

# Chinese Political Theology: Myth and Reality

Jason Morgan

## Abstract

Political theology is a concept from the writings of Carl Schmitt, updated from much older ideas of statecraft, according to which the ultimate grounding of political sovereignty is metaphysical. The dominant Han Chinese theme of political theology has long been that of *tianxia*, or the all-under-heaven, the rule of which passed from dynasty to dynasty, ruler to ruler, according to the vicissitudes of the *tianming*, or the mandate of heaven. However, Mongolian and Tibetan political theologies greatly complicate the purported Han Chinese political theology which insists upon viewing “China” as an integrated, diachronic political continuity. In this paper, I rely on the work of Mongolian scholar Yang Haiying and others to challenge the received wisdom of *tianxia* political theology.

## Keywords

political theology; *tianxia*; Mongolia; Tibet; Chinggis Khan; Tengri; chakravartin; Carl Schmitt

## Introduction

German political theorist Carl Schmitt’s (1888-1985) 1922 book *Political Theology* formulated for modern readers a concept familiar from virtually every state in history.<sup>1</sup> For Schmitt, political theology

recognizes that political sovereignty is ultimately grounded in theological justifications, or that political legitimacy is, in the final analysis, not political but metaphysical.<sup>2</sup> Sovereigns and governments, in other words, appeal to something beyond the present dynamics of power and rule to explain the political order. From Egyptian pharaohs to American presidents, from ancient Romans to the Russian czars, and from Aztec kings to African nobility, there have been few leaders who have not framed their administrations within a much larger cosmogony of supernatural forces acting through the state in human society.<sup>3</sup> Even—especially—overtly secular rulers, such as those of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Communist states, abide under a mythos of class, party, and ideological struggle which situates the passing present within a saga of political righteousness. Might is clothed in reason by whatever political theology a sovereign deploys.

In “The Theological Roots of Modern Chinese Political Thought: A Voegelinian Interpretation,” Jin Li and Li Ma track the modern Chinese understanding of political theology to the seminal 1922 text by Carl Schmitt.<sup>4</sup> Li and Ma are concerned with the political theology of Chinese Communism, but as Jarosław Marek Duraj argues elsewhere in the same volume, Eric Voegelin identified the Chinese concept of *tianxia* (天下) (and its “degraded political form” of the state, *guo* (國)) as an “ecumenic dichotomy,” which I understand as the basic political theology of

<sup>1</sup> Political theology is an ancient concept in the West. Thomas Hobbes is often credited with having first formulated political theology for the emerging Machiavellian state, but as Michael Oakeshott argues, Hobbes revived an idea that predated Christian political theology (such as that expounded, at an early stage in Christian politics, by St. Augustine). Michael Oakeshott, “Introduction to *Leviathan*,” in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (New and Expanded Edition) (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991), pp. 288-294

<sup>2</sup> See Naruse Shō, “Reigai to chitsujo: Carl Schmitt ni okeru ‘seiji shingaku’ to ‘seijiteki na mono,’” *Nagoya Daigaku Jinbungaku Kenkyū Ronshū*, no. 1 (2018), p. 1. For a background to Schmitt’s development of the political theology idea, see Kosano Kazuko, “Carl Schmitt ‘Seiji Shingaku’ no gaiyō,” *Daitō Hōsei Ronshū*, no. 26 (2017), pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> “The metaphysical of the world produced by a certain epoch is exactly the sociology of the concept of sovereignty. In fact it proves, as Edward Caird said of August Comte, that metaphysics is the most intense and clearest expression of an epoch.” Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* (1922), p. 51, cited in Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology* (Cambridge, England: Polity, 2008), p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Jin Li and Li Ma, “The Theological Roots of Modern Chinese Political Thought: A Voegelinian Interpretation,” in Lee Trepanier, ed., *Eric Voegelin’s Asian Political Thought* (London, England: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), p. 30

