

## 書評

*Hegemonies Compared: State Formation and Chinese School Politics in Postwar Singapore and Hong Kong*, by Ting-Hong Wong, New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002, 290 pages.

*Hegemonies Compared* gives a fascinating historical account of the interrelations among hegemony, state formation and Chinese schools in Singapore and Hong Kong during the period of 1945-1965. It is a theoretically sophisticated and empirically engaging comparative study that illuminates how differences in the state institutions and the racial structures gave rise to two very different state strategies of controlling Chinese schools in the two societies. It draws on an opulent reservoir of exemplary works on state formation and education while challenging and rethinking some of the conventional theoretical assumptions in the Western literature. One of his ambitions, as the author himself puts it, is to advance theoretical reformulations, or to "decenter" the West and the earlier modern biases of prevailing theories in state formation and education.

The theoretical approach adopted by Wong reflects a serious engagement with the critical theory tradition, and also an integration, as well as extension, of different conceptualizations within the tradition. The Marxist approach to education by Bowles and Gintis in 1976 opens up the agenda of class domination in education, but their framework overlooks the complicit relations between the dominant and the subordinate cultures and it also leaves out the role of the state. Wong turns therefore to the neo-Gramscian notions of hegemony and state formation for an alternative framework. Drawing on the works of scholars in critical education analysis, such as M. Apple,

M. Carnoy and H. Levin, and R. Dale, Wong highlights the process of cultural incorporation by the state as well as the multiple and contradictory consequences of state interventions in the school system. The diverse incorporation strategies, or what Wong calls "hegemonic approaches" at the very end of the book, are the outcomes, with varying degrees of success, of the interaction of a host of factors including state structures (Jessop), the racial settings, social movements, the pedagogic device (Berstein) by the schools, and the capacities for Chinese language and culture as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu).

Singapore and Hong Kong presented two divergent cases for a good comparison in several ways, especially given the fact they were both colonies of Britain. Among others, first, Singapore went through decolonization immediately after the war, and as a result, it instituted a reformed state structure that allowed more popular participation. This made the ruling regime depend increasingly on support from its populace. Hong Kong, however, remained a British colony for several more decades after the war, and the state structure remained closed to the public and highly dependent on business support. Second, Singapore was a multi-racial society that was fragmented between the Chinese and the non-Chinese (e.g. the Malays) whereas Hong Kong remained by and large a mono-racial society with no serious anti-Chinese mobilization from other racial groups. These two different scenarios would mean that Singapore faced more contradictory pressure in racial politics than Hong Kong. The differences had an impact on the state capacities to incorporate Chinese culture, which resulted in their diverse approaches to controlling Chinese schools in the two societies. In Singapore the approach was one of partial concession and desinicization of the Chinese school curriculum, whereas in Hong Kong, very interestingly, the approach was one of sinicization with de-nationalization. The two approaches nonetheless were by no means equally successful, as Wong seems to sug-

gest that the one adopted in Singapore was met with greater resistance than that in Hong Kong.

On the whole, the book succeeds to establish its arguments on very persuasive theoretical, methodological, and empirical grounds. Apart from its empirical contributions, the book should be highly commended for its theoretical advancement. As pointed out by the author, most works in state formation and education have focused on Western societies in the earlier modern period (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), which limited their applicability in other settings. The early modern period was a time of budding development of the modern state and the school institution. The state builders considered the school as an effective tool for state-making and nation-building. Under such historical peculiarities, many scholars regarded the school system merely as a dependent variable determined by the demands of the state. As a theoretical departure, Wong argues that the schools can profoundly shape the agenda of state formation in their reciprocal interaction with the state. All in all, Wong's approach has the merits of underscoring the relative autonomy of the school and contextualizing the state formation process. The introduction of the variable of race, moreover, effectively extends the application of state theory in education studies. The idea of culture is perhaps the least developed among the numerous concepts and variables. This nonetheless does not undermine the major arguments made. To say the least, the book demonstrates an impressive scholarship, and is highly recommended to colleagues and students interested in state formation and education in and beyond the two societies.

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