

# *Analysis of the Mechanism of Political Concept Generation from a Philosophical Perspective--Take the "Celestial Empire" as an Example*

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**Abstract:** There are many great civilizations, and these civilizations have created unique worldviews. The development of political concepts plays a huge role in the progress of society, and looking at the influence mechanism of political concepts with philosophical thinking helps to consolidate the in modern Chinese history, the term "Celestial Empire" appears frequently, what in modern Chinese history, the term "Celestial Empire" appears frequently, what kind of worldview this is, and what kind of impact it has brought to China, this article will briefly analyze this worldview.

## **1. Explanation of the concept of the "Celestial Empire"**

The idea of a "Celestial Empire" has a long history in our country, and since ancient times it has been said that "the barbarians have a ruler who is not as good as the fall of the Xia." "I have heard of those who change the barbarians with the Xia, but not those who change the barbarians." All of these views reflect the view of the Celestial Empire. The ancient view of the defence of Yi and Xia existed in China, which emphasised the pivot of civilisation transmission with China as the pivot, and the extension of beneficence. The traditional concept of the "Celestial Empire" had also influenced the cultural development of our country for thousands of years, and by the end of the Qing Dynasty, this idea had become deeply rooted in the minds of the old guard officials. To discuss the idea of a 'Celestial Empire', it is inevitable that we cannot avoid the idea of humility and respect for the Xia and vassal system. In the following pages, I will briefly explore these two mindsets and political institutions.

### **1.1. The consciousness of the YI to respect the XIA**

The "YIXIA VIEW" is a political and cultural viewpoint that takes the Chinese national culture as the core, denigrates the backward civilizations of the neighbouring countries and places, and attempts to use the Chinese national culture to infiltrate from the inside to the outside to achieve the purpose of transforming the barbarians through the advanced civilization of the Chinese nation[1]. It has also played a positive role in the study of ancient Chinese historiography and has been used by the old guard in modern times as an important theory of China's adherence to tradition and its rejection of Western learning. The study of the 'Celestial Empire' consciousness requires a clear

understanding of the traditional concept of Yi and Xia, which will help us to better understand the emergence and development of the worldview of the Celestial Empire.

### 1.1.1. Origin

The emergence of the concept of Yi Xia is inextricably linked to the emergence of the concept of the Chinese nation and its subsequent development of Chinese culture. According to a study on the history of China's ethnic groups by the scholar Mr Lin Huixiang, the tribes of China's ancient period gradually gave rise to numerous ethnic minorities during the long period of warfare, and these ethnic groups were summarised into sixteen lineages, including the Huaxia, the Dongyi, the Jing-Wu, the Baiyue, the Donghu, the Su Shen, the Xiongnu, the Turkic, the Mongolian, the Diao, the Qiang, the Tibetan, the Miao-Yao and the Luo-Myan. Long residing in the Central Plains, the Huaxia created a strong contrast between them and other remote nomadic peoples in China due to their relatively developed agricultural technology, and in this way, the Huaxia took the lead in creating the first feudal dynasty in our history, the Xia. The formation of the Xia established the status of Huaxia among ethnic minorities and symbolised the initial emergence of the core concept of Huaxia culture. Since then, the use of the core concept of Huaxia culture has become an important guideline for defining and dealing with the mutual relationship between the Yi and Xia cultures, gradually forming the Yi-Xia view.

### 1.1.2 The "YIXIA" view and the "Celestial Empire" view

Returning to the concept of 'China', in ancient times 'China' was also not just a geographical centre, but a political and cultural centre. In contrast to the advanced and superior Chinese civilisation, the barbarians lived in an uncivilised and backward region. As a result, when the new geographical knowledge of the West was introduced into China, it was met with fierce accusations. The fact that the old guard of the late Qing Dynasty, adhering to the traditional Chinese culture and geography of the 'Yi Xia' view, tried to counter the enormous impact of the new Western knowledge by bringing out the traditional culture of China, reflecting both the deep-rootedness of their traditional Chinese thinking and the fact that the old guard, adhering to traditional ideas, did not have a new doctrinal basis, but struggled to build on the old Chinese culture. This reflects both the deep-rootedness of their traditional Chinese thinking and the fact that the old guard, who adhered to traditional ideas, did not have a new doctrinal base, but struggled to find 'new' knowledge in the ancient library of traditional Chinese thinking to counter the entry of Western doctrine.