Chinese history.<sup>5</sup> The overriding dogma of Chinese political theology, from antiquity to the present Communist dispensation, is that the power to order *tianxia*, brokered by the mandate of heaven (*tianming* 天命), is conferred on successive *guo*, or dynasties, but that these dynasties form a continuum which expresses, diachronically, the essence of the *guo*, or *zhonghua* (中華) (a coalesced efflorescence or prosperity).<sup>6</sup> Even authors skeptical of Chinese claims to a diachronic paramountcy of East Asia repeat the fundamental Chinese political theology of a perduring *tianxia* recycled, through the brokerage of *tianming*, across various *guo*, or dynasties, which together form “thousands of years” of Chinese rule.<sup>7</sup> Chinese scholar Zhang Weiwei’s *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* could stand as the model of this kind of political-theological exegesis—Zhang contrasts “China” with “the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley and Greece,” noting that, while these have not “continued till the present day and functioned within unified modern states,” the *wenming xing guojia* (文明型国家), or

“civilizational state” of China, has.<sup>8</sup>

However, it is not so simple to project the political theology of *tianxia* into the past and call all of the polities which have controlled various portions of continental East Asia over the past three millennia or so “China.”<sup>9</sup> The New Qing History of the late twentieth century alerted Western scholars to a fact which a focus on Chinese-language documents had long obscured: “China” is shot through with a welter of political theologies, many of them tailored to the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures which the borders of “China” at any given point have comprised.<sup>10</sup> *Tianxia*—“all under heaven”—is a political theology which has been co-opted by many non-Chinese, even “barbarian,” rulers to ends entirely other than the fiction of dynastic succession upon which the edifice of “Chinese history” rests.<sup>11</sup> The most formidable challenge to Chinese political theology comes from the Mongols, to whom we now briefly turn.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jarosław Marek Duraj, “Re-thinking Chinese Ecumene in the Global Age,” in Lee Trepanier, ed., *Eric Voegelin’s Asian Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 9. See also Walter Scheidel, “From the ‘Great Convergence’ to the ‘First Great Divergence’: Roman and Qin-Han State Formation and Its Aftermath,” in Walter Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 11. Terada Hiroaki explicates and contextualizes the devolution of *tianxia* to *guo* in “Chūgoku kindai hōshi no gairyaku,” in *Chūgoku hōseishi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2018), pp. 336-338.

<sup>6</sup> The reality of this brokerage can be seen in Sima Qian’s account of Shang Yang’s encounter with Duke Xiao of Qin. See Jin Jin, “The Decay of Order for the Progress of an Empire: Shang Yang’s Proposal for Fundamental Reform in the *Records of the Grand Historian*,” in Lee Trepanier, ed., *Eric Voegelin’s Asian Political Thought*, op. cit., pp. 77-91. Paul Goldin’s “Li Si, Chancellor of the Universe” also provides a helpful window on imperial ideology. Paul Goldin, *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004). See also Machida Saburō, “Ri Shi wo megutte,” *Chūgoku Tetsugaku Ronshū*, vol. 9 (October 1983), pp. 1-16. Li Si’s sovereign, Qin Shihuangdi, understood at least part of the theology of politics. See Jie Shi, “Incorporating All for One: The First Emperor’s Tomb Mound,” *Early China*, vol. 37 (2014), pp. 359-391. For an overview of *zhonghua* ideology, see chapter two, “Chūka bunmei no genri,” in Kō Bunyu, *Rekishi ni wa nanika: Nichi, Chū, Tai, Kan no rekishi no sai wo kyoshiteki ni toraeru* (Tokyo: Jiyuusha, 2017), pp. 53-85. See also Ari Daniel Levine, “Review of Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012),” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 133, no. 3 (2013), pp. 574-577.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Gideon Rachman, *Easternization: Asia’s Rise and America’s Decline: From Obama to Trump and Beyond* (New York, NY: Other Press, 2016), p. 2, Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2015), p. 11, citing Lucian W. Pye and Nathan Leites, “Nuances in Chinese Political Culture,” RAND Corporation, 1970, Document Number P-4504, and Klaus Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), pp. 2-4. An excellent visual representation of this imagined continuity over time is in Wang Yong, *Zhongguo ditu shi wang* (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1958) and Cao Wanru et al., eds., *An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China: From the Warring States Period to the Yuan Dynasty (476 BC—AD 1368)* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1990). See also the prologue in Josh Rogin, *Chaos under Heaven: Trump, Xi, and the Battle for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Zhang Weiwei, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack, NJ: World Century, 2012), p. 2. A rather extreme example of the diachronic extension of the “civilizational state” is in Su Chen-shen and Lee Rong-tsun, *Zhongguo lishi tushuo (yi): xianshi shidai* (Taipei: Xinxin Wenhua, 1979), in which the authors begin the story of Chinese civilization before the rise of Peking Man.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Patricia Ebrey: “Max Weber, in his writing on China, referred to a unitary Chinese empire, one that lasted more than two thousand years. This reflected the common nineteenth-century European view of Asia as static and unchanging. Contemporary understandings of Chinese history are quite different. Changes in dynasties were not simply changes in the family that supplied the ruler. The transition between major dynasties—especially the five that lasted two hundred years or more (Han, Tang, Song, Ming and Qing)—were generally marked by major disruptions in the power structure.” But even Ebrey sees “a succession of states/empires in China,” taking “China” as a diachronic category. “China as a Contrasting Case: Bureaucracy and Empire in Song China,” in Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, eds., *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 31, citing Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1964). See also Viren Murthy, “Review of Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012),” *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2 (2013), p. 409.

