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Critical-Decolonial Perspective on the Construction of China and the Legacy of Fúxī

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Abstract

The research aims to investigate the construction of the Modern Chinese State from a critical-decolonial perspective, highlighting the cultural and symbolic influence of the myth of Fúxī and the Eight Trigrams – the latter symbolizing a worldview centered on harmony and self-organization, values that contributed to the social and political structuring of China, shaping a model that sought to resist coloniality and preserve cultural autonomy. The analysis aims to understand how China incorporated aspects of its traditional worldview, reflecting a resilient identity and a system of values that guided the country in its rise as a global power. The research method used was qualitative and critical-decolonial, with deductive method, historical and documentary analysis. And it revealed that, unlike the Western model of modernization that imposes a break with traditions in favor of the adoption of exogenous institutional structures, the Chinese integrated tradition and modernity. In this sense, these are not just cultural symbols of the past, but structuring pillars of contemporary governance.

Keywords: Modern Chinese State, Critical-Decolonial Perspective, Cultural Autonomy, Political Science

1. Introduction

This study begins with the central problem of how the mythology of *Fúxī* (伏羲) and the Eight Trigrams (八卦, *bāguà*), as cultural and philosophical pillars, influenced the formation and consolidation of the Modern Chinese State, both in the construction of its political identity and in the integration of ancestral values in a contemporary context. The main objective is to analyze how those mythological and philosophical elements acted in strengthening social cohesion and in preserving a worldview that supports the political, cultural and spiritual foundations of modern China.

The relevance lies in the impact that traditional Chinese mythology and philosophy have had on the construction of a resilient and unique political identity, a heritage that reinforces the sense of historical continuity, legitimizing the unity and political power of the State before its people and the international community. Therefore, the choice of the theme is justified by the need to understand how ancestral cultural and philosophical elements, such as the myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams, continue to play a fundamental role in the structuring of Chinese political and social thought.

China, as one of the oldest civilizations in the world, has a rich mythological and philosophical tradition that permeates not only its history but also its contemporary political organization. In this sense, the mythology of *Fúxī*, considered the first of the Three August Ones and one of the founders of Chinese civilization, offers a unique window into how ancestral values were reinterpreted and integrated into the modernization project of the Chinese state. The Eight Trigrams, in turn, represent a symbolic system that transcends the realms of philosophy and religion, influencing areas such as politics, economics, and social organization.

The relevance of this study also lies in the context of International Relations and Law, areas in which China has played an increasingly prominent role. Understanding the formation of the modern Chinese state and its political identity is essential to analyzing its actions on the global stage, especially at a time when the country seeks to reaffirm its position as a world power. Chinese mythology and philosophy are not just elements of the past, but active tools in the construction of a national narrative that sustains the legitimacy of the state and its international projection. That said, the study contributes to a deeper analysis of the foundations that underpin contemporary China's political and strategic decisions.

Regarding the methodological aspects, the applied approach was qualitative and critical-decolonial, with deductive method, historical and documentary analysis. The study includes a review of Chinese and Western theoretical and historical sources, seeking interpretations of the *Fúxī* myth in the context of the formation of Chinese political thought. The decolonial perspective will serve to highlight the cultural and political resistance to Western influence throughout China's development. This approach is particularly relevant given that China seeks to reaffirm its cultural and political autonomy in the face of Western domination, especially in the field of International Relations and International Law.

The article is structured in three main sections. The first presents the philosophical and cultural foundations of the myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams, exploring its origins and symbolic meaning in Chinese tradition. The second section discusses the historical and political relevance of this mythology in the formation of the Modern Chinese State, highlighting its influence on the construction of national identity and the legitimization of state power. Finally, the third section addresses the contemporary implications of this cultural heritage, analyzing how ancestral values continue to influence China's domestic and foreign policy. The conclusion reflects on the importance of revisiting founding myths as a tool for understanding the relationship between culture, politics, and identity in states with long historical traditions.

