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Book Title

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Introduction Chinese citizenship, Confucianism, and the Confucian

education revival

Chinese citizenship from a post-orientalist perspective

Ever since scholars initially translated the term 'citizen' into Chinese at the end of the 19th century, they have presented multiple translations, such as *gongmin* (public people), *guomin* (national people), and *shimin* (city people) (Goldman and Perry 2002). In his review of the emergence of the concept of citizen in modern China, Guo (2014) clarified two perspectives with which to translate 'citizen': statism introduces the citizen as an instrument with which to build a powerful nation-state by disrupting Chinese people's servility and encouraging their civic consciousness, whereas individualism aims to establish a more liberal nation-state by cultivating Chinese people's individualistic and utilitarian mentalities. These two views have evolved unevenly in China's modern era. While the state has largely repressed individualism and distanced it from Chinese citizenship, it has overwhelmingly emphasized statism since the founding of the Chinese socialist regime. While post-Mao China has experienced an emerging process of individualization and a consequent rise in individual consciousness of citizenship rights since the implementation of reform in the late 1970s, the dynamics of individualization still serve as a developmental strategy of the party-state to pursue modernization (Yan 2010). Differing from the Western rights-based citizenship, Chinese citizenship seems to prioritize the dimension of civic responsibility/obligation over individual rights (Guo 2014).

Scholars have formulated two extremes in Chinese citizenship studies (Chen 2020): one model oversimplifies citizenship as membership in a political community but overlooks its modern normative implications; the other essentializes citizenship as a Western concept, but ignores the situational effects of non-Western conditions. How to disrupt the normalization of the two extremes? First, to address the oversimplification of Chinese citizenship, one should examine commonly accepted cores of citizenship, such as rights and responsibilities, and their implications for the Chinese context. Second, to challenge the essentialization of Chinese citizenship, one should pay attention to local Chinese traditions and values, such as the principles of Confucianism, and combine them with the fundamental values of citizenship.

Adopting the above points as a framework, the present book aims to explore the nexus between citizenship and Confucianism in China. Scholarship on the association of Confucianism with citizenship has recently gained momentum (Guo 2021; Janoski 2015; Wang 2015b, 2021; Yu 2020). In a broad sense, these studies of Confucianism and citizenship in China can be seen as part of an emerging body of literature on Chinese citizenship (Guo and Guo 2015; Guo 2021), which can in turn be categorized within the general project of examining citizenship after orientalism (Isin 2002, 2012). According to Isin (2012), it is no longer appropriate to conceive of citizenship as merely the membership or nationality of an individual in a nation-state on account of the converging forces of anti-colonial struggles, globalization, and the dynamics of post-modernity since the 1990s. In this situation, 'the project of reimagining citizenship (as political subjectivity) after orientalism' has

become imperative (Isin 2012: 567). One key theoretical move in placing the accent on *after* in the proposal for 'citizenship after orientalism' is to consider how to rethink and transform the juridico-legal systems of citizenship and explain their orientalist origins (Isin 2012). In particular, the reorientation from juridico-legal systems to political subjectivity is a breakthrough for citizenship studies insofar as it incorporates the formation of political subjects as a necessary element of the citizenship regime and thus widens the lens to capture the dynamic claims of citizens to rights, civic self-cultivation, public participation, and acts of citizenship (Isin 2008, 2009; Isin and Nielsen 2008). Similarly, Guo (2022: 480) insightfully pointed out that the modern concept of citizenship has been dominated by an orthodox consensus that regards 'individuals from a Christian, white, male, propertied, adult, and heterosexual background as ideal figures'. In contrast,

[S]ocial groups from Eastern societies, females, homosexuals, and those from non-white races are regarded as inherently unfit for citizenship. From this perspective, citizenship development is seen as a gradual expansion from West to East, centre to periphery, male to female, white to non-white, and humans to other species. (Guo 2022: 480)

Guo (2022) further argued bluntly that the nature of modern citizenship is Western-centric, being characterized by Weberianism and the Marshallian paradigm. The Weberianist ideology views citizenship as a uniquely Western creation that emerged from the medieval European urban communities, in which such institutions as city councils and courts were established to exercise civic self-government and the values of citizenship, such as freedom, rights, equality, and participation, and its cultural elements, including churches, religious rituals, and brotherhoods, were nurtured (Weber 1958). Weberianism is considered as a typical example of an ideological system that later developed into orientalism (Said 1994) because of the assumption that cities in ancient Eastern societies (e.g., Chinese societies) failed to brew the institutional, cultural, and ethical elements of citizenship in the same way as their European counterparts (Guo 2021, 2022).

Meanwhile, the Marshallian paradigm of citizenship describes a liberal approach to citizenship configured by the British sociologist T. H. Marshall ([1949] 1963). This citizenship pattern takes citizenship rights as the main axis and summarizes the evolution of these rights from civil rights to political rights to social rights. The influence of the Marshallian paradigm on citizenship studies has been so profound and widespread that it has somewhat obscured the contextual particularities of non-Western citizenship institutions, ideas, and practices (Guo 2022; Wang 2016, 2022). In short, both Weberianism and the Marshallian paradigm highlight the centrality and dominance of the West in the conceptualization and evolution of citizenship, implying an orientalist ideology that exaggerates the ontological distinctions between East and West, presents a binary hierarchical structure of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority and blurs the diversities and complexities of citizenship in Eastern societies.