<sup>10</sup> On the New Qing History, see, e.g., Evelyn S. Rawski, “Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4 (November 1996), pp. 829-850. But see also Charles Horner, “China and the Historians,” in *A China Scholar’s Long March: Writings and Reflections, 1978-2015* (Portland, ME: MerwinAsia, 2018), pp. 161-173.

<sup>11</sup> See also Yasuda Jirō, *Chūgoku kinsei shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1948), pp. 3-4.

## All under Tengri, All from Chinggis Khan

It is well known that “China” has often been ruled by non-Han peoples. The last imperial dynasty, the Qing, for example, was Manchurian, a legacy of the Jin (1115-1234) and of Nurhaci (1559-1626), the political theologian who made the peoples who would later be known as the Manchus into a receptacle for statecraft imagination forming them into a political force. While Chinese scholars past and present have been anxious to imbricate non-Han dynasties into the *tianxia* political theology, insisting that “barbarian” rulers were “Sinicized” and took on the polish of Han civilization while nestled in the folds of the “Great State,” the documentary reality is that even the most apparently Sinoform Qing rulers, such as Kangxi (1654-1722) and Qianlong (1711-1799), retained their Manchurian prerogatives.

But even when it is admitted that non-Han identity was nurtured under Sinic *tianxia* political theology paradigms, the continuity implied by *tianxia* ideology remains intact. Mongolian scholar Yang Haiying (楊海英) (Ohno Akira (大野旭), Oghonos Chogtu) explodes this continuity in his oeuvre. In one of his most recent works, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku shi: Eurasia no shiten kara*, Yang carries the logic of non-Sinic, in particular Mongolian, rule over Han-plural domains to its natural conclusion.<sup>13</sup> Yang writes that the Chinese notion of “four thousand years of Chinese history” is a “naïve aspiration and daydream” (*tenshin ranman na ganbō ya kūsdō*), and that the actual history of what Yang calls “Shina,” following the Western appellation (which does not include the built-in chauvinism of *zhonghua* ideology), is vastly different from what Han historians have written down. Looking from the perspective of the steppes and their empires, Yang finds not continuity but gaps and

breaks throughout the “Chinese” civilizational history commonly presented from non-Mongolian, largely Sinophilic perspectives.<sup>14</sup>

Yang’s historiography thus inverts the *tianxia* mode of interpretation. But Yang goes farther, arguing that the Eurasian nomads are “one civilization” and tracking the cultural cadences which give continuity and consistency to this group—a group which, it must be remembered, brought forth the most expansive empire in the history of the world.<sup>15</sup> Although he engages heavily with anthropologist Umesao Tadao’s (1920-2010) 1957 *Bunmei no seitai shikan*, a work which is beyond our purposes here, it is important for us that Yang explicates the material culture of the nomads (namely, their reliance upon transhumant practices to provide mobility across the vast steppe) as well as their “theological politics” (to coin a phrase) of worship of heaven (Tengri), one of whose aspects is the “Eternal Blue Sky”.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Yang inverts the political theology of *tianxia* to the ultimate degree, arguing that the “son of heaven” doctrine which anchored Chinese political theology from the time of the Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046-256 BC) was imported from nomadic culture, which had long before been worshiping heaven.<sup>17</sup> The “barbarians” were not Sinicized, in other words. The Han were Mongolized.