The choice of the theme is also justified by the need for an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Law, International Relations and political philosophy; seeking to understand how Chinese mythology and philosophy influenced the formation of a legal and political system that, although modern, maintains strong ties with its cultural tradition. This perspective is essential for a more comprehensive analysis of China's role on the global stage.

Finally, this study contributes to the academic debate on the relationship between culture, politics, and identity in the context of International Relations and Law. The analysis of the mythology of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams offers a unique perspective to understand how China has constructed a political identity that simultaneously preserves its ancestral roots and projects itself as a global power. In this sense, the study not only enriches the field of International Relations but also offers valuable insights into the understanding of Law and politics in a globalized context.

2. The Myth Of *Fúxī* And The Eight Trigrams

The myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams plays a fundamental role in the construction of the traditional Chinese worldview, underpinning cultural, philosophical and social aspects that profoundly influenced the formation of the Modern Chinese State. In Chinese mythology, *Fúxī* is considered the first of the Three Legendary Ones (三皇, *sān huáng*), mythological figures responsible for teaching the foundations of human civilization.

The Chinese philosophical tradition has a structuring basis in the conception of cosmic order, in which the Eight Trigrams occupy a central role. Originating from the Book of Changes (*I Ching*), the trigrams are symbolic representations of natural forces, serving as a foundation for understanding universal dynamics. Chinese writing and thought systems have been profoundly influenced by myths and cosmological patterns, including the trigrams, which unfold from the interaction of the fundamental principles of *Yīn* and *Yang*ⁱ (Bauer, 2009).

Fúxī was credited with creating the Eight Trigrams and teaching human's various arts, such as reflecting on the world and observing nature; for example, imitating a spider would make it possible to produce a net for fishing and hunting. As the First Emperor, *Fúxī* is remembered for his ability to observe nature and interpret the principles of the universe, creating the basis for systems such as cosmogony, writing, medicine, and philosophy (Marquéz, 2020, p. 15-18).

The states of change represented by the trigrams would explain the order of the universe, the laws that govern it, the phenomena of nature and even the human being itself. In the Book of Changes, the *Yang* principle would be represented by a continuous line (—), while the *Yīn* by a discontinuous line (– –); their combinations lead to the Eight Trigrams. These would be composed of three continuous or discontinuous lines, which correspond to natural phenomena and symbolize the eight fundamental states of change in nature (Bauer, 2009).

The trigrams and the elements of nature are: a) ☰ (乾, *qian*) sky; b) ☱ (兑, *duì*) lake; c) ☳ (震, *zhèn*) thunder; d) ☲ (离, *lí*) fire; e) ☷ (坤, *kūn*) earth; f) ☶ (艮, *gèn*) mountain; g) ☵ (坎, *kǎn*) water; and h) ☴ (巽, *xùn*) wind. The connection between the trigrams and the natural elements reflects the holistic vision of Chinese philosophy, which sees the human being as an integral part of a greater whole, governed by the same universal laws (Bauer, 2009).

These fundamental principles of cosmic order are intrinsically linked to the Taoist worldview which, described in the Book of Changes, holds that the world is governed by two dialectically opposed and interdependent forces, namely *Yīn* and *Yang*. Acting in a complementary and harmonious manner, these forces would keep the cosmos in a constant process of change; the imbalance of either would cause extinction because one gives rise to and develops the other (Bauer, 2009).

It is therefore believed that the universe would be composed of infinite cyclical changes, such as from dawn to sunset, from night darkness to daylight, from birth to death. This basic understanding would be applied to all existence, since the only 'constant' would be the change. Various traditions of thought in Asia hold similar notions to this, because the fundamental principle of any existence is impermanence – also advocated by the Buddhist tradition.

The Brazilian saying “a river never passes through the same place twice” has the same origins as Heraclitus' philosophy, which can be summarized in the idea that “no one steps into the same river twice” due to the constant

transformation of humans and the world, and also found in the Tibetan Book of Life and Death, which mentions a popular saying that it would be “impossible to wash the same dirty hand twice in the same river”; given this conception of constant change (Marquéz, 2020, p. 15-18).

