rd century BCE, inherited this warrior ethic from his ancestors and lived his political life in conformity with it during his early rule, but over time, he began to see the futility of warfare and the human cost of territorial expansion. As a result, he began to develop a new political ethic for rulers. He proposed the idea that ruler-ship should be based on and guided by a new political morality for which he used the Indic term 'dhamma'. Both the ruler and the subjects were to submit to this higher ethic. Political violence and physical conquest were to be minimized. Kings had to rule less by force and more by persuasion. Officials were to be appointed to spread and instruct people not only within the territory of the king but also outside to spread dhamma. Physical conquest was to be replaced by moral conquest, brute power by moral hegemony. Thus, Asoka envisaged a new global order grounded largely in non-violence and non-injury towards others. My paper will explore Asoka's ideas on an ethically global order in greater depth and detail.

QIN Yaqing | *Tianxia*: A Process of Relations
China Foreign Affairs University

Tianxia is often taken as a spatial structure where substantial entities exist and co-exist. This paper argues that *tianxia* is a temporal-spatial process of relations. It takes a processual/ relational ontology, believing that *tianxia* is first of all a process composed of fluid, dynamic and complex relations rather than a spatial sphere of atomistic entities. It further argues that this process is defined in terms of relations, relations between humans and nature, among humans, etc. Since *tianxia* is relational, it is necessary to understand the nature of relations in its original state. The Chinese *zhongyong* dialectics takes the *yin-yang* relationship as the meta-relationship and believes that its original state is harmony, defined in terms of maximum cooperation and characterized by immanent inclusivity and mutual complementarity. In line with this logic, conflict is fundamentally resolvable and harmony achievable. Global governance is used as a case to illustrate how relational governance is an important complementary approach to rule-based governance for cooperation and harmony in international society.

Salvatore BABONES | From *Tianxia* to Tianxia: A Step in the Internationalization of Chinese Political Thought
The University of Sydney

Most (though not all) scholars agree with Zhao Tingyang there existed a meaningful Chinese *tianxia* at the of the classical Zhou Dynasty. But what does the term mean today? Its meaning in Chinese is one thing; its meaning in English may be something else entirely. Just as the Greek word *hegemonia* became the English hegemony and the Latin word *imerium* became the English empire, the Chinese word *tianxia* is entering English-language political discourse as something related to, but distinct from, its original Chinese meaning(s). Like hegemony and empire before it, as tianxia enters English it is likely to lose its cultural specificity while retaining its structural implications. As a distinct form of structural power, tianxia is less immediately coercive than hegemony, which is itself less coercive than empire. A tianxia is more flexible than an empire and more durable than mere hegemony. And a tianxia is more universal than either of the two classical Western structures of power. New political structures call for new terms to describe them; tianxia may be just the term we need to describe today's messily postmodern but unprecedentedly harmonious world society.

Astrid NORDIN & Graham M. SMITH | Friendship Under Heaven: A Comparative Study of Friendship in Chinese and Western Traditions of Thought
Lancaster University
University of Leeds

This paper compares understandings of friendship in Chinese and Western traditions of thinking about political relations in the world. It focuses on the use in contemporary Anglophone and Sinophone literatures, of a range of terms that played an important role in political thinking further back in history: amity, *filia*, *amitié*, *youyi*, and others. It shows that friendship is key to contemporary articulations of *tianxia*, for example in Zhao Tingyang's relatively recent suggestion that *tianxia* thinking has the power to turn the enemy into a friend. It further suggests that as such, friendship provides a vocabulary through which scholars can relate *tianxia* thinking to comparable ideals in the context of other major cultural traditions, particularly in the West.

Dominic SACHSENMAIER | Conflicting Visions of World Order? Hidden Facets of the Encounter between the Globalizing Catholic Church and 17th-Century China
Georg-August University Göttingen

Seventeenth-century Chinese Christianity, or the "Learning of Heaven," was not shaped solely by intellectual efforts and spiritual quests. It was also impacted by hegemonic claims and efforts at institutional control by both the Chinese and Christian sides. Many tensions remained unresolved between two large systems, including their subordinate institutions: the globalizing Catholic Church and the Chinese state and society. The presentation will firstly shed light on the (highly contested) visions of global governance framing the worldwide expansion of Catholicism during the 16th and 17th century. These visions were not necessarily inclusive but could be based on hegemony, exclusion and institutional marginalization of new groups of converts. The second part of the talk will investigate the frictions that resulted from the encounter of the global Catholic church with Ming-Qing China.