Yang also dismantles a modern dogma of Chinese political theology, namely the fiction that the People’s Republic of China is a model of racial tolerance. In *Genocide to Bunka Dai Kakumei*, for example, Yang details the harrowing years during the Cultural Revolution when Mao Zedong (1893-1976), Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), and several other authorities within the Chinese Communist Party planned, ordered, and later covered up the mass murder of Mongolians.<sup>18</sup> The political theology that “China is

<sup>12</sup> See J. Daniel Rogers, Erdenebat Ulambayar, and Mathew Gallon, “Urban Centres and the Emergence of Empires in Eastern Inner Asia,” *Antiquity*, vol. 79 (2005), pp. 801-818, and Agyn Khairulloevich Kazymzhanov and Keith Owen Tribble, “The Political Tradition of the Steppe,” *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 26, no. 3 (September 1998), pp. 453-472.

<sup>13</sup> Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku shi: Eurasia no shiten kara* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2019)

<sup>14</sup> Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku*, op. cit., pp. 14-15

<sup>15</sup> Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku*, op. cit., p. 79. See also David O. Morgan, *The Mongols* (2e) (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku*, op. cit., pp. 86-91, citing Umesao Tadao, *Bunmei no seitai shikan* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1967), and pp. 114-116. See also Sanping Chen, “Son of Heaven and Son of God: Interactions among Ancient Asiatic Cultures regarding Sacral Kingship and Theophoric Names,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, vol. 12, no. 3 (2002), p. 307, and Paul D. Buell and Judith Kolbas, “The Ethos of State and Society in the Early Mongol Empire: Chinggis Khan to Güyük,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, vol. 26, nos. 1-2 (2016), pp. 44-45.

<sup>17</sup> Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku*, op. cit., pp. 115-116, citing Kaizuka Shigeki and Itō Michiharu, *Kodai Chūgoku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000). See also Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, “The Rise of the Chinggisid Dynasty: Pre-Modern Eurasian Political Order and Culture at a Glance,” *International Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2018), pp. 39-84.

<sup>18</sup> “China Tries Ethnic Mongolian Historian for Genocide Book, in Secret,” Federal Government Documents and Publications (April 12, 2019), Yang Haiying, “Japan’s ‘Southern Mongolia Parliamentary Alliance’ Is Historically Significant,” JAPAN Forward (June 4, 2021), and Southern Mongolia Congress, “Press Conference on Southern Mongolian Genocide to UNESCO’s Memory of the World Programme” (July 5, 2017)

the ancestral homeland of the Mongols” is belied by the campaign of ethnic cleansing and programmatic historical amnesia which the Chinese Communist Party carried out.<sup>19</sup> The persistence of the Chinggisid line in Mongolia also appears to serve as a reminder to the Han authorities that Mongolia pulls back the curtain on Chinese political theology.<sup>20</sup> The ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign in Mongolia, including the erasure of Mongolian language and the transplantation of Mongolian people with Han colonists, attests to the truth of Yang’s interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

### Buddha and Chakravartin: The Lamaist Dissent from Chinese Political Theology

The political theology of a succession of dynasties entrusted with the *tianxia* is further complicated by the Tibetan, and the Tibeto-Mongolian, currents of Asian history.<sup>22</sup> (I elide here the additional challenge to *tianxia* political theology presented by Temür (1336-1405) and his appeal to Islam for justification for his conquest.<sup>23</sup>) Mongol rule was often conceptually gridded within the cosmos of Tibetan Buddhism, so that even the religious and philosophical props for Chinese political theology (namely Daoism and Confucianism) were sometimes attenuated or outright ignored. Kublai Khan’s (1215-1294) rule over “China” after his “accession to—or usurpation of—the Yuan throne,” writes Veronika Veit, was legitimized by the “*khoyar yosun*” dual-order model of lama and king, with Kublai as the putative “*cakravartin-rajā*,” or “universal emperor who turned the wheel of the law” in accordance with Tibetan

Buddhist political theology.<sup>24</sup> It is true that Kublai couched his realm’s Han-facing political theology in the language of the “Great State”.<sup>25</sup> But the emerging scholarly picture of Mongolian statecraft is dyed much more deeply in Buddhist hues than in the festal vermilion of the Han state.<sup>26</sup>