The structure of trigrams, composed of continuous or broken lines, reflects the cyclical patterns of the universe and establishes profound relationships between natural phenomena and aspects of human life. This symbolism, rooted in Chinese philosophy, reveals a holistic view of the world, in which each trigram represents an essential element of nature, such as sky, earth, fire, water, wind, thunder, mountain and lake. These elements are not just static symbols but represent dynamic and interconnected forces that govern balance and transformation in the cosmos (Bauer, 2009).

The logic underlying the trigrams is deeply influenced by the dialectic of *Yīn* and *Yang*, which describes the complementary and contradictory interaction between opposing but interdependent forces. This dialectic is widely explored in Chinese strategic thought, where harmony between opposites is seen as essential for balance and prosperity (Chin *et al.*, 2018).

In the context of strategic thinking, the application of this dialectical framework allows for interpretations that go beyond traditional philosophy, extending to contemporary political and legal systems. For example, the notion of balance between opposing forces can be applied to conflict management, where the search for harmonious and complementary solutions is preferred over confrontational approaches. In the political sphere, the idea of *Yīn* and *Yang* can be used to understand the dynamics between centralization and decentralization of power, or between state authority and individual autonomy. In the legal field, the trigram framework can inspire a more flexible and contextualized approach, where laws are interpreted and applied in a way that balances conflicting interests, rather than adopting a rigid and binary view (Chin *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, the holistic and cyclical view of trigrams offers a unique perspective for strategic decision-making, where constant change and interdependence between elements are seen as natural and inevitable. This contrasts with more linear and causal Western approaches, highlighting the importance of adaptability and resilience in a constantly changing world. Therefore, the trigram framework, combined with the dialectic of *Yīn* and *Yang*, not only enriches philosophical understanding, but also offers valuable tools for analysis and practice in contemporary political, legal, and organizational systems (Chin *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, their interpretation goes beyond the merely symbolic character and acquires an epistemological dimension, serving as a model for the organization of traditional Chinese thought. According to Kissinger (2011)ⁱⁱ, China’s political and diplomatic structure often reflects the fluid and adaptive logic derived from this cosmological vision, differentiating itself from Western Cartesian thought. The trigrams would therefore operate as a categorization system that structures everything from astrology and traditional medicine to the formulation of military strategies. These symbols are closely related to the construction of Chinese cultural identity, which values harmony between man and the cosmos.

Therefore, beyond this philosophical role, the myth of *Fúxī* also has a cultural and symbolic dimension that shaped Chinese identity, as he is described as a civilizing hero who taught humans essential skills such as fishing, hunting and the use of tools. His figure transcends mythology, as he is revered as a symbol of ancient wisdom and the human capacity to live in harmony with nature. Often depicted with a serpent’s body and a human torso, *Fúxī* symbolizes the integration between the human and natural worlds.

Temples dedicated to *Fúxī* in places such as *Tiānshuǐ* (天水) and *Huáiyáng* (淮阳) attest to the cultural and spiritual importance of this myth. These structures not only celebrate a cultural hero, but also serve as spaces for the preservation and transmission of values and traditions associated with the Chinese worldview; where reverence for *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams demonstrates how mythological elements connect to practical aspects of social and political organization, contributing to the formation of a resilient cultural identity that has persisted throughout history, even in the face of challenges such as colonialism and modernization.

The influence of the Eight Trigrams on the Chinese worldview is manifested not only in its traditional philosophy but also in modern conceptions of governance and International Law. Zhang (2023) argues that China's rise in the international system is guided by principles that revive traditional notions of balance and interdependence, in line with the idea of the trigrams as dynamic representations of reality. Similarly, contemporary Chinese legal theory, by adopting the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, resonates with the logic of the trigrams, as it seeks harmony in International Relations through complementarity and interdependence (Su, 2014).

By exploring the myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams, it becomes clear that these cultural and philosophical pillars played a significant role in cementing values such as harmony, interdependence and resilience. These foundations have been put into practice by the Chinese government through diplomacy, where the fundamental principle is harmony, expressed by the idea of "Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity" (人类命运共同体, *rénlèi mìngyùn gòngtóngtǐ*).

