



## Lecture Series: China and The Turn to the National Histories of International Law (16 Dec 2022)

20 Dec 2022

Katy Ng

In light of a forthcoming book on Histories of International Law in China: All Under Heaven? (edited by Ignacio de la Rasilla, Jiangyu Wang, and Congyan Cai, Oxford University Press 2025), the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL), in partnership with Wuhan University Law School and Fudan University Law School, is organizing a massive series of public lectures on the histories of international law from both Chinese and global perspectives. To begin the series, on 11 November 2022, the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL) of the City University of Hong Kong's School of Law hosted the first lecture to assist students and lawyers in discovering the peripheral and semi-peripheral histories of International Law. **Prof. Ignacio DE LA RASILLA**, Wuhan University was invited as our distinguished speaker.

**Prof. WANG Jiangyu**, the CCCL's Centre Director, delivered a welcome speech to start the public lecture.

**Prof. Ignacio DE LA RASILLA**, LLB (UCM), MA & PhD (The Graduate Institute, Geneva), LLM (Harvard), FHEA, holds the Han Depei Chair in International Law, and he is 'One Thousand Talents Plan' Professor at the Wuhan University School of Law and its Institute of International Law, and a Chief Expert at the Wuhan Academy of International Law and Global Governance (National Top Think Tank) in China. He has published extensively in international law including as the author or editor of seven books and eighty journal articles and book chapters.

He began the lecture by introducing the primary concerns of the book, which is called Histories of International Law in China, which allowed him to go through the six distinct phrases in which China has moved into the relationship in his engagement with international law from a historical perspective. He also talked about the purpose of the book, how the book fits into a contemporary trend towards the national history of international law, and how the different methodologies and diverse approaches were studied back in time. He stated this book was in 35 chapters with around 40 contributors from all over the world including Chinese scholars, and also the United States, Canada, and other countries in Asia. The first part of the book contains eight chapters ending with China and the western standard of civilization. One essential reference remains how China contributes to the hectic conference of 1899 and 1907. The second part of the book

focuses on an unusual period: 1912 to 1949. It is remarkably fascinating to include the foundation of the Chinese Communist party and the introduction of the Marxist theory of international law to China in the period. The book also looked at the contribution of China to the foundation United Nations. The starting point of the third period in the book, which is from the New China to the opening up and reform process, represents, in addition, the most modern part. For instance, a chapter looked into international law during the cultural revolution, widely unstudied. Some of the last chapters could assist us to recognize the present situation.

After introducing the publication in detail, he turned to discuss the national history of international law comparing western history, with an emerging tendency within which fits the peripheral or historically peripheral national history of jurisprudence. He believed all of us were more familiar with the history of international law more generally with western figures. However, understanding more about the dominant superpower at present and its relationship with international law from a historical perspective would enable people to understand better the current position and future patterns of China which is of significant engagement with international law. He in the end emphasized that we need to try to build the paradox of hidden evolution. Even though there are now emerging histories of post-colonial approaches, the paradox is that it ends up illuminating the western record of international law. Therefore, he would like to focus more on internal law in Asia including China's relations with India, Korea, and even Japan. He believed the book was about the age of Asia.

**Associate Prof. CHEN Li**, Fudan University led a discussion session following **PROF. DE LA RASILLA**'s thought-provoking speech, in which they shared their insights. The majority of all those attending took the opportunity to express themselves, and many of them were insightful and imaginative. **Prof. WANG Jianguyu** gave a closing remark in which he thanked all of the attendants for their contributions to the lecture's success.



Prof. Ignacio DE LA RASILLA and Associate Prof. CHEN Li.



Prof. WANG Jianguyu.