This Tibetan complication to Chinese political theology is presented in historical and international legal detail in Michael van Walt van Praag and Miek Boltjes’ *Tibet Brief 20/20*. In this volume, van Walt van Praag and Boltjes explain that Tibet was never, by any measure, a part of China, despite the Chinese Communist Party’s insistence to the contrary. One of the main problems with Beijing’s current argument, van Walt van Praag and Boltjes write, is that “in historical Inner and East Asia, sovereignty—defined simply as the lawful authority of a ruler to wield power over his subjects—was tied to the person of the ruler and not to a specific territory and was mostly conceived as divisible. Thus, sovereignty was mostly layered or shared and was rarely supreme.”<sup>27</sup> The current Chinese political theology of “one China” extending in territorial and racialist continuity over, for example, Tibet, is a modern fiction. According to van Walt van Praag and Boltjes, this fiction has grounding neither in the political theology (heavily influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and, later, Mongolian Buddhism) of Inner or East Asia, nor in modern international law.<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion

The political theology of China teaches that a consistent and diachronically integrated state,

<sup>19</sup> Yang Haiying, *Genocide to Bunka Dai Kakumei: Uchi Mongoru no minzoku mondai* (Tokyo: Bensei, 2014), p. 46

<sup>20</sup> See Yang Haiying, *Chingisu Hān saishi: kokoromi to shite no rekishi jinruigakuteki saikōsei* (Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> On the persistence of the Chinggisid line, see Yang Haiying, *Chingisu Hān no matsuei: gendai Chūōgoku wo ikita ōjo Suchinkanru* (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> See Batujirghal and Yang Haiying, *Arjai Grotto: The Rise and Fall of a Buddhist Memorial for Chinggis Khan* (Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> See Michal Biran, “The Mongols in Central Asia from Chinggis Khan’s Invasion to the Rise of Temür: the Ögödeid and Chaghadaid Realms,” in Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 46-66.

<sup>24</sup> Veronika Veit, “The Eastern Steppe: Mongol Regimes after the Yuan (1368-1636),” in Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, op. cit., p. 171. On the complexities of Buddhist political ritual in Tibet and Mongolia, see Solomon George FitzHerbert, “An Early Tibetan Gesar *bsang* Text,” *Archiv Orientalni*, vol. 84 (2016), pp. 467-526. See also Kirill Alexeev, “Anatomy of the Mongolian Colophons in the Translation of the Word of the Buddha,” *Archiv Orientalni*, vol. 87 (2019), pp. 315-331, and George FitzHerbert, “Constitutional Mythologies and Entangled Cultures in the Tibeto-Mongolian Gesar Epic: The Motif of Gesar’s Celestial Descent,” *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 129 (2016), pp. 297-326.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Brook, *Great State: China and the World* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2020), p. 31

<sup>26</sup> See “Chinese Legitimation of the Mongol Regime and the Legacy of ‘Unification,’” in Timothy Brook, Michael van Walt van Praag, and Miek Boltjes, eds., *Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations since Chinggis Khan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 49-56.

<sup>27</sup> Michael van Walt van Praag and Miek Boltjes, *Tibet Brief 20/20* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2020), pp. 34-35

<sup>28</sup> See also Maria Adele Carrai, “Learning Western Technique of Empire: Republican China and the New Legal Framework for Managing Tibet,” *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 30 (2017), pp. 801-824.

*zhonghua*, has persisted across a stretch of thousands of years, undergoing continual reconstitution and disintegration, phoenixlike, according to the dialectical mechanism of the “mandate of heaven.” In this essay, I have attempted to demonstrate that this political theology is not tenable even as mythos. The historical record simply does not support the *tianxia* political theology of what many still refer to as “China.” Today, the People’s Republic of China claims dominion over East Turkestan, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, Taiwan, and even the Qing’s former Ryūkyū trading partner and quasi-client state (Okinawa). By an extension of the racialist Han paradigm, the People’s Republic also expects so-called “overseas Chinese” (*huaqiao*) to maintain a degree of allegiance to the Chinese “motherland,” an expectation of racial solidarity arguably voiced by no other modern state after the sobering examples provided by the Third Reich, Rwanda, Bosnia, and apartheid South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