WANG Ban | Does *Tianxia* Need the Nation-State?
Stanford University

Tianxia discourse has always targeted the modern nation-state system as the stumbling block to the peace and unity of the world. Yet thrust into the midst of clashing nation-states, modern China must engage the Western national model. In the wake of the fall of the Qing empire, reformers and revolutionaries devoted themselves to building a modern nation-state in order to survive as a polity and culture. Liang Qichao, Sun Yatsen, Mao and others were nationalist thinkers, but in the process of nation building they harbored on the side a *tianxia* vision beyond the nation-state. This paper will focus and elaborate on how Liang, Sun, and Mao invested in nation-building as a necessary and powerful means of realizing the cosmopolitan or internationalist vision a la *tianxia*. I will retrieve certain motifs in the Confucian classics that inform this nation-international continuum.

TAN Sor -hoon | *Tianxia* and Global Distributive Justice
Singapore Management University

The *Great Learning*'s formula for pursuing the "highest good" by progressing from personal cultivation to ordering the family, governing well the state, and bringing peace to all-under-heaven, is often cited to elucidate the Confucian conception of our responsibilities to one another in the world at large beyond the nation-state. According to Qian Mu, its influence on Chinese culture is such that "The Chinese often dissolve the concept of nation in the concept of humanity, and the concept of the nation-state in the concept of all-under heaven or the world." The concept of *tianxia*, often translated as "all-under-heaven" or simply "the world" – has become the focus of recent Confucian discourse about global order, and the rethinking of China's role in the world, as an alternative to the current nation-states based international system, since Zhao Tingyang's influential work suggesting that "What the world needs is an institutionalized system to promote universal wellbeing, not just the interests of some dominating nations." Gan Chunsong approaches the *tianxia* concept differently by emphasizing its ethical aim, with theoretical presupposition of universal good human nature. This enables Confucians to adopt a critical stance towards *de facto* institutions throughout Chinese history. This paper will explore the relationship of recent theoretical constructions of the *tianxia* concept and its potential for addressing the problems of global distributive justice.

NAKAJIMA Takahiro | Universalizing *Tianxia* in East Asian Context
The University of Tokyo

The concept "tianxia" is unique in its spread in East Asian Context. It was a universal concept in pre-modern period there. For example, Japanese intellectuals thought of political and civilized universe through this concept. However, after the western concept "world" as new universality entered East Asia, it was marginalized to a local and cultural concept. Now, Chinese intellectuals try to elaborate it as a universal concept again. It could be interpreted as a recovery of "right of discourse." What type of universality is at stake in this phenomenon? By referring to previous efforts to universalize *tianxia* in East Asian context, I would like to shed light to this question.

Liam KELLEY | Separate But Connected: Vietnam's *Tianxia* in the Nineteenth Century
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

In premodern Vietnamese historical sources written in classical Chinese, the term "*tianxia*" appears frequently. When it is used, however, it refers not to the same "*tianxia*" in Chinese sources, but to a more specific Vietnamese "*tianxia*": the "*tianxia*" or "universe" of the Vietnamese. That said, the fact that this Chinese term is used in a Vietnamese context is an indication of the many ways in which the concept of "*tianxia*" in Vietnam was the same as the concept of "*tianxia*" was in China at that time. But what exactly was the Vietnamese "*tianxia*"? In this paper we will discuss how the educated elite in nineteenth-century Vietnam understood "*tianxia*" by examining the various ways in which they envisioned the "universe" around them. Here particular note will be made of how the history of Vietnamese expansion towards the south and their interactions with people of different ethnicities, especially the Cham and Khmer, influenced the perceptions of the Vietnamese elite of their own "*tianxia*."

WANG Qingxin | Comparing the Ancient Chinese *Tianxia* Order During the Spring Autumn Period and the Modern International Order: Prospects and Problems
Tsinghua University

This paper compares the ancient Chinese *tianxia* order during the Spring Autumn period with the modern international order based on the nation-state system. It argues that there are some important similarities despite apparent differences and draw some implications for the future of the international order in light of China's rise as global power. The first part of the paper argues that there are four major similarities: First, both international orders are hierarchical; Second, both international orders have a distinct flavor cosmopolitanism; Third, both international orders rely on a system of international ethical norms and laws in the maintenance of the international orders. lastly, both international orders have emphasized the importance of a coalition of military powers to support the orders. The second part of the paper explores the possibility of integrating the Confucian *tianxia* order into the modern international order.

