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Sun, J. & Lancaster, S. *Chinese Globalization – A profile of people-based global connections in China*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

A timely addition to the ever-growing literature on China's economic strengths and interconnections with the world, Jiaming Sun and Scott Lancaster's work persuasively argues that "different types of people-based global connections in China influence the individual values, attitudes, and [behaviors] that make up the crucial outcomes of local transformations" (xviii). Adopting a methodology in which historical analyses, ethnographic interviews, documentary evidence, surveys, and secondary analysis of existing data influence the narrative, Sun and Lancaster succeed in producing an interdisciplinary text, enriching our understanding of China's success in the economic sphere. The primary motivating factor for this undertaking appears to be the massive – rather epochal – transformations undergone by the people of China in the last three and half decades. These transformations are almost exclusively in the domain of economics and economic well-being and have not appeared to influence the nature of Chinese political expression.

Divided into eight chapters, the work contains both a macroscopic and microscopic evaluation of the dramatic changes that have underwritten transformation in China. With an introduction dealing with China's evolution from a middle kingdom to global power, the reader is acquainted with the town of Yiwu (in Zhejiang province), where transnational actions, global connections, and local transformation come together. The success of Yiwu and its location as a hub for manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers is, according to the authors, an example of China's globalization at work. Much celebrated, Yiwu is indeed a picture of post-modernism, advertising China's appeal as a meeting ground for buyers and sellers alike. Yiwu has the feel of a China that is willing to accept the forces of market globalization and, in the process, appears to "localize" the globe. Yiwu is a stunning illustration of what the market can do when business interests go beyond profit. In many ways, however, while Yiwu represents the success of a world without mercantile borders, it also demonstrates our collective myopia by restricting notions of globalization to those that are demonstrated in the market and nowhere else.

The strength of Sun and Lancaster's book is its exclusive focus on Chinese globalization, and the first chapter details China's global connections and cross-border human contacts. As is well-known, the Chinese diaspora is commercially dominant throughout Southeast Asia, and China's opening up and adopting a policy of economic rejuvenation has intensified connections – familial, commercial, and otherwise – throughout the region and beyond.

Globalization as a powerful determinant has transformed nations, individuals, corporations, and products and has inspired in China an increasing need to harmonize laws and synchronize a legal framework over and above considerations influenced by sovereignty. In the second chapter, the authors walk the reader through a theoretical discussion on the nuances emerging from globalization, with macro-globalization representing "large scale forms of cross-border trade, investment, financial transactions, commodity chains, and cultural diffusion as defining characteristics," and micro-globalization stressing the relentless observation of "social [behaviors], attitudes, and perceptual changes that occur in people based on transnational actions and views global connections as the fundamental mechanism of globalization" (p.17). With individuals at its core, globalization elevates itself as both a dominant culture and counter-culture with an overarching frame uniting all – individuals, firms, nations, and cultures. Immanuel Wallerstein's "world system" and Walton and Sassen's "World City System" are but theoretical signposts, pointing ahead to the place where globalization and glocalization converge.

In Chapter 3, the authors attempt to bring the reader back to globalization studies and illustrate the intrinsic role that individuals play in a globalized world. If Pavarotti mesmerised audiences in China, they say, so too did Yao Ming at the NBA, representing a transformation in the organization of social relations and transactions “in terms of their intensity, extensity, velocity, and impact...” (p. 53). This line of reasoning, however, requires extensive caution, as Pavarotti the tenor and Yao Ming the professional athlete are precisely representative of global forces that highlight the specific and ignore the rest. For instance, the market sponsorship and global viewership of the NBA is greater than, say, that which taekwondo would ever attract. Similarly, the exceptional talent of Pavarotti and his legions of adoring fans represent an aspect of the “culture-scape” of globalization described by Arjun Appadurai. The flipside of this phenomenon, however, is that many art forms, languages, cultures, and sports are dying out or waning in popularity for want of attention and advertisement in a world in which attention spans are increasingly determined by billboards and spending patterns – with aesthetic appeal becoming secondary to the power of money and its priorities.