And yet, political theology appears to be indestructible. Many have remarked that the current leader of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, is attempting to revive the authoritarian model of Mao Zedong, who in turn was often heralded as an emperor in his own right.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese Communist Party, it could be argued, has assumed the mantle of heavenly approbation, and now holds the *tianxia* lost by the Qing, scattered by war with the Nationalists and Japan, but preserved, like a Vestal Virgin cupping a guttering sacred flame of state, during the Long March to Yan’an.<sup>31</sup> It would appear that the current “China Dream” is not merely to recover the glories of the central efflorescence (*zhonghua*) in possession of the all-under-heaven, but to “Sino-form”

the rest of the planet using the technologies now available to modern states.<sup>32</sup>

However, there is ongoing dissent to what remains the dominant political theology in East Asia, even after the apparent rise of the ideological Westphalian state. A 2016 article by Sharad K. Soni invokes the Buddhist legacies of the past in considering the “emerging dimensions of India-Mongolia Relations,” for example, and Natalie Köhle has questioned whether, as has been generally assumed, the “Manchu Qing emperors had no personal commitment to Buddhism”.<sup>33</sup> Others have also revisited the place of Buddhism in the previous model of Chinese political theology, such as Wen-Shing Chou’s investigation of the “Buddhist universe” of the court of the thirteenth Dalai Lama.<sup>34</sup> Some scholars are going even farther back, disentangling the political theology of, for instance, the Tang Dynasty from lesser regional states.<sup>35</sup> The archaeological record, too, continues to yield new clues about the pre- and extra-Sinic political theologies which competed with, and often overpowered, the political theology of *tianxia*.<sup>36</sup>

## Bibliography

- Alexeev, Kirill. 2019. “Anatomy of the Mongolian Colophons in the Translation of the Word of the Buddha”. *Archiv Orientalní*, vol. 87.
- Batujirghal and Yang Haiying. 2005. *Arjai Grotto: The Rise and Fall of a Buddhist Memorial for Chinggis Khan*. Tokyo: Fūkyōsha.
- Biran, Michal. 2009. “The Mongols in Central Asia

<sup>29</sup> A harrowing exploration of the comparison between the People’s Republic of China and South Africa under apartheid is at Michael J. Walsh, *Stating the Sacred: Religion, China, and the Formation of the Nation-State* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2020), pp. ix-xix.

<sup>30</sup> Yang Haiying, *Dokusai no Chūgoku gendaishi: Mō Takutō kara Shū Kinpei made* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2019)

<sup>31</sup> See chapter seven, “Controlling Legends,” in Rowan Callick, *The Party Forever: Inside China’s Modern Communist Elite* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 117-129. See also “The Xi Vision” in Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 2-5, and Frank Dikötter, *How to Be a Dictator: The Cult of Personality in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> David P. Goldman, *You Will Be Assimilated: China’s Plan to Sino-Form the World* (New York, NY: Bombardier Books, 2020). See also Yang Haiying, “*Chūgoku*” to *iu shinwa*: *Shū Kinpei “Idainaru Chūka minzoku” no uso* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2018), pp. 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Sharad K. Soni, “Emerging Dimensions of India-Mongolia Relations,” *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January-March 2016), pp. 51-62, and Natalie Köhle, “Why did the Kangxi Emperor Go to Wutai Shan? Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Place of Tibetan Buddhism at the Early Qing Court,” *Late Imperial China*, vol. 29, no. 1 (June 2008), pp. 73-119.

<sup>34</sup> Wen-Shing Chou, “Reimagining the Buddhist Universe: Pilgrimage and Cosmography in the Court of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933),” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2 (May 2014), pp. 419-445

<sup>35</sup> Christian Daniels, “Nanzhao as a Southeast Asian Kingdom, c. 738-902,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 2 (June 2021), pp. 188-213.

<sup>36</sup> See Christopher Evans and Caroline Humphrey, “History, Timelessness and the Monumental: The Oboos of the Mergen Environs, Inner Mongolia,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2003), pp. 195-211, and Yang Haiying, *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku shi*, op. cit., pp. 199-205. On the perennial questions of empire for the Chinese state, see Ming Wan, “Discourses on Salt and Iron: A First Century B.C. Chinese Debate over the Political Economy of Empire,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, vol. 17 (2012), pp. 143-163.

