

Recentering the World

Recentering the World recovers a richly contextual, detailed history of Western-imposed legal structures in China, as well as engagements with international law by Chinese officials, jurists, and citizens. Beginning in the Late Qing era, it shows how international law functioned as a channel for power relations, techniques of economic domination, and novel forms of resistance. The book also radically diversifies traditionally Eurocentric accounts of modern international law's origins, demonstrating how, by the mid twentieth century, Chinese jurists had made major contributions to international organizations and the United Nations system, the international judiciary, the laws of armed conflict, and more. Drawing on extensive archival research, this book is a valuable guide to China's often conflicted role in international law, its reception and contention of concepts of sovereignty, property, obligation, and autonomy, and its gradual move from the "periphery" to a shared spot at the "center" of global legal order.

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Recentering the World

China and the Transformation of International Law

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人君中天下而立,则正身以为四方之标准 ... 若就君德论,则德到这处,极至而无以加。

The lord of men centers the world around him and rectifies himself to provide a standard for all four directions . . . As for the ruler's virtue, this signifies that when virtue has reached this stage it is at its utmost, and nothing can be added.

Chen Chun 陳淳, North Stream's Glossary of Scholarly Terms 北溪字義, c. 1217

巴西议员在会曾有言曰: 今知天下果无公理 ... 请侯第三次会诸君再视巴西是否强国、弱国、大国、小国。臣闻其说, 心窃壮之。

The Brazilian delegate said at one point: "Now I realize that there is after all no just principle under Heaven ... Please wait until the Third Hague Conference, gentlemen, and see whether Brazil is a strong country or a weak one, a large country or a small one." As I listened to his comments, I privately felt a sense of grand resolve.

Lu Zhengxiang 陸徵祥, Memorial to the Qing Court regarding the Second Hague Conference of 1907, January 16, 1908

依國際組織以求世界永久和平,可說是中華民國國民一致的外交原則。

The pursuit of perpetual peace in the world by means of an international organization can be considered the foreign policy that is the consensus of the whole Chinese citizenry.

Zhou Gengsheng 周鯁生, "Xianfa Zhong de Waijiao Yuanze 憲法中的外交原則" [Principles of Diplomacy in the Constitution], Zhongyang Ribao 中央日报, December 28, 1946



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