These values have not only shaped China's worldview but have also influenced the structuring of its state model, which integrates ancient traditions with the demands of modernity. In this way, the myth of *Fúxī* offers a unique lens through which to understand how China has preserved its cultural autonomy and shaped its historical trajectory, grounded in a distinct worldview deeply rooted in its cultural past.

3. The Formation Of The Modern Chinese State

The formation of the Modern Chinese State was a complex process marked by significant historical events that redefined the country's political, social and economic structure. Among the main events that contributed to this transformation are the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860), the *Xinhai* Revolution (1911), the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the various forms of resistance to Western and Japanese imperialism throughout the 20th century.

The Opium Wars symbolized the beginning of China's so-called "Century of Humiliation," when the Qing Empire was forced to sign unequal treaties, such as the Treaty of Nanking, which resulted in the cession of Hong Kong to Britain and the forced opening of ports to foreign trade (Chang, 2014; Carvalho, 2024). This situation exposed the fragility of the Qing government and fueled a sense of popular dissatisfaction, culminating in the *Xinhai* Revolution of 1911.

To understand the formation of the Modern Chinese State, it is essential to analyze it within the context of International Law, especially from the perspective of the relationship between imperialism and sovereignty. As Antony Anghie (2005) argues, modern International Law emerged in a context in which colonial powers used legal norms to justify the domination of non-European territories. China, throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, was directly affected by this Eurocentric legal structure, in which sovereignty was granted unequally to the states of the so-called "Third World".

The unequal treaties imposed on China, such as the Treaty of Nanking (1842) and the Treaty of Tianjin (1858), exemplify Anghie's argument that International Law functioned as an instrument of legitimacy for the subordination of non-Western states. These legal impositions removed from China control over its trade, economy and part of territory, placing it in a position of dependence on the European powers and Japan (Anghie, 2005, p. 196).

The *Xinhai* Revolution was a landmark in Chinese history, as it resulted in the fall of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. However, political instability persisted, leading to a series of civil wars and foreign interventions. During the 20th century, China underwent profound sociopolitical reforms, including the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The trajectory of the People's Republic of China is marked by profound contradictions between rupture and continuities, especially regarding the role of culture and tradition in the construction of the modern state and the pursuit of development. Since its founding in 1949, under the leadership of Mao Zedongⁱⁱⁱ, China has undertaken a radical transformation of its social, economic, and cultural structures, aiming to free itself from colonialism, feudalism, and imperialism, asserting as an independent socialist power (Kissinger, 2011; Carvalho, 2024).

Since the 1949 Revolution, the Chinese government has adopted policies of nationalizing strategic industries and establishing state control over key sectors of the economy. These measures ensured that the country's modernization occurred under conditions that preserved its autonomy, avoiding excessive dependence on foreign capital. Later, with Deng Xiaoping's reforms from the 1970s onwards, China began to integrate market elements into its economy, but without giving up state control over strategic areas, which differentiated it from other post-colonial countries that, by accepting structural adjustment programs from the IMF and the World Bank, reinforced their economic dependence on the West (Kissinger, 2011; Mignolo, 2017).

China's struggle to regain its sovereignty was not only in the military and political fields, but also in an attempt to reformulate the norms of International Law that kept it in a subordinate position. The rise of the Chinese Communist Party and the founding of the People's Republic of China represented not only a break with the previous government, but also an effort to redefine China's position within the international system. Non-acceptance of the authority of Western powers and rejection of foreign interference became fundamental principles of Chinese foreign policy, reflecting the search for full sovereignty, in contrast to the condition of "limited sovereignty" imposed by colonialism and traditional International Law (Anghie, 2005, p. 199).

In the early decades of the People's Republic, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), there was a systematic rejection of Chinese cultural traditions – Confucianism, religion, customs, and symbols associated with imperial China were labeled 'outdated' and treated as obstacles to revolutionary progress. This denial of cultural roots was not merely symbolic: thousands of intellectuals, artists, and religious figures were persecuted, works of art and temples were destroyed, and the classical heritage was replaced by a revolutionary socialist aesthetic^{iv} (Carvalho, 2024).

