Introduction

An Inescapable Agenda of Post-Chineseness

Background

While Chineseness, or China for that matter, has always meant different and even incompatible things on the occasions when politicians, marketing staff, journalists, and scholars evoke it in reference to their own distinctive purposes, the intention has been to convey something substantive, affirmative, and discernable. Two developments in 2020 intensified the discursive need to essentialize China, as a one-of-a-kind category and bounded. One is the determination of Washington's national security circles to cope with a perceived China threat (Zuo 2021; Falin Zhang 2021; Scobell 2020; Pilsbury 2016). This leads to a series of confrontational platforms targeting a variety of areas, including investment, social media, artificial intelligence, maritime security, human rights, diplomacy, science and education, public health, and so on, as long as they involve the category/label/name of China. At times, China is, in itself, problematized and interrogated as regards how much control and influence the Beijing authorities are allowed within their Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Taiwan policies. Even so, the policy discourse seriously diverges in terms of what China represents—the whole of the nation, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Chinese civilization, the Beijing authorities, or simply all of the unruly behavior conducted in the name of China.

The other development is that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has compelled almost every national government to resort to the imposition of quarantine measures, virtually reproducing the territoriality of the nation, with China most obviously included due to being the first territorial jurisdiction that suffered the outbreak, which prompted its authorities to control

the border, release nationalism to preempt blame for initial unpreparedness, and celebrate the efficient recovery as a national achievement (Kuik 2021; Q. Huang 2021; Pichamon and Shih 2021). Since the public health authorities lie within the sovereign jurisdiction, a comparison of performance in the months subsequent to the outbreak of the pandemic necessarily reinforces the territorial binaries between different nations. Nevertheless, public health solidarity is apparent at both the governmental and societal levels, with all kinds of mutual support cutting across borders. That said, the blame game continues, based on the ambiguity regarding which China was responsible—the Chinese Communist Party, Chinese culture, the Chinese race, or the entire nation.

The year 2020 has a prior trajectory in the background, against which essentializing discourses had been simultaneously contested and reinforced for some time. On the one hand, indeed, there has been a trend to unlearn the binaries (Babones 2017; Khong 2013). With the governing capacity of the Beijing authorities having risen to become second in the world, a tendency among Chinese scholars to convince the world to appreciate Chinese ways of governance is emerging (Teets 2016; Ambrosio 2012; W. Zhang 2011; Wang 2016). Chinese manners and customs are being introduced to the rest of the world, especially among the former colonies of the Western countries and Japan. At the same time, the seeming readiness of the Chinese populace to learn and embrace life practices elsewhere is likewise evident. Non-Chinese manners and customs are becoming easier for the Chinese to adopt. Both the Chinese and their partners are becoming differently Chinese, in one way or another (Chu 2021; Kavalski 2018; Pan and Kavalski 2018; Hwang, Bunskoek, and Shih 2021). Embedded Chineseness constitutes and revises the identities of different people to different extents. Enabling multiple directions of influences and changes, Sinicization of this sort complicates as well as deconstructs the binaries (Katzenstein 2012a). Chineseness evolves through the agency of businesspeople, priests, migrants, NGO activists, politicians, netizens, journalists, academics, performers, diplomats, and so on. The people in all of these various capacities will be discussed in the following chapters. This changing, diverging Chineseness reflects enthusiasm and yet simultaneously provokes anxiety.

On the other hand, there has arisen another trend of estrangement, resentment, and even resistance or containment, registered in the responses of various significant actors, to the co-constituted Sinicization. One apparent actor is Washington. Together with its strategic allies, each espousing a reason for alarm (McCourt 2021; Hass 2021; Smith and Bolt 2021; Gewirtz