- from Chinggis Khan's Invasion to the Rise of Temür: The Ögödeid and Chaghadaid Realms". In Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden, eds. *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Brook, Timothy. 2020. *Great State: China and the World*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Brook, Timothy, Michael van Walt van Praag, and Miek Boltjes, eds. 2018. *Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations since Chinggis Khan*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Buell, Paul D. and Judith Kolbas. 2016. "The Ethos of State and Society in the Early Mongol Empire: Chinggis Khan to Güyük". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3*, vol. 26, nos. 1-2.
- Callick, Rowan. 2013. *The Party Forever: Inside China's Modern Communist Elite*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cao Wanru et al., eds. 1990. *An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China: From the Warring States Period to the Yuan Dynasty (476 BC—AD 1368)*. Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House.
- Carrai, Maria Adele. 2017. "Learning Western Technique of Empire: Republican China and the New Legal Framework for Managing Tibet". *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 30.
- Chen, Sanping. 2002. "Son of Heaven and Son of God: Interactions among Ancient Asiatic Cultures regarding Sacral Kingship and Theophoric Names". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3*, vol. 12, no. 3.
- "China Tries Ethnic Mongolian Historian for Genocide Book, in Secret". 2019. Federal Government Documents and Publications.
- Chou, Wen-Shing. 2014. "Reimagining the Buddhist Universe: Pilgrimage and Cosmography in the Court of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933)". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2.
- Daniels, Christian. 2021. "Nanzhao as a Southeast Asian Kingdom, c. 738-902". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 2.
- Dikötter, Frank. 2019. *How to Be a Dictator: The Cult of Personality in the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Duraj, Jarosław Marek. 2020. "Re-thinking Chinese Ecumene in the Global Age". In Lee Trepanier, ed. *Eric Voegelin's Asian Political Thought*. London, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ebrey, Patricia. 2016. "China as a Contrasting Case: Bureaucracy and Empire in Song China". In Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, eds., *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Economy, Elizabeth C. 2018. *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, Christopher and Caroline Humphrey. 2003. "History, Timelessness and the Monumental: the Oboos of the Mergen Environs, Inner Mongolia". *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2.
- FitzHerbert, Solomon George. 2016. "An Early Tibetan Gesar bsang Text". *Archiv Orientální*, vol. 84.
- . 2016. "Constitutional Mythologies and Entangled Cultures in the Tibeto-Mongolian Gesar Epic: The Motif of Gesar's Celestial Descent". *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 129.
- Goldin, Paul. 2004. *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Goldman, David P. 2020. *You Will Be Assimilated: China's Plan to Sino-Form the World*. New York, NY: Bombardier Books.

- Horner, Charles. 2018. *A China Scholar's Long March: Writings and Reflections, 1978-2015*. Portland, ME: MerwinAsia.
- Jie Shi. 2014. "Incorporating All for One: The First Emperor's Tomb Mound". *Early China*, vol. 37.
- Jin Jin. 2020. "The Decay of Order for the Progress of an Empire: Shang Yang's Proposal for Fundamental Reform in the Records of the Grand Historian". In Lee Trepanier, ed. *Eric Voegelin's Asian Political Thought*. London, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kaizuka Shigeki and Itō Michiharu. 2000. *Kodai Chūgoku*. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Kazymzhanov, Agyn Khairulloevich and Keith Owen Tribble. 1998. "The Political Tradition of the Steppe". *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 26, no. 3.
- Kō Bunyu. 2017. *Rekishī to wa nanika: Nichi, Chū, Tai, Kan no rekishi no sai wo kyoshiteki ni toraeru*. Tokyo: Jiyūsha.
- Köhle, Natalie. 2008. "Why did the Kangxi Emperor Go to Wutai Shan? Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Place of Tibetan Buddhism at the Early Qing Court". *Late Imperial China*, vol. 29, no. 1.
- Kosano Kazuko. 2017. "Carl Schmitt 'Seiji Shingaku' no gaiyō". *Daitō Hōsei Ronshū*, no. 26.
- Levine, Ari Daniel. 2013. "Review of Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 133, no. 3.
- Li, Jin and Li Ma. 2020. "The Theological Roots of Modern Chinese Political Thought: A Voegelinian Interpretation". In Lee Trepanier, ed. *Eric Voegelin's Asian Political Thought*. London, England: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Machida Saburō. 1983. "Ri Shi wo megutte". *Chūgoku Tetsugaku Ronshū*, vol. 9.
- Morgan, David O. 2007. *The Mongols (2e)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Mühlhahn, Klaus. 2019. *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Munkh-Erdene, Lhamsuren. 2018. "The Rise of the Chinggisid Dynasty: Pre-Modern Eurasian Political Order and Culture at a Glance". *International Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1.
- Murthy, Viren. 2013. "Review of Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012)". *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 73, no. 2.
- Naruse Shō. 2018. "Reigai to chitsujo: Carl Schmitt ni okeru 'seiji shingaku' to 'seijiteki na mono'". *Nagoya Daigaku Jinbungaku Kenkyū Ronshū*, no. 1.
- Oakeshott, Michael. 1991. *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (New and Expanded Edition)*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund.
- Pillsbury, Michael. 2015. *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Rachman, Gideon. 2016. *Easternization: Asia's Rise and America's Decline: From Obama to Trump and Beyond*. New York, NY: Other Press.
- Rawski, Evelyn S. 1996. "Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4.
- Rogers, J. Daniel, Erdenebat Ulambayar, and Mathew Gallon. 2005. "Urban Centres and the Emergence of Empires in Eastern Inner Asia". *Antiquity*, vol. 79.

