Charity with Chinese Characteristics

Chinese Charitable Foundations between the Party-state and Society

Elgar Studies in Law and Society

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This thought-provoking book explores the functions of charitable foundations in the People's Republic of China. Using both empirical fieldwork and extensive textual analysis, it examines the role of foundations in Chinese society and their relationship with the Chinese government, and provides a new, functional perspective on the role of foundations, complementing mainstream civil society and corporatist perspectives.

“This book will likely serve as the authoritative account of the legal structures governing Chinese foundations for some years to come. For scholars wanting to engage with larger theoretical questions in international non-profit studies, the literature reviews and identification of various functions of foundations in and outside China also offer a ready guide for how to enter those debates. In short, many will find it an indispensable reference for understanding the legal environment for and functions of philanthropic foundations in China today.”

– Anthony J. Spires, The China Quarterly

“The volume by Levy and Pissler definitely enriches our knowledge of how public and private is intertwined in China, and how philanthropy and nonprofits are systematically used to achieve both an improvement of governance and simultaneously an intensification CPC hegemony. The authors successfully manage to unveil the often referred to “Chinese Characteristics” that might be translated into a combined notion of Foucault’s approach of governmentality and the Gramscian concept of hegemony.”

– Annette Zimmer, VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations

“Until recently, China had successfully followed the paths of Western governments eager to ease the regulatory barriers for large scale philanthropy in hopes of unlocking private resources to complement public expenditure. But as this deeply-researched, important study demonstrates, Chinese foundations only partially resemble their independent Western counterparts because they are effectively instrumentalized by the Chinese Party-state, as Levy and Pissler convincingly show by developing an innovative analytical framework. This book will be indispensable reading for anyone interested in Chinese philanthropy and civil society.”

– Stefan Toepler, George Mason University, US

“One of the most important developments in China in recent years has been the rise of new wealth and how the Chinese Communist Party is responding. Charitable foundations are increasing in number and taking on roles formerly the preserve of government agencies. In this important study, Levy and Pissler look at the development of the sector and the constraints placed upon it by the authorities. A well-informed and important book that should be read by all interested in developments in contemporary China.”

– Tony Saich, Harvard Kennedy School, US

“This is one of the first international books that deals with Chinese charitable foundations, broadly covering the third sector as well as the problems and opportunities of charity in China. It is an impressive interdisciplinary work authored by two renowned experts in the field. They rightly use a functional governance approach, present extensive historical and empirical data and provide valuable insights for the understanding of charity in China.”

– Dr. Hong Yao, Tsinghua University

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and provide excellent information on the current function of foundations in China’s society. In sum: A book not to be missed.’
– Klaus J. Hopt, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Law, Germany