This process, although justified to break with structures of internal and external domination, can be critically interpreted as a form of cultural self-denial, embedded in a modernization project that sought equivalence with Western development parameters, even while placing itself in ideological opposition to the capitalist West. Thus, the first phase of Chinese socialism prioritized class struggle and ideological mobilization, to the detriment of valuing the history and ancient culture of Chinese civilization itself.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution and the rise of Deng Xiaoping to power in 1978, a new phase in China's trajectory began. Although the focus shifted to economic modernization – through the Four Modernizations (industry, agriculture, science, and defense) – there was also a gradual rehabilitation of cultural and historical aspects that had been marginalized. The state began to recognize that traditional culture could be a strategic resource in building a cohesive national identity, especially in the face of the challenges of globalization (Carvalho, 2024).

The reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s marked a period of economic openness and modernization, consolidating a development model that mixed elements of socialism with market strategies, guaranteeing China unprecedented economic growth and greater autonomy from Western influence^v (Kissinger, 2011). Under the leadership of Deng and, later, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, official discourse began to emphasize "socialism with Chinese characteristics" in 1982, a formula that revives elements of the imperial past, Confucianism, and classical Chinese philosophy, articulating them with the development project (Carvalho, 2024). The role of culture was elevated to an essential component of Chinese soft power and its international prominence.

The current aspect of China's modernization did not mean a break with its traditional values, but rather the integration of ancient philosophical and cultural elements into the development of the modern state. Confucianism,

Taoism and Legalism continued to play fundamental roles in the formulation of national policies and in the structuring of Chinese society^{vi} (Kissinger, 2011).

The principles of cosmic harmony, present in Confucianism and Taoism, influenced Chinese politics by emphasizing the search for balance between rulers and ruled, the need for meritocratic administration and the maintenance of social order. During the period of economic reforms in the 20th century, the Chinese government used these values to justify policies that combined state planning with economic pragmatism, allowing the country to grow without compromising its national identity.

China has been promoting a policy of “cultural renaissance,” reviving elements of the Confucian tradition and investing in the valorization of its history and cultural heritage as a way of strengthening its sovereignty. The preservation of its own tradition is reflected in the Chinese state model, which presents itself as an alternative to Western hegemony, while at the same time seeking to consolidate its position as an autonomous and independent global power.

The relationship between traditional values and the construction of an independent state model is visible in China’s own foreign policy, which emphasizes sovereignty, mutual respect between nations and non-interference in internal affairs. This approach reinforces China’s position on the world stage as a state that resists colonialism and seeks to assert its autonomy in relation to Western powers. Currently, initiatives such as the New Silk Road and China’s presence in multilateral organizations are strategies to consolidate an autonomous development model that is less dependent on the rules established by traditional powers.

In this regard, each of China’s great leaders contributed significantly to the development of the modern Chinese state. Xi Jinping has been heinously promoting an increasingly explicit cultural nationalism, incorporating traditional and religious elements into the Communist Party’s discourse. Under his rule, there is an effort to construct a continuous and organic historical narrative of China – from Empire to socialism – consolidating the idea of a unique, resilient, and autonomous civilization.

China’s trajectory highlights a dialectic between denial and repurposing of its cultural roots. From a critical and Global South perspective, this experience reveals how modernization projects can initially reject local traditions in the name of a universal, often Eurocentric ideal, but also how these traditions can be rescued and reinterpreted as the foundations of an alternative development model. Contemporary China, by integrating culture, history, and political project, challenges the hegemonic logic of the West and proposes plural paths for strengthening states in the Global South.

