

means through which China is both adapting to and actively manipulating the ability of others to grant it status will thus be a key consideration as world leaders try to enlist Beijing in a future coalition.

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China in the World: An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and Globalization

JENNIFER HUBBERT

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019

viii + 234 pp. £68.00

ISBN 978-0-8248-7820-7 doi:10.1017/S0305741020000016

Amidst rising US–China trade tensions, anthropologist Jennifer Hubbert's book *China in the World* offers a timely and superbly insightful look into the cultural contention between the two “superpowers.” The immediate object of her analysis is the Confucius Institutes (CIs), a core component of China's soft power policy that has generated much controversy in the United States, perhaps more so than other places. But the significance of her approach goes much further. Whereas Niall Ferguson's coinage “Chimerica” in the context of financial history aims to but ultimately falls short in illuminating the economic entanglement between China and America, Hubbert's study is among the first to shed a more critical light on this chimerical entanglement from the critical perspective of cultural studies.

First and foremost, Hubbert takes the question of power – both in terms of soft power and what counts as and is expected of a 21st-century superpower – more seriously than most political scientists. Influential as Joseph Nye's “soft power” formulation is in shaping contemporary China's globalization practices, few have engaged with its impact from the standpoint of cultural production. Based on extensive fieldwork in both America and China, the book challenges the assumption that soft power policy directly translates into the ability to influence. Instead, Hubbert turns our attention to the contingent effects of cultural policies to rethink what they tell us about the state and state–society relations.

The critical impulse to unpack the relationship between culture and power permeates Hubbert's seven neatly organized chapters. Chapter one helpfully establishes the contribution of anthropology to international relations in enabling us to approach the CIs as a product of the Chimerican cultural entanglement. In chapter two, Hubbert draws on some of her previous and equally nuanced work on the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo to analyse the CIs as a form of nation branding, which mobilizes traditional culture to refashion China's place in globalization.

Chapter three focuses on the CI classrooms in America, where many students' Chinese learning is motivated by a long-standing exoticism associated with Asian culture – which makes Chinese-learning “cool” – and an increased desire to equip oneself with the skills necessary to cope with the challenges of a risk society. Chinese, then, becomes less an instrument for the Chinese government to accrue power than a means for aspiring global citizens in American schools to acquire cultural capital. This process in turn boosts America's, not China's, soft power.

In chapter four, Hubbert follows a popular Chinese Bridge excursion led by the CIs for American high school students that showcases China's modern progress and ancient glories. The effects of such tours on participants, however, often contradict

their original intent. For instance, American students are turned off by organized trips to McDonald's – meant to illustrate China's globalizing status – and much prefer the unofficial sampling of street foods, which helps to enhance their self-image of worldliness. Soft-power policies, again, generate contingent results when China's desire to stage authenticity is met with an ingrained suspicion of authoritarianism, even though local cultural practices do make participants want to continue their Chinese learning, thus paradoxically fulfilling the goal of the CIs.

Chapter five probes further into the ways in which the Chinese state is imagined in a US Confucius classroom. Here, Hubbert's effort to disaggregate the state manifests itself in a transnational approach that scrutinizes how the global agents and targets of CIs implement and experience soft power policies. When CI teachers personalize their pedagogy by relating their shopping experience in Chinese cities, for example, the students perceive it as a marker of China's departure from communist repression and entry into normative global modernity via consumer freedom. Such a changed perspective – based on Chinese and American affinity rather than difference – helps to revamp the image of China as Cold-War Other. But this outcome ironically does not stem from the effectiveness of CIs as an instrument of state propaganda. Rather, it results from the deviation from official narratives among policy agents on the ground.

In chapter six, Hubbert makes the particularly fascinating argument that the CIs present less of a threat to US academic freedom than the tendency among American participants in CI programmes to deny CI teachers their modern subjectivity. One teacher, for instance, insists that her perspective on Marxism has to do with her upbringing in China, which provides different understandings of the concept. There is indeed some value in her sharing of these alternative views with her US students, as it points to a kind of political agency ideally supported by the institution of free speech – a well-informed citizenry who can engage and process multiple viewpoints, even those that may differ from one's own.

The concluding chapter provides a set of provocative methodological reflections that invite readers to further explore different ways of imagining Chimerican futures. The Chinese state may indeed be “rising,” if we understand that to mean becoming an increasingly visible, if not powerful, global actor. But in whose terms is this power produced, configured and evaluated? This is the question that Hubbert's outstanding book has prompted us to consider more carefully, in part by unsettling the norms of what it means to be modern or global in the first place.

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The Other Digital China: Nonconfrontational Activism on the Social Web

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Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2019

312 pp. £31.95

ISBN 978-0-674-98092-1 doi:10.1017/S0305741020000211

Professor Jing Wang's esteemed career as a scholar-activist, with rich experience in the digital empowerment of grassroots Chinese NGOs, means that her latest book, *The Other Digital China*, is met with special anticipation. The book presents the