Chapters 4 and 5 narrate “Chinese global ties from past to present” and “Chinese global connections – from institutions to individuals.” If Sun and Lancaster would have us believe that the Silk Road of yore (not Xi Jinping’s current interpretation) and Admiral Zheng He’s voyages were early examples of a globalization, qualification is required: The Silk Road of yore was not mediated by sovereign authorities but was instead the genesis of many individual and guild-based endeavors to trade essential commodities and luxury items, with individual traders finding commercial recognition in interior regions, away from the coast. Similarly, Zheng He’s voyages stemmed from the hubris of an empire calling itself “celestial,” with the aim to “awe” distant empires. The commercial links encouraged by Zheng He’s voyages are open to question, but their being invoked as examples of modern globalization and conflated with the strategic are perplexing, to say the least. The text’s mention of Shanghai as a microcosm of globalization carries more merit, as it was a template for extra-territoriality and a trading station in sync with the modernity of Europe more than the placid time scale of Asia of that time.

Globalization today stretches to include many facets – including trade, finance, education, internet, and expositions etc., and China is integrated with the world at many levels. The ties that Chinese universities have with their Western counterparts, the establishment of international schools, the tens of thousands of Chinese students studying overseas, and the rapid spread of internet connectivity in China all go to prove that erstwhile variables guiding globalization are morphing into determinants firmly implanting globalization – irrespective of the multiple definitions this process has encouraged.

Such has been the impact and perseverance of globalization on China that at the local level, architecture has assumed a “global” consonance. The stadia constructed for the Beijing Olympics in 2008 are but an illustration of this, as detailed by the authors in Chapter 6. Staying on course, the authors in Chapter 7, titled “Mosaic – Global Connections Make Differences,” outline case studies of individuals and firms that fulfill the criteria employed by the authors to satisfy their core arguments with respect to Chinese globalization. In the final chapter, “The Big Picture – Chinese Globalization,” a case is made for China being a normative actor (by being a member of the WTO) and for the Chinese model (if there is one) as a system—*i.e.*, liberalizing the economy, introducing markets to replace central planning, importing foreign capital and technology, and relying on exports etc.—being the best bet for stability and ensuring all round prosperity. (The jury is out on the actual existence of a “Chinese model,” as economic well-being and tangible prosperity underwritten by the state hides many realities.)

The authors deserve kudos for staying faithful to the theme – Chinese globalization, but they fall short in critiquing the other side of successful economic transformation—the other side referring to political accountability and the authoritarian inclination of Chinese economic planners, who place the individual in a strait jacket. If the trade-off for the Communist Party of China is to ensure economic well-being for the country and secure political legitimacy for itself, then the party has succeeded for the short term. If China has taken to globalization to ensure statistical firsts, it has likewise succeeded. Finally, if China is motivated by “catching up with the West” (whatever that means), it may well also achieve this, though with incalculable costs to the Chinese individual, who is part of a system in which the individual must conform to a higher authority.

Globalization has worked wonders for Chinese corporations, industrial societies, and millions of individual Chinese citizens, yet millions more are feeling left out and remain quite critical of an ethic in which profit is worshipped and virtue reduced to a footnote. Irrespective of Confucian shibboleths, the state in China today is far from virtuous. The looming challenge for China – apart from adjusting to its “new normal” of reduced economic growth – is to (a) balance individual expectations and (b) accommodate diverse views that would open political space and enrich both globalization discourse and the Chinese political system.

The authors in an otherwise finely researched book steer clear of potential contestations facing a transforming China, and this limitation becomes more apparent as the text progresses, as there are sufficient indications that despite the exposure, participation, and success of globalization in China, globalization itself has not made a dent in the country’s political apparatus; indeed, with Chinese economic growth peaking, the political control of the party is only increasing. This mismatch may just end up becoming a tripwire with global consequences.

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