2020), Washington perceives a strategic competitor, ideological revisionist, and even existential threat. For another example, the postcolonial pro-Taiwan independence forces or Hong Kong's prodemocracy forces are constantly alerted by the totalizing mainlandization implied by the pursuit of China's reunification (Y. J. Cheng 2017). Chinese Southeast Asians in, for example, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, or even Singapore, battling for equal citizenship in their respective nation, constitute yet a third ambivalent and hybrid group (Aryodiguno 2020; Ngeow, Ling, and Fan 2014; Hau 2014). Some may develop a sense of self-esteem through an imagined network of re-Sinicization, but such self-esteem can reproduce ethnic otherness in an indigenous society. It can actually undermine the self-esteem of those Chinese Southeast Asians in their earnest quest for equal citizenship. This latter group wishes to dispense with exotic Chineseness in the eyes of the indigenous society. Finally, in a fourth example, neighboring Vietnam or Mongolia could find the lack of social sensitivity, familiar in their historical relationships with China, an annoying characteristic of the rising nation (Nguyen 2021; Chiung-chiu Huang 2020a, 2020b; Thrift 2014). The ensuing chapters will discuss these actors. They practice exteriority to China in their coping with a China that is imagined to be "out there."

From Chineseness to Post-Chineseness

When seeking to understand the contemporary world, which is informed by certain kinds of Chineseness, it no longer suffices simply to refer to the category "China," which everyone has contributed to making complicated, obscured, and sometimes transcended. Nevertheless, in practice, China continues to be a predominant category, as witnessed in 2020, despite the incompatibility between the narratives. Differently essentialized notions of China undergird the imagination of identities of all kinds. Under this ironic circumstance, in which the category "China" is both indispensable and unstable, China scholars can neither resort to total deconstruction nor adhere to any universal definition. A comparative agenda that allows empirical research on the decentralized uses of China is clearly required (Bunskoek and Shih 2021).

Such an agenda must recognize the mutual constitution of China/ Chineseness and the identities of its partners everywhere at their own levels—geocultural, national, ethnic, kin, personal, egoistic, and so on. Its analytical frame must enable an array of perspectives to coexist and com-

municate intellectually as well as practically. Further, it must acknowledge the unstable characteristics of these perspectives themselves, too. This is tantamount to a quantum theory in the social sciences and humanities, not only because China is ontologically unfixed but also because its partners and researchers are internal to its ontological condition (C. Pan 2020; Cho and Hwang 2020). China/Chineseness can and must adapt and transform, contingent upon the practices and the views of those who employ or study China/Chineseness as a category.

Post-Chineseness is the name that this book gives to the needed agenda and the ontology. Broadly, post-Chineseness is no more than a case of post-identities, which presumably lie everywhere. Specifically, I refer to Chineseness as the *conditions of being Chinese*, while post-Chineseness is the *on-going processes of becoming differently Chinese* through self as well as mutual de/recognition. Recognizing is inevitably mutual and relational. That means people feel related to each other in terms of their respective positions on Chineseness. Each claim to post-Chinese identity necessarily occurs within a prior relationship, in which Chineseness has a trajectory of evolving characteristics shared by the relevant actors, for example, tributary, colonial, war, Confucian, familial, migrant, revolutionary, culinary, religious, alliance, patron-client, hometown relations, and so on. Relational Chineseness is certainly dynamic in nature. This is why and how, historically, all claims to Chineseness are, at the same time, post-Chineseness; hence there is a lacuna of any unified meaning. In a nutshell, studying and using China is about defining Chineseness. Defining Chineseness involves a relationship that produces identities of both China in context and the interacting alter-selves.

The process of recognizing Chineseness affects the approach to China policy and China scholarship. These processes, likewise, shape the self-identities of China scholars and China policy-makers. Understanding, confronting, and promoting China is all about practicing Chineseness alongside the other constituents of self-identities, for example, Christian, capitalist, exceptionalist, patriotic, and colonial, so Chineseness, intertwined with other constituents, does not stand alone. That is why all Chineseness must be, simultaneously, post-Chineseness.

This book seeks to analyze the international and national relationships involving China and Chineseness. It will study how different types of Chineseness constitute corporate as well as individual actors. I hope to explain their behavior by interrogating who they are as regards their relationships to China and Chineseness. Given that these relationships are contingent

on the context of the interaction and the choice of actors, they evolve over time and in different places. One can understand how a particular type of relational Chineseness (i.e., post-Chineseness in process and practice) orients the actors toward a particular tendency, but cannot universally explain how the actors adopt or reject a particular type of Chineseness. In other words, actors cannot avoid making decisions on the post-identities of the other parties as well as their own, because this is relationally necessary, but are not structurally determined to make particular decisions. One can explain their behavior only after one gets to know who they are, and the records of their decisions are usually cyclical and inconsistent, with a track record of turns and vicissitudes that is worthy of analysis (Kosuke and Noro 2021; Chen and Kosuke 2019).