The Yixia view is essentially a sense of cultural identity. The old guard of the late Qing Dynasty had Chinese civilisation at its core, insisting that the oldest traditional Chinese ethical framework was perfect and flawless, and scorning the barbarism and backwardness of the West[2]. However, in a time of great change unseen in three millennia, the international landscape facing modern China is different from that of ancient times, and to look at the world and China with unchanging eyes would result in a complete lag behind the times. The traditional Chinese view of 'Yi Xia' has thus become an obstacle to modern Chinese understanding of the Western world, and the one-sided praise of Chinese culture at the expense of other cultures has only increased blind Chinese self-confidence and a proud sense of 'heavenly power'. The Chinese people's sense of pride in their own country.

## 1.2. The Vassal System

### 1.2.1. Origin and development

As a major part of China's feudal political system, the vassal system has developed and evolved in much the same way as feudal society as a whole, with different characteristics according to the

development of the times. In its way, the historical development of the feudal vassal system has its regularity, with its connotations showing an inherited relationship and interaction with external developments. This mechanism produced a certain historical connection and coherence, not as the result of fabrication or an occasional whim by those of the ruling class, but as a result of its content changing in the course of historical continuity as the time required[3].

The idea of the vassal system has its roots in the feudal system of the Western Zhou Dynasty, which was refined and matured through the dynasties and the Qing dynasty inherited the vassal system from the Ming dynasty after it entered China in 1644. The most important part of the Qing dynasty's diplomatic vassal system was the tribute relationship. On the one hand, it effectively safeguarded the territory of the Qing dynasty, enhanced the political, economic, trade and cultural ties between the Qing dynasty and the vassal states, established a ritualistic link of mutual recognition of superiority and inferiority unique to the ancient East, and replaced the traditional feudal political order of acceptance of the status of small states by the tribute method. The tributary relationship was the basis for the vassal system. However, the vassal system was also based on the consolidation of absolute authority over the suzerain state, and the tributary relationship based on the vassal system was a feudal hierarchical state order with the suzerain state at its core.

### 1.2.2. The Vassal System and Diplomacy

The Opium Wars were the first collision between the traditional Chinese order of China and the Western concept of sovereignty and order. The Opium War forcefully opened the doors of China, and at the same time brought the idea of treaties and a new concept of interaction between nations to China. The conclusion of the Treaty of Nanjing, including the Treaty of Shimonoseki after the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, was a powerful shock to China's traditional tribute system, shaking the Qing dynasty, which had occupied a central and strategically important position in this system, and the supremacy of the "Celestial Empire", which was governed by a hierarchical system. The management of foreign trade was destroyed, and the Qing authorities were forced to negotiate with the "barbarians and dijon". In 1871, after the signing of the Treaty of Amity between China and Japan, the tribute system collapsed. After the Sino-French War and the Sino-Japanese War, and after the signing of the Sino-French New Treaty and the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Vietnam and Korea were stripped out of the tribute system and the Qing dynasty's tribute system collapsed[4].

After the Opium War, with the bankruptcy of the "closed-door" policy, the shaking of the status of the "Celestial Empire", and the signing of numerous unequal treaties, the traditional tribute system was replaced by the modern Western-led treaty system, and the concept of diplomacy also changed from the traditional "Yiwu view" to the "foreign affairs view". "The transformation of China's modern diplomatic system and diplomatic philosophy also reflected the shift from the traditional foreign policy based on rituals and laws to the "foreign affairs concept". The change in China's modern diplomatic system and philosophy also reflects the shift from a vague foreign policy based on rituals and laws to a pragmatic foreign policy based on self-improvement under modern diplomacy.

The historical origins of the vassal system and the modern diplomatic practices based on the vassal system show that the "Celestial Empire" consciousness had existed in the Chinese mindset for a long time, and the influence of culture and the patriarchal system, as well as the influence of the order of superiority and inferiority with foreign countries caused by the tribute relationship, led the Qing government to take for granted that it was in the middle of the world and enjoyed the glory of all nations. The Qing government took it for granted that it was in the centre of the world and enjoyed the glory of all nations, not realising that this mentality was the root of its demise and that modern China was heading towards the abyss under the influence of such thinking.

## 2. Idea tracking: models and representations

### 2.1. Conceptual model

The main feature of the ancient Chinese economy was an agrarian one, which grew through the production of men and women and self-sufficiency. Once it rose to the national level, Chinese culture developed a characteristic that saw itself as a self-sufficient system. According to Mr Yin Haiguang, the following points are embedded in the worldview of the Tian Dynasty model[5].