- Rogin, Josh. 2021. *Chaos under Heaven: Trump, Xi, and the Battle for the 21st Century*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Scheidel, Walter. 2009. "From the 'Great Convergence' to the 'First Great Divergence': Roman and Qin-Han State Formation and Its Aftermath". In Walter Scheidel, ed. *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitt, Carl. 2008. *Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology*. Cambridge, England: Polity.
- Soni, Sharad K. 2016. "Emerging Dimensions of India-Mongolia Relations". *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1.
- Southern Mongolia Congress. 2017. "Press Conference on Southern Mongolian Genocide to UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme".
- Su Chen-shen and Lee Rong-tsuen. 1979. *Zhongguo lishi tushuo (yi): xianshi shidai*. Taipei: Xinxin Wenhua.
- Terada Hiroaki. 2018. *Chūgoku hōseishi*. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai.
- Umesao Tadao. 1967. *Bunmei no seitai shikan*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron.
- van Walt van Praag, Michael and Miek Boltjes. 2020. *Tibet Brief 20/20*. Denver, CO: Outskirts Press.
- Veit, Veronika. 2009. "The Eastern Steppe: Mongol Regimes after the Yuan (1368-1636)". In Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden, eds. *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Walsh, Michael J. 2020. *Stating the Sacred: Religion, China, and the Formation of the Nation-State*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Wan, Ming. 2012. "Discourses on Salt and Iron: A First Century B.C. Chinese Debate over the Political Economy of Empire". *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, vol. 17.
- Wang Yong. 1958. *Zhongguo ditu shi wang*. Beijing: Sanlian Shudian.
- Yang Haiying. 1995. *Chingisu Hān no matsuei: gendai Chūogoku wo ikita ōjo Suchinkanru*. Tokyo: Sōshisha.
- . 2005. *Chingisu Hān saishi: kokoromi to shite no rekishi jinruigakuteki saikōsei*. Tokyo: Fūkyōsha.
- . 2014. *Genocide to Bunka Dai Kakumei: Uchi Mongoru no minzoku mondai*. Tokyo: Bensei.
- . 2018. "Chūgoku" to iu shinwa: Shū Kinpei "Idainaru Chūka minzoku" no uso. Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.
- . 2019. *Dokusai no Chūgoku gendaishi: Mō Takutō kara Shū Kinpei made*. Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.
- . 2019. *Gyakuten no Dai Chūgoku shi: Eurasia no shiten kara*. Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.
- . 2021. "Japan's 'Southern Mongolia Parliamentary Alliance' Is Historically Significant". *JAPAN Forward*.
- Yasuda Jirō. 1948. *Chūgoku kinsei shisō kenkyū*. Tokyo: Kōbundō.
- Zhang Weiwei. 2012. *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*. Hackensack, NJ: World Century.