WANG Binfan | Humanity and Political Meritocracy without Family and State: Kang Youwei's Ideal of Confucian Cosmopolitanism in *Book of the Great Unity*
University of Toronto

As a famous Confucian thinker and reformer, Kang Youwei finished *Book of the Great Unity* (*Datong Shu*) in 1902 to explore his ideal of world order in the future. However, Kang's ideal was usually labeled as "communism" or "utopian socialism" because of his proposal to abolish diverse "boundaries" in the real world, and sharply criticized by some Confucian scholars because he regarded both family and state which are crucial concepts for Confucianism as "boundaries." For those critics, it seems that Kang Youwei—so-called "the Martin Luther of Confucianism"—betrayed Confucianism in the end. This paper is going to revise such misunderstandings and see how Kang developed an idea of Confucian Cosmopolitanism without family and state. Confucianism highlights the significance of family and state because they form the basic structure of human society to make the practice of virtues (such as humanity) possible. Such practice, as well as the moral hierarchy based on that, determines political meritocracy as the mainstream of Confucian political philosophy. However, for Kang, the framework above is for the age of fairly well-off (Xiaokang), and we need to make great efforts to overcome this age to reach the age of great unity (Datong) which prevents all deficiencies in the previous age. That does not aim to replace Confucian virtues (humanity) and political philosophy (meritocracy) with any other values, but to reconstruct the basic social structure to build up a new world for the future. By going through his images of the new world in the book, we will see how humanity and political meritocracy are well-preserved in the age of great unity when traditional family and state are abolished, and how it could come true in the modern world with diverse traditions interacting with each other. No matter how we think of the possibility for Kang's ideal, we should admit that he never betray Confucianism but considered about the future of this long-lasting tradition in the age of globalization instead.

Christian URL | Veiling Ideology or Enabling Utopia? On the Potentials and Limitations of the Debate about *Tianxia* as a Model for a New World Order
Ghent University

The emergence of what has been called "Chimerica" as the main axis around which the global economy rotates in the early 21st century, and the increasingly nationalist rhetoric in China, in the USA, and elsewhere corresponds to the increasing contradictions of the global capitalist world order. The appeal of *tianxia* lies in the hope to construct an alternative to the existing world-order, an alternative that would enable us to effectively take on the social, political, and environmental challenges that may make an end to organized human life entirely. However, oscillating between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the debate on Confucian relational ethics as a foundation for an alternative world order risks reproducing rather than overcoming the contradictions and conflicts of global capitalist modernity. In my paper I will discuss the question of what had to happen to really unleash the critical potentials of *tianxia*, and to prevent Zhao Tingyang's "world system" (*tianxia tixi*), or Hu Angang's "Chinese dream" (*Zhonggou meng*) from remaining mere expressions of the alienated conditions under global capitalism. This was of course what happened in the attempts, for example, of the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō and his students to reinterpret Japan's war effort to bring "the world under a single roof" (*hakkō ichiu*) as an attempt to build a harmonious and co-operative "new world order" (*sekai shinchitsujo*) based on "Eastern values". How is the contemporary discourse of Zhao Tingyang and others different from the earlier discourse in inter-war and wartime Japan? And what is required concretely to realize *tianxia* as an alternative order today? Rather than the sheer evocation of Confucian values, this realization, arguably, requires the creation of concrete social and political institutions and economic conditions which allow such values to be lived and enacted in the first place, and thus, as I will argue, an overcoming of the existing capitalist order.

Mogobe B. RAMOSE | "We choose the Moon" for truth, justice and peace: a dialogue between *ubuntu* and *pu jen*
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, South Africa

The citation in this title refers to the famous "we choose the Moon" speech delivered by President J F Kennedy at the Rice University Stadium, Houston, Texas in 1961. Kennedy's option for the Moon was an option for the world insofar as it defined the interaction of the United States of America with the peoples of the world. It is invoked here to underline the point that the dialogue between *ubuntu*; an African philosophical concept and, *pu jen;* a Chinese philosophical concept concerns not only Africa and China but the West as represented by Kennedy and all other peoples of the world as actors in different guises in the unfolding international relations. "Peace on Earth" echoes Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in terris* to recognise the crucial importance of involving all the religions of the world in the quest for peace in the world. The thesis to be defended in this essay is that the ethical dimension of both *ubuntu* and *pu jen* demands another model of global human relations in pursuit of truth, justice and peace in the world. The ethical convergence between *pu jen* – "an unbearing heart" and *ubuntu* "promote life and avoid killing" will be explained and used to question the apparent

dogma of the inalienability, inviolability and eternity of sovereign statehood. The argument here is that this apparent dogma is a basic obstacle to the quest for truth, justice and peace in the world.

Key concepts: *Choice, Moon, ubuntu, pu jen, dogma, truth, sovereignty*

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