Given this intellectual background, the post-orientalist perspective is of great significance in overcoming the Western centrism in citizenship studies and presenting diverse citizenship modalities in different contexts. As part of this spectrum of knowledge, the study of Chinese citizenship has developed remarkably over the past two decades (Guo 2021; Kyung-Sup 2020; Woodman and Guo 2017; Zhao and Wang *Forthcoming*). In addressing the theoretical implications

of the experience of China's citizenship for de-Westernization, Guo (2022) emphasized the importance of contextualism by arguing for the need to take full account of China's indigenous political, cultural, and social resources and their potential influence when seeking to understand the meaning, formation, and history of Chinese citizenship. Moreover, it is imperative to avoid oversimplifying the fundamental values of liberty and equality as the common core of citizenship by integrating them with contextualized local experiences (Chen 2020).

This book takes a post-orientalist perspective to discuss the implications of incorporating core elements of citizenship into the revival of Confucianism, particularly Confucian education in 21st-century China. In examining the relationship between Confucianism and citizenship, it combines two complementary approaches: theoretical reflection and empirical exploration. Theoretical and philosophical reflection helps to unveil the complexities, contradictions, and multifaceted nature of the intellectual debate on Confucianism and citizenship in general. It also opens up the possibility of the integration of these two ideas and lays a theoretical foundation for the empirical exploration that follows. The key strength of the empirical perspective is that it helps to transcend the limitations of conceptual deliberation. Empirical results can reveal the dynamics of how Confucianism is connected with citizenship under contemporary China's political, cultural, and social conditions. The book's empirical exploration of Confucianism and citizenship is embedded primarily in the context of the contemporary revival of Confucian education. That is, it examines the relational complexities between some of the core elements of citizenship—identity, rights, responsibilities, acts, virtues, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism—and the discourses and practices of Confucian pedagogy.

Both the theoretical and empirical perspectives guide the research questions of this book—Is Confucianism compatible with citizenship? If so, how? Is it theoretically and empirically possible to have a 'Confucian citizen' characterized by the integration of Confucianism and citizenship? How, if at all, has the idea of the 'Confucian citizen' been shaped in the contemporary Chinese context? How do Confucian actors make sense of core conceptions of citizenship and thus present themselves as citizens through their engagement in Confucian education?

In line with the logical connection between theoretical reflection and empirical exploration, the remainder of this introductory chapter is organized as follows. The next section briefly presents the theoretical and philosophical discussions around the question of the compatibility of Confucianism and citizenship. This section is designed to assist readers in quickly and effectively grasping the book's themes from a general perspective. But detailed investigations of the intricate nexus of Confucianism and citizenship are presented later in Chapters One, Two, and Three of this book. The following section of the present chapter introduces the context of the contemporary revival of Confucian education, describing relevant studies and clarifying the research setting and methods associated with the empirical exploration to follow. This section lays the foundation for Chapters Four, Five, and Six, which focus on the empirical study. I then summarize the book's implications according to the theoretical and empirical findings and clarify the limitations of the research. The final section concludes with an outline of the entire book.

The question of the compatibility of Confucianism and citizenship

The relationship between citizenship and Confucianism is a perplexing topic in existing scholarship. One popularly accepted proposition is that citizenship and Confucianism are incompatible with each other (Yu 2020; Wang 2015b), but this is not always the case. Two questionable assumptions define this perspective. First, scholars assumed that liberal citizenship, which emphasizes civil, political, and social rights (Marshall 1962), is the predominant paradigm, and they neglected other meaningful models of citizenship, such as civic republicanism, communitarianism, and multi-culturalism (Kymlicka 1995; Kukathas 1996). Second, scholars elevated the authoritarian aspects of Confucianism that prioritize hierarchy, obedience, and obligations but depreciated other Confucian values that may contribute to the development of human rights, individual freedom, and social equality (Angle 2002; Kim 2015). Both Confucianism and citizenship can be perceived as concepts of essential contestability (Gallie 1955), being variously describable, internally complex, and open to modification, accommodating different, or even controversial, ideas, and narratives. Thus, it is reasonable to imagine multiple types of relationships beyond the predominant assumption of incompatibility.

Over the past two decades, scholars have explored new types of relationships between Confucianism and citizenship beyond incompatibility. These studies have presented two main arguments. First, they have gradually invalidated the claim that Confucianism and citizenship are incompatible and replaced it with an understanding of Confucianism as having the potential to contribute in some ways to citizenship and citizenship education in China. Second, they have argued that the combination of Confucianism and citizenship in present-day China can lead to new forms of civic subjectivity that differ from Western styles of citizenship.

On the first of these two arguments, Nuyen (2002) noted that Confucianism had the potential to contribute to a critique of the liberal conception of citizenship, which is incapable of reconciling its emphasis on individuality and individual rights with the pursuit of equality and democratic values. Confucianism holds a reciprocal and relational understanding of the individual and of individual rights and duties, which prevents it from accommodating the thin idea of citizenship that opposes the protection of individual rights to communal interests but might be compatible with a thick notion of citizenship that highlights the interdependence of personal interests and the common good. In the same vein, Yu (2020) pointed out the need to better understand the potential compatibility of Confucianism with democracy and to seek the necessary conditions for their peaceful coexistence, as they are not always directly at odds. Furthermore, Kim (2010) argued that a notion of active citizenship is implied in Confucius' designation of self-disclosing and honorific individualism as '*kuang*' (undisciplined), and that Confucius' account of rational and self-controlling individualism as '*juan*' (over-scrupulous) relates to a chastened citizenship (Kim 2010). Echoing these academic endeavours, this book goes further to summarize various types of relationships between Confucianism and citizenship through a systematic review of the literature (in particular, Chapters One, Two, and Three), indicating that although a thin, liberal citizenship is incompatible with the authoritarian values espoused by illiberal Confucianism, it might be consistent with a liberal style of Confucianism that affirms liberty and individualistic values.

On the second argument, some scholars (Nuyen 2002; Wang 2015b, 2021, 2022d) have proposed reconfiguring a new Confucian citizen in contemporary China by integrating Confucian values with a thick and