4. Coloniality And The International System: The Impacts Of The Myth Of *Fúxī* In Modern China

The relationship between coloniality and the structure of the contemporary international system cannot be dissociated from the historical legacy of Western domination. Although formal colonialism was overcome through the independence processes of nations in the Global South, its marks remain in the persistence of asymmetrical power structures that subordinate diverse regions epistemologically, politically, and economically to Western influences. This phenomenon, as Quijano (2009) highlights, transcends territorial occupation, reflecting itself in the imposition of paradigms of knowledge and development that marginalize alternative visions and delegitimize non-Western worldviews.

Coloniality, therefore, is not limited to the past, but manifests itself in the present through subtle mechanisms of control and domination, which perpetuate the global hierarchy established during European colonial expansion. This is intrinsically connected to ‘modernity’, exposed by Mignolo (2017) as its darkest side, affecting different locations in different ways.

The maintenance of Chinese autonomy in the face of colonialism is linked, among other factors, to its ancient culture and the resilience of its worldview. In the West, the formation of the modern state was often associated with the overcoming of tradition and the adoption of an Enlightenment rationalism. In China, however, the state

model developed in continuity with its ancestral foundations, incorporating philosophical and mythological principles rooted in its history (Kissinger, 2011). In this context, the myth of *Fúxī* emerges as a central element in the construction of Chinese political identity and in the affirmation of its cultural sovereignty. *Fúxī*, as a mythological figure associated with order and civilization, represents the harmony between the past and the present, symbolizing China's ability to reinterpret its modernity based on its own references.

Unlike the colonizing logic, which delegitimizes the traditions of dominated peoples and imposes a Eurocentric vision of progress, China reinterpreted its modernity based on its own references. Its history echoes the notion of a self-sufficient China, whose epistemological foundations were preserved even in the face of colonial pressures. This capacity for cultural and political resistance allowed China to develop a distinct model of modernization, which did not submit to Western prescriptions, but rather adapted and reinterpreted them according to its needs and values (Brandauer; Huang, 1995).

In this vein, decolonial thinking emphasizes the need to break away from the intellectual and institutional constraints inherited from colonialism (Quijano, 2009; Fanon, 2005). In China, this process has taken shape in the reaffirmation of its own political and economic system, in opposition to Western prescriptions (Carvalho, 2024). While Latin American, African, and Asian nations have been forced to adopt foreign administrative and legal models – including the establishment of foreign military bases on national soil^{vii} (Carrion, 2016) – China has consolidated its governance from an internal perspective, without giving up its civilizational tradition. This autonomy has allowed the country to develop a model of economic and political development that, although it has incorporated elements of global capitalism, has remained aligned with its national interests and cultural identity.

Regarding the Chinese vision of the international order in the contemporary era, multilateralism, state sovereignty and rejection of the hegemonic Western model are highlighted. Positioning itself in defense of International Law, based on the UN Charter, and criticizing the imposition of Western norms on countries of the Global South, China seeks to consolidate a more just global order, resisting the unipolar influence of the United States and promoting the self-determination of peoples (Ma, 2024). This stance reflects a profound critique of the coloniality of power, which manifests itself not only in economic and military domination, but also in the imposition of values and norms that marginalize non-Western perspectives.

Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China promotes infrastructure and global connectivity projects that seek to integrate different economies and cultures, highlighting the importance of cooperation rather than confrontation. Official discourse emphasizes mutual respect for national sovereignty, cultural values and development paths, reinforcing the idea of peaceful coexistence.

Resilience is promoted through China's proactive stance on global issues such as climate change, pandemics, and economic crises. In the environmental context, China positions itself as a leader in the energy transition and sustainable development, investing in renewable energy and proposing carbon neutrality targets by 2060 (EEAS, 2020). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government adopted "health diplomacy", providing vaccines, medical equipment, and technical assistance to developing countries, demonstrating its ability to deal with global challenges collaboratively (Porto, 2021).

Interdependence is promoted through economic and multilateral initiatives that reinforce the interconnection of countries. Organizations such as BRICS^{viii}, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization^{ix} (SCO) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are examples of platforms where China leads or influences, promoting models of multilateral cooperation based on joint development. In the cultural sphere, the Chinese government uses Confucius Institutes to promote the Chinese language and culture, bringing other nations closer to the values of harmony and cooperation that underpin traditional thought.