(1) Self-centredness. This is a matter of historical and geographical understanding, going back to the notion of 'China', the central country of the world, which was first formed by historical factors, from ancient China onwards, a world view that the world was set in one place. Traditional Chinese intellectuals saw unification as the norm and division as chaos. Secondly, as our culture has not traditionally emphasised the importance of geographical knowledge or interaction with foreigners, it was natural for people to believe that China was in the centre of the world, given the importance of their psychology.

(2) Foreign countries were not viewed as equals. After the Qing Dynasty, our officials referred to the English as "Ying Yi" and the handling of foreign affairs as "Yi Affairs". In fact, in this state, we were in a state of isolation from many other small states, and this isolation gave rise to certain characteristics in many people. A certain pride within a man based on himself also arises in part from this isolation. In the late Qing Dynasty, there was a belief among Chinese intellectuals that all foreign systems, instruments and cultures came from China, and that the ancient Chinese philosophers had already explained the various Western systems and cultures. Under the influence of this isolation, it would lead to China moving further and further away from civilisation.

China, in its isolated plight, has shown a strong sense of its satisfaction in terms of institutions, ideas, economy and technology. There was no shortage of highly educated intellectuals in China, but it was a frightening thought that in the eyes of these intellectuals no culture or civilisation existed yet that could rival China. During the changes of the late Qing dynasty, the political situation, the social system and the entry of foreign cultures all changed dramatically, but this world view of the 'Celestial Empire' continued to appear in different places. The formation of such an ideology was therefore not supported by objective realities, but only by the correct beliefs of its proponents, by the arrogant inertia of past thinking, and by the creation of an ideological wall of its own to resist the onslaught of external ideas.

### 2.2. Manifestations of consciousness

Politically, the "Celestial Empire" consciousness manifested itself in the central posture of the political system, which has been discussed above. In 1816, when the British sent Amen Heath to China, the Qing government still treated him as a tribute envoy, and when he refused to bow down, the Jiaqing Emperor was furious, criticising him for not having a 'common master of the world'. The two British ambassadors were seen by the Qing government as no different from any other vassal state, and their arrogant political posture set the stage for the opening of the country's doors.

Economically, the 'closed door' was manifested in all the restrictions on foreign trade, the most serious of which was the ban on the sea[6]. The ban on the sea was a fundamental state policy during the Ming dynasty, and if one looks at it in terms of openness without prohibition, it was also a process of uninterrupted prohibition. The Qing government decreed that officials and citizens were forbidden to trade at sea without permission and deterred the population with penalties. The 'closed-door' policy indeed played a part in the fight against Japanese invaders and the maintenance of peace along the coast, but under the 'Celestial Empire' consciousness of China's feudal dynasties, we still thought of ourselves as the Celestial Empire, and the feudal rulers thought that our country

was vast, rich in resources and great demand at home and abroad, and did not see the need to develop foreign markets. A strong sense of self-superiority also allowed our rulers to deceive themselves, and while the West had already entered a capitalist society and undergone the industrial revolution, we were heading towards the sunset[7].

In terms of institutions, since ancient times, China has inherited a feudal dictatorship in which the monarch was the common master of the world and the political ideology of "nothing under heaven is king's land" has been maintained, while the West had developed various forms of representative government by this time. Although the Qing court made several reforms to save the Qing dynasty from destruction, the basis for the change was still based on the ideological model of the imperial examinations and state rituals alone, and few fundamental changes were made to the democratic political system, resulting in two ideological debates in the later years. The sense of "heavenly dynasties" made some Chinese intellectuals hesitant to change the system, whether the two-thousand-year-old emperor system could be abolished or not, and whether the traditional system should be abandoned or not, which were some of the obstacles to China's development in terms of institutional change caused by the concept of heavenly dynasties[8].

### 3. Revelation

Historically, the sense of the "Celestial Empire" was a major obstacle to China's development and an important influence in leading modern China into the abyss. The complete disintegration of this ideology at the end of the Qing period was also inevitable, both because of the changes in China's political environment in the late Qing and because of the links with foreign cultures, which led to the creation of new references that differed from China's original traditional thinking. The combination of these two factors led to the Chinese nation finally waking up from its tattered dream of a "heavenly dynasty", to a shaken belief in itself and the precariousness of the country. In the course of China's subsequent development, the abandonment of this 'heavenly dynasty' mentality and the study of Western systems, culture and technology had a very positive effect on China's rapid integration into the changing world and the search for a correct path for itself. We need to take foreign cultures seriously, look correctly at the gap between the development of other countries and our construction, and seek factors conducive to our development to expand our development conditions.

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