Traces of Post-Chineseness in the Literature

Due to their interdisciplinary nature, the studies of cultural politics in this book contribute to a mix of literature that comes from three different areas—international relations theory (primarily part 1), China studies (primarily part 2), and ethnic identity (primarily part 3). All of these areas witness the China question as actors practically encountering the expansion of influence expediently understood as the rise of China. International relations (IR) theory is clearly premised upon the exclusionary ontology of an autonomous nation. It embraces the binary view of the nation versus anarchy (or inside versus outside) that the analysis of this book sets out to deconstruct. In the twenty-first century, IR theory, under the banner of the "Chinese school," is actually emerging to reinforce the binary (Y. Hwang 2021; Wang 2020). Ethnic studies represent Chineseness as ethnicity. The literature records the discrimination that the ethnic Chinese suffer, each residential community differently in their own location. Alternatively, Chineseness can similarly be the cause of suppression when the context shifts to the multiethnic conditions within the People's Republic of China's claimed borders, where national unity is the priority. However, these three areas remain separate, although IR theory and China studies' treatment of China as a distinct entity and ethnic studies' treatment of China and Chineseness as constructed are epistemologically well-aligned.

Specifically, there is a common bias toward binary thinking in all three of these areas. This is a deep bias, though. The three areas support each other in reproducing China as a separate category that can be singled before a uni-

versal eye—studied, divided, conquered, contained, Orientalized, developed, romanticized, or baptized. Such a common, prior bias is largely concealed. Even though some scholars of ethnic studies are alert to this, they do not appear to have an alternative discourse to prevent their post-structuralist ideas from being reduced to simply another imagined feature/component of authentic China (J. Pan 2016).

POST-CHINESE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Chinese School of International Relations

The IR literature provides three points of connection to post-Chineseness. The most obviously relevant literature concerns the Chinese school of IR (Ren 2020; Qin 2018; Zhang and Chang 2016; H. Wang 2013). This literature ponders how China can be a useful resource to IR theorization, especially attending to either a China-unique theory or a China-inspired universal theory. Both take for granted the idea that China is a distinctive category. As a noticeable example, the Chinese IR brings forth the classic notion of Tianxia (or all-under-heaven) (Feng Zhang 2015; Ban Wang 2017; T. Zhao 2019). The literature treats Tianxia as either a culturally bound theory that exclusively explains Chinese foreign policy or as a universally prescriptive theory, especially designed to rescue the West from self-help anarchy. Whichever formulation is adopted, the alleged school reproduces the imagined uniqueness of China and the binary that plagues a sophisticated understanding of the world. Post-Chineseness is a de-national remedy because it studies how to recognize or refuse Chineseness in China as well as in the West. Thus, a seemingly distinctive Chineseness is practically accessible to all and revisable. While China can be conceptualized as a stable characteristic or a way of life, persons or nations cannot be made to be exclusively Chinese or non-Chinese as such. China and the West are not identical, but are not simply different, either. The two cosmological views co-constitute the actors as having unlimited possibilities.

Relational School of International Relations

The second point of connection is relational IR, which traces the norms and values of contemporary IR to a historically developed, shared past that is embedded in modern European political thought, diplomatic practices, and Christian traditions (Jackson and Nexon 2019, 1999; Neumann 2011;

Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery 2009). Indicating the limitation of the relational literature on the relationality that constitutes China, China is almost an unrelated alien in this literature (Ling 2014a; Kavalski 2018; Qin and Nordin 2019; Nordin and Smith 2019). Post-Chineseness links the relational literature to China and demonstrates how Chinese norms and values, omitted from European political thought, have already emerged to relate all actors (Y. Zhang 2017), usually each differently, in those processes.

The Post-Western Agenda

The third point is the literature on post-Western IR that endeavors to represent the geocultural sensibilities of all sites that potentially supply resources to retheorize the currently mainly Western IR. The post-Western IR is particularly keen on the mutual constitution of the West and the rest, including China (Ling 2019; Shih et al. 2019; Shih and Yu 2015; C. Chen 2011). However, the post-Western literature rarely deals with China, apart from a few especially commissioned reports (Yiwei Wang 2009; Yongtao Liu 2012). Post-Chineseness fills the lacuna because it is an intuitive extension of the post-Western agenda. In addition, a major caveat of the post-Western studies is the stress on sited difference, which may become another source of binary (Murray 2020). By contrast, post-Chineseness is a deliberate deconstruction of sited difference. It exemplifies post-identities and thus produces a solution for the unintentionally contrived, albeit transitory, binaries existing in the post-Western literature.

Post-Chinese Ethnicity

Chineseness is a major dimension of the ethnic issue in Southeast Asia (Chong 2020; Choiruzzad 2020; Shih et al. 2020; Shih 2017a). The literature reflects more than scholarship; it also records a strategy of survival (Ngeow 2020; G. Wang 2018; Suryadinata 2017, 3–22). The thrust of the research in general, as well as the research of Chinese Southeast Asian scholars in particular, points to a single strategically significant message; namely, there is no such definition of Chineseness that can sufficiently portray Chinese Southeast Asians. In this sense, Chineseness is inevitably post-Chineseness, and post-Chineseness prevents any solidarity from arising among these mutually estranged Chinese populations. Therefore, no claimed threat to the indigenous regimes is plausible. However, this is not the usual lens that indigenous China experts adopt when approaching China (C. C. Huang

2020a, 2020b; Shih 2015). An epistemological search continues for a way to identify and represent China/Chineseness (Ngeow 2019a; Clemente and Shih 2019). In addition, these lenses are often partly acquired from their former colonizers' intellectual legacies (Seo 2020; Chin 2020; S. Lin 2018).

The challenge is everywhere. While the Western China scholarship can be relatively easily accessed, a less frequently tackled agenda is how, for example, Taiwan and Hong Kong painstakingly adjust the lens to understand China in the twenty-first century (H. Chan 2018; Au 2018; Ching-chang Chen 2015; Y. Hwang 2014). Having struggled with their own Chineseness, the studies of Hong Kong and Taiwan sit between the national and ethnic agendas, each with its own combination and fluctuation, while certain features span both communities (Ngeow 2019b; Shih 2018c). With an analytical frame of post-Chineseness proposing behavioral tendencies in association with the post-Chinese types, the adaptation of Hong Kong and Taiwan can be compared with the identity strategies practiced in Southeast Asia. As it currently stands, Chineseness simply connotes that we are all different. Post-Chineseness also responds to the need to study how people are practically related through pacing of post-Chinese cycles that enable acknowledgment, development, refusal, or destruction of their resemblance.

Ethnicity is a critical component of the China studies community but is seldom realized by the China scholars. In Indonesia, for example, China studies and Chinese Indonesian studies are almost identical (Aryodiguno 2020), while in Mongolia, as another example, the term "Chinese migrants" refers primarily to Chinese Inner Mongolians (Thrift 2014). Chinese American scholars on China are usually divided by the same political/ideological alignments that exist within the People's Republic of China rather than those in the United States. Tibetan studies are extremely sensitive precisely because they challenge the sense of the boundary of the Chinese nation (J. Chen 2016). Pakistan achieves the status of being an iron brother to China partly because its leaders consider the Uygur issues a domestic, ethnic issue rather than a religious one. The purpose of the post-Chinese agenda is to trace and record all of these inconsistencies and peculiarities. To that extent, China is constituted by the China studies community, while China studies is an identity strategy of China scholars.

Post-Chinese China Studies

While China studies is arguably not exactly a social science discipline, "China" is included in the name of many research institutes worldwide. These institutes are either centers and societies affiliated with universities and

academia to a varying degree, or think tanks. In the absence of a consensual definition of China, the scope of the college textbooks on China is highly territorially overlapping in practice (e.g., Brown 2019; Gamer and Toops 2017). Namely, China is represented by phenomena inside the sovereign borders of the People's Republic of China. In terms of history, whatever is considered Chinese history by PRC academics can fall within the scope of China studies. The popular agenda of China's state-and-society reinforces such a territorially demarcated scope of research. From this agenda arise the studies of reform, democratization, the party-state, civil society, and so on. These topics have remained popular for three decades (see, for example, Shue 1988; Oi 1989; Goodman and Hooper 1994; Solinger 1999; Goldman and Perry 2002; Perry 2007; Wright 2010; Fewsmith 2010; You 2013; Saich 2016; Teets 2016; Economy 2018). Scholars do not need to define China before claiming to make a contribution to China studies. Such a territorial preference is chronic (Duara 2004).

However, for example, the critical self-reflection on Chineseness by Chinese Southeast Asian intellectuals easily challenges the territorially bound scope of China, to the extent that the level of their identification with the motherland obscures the arbitrariness of the PRC borders. The Chinese Civil War legacies in Taiwan, as another example, unexpectedly continue to become the politically incorrect, that is, ironically intimate, link with China. Transnational religious movements, likewise, engender dual identities in their disciples, who may find religious beliefs far more relevant than political loyalty in their daily life (Chen and Chen 2021). Post-Chinese agendas contribute to the China studies literature indirectly but significantly, since territoriality constrains the current research design that the state-and-society sensibilities disproportionately comprise. In contrast, the post-Chinese agendas are consciously neither statist nor state-centrist.

Unconventional and Composite Methodology

This book is only partially compatible with social science methodology. It is compatible to the extent that post-Chinese identities are empirical issues, and also in the sense that the correlations between post-Chinese identities and the behavior of the actors constitute important research topics. However, the research design of the book is not typical social science as regards the relationships between researchers and the actors studied by researchers. In this book, researchers need to know who those actors are that they seek to study. Unless researchers know who they are, these actors' behavior cannot

be adequately explained. This is very different from the social science that stresses objectivity and discourages researchers from gathering the subjective views of the actors. According to the philosophy of social science, researchers need not, and indeed should not, know the actors.

On the contrary, this book argues that researchers and policy-makers always analyze, explain, and predict the actors' behavior according to their prior knowledge about the actors in question. This argument involves two stages. The first stage entails studying the *prior knowledge* of the researchers, while the second stage entails gathering and appreciating the *specific perspectives* of the researchers and policy-makers, whose judgment is essential for recognizing the identity choices and strategies of the actors to be explained. The first stage demands the adoption of a certain critical theory (e.g., Marxism, feminism, postcolonialism, constructivism, deconstruction, etc.) that can place the researchers in their historical trajectories. The second stage calls for an intellectual history that recognizes the identity practices of the researchers that enable them to make judgments about the actors.

POST-WESTERN APPROACH

The book will not discuss methodology except here in the introduction. The particular critical theory that informs the methodology of this book is the post-Western approach. The main thrust of the post-Western agenda is to trace and discover the genealogical trajectory of an institution, value, discourse, identity, or social force that has an imagined origin in the geo-cultural tradition of the population at an inhabited site but the population has experienced assimilation through the colonial and capitalist influences. Post-Western research emphasizes the agency of the colonially constituted population regarding reworlding, *a practice that revises and appropriates the colonial impacts according to the local conditions and purposes*. Post-Western sensibilities are registered in recognizing differences—all are differently different (Trownsell et al. 2021; Bilgin 2012). This is not a romanticizing agenda, though (Shih 2021), as the danger of discrimination and annihilation continues to seek various kinds of reversion of the post-Western order and even the restoration of a certain political correctness (Shih and Ikeda 2016). Therefore, transcending wishes to reestablish the binaries, the post-Western agendas require relational thinking (Pan and Kavalski 2018; Kavalski 2017a, 2017b). Post-Western critics who neglect the relational sensibilities may reinstall the fallacy of the West versus the non-West.

Given that post-Chineseness is both a matter of position and the resources that the actors choose to rely on, it is methodologically by all

means exchangeable with other post-identities, contingent upon the resources invoked to undergird an identity. In fact, contemporary post-Chinese identities are almost always "Anglo-Chinese" due to direct as well as indirect Westernization (Katzenstein 2012a). As already discussed, post-Chineseness is post-Western, but more than post-Western. To the extent that the Western identities evolve against the background of Sinicization (Zhang, Suzuki, and Quirk 2016), all of the Western identities will have a post-Chinese component in their reconstruction, be it embracing or denying Chineseness. Once practicing Western identities evokes Chinese references, Western identities will receive different assessments in accordance with Chinese values. This would be "para-Western," a practice that raises coextensive, that is, Chinese, views of relations and identities that have their own cosmology. In short, the Western and Chinese lenses do not share the same universe, but they are not entirely different, either. Post-identities, including post-Western and post-Chinese identities, allow them to communicate, exchange, and coexist.

For yet another alternative lens, there are "non-Western" resources. This is where the Western relations and identities are of little relevance, when retrieving historical or indigenous identities before encountering the Western influence (Y. Zhang 2017). In this situation, indigenous identities will create a non-Western agenda. This agenda contributes to the understanding of different worldviews that enable the acquisition of the Western culture in their own different ways (Acharya 2014a, 2014b).

Relational Lenses

Post-Western perspectives allude to a pessimistic assessment of resistance, which is unlikely, with all being irrevocably intertwined in the colonial and capitalist order in one way or another. However, it likewise reveals the implausibility of dominance, since the Western powers are likewise reconstituted. Philosophically, all dominance and suppression will circularly result in self-suppression. Given the relational necessity, the post-Chinese agenda must recognize not only the assimilation within the Western influence, but as many other strings of resemblance that encompass all as possible. All of the actors are related to the extent that they are co-constituted by these strings of prior resemblance. For the purpose of studying post-Chineseness, these strings can include, at least, (1) the old colonial network and colonialism (colonial relations), (2) the recent Cold War alliance and ideology of anti-communism (Cold War relations), and (3) the consensually perceived rise of China as well as the common quest for global governance that promotes rule-binding coordination (global governance relations). In the

historical experience, there are also relational strings in the region whereby certain actors are co-constituted; for example, the legacies of the tributary system, Confucian cultural values, Buddhism, Japanese colonialism, and Chinese migration. Further to the lower levels of gathering, recognizing Chineseness is increasingly contextual and role-making, and hence more improvised compared with the aforementioned prior or imposed relations.

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

To understand the behavioral and emotional orientation toward a post-Chinese target, intellectual history is required. An intellectual history agenda examines individualized intellectual growth, on the one hand, and the mutual influences between people from the same communities that constitute a collective tendency, on the other; for example, Chinese-Singaporean scholars on China must face a prior relation that constitutes Singapore and its Malaysian and Indonesian neighbors, and they also each possess a migrant history that has brought them to a Singaporean institution. Intellectual history examines both the prior orientations that constitute the self-identities of all of the actors at a given time and their agency in selecting lenses for recognizing Chineseness both in the self and others. Presumably, intellectual history allows the induction of the entire repertoire of different post-Chinese identities. Through this, it is possible to judge the possibility of shifting from one post-Chinese identity to another and trace the conceptual and practical routes that facilitate such shifts. This is apparent in the case of Hong Kong, where the meanings of the institution of the one-country-two-systems are intensively disputed by scholars, diplomats, activists, and government officials. The other side of the coin is the possibility of referring the evolving (e.g., certain British) self-identities to the strategic recognition of imagined (HK) Chineseness in others. This last agenda shows how the Self and the Other are co-constituted by post-Chineseness.

Structure of the Arguments and Cases

FORMATTING THE NARRATIVES

I will first present how post-Chineseness is both similar to and different from international relations in Western relational thinking. Theoretically, post-Chineseness IR restores bilateralism to relational analysis and transcends

concerns with the ontology of the autonomous state or their shared international system. I begin with a theoretical discussion of the Chinese style of relationality in terms of what constitutes relations for those who subscribe to Chinese identities and how they establish and adapt relationships. I proceed to interrogate how post-Chineseness is both the result of practicing Chinese relationality and the method for cutting across the Chinese and Western relations. I cite Sino-Pakistani relations to demonstrate the importance of these sensibilities regarding *bilateral relation*, Sun Yatsen's use of "Yadong" (Asiatic East) to illustrate the plausibility as well as the predicament of a *multilateral relation*, exempt from the self-other binary, and the Chinese religious pluralism that supports a kind of *self-relation* whereby believers strategize the supernatural worlds in such ways so that their self-identities can remain differently related as well as adaptive in a nationalist context.

Then part 2 shows how international relations are equally de/re/constructive from the imagined external perspectives. I rely on Vietnamese sinologists to teach the maneuvering of *cultural* relations informed by a shared Confucian legacy, Taiwanese China scholars to reveal the epistemological cleavages implanted by the Japanese *colonial* relations, Filipino China scholars to sensitize the ethnic relations embedded in the Chinese *migrant* history, and South and Southeast Asian think tank analysts to attest to the irony of knowing their subject exclusively in *geostrategic* relations.

Finally, part 3 evokes the politicized agenda of Hong Kong and Taiwan, where epistemological positioning vis-á-vis either "China" or the West is always ambiguous. I invited two directors of experimental drama and a postcolonial Presbyterian priest to give their testimony regarding the ordeal of being caught between China, the indigenous society, and the migrant China watchers as well as politicians and journalists in Hong Kong and Taiwan to further complicate the undecidability with additional competition for cultural loyalty from the former colonial powers and the West.

The division of the book into three parts flows simultaneously in three different orders. The first order concerns the international *relationalities*. The international relationalities of post-Chineseness are presented in the order of international identification in part 1, international sinology in part 2, and international ethnicity in part 3. It is at the same time in the second order of *self-identities*—the book looks successively ostensibly from inside (part 1), from outside (part 2), and from in-between (part 3), correspondingly. Last but not least, it is in the third order of *worlding strategies*. The three parts adopt the para-Western (part 1), the non-Western (part 2), and the post-Western (part 3) purposes, respectively. The last order is worthy of further comment.

The "para-Western purpose" exists in the nonbinary, fluidity, inconsistency, and multiplicity that are believed to characterize all of the actors, including the West. On the para-Western agenda, post-Chineseness and the West make a composite of universality, or "biversality," which can certainly allude to "pluriversality" (Hutchings 2019). Indicating the *simultaneity of indigenous and Western relations*, this is one universe that contains many universes. The "non-Western" purpose is linked with the indigenous identity strategies that make little sense to those not in the indigenous conditions but greatly influence the lens of assessment of the relationships with the West. The non-Western agenda attends to the deliberate use of *Chinese resources* to suit the purposes of the actors. The "post-Western" purpose is to accept the Western or colonial influences already existing within Chineseness, and yet it will continue to evolve and adapt in the future. The post-Western agenda attends to the deliberate use of *Western/colonial resources* to suit the purposes of the actors.

Snapshots of the Chapters

Essentializing and binaries are what harm the understandings of practices and identities in general, and Chinese identities in particular. The book will begin with a discussion of how, theoretically and practically, decentralism as well as de-essentialism become possible through actors exerting agency to improvise relational identities. Part 1 includes four chapters that aim to "look out" from the positions of imagined China and Chineseness. The purpose of chapter 1 is to theorize and categorize post-Chineseness as imagined relational resemblance; that of chapter 2, to engage in the empirical processes of post-Chineseness in bilateral relations; that of chapter 3, to present a failed case of de-essentializing in multilateral relations; and that of chapter 4, to present a successful case of de-essentializing in self-relations. Part 2 includes discussions of how Chineseness is constructed for the purpose of stabilizing the observers' own identities. In part 2, the four chapters aim to "look in" at an imagined China by painstakingly crafting a self-position outside. The purpose of chapter 5 is to present the knowledge about China informed by prior cultural relations; that of chapter 6, the knowledge informed by colonial relations; that of chapter 7, the knowledge informed by ethnic relations; and that of chapter 8, the knowledge informed by geo-strategic relations. In part 3, the four chapters reveal the undecidability of China scholarship in Taiwan and Hong Kong as well as Singapore in terms of their multiple relationalities and self-identities. Chapter 9 compares a Hong Kong-based

cultural strategy of portraying Chineseness and a Singapore-based one. Chapter 10 traces the inspiration of the Presbyterian identity in postcolonial Taiwan's approach to China. Chapter 11 sources the Hong Kong-based China watching from its rich migrant academia. Finally, Chapter 12 interrogates the unstable identities of Taiwan and Hong Kong between the West, the colonial, and Chinese relations.