Therefore, it is possible to understand the cultural foundations and influence of teachings such as those of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams on Chinese decision-making and vision of global governance. Philosophical principles inherited from Confucianism and Taoism, which emphasize the search for harmony and balance, both at the

individual and collective levels, are translated on the international scene into an opposition to unilateralism and the defense of a multipolar global system, where nations must be interdependent and respect each other.

Promoting Chinese culture abroad has thus become a key strategy, as through international events such as films, art exhibitions and educational partnerships, China aims to create a positive narrative that reinforces its values. The opening of events such as the Beijing Olympics (2008 and 2022) is an example of how the Chinese use cultural symbolism to convey the idea of historical resilience and harmony in their interactions with the world. In this way, they disseminate pillars of harmony, resilience and interdependence; and project an image of responsible global leadership based on values that reflect their long cultural and philosophical history.

Therefore, China's rise as a global power is not just an economic phenomenon, but a milestone in the fight against coloniality. By preserving its epistemological autonomy and reaffirming its founding myths, China challenges Western hegemony and demonstrates that modernity can be built on multiple trajectories, without the need for submission to a single, imposed model. The Chinese experience therefore offers an important counterpoint to Western hegemonic discourse, showing that it is possible to achieve development and modernization without giving up cultural identity and national sovereignty.

However, it is important to emphasize that the critique of coloniality should not be interpreted as an uncritical defense of China or any other nation. The struggle against coloniality should be understood as an ongoing process of deconstructing the power structures that perpetuate domination and subordination, both internationally and domestically. In this sense, the Chinese experience offers valuable insights, but it also raises important questions about how to reconcile economic development with social justice, national autonomy with international cooperation, and tradition with innovation.

In short, the relationship between coloniality and the structure of the contemporary international system is complex and multifaceted. China, with its history of resistance to imperialist domination and its ability to reinterpret modernity from its own perspectives, offers a powerful example of how it is possible to challenge Western hegemony and build a more just and pluralistic global order. However, the struggle against coloniality is not limited to national resistance, but also involves the construction of epistemological, political and economic alternatives that can promote the emancipation of all subordinate peoples and nations.

In the case of China, coloniality was expressed in a unique way. Unlike nations that suffered direct domination, China faced centuries of attempts at imperialist subjugation, from the Opium Wars, foreign occupation of strategic ports, and imposition of unequal treaties (Brandauer; Huang, 1995). However, unlike what happened with several nations in the Global South, which were fragmented and incorporated into the colonial system, China preserved its identity and resisted Western assimilation. This process of resistance occurred in the military, economic, cultural, and epistemological spheres.

5. Final Considerations

This research sought to demonstrate how the construction of the Modern Chinese State is intrinsically linked to its cultural and philosophical heritage, highlighting the fundamental role of the myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams. The analysis revealed that, unlike the Western model of modernization, which often imposes a break with traditions in favor of the adoption of exogenous institutional structures, the Chinese trajectory is characterized by the integration of tradition and modernity. This process reflects a strategy of cultural resistance and sovereign affirmation.

Throughout the study, it is argued that the philosophical and cosmological elements originating from traditional Chinese thought not only influenced the formation of its state model but continue to play a fundamental role in the formulation of its domestic and foreign policies. China's resilience in maintaining its cultural identity, even in the face of historical challenges such as the Opium Wars and unequal treaties, demonstrates its capacity for adaptation and preservation of its epistemological autonomy. In this sense, the myth of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams are not only cultural symbols of the past but constitute structuring pillars that support contemporary Chinese governance.

The research contributes to critical and decolonial studies by challenging the Eurocentric conception of modernity and development, which has historically imposed a single model based on Western premises. The Chinese experience offers an alternative to this logic, demonstrating that it is possible to consolidate a strong and sovereign state model without the need to submit to external standards.

Furthermore, the analysis reinforces the importance of a pluriversal approach in understanding international relations, where multiple paths to modernity coexist, challenging the hegemonic narrative that marginalizes epistemologies from the Global South. China's resilience in preserving its worldview and structuring it as the basis of its governance serves as an example of resistance to coloniality, contributing to the valorization of historically subalternized political and philosophical models.

The permanence of traditional values in China's political organization indicates that its cultural heritage is not just a symbolic reference, but an active instrument in the formulation of policies and the construction of its global identity. Principles such as harmony, interdependence and resilience continue to guide its diplomatic strategies, reflected in initiatives such as the New Silk Road and its multilateral stance in international politics.

Internally, the influence of Confucian and Taoist thought is still evident in the structure of the state, in the management of the balance between authority and local autonomy, as well as in the formulation of economic and social policies that seek to avoid extreme conflicts and promote stability. This continuity shows that, beyond a nationalist discourse, China maintains its philosophical tradition as a practical tool of governance. Given the reflections presented, it is possible in future research to deepen the impact of the Chinese philosophical heritage on contemporary policies, exploring how ancestral values shape strategic decisions in the economy, diplomacy and International Law.

That said, it is important to analyze how China's rise influences decolonial thinking in other regions of the Global South, investigating whether its experience can serve as a reference for countries seeking to strengthen their cultural and epistemological identities in the international system. Another point of investigation would be a comparative study between the Chinese experience and other civilizations that also resisted coloniality, evaluating the different paths taken by states that, like China, sought to modernize without giving up their cultural traditions.

Ultimately, this study shows that modernization does not have to be synonymous with cultural homogenization and that the Chinese trajectory offers a concrete alternative to the Western model of development. China's resilience over the centuries demonstrates that multiple modernities are possible and that the preservation of cultural identity can, contrary to what colonialism advocates, be a factor in strengthening the State and not an obstacle to progress.

Thus, understanding the legacy of *Fúxī* and the Eight Trigrams transcends a mere mythological analysis and proves essential to understanding contemporary China and its insertion in the globalized world. By challenging the epistemic hegemony of the West, the Chinese experience reinforces the need to rethink the paradigms that structure the international system and to recognize the validity and relevance of different philosophical matrices in the construction of the global future.

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ⁱ See Chapter “*Adicionaes al Libro de Las Mutaciones y los Libros de Chenwei*” [Additions to the Book of Mutations and the Books of Chenwei] (p. 142), on the book “*Historia de la filosofía china*” [History of Chinese Philosophy] by Bauer (2009).

ⁱⁱ For more information see the Chapter “Concepts of International Relations: Impartiality or Equality?”, on the book “On China” by Kissinger (2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ For more information, see the topics “The Boxer Uprising and the New Era of Warring States” (p. 95) and “Mao's Continuous Revolution” (p. 99), on the book “On China” by Kissinger (2011).

^{iv} For more information, see the topic “4- *A República nascente: o declínio dos conservadores e a ascensão dos reformadores e revolucionários*” [4- The nascent Republic: the decline of conservatives and the rise of reformers and revolutionaries] (p. 77-94), on the book “*China: tradição e modernidade na governança do país*” [China: tradition and modernity in the country's governance] by Carvalho (2024).

^v Covered in the topics “Deng's First Return to Power” (p. 307) and “Deng's Ascendancy – “Reform and Opening Up”” (p. 315), on the book “On China” by Kissinger (2011).

^{vi} Exposed in “The New Millennium” (p. 455), on the book “On China” by Kissinger (2011).

^{vii} As historian Raul Carrion (2016) explains, the United States maintains military bases in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean), Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Aruba, Belize, Barbados, Martinique, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Cuba (Guantanamo), Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, French Guiana, Suriname, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina (Falkland Islands) and Chile. In Europe, they are present in Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Belgium, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Albania, Kosovo, Hungary, Turkey, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

^{viii} BRICS is an acronym of the founding countries of this socio-economic bloc – which currently has Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Iran as members and Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan as partner countries (Brasil, 2025).

^{ix} The SCO has the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and Iran as member's states; Afghanistan, Mongolia and Belarus as observer states; and Türkiye, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar as dialogue partners (Türkiye, 2022).