

argument resonates with the state's apparent pre-occupation with "black hands" purportedly operating in Hong Kong, but doesn't quite capture the full motivation for China's authoritarian information regime. For that, the go-to studies are Anne-Marie Brady's *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) and Maria Repnikova's *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power under Authoritarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). There is little cause for optimism in this book, although the author does find examples of resistance amid "the onslaught" of propaganda and censorship, and claims (intriguingly) that "more people are involved and they are more powerful than we have been led to believe" (p. 79).

There are some issues with this book. A slim 120 pages, the first part is definition-heavy with clunky passages ("the term propaganda dates to 1622 when the Roman Catholic Church..." p. 1) and sluggish presentation of methods. It reads like a cautiously constructed PhD thesis, indeed in regrettable oversight the author refers to "this dissertation" in the introduction and conclusion. There are avoidable errors in language (even in chapter headings, such as "Measure nationalist propaganda strategy in close society") that hinder the fluency. It contains speculative statements such as predicting that Xi Jinping "will likely be in power for the rest of his life" (p. 121). And it misses some key literature; neither of the two go-to books referenced above is cited, while Molly Robert's instant classic, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion inside China's Great Firewall* (Princeton, 2018), probably came out too late to be consulted.

Chinese state propaganda within and without the boundaries of mainland China is a pressing issue of our time, and this book is an encouraging sign that researchers have the conceptual and methodological tools to help us make sense of how it works, to what effect and how to counter it.

JONATHAN SULLIVAN  
[Jonathan.Sullivan@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Sullivan@nottingham.ac.uk)

*The Sounds of Social Space: Branding, Built Environment, and Leisure in Urban China*

PAUL KENDALL

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Paul Kendall's book is the first to appear in print from a clutch of recent UK PhDs on urban soundscapes in China. They all focus on everyday music-making and they all, to a greater or lesser extent, pay homage to Ruth Finnegan's ground-breaking study of music-making in Milton Keynes (*The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*, Cambridge University Press, 1989). Kendall's book is distinguished by the choice of field site: Kaili is a relatively new "fifth tier city" (i.e. a provincial small town) in Guizhou which has focused its development initiatives of recent years on exploiting the cultural resources of the Dong and Miao ethnic minority peoples who live around it. The city brands itself as "the home of 1000 festivals," a tourist destination which provides authentic (*yuanshengtai*) experiences of nature and culture, singing and dancing.

Kendall provides interesting reflections on questions of spatiality in rapidly urbanizing China, noting the extreme fluidity of urban spaces under China's development

policies which can see whole neighbourhoods swiftly razed and reconstructed. He reflects on the radical shift from the mid-1980s, when table tennis tables were banned as a potential source of spiritual pollution, to the heavy emphasis on leisure and consumption as a means to development in the mid-2000s. He makes a convincing critique of Lefebvre's classic depiction of the state as a destructive force, allied with capitalism and pitched against lived experience, noting instead the ways in which lived experience may be produced through state actions.

Kendall provides a vivid description of the cacophonous city soundscape, taking us on a tour of the multiple sources of piped music at traffic intersections, karaoke bars, amplified renditions of Red Songs by choirs in the town park, and sound systems for line dancing and ballroom dancing in the town square. This kind of vibrant musical-social scene will be familiar to anyone who has watched *People's Park*, a documentary by Libbie D. Cohn and J.P. Sniadeki (Cinema Guild, 2012), but it is worlds away from Kaili's brand identity. Kendall is concerned with the paradox of Kaili, which brands itself the home of authentic musical performance, but where authentic music is nowhere to be found. Amateur musicians in Kaili describe themselves as fake minority people, performing fake music. The real music is out there in the pristine and exotic villages, and they insistently urge the author to go in search of it.

In his desire to break away from earlier studies of rural music-making in China, and to resist the demands of local people that he should study "real" music, Kendall stubbornly refuses to follow the authentic music to its presumed source in the minority villages surrounding Kaili. While respecting the urge to emphasize the urban everyday, I think he misses an opportunity here. Given the fluidity of urban and rural spatialities, Han and ethnic categories, and the vexed question of what is real and what is authentic musical experience in this region, I really wanted to find out what actually goes on in the villages when the tourists descend. I suspect that many minority performers are regularly traversing urban–rural boundaries, providing different versions of their repertoire for different audiences, and the village performances would be no less "fake" than those of the city. Catherine Ingram has done excellent work on this (see her article, "Taking the stage: rural Kam women and contemporary Kam 'cultural development'" in *Women, Gender and Rural Development in China*, edited by Tamara Jacka and Sally Sargeson, Edward Elgar, 2011), following ethnic Dong (Kam) performers out of their villages and into spheres of urban performance, and I would love to see these two authors in conversation.

For me, the book's twin emphases – on branding and lived experience – don't quite come together satisfactorily. It's useful to show the gulf between branding and lived reality, but I wanted to take a step further, either through a deeper exploration of the production of *yuanshengtai* or through a deeper consideration of the meanings of music-making in the lives of Kaili's urban musicians, perhaps drawing on individual oral histories to supplement the archival material. But it is the mark of a good book to leave the reader wanting more, and with this first monograph Paul Kendall has provided fresh perspectives on urban life in China, and a welcome addition to the literature on tourism and authenticity.

RACHEL HARRIS

[rh@soas.ac.uk](mailto:rh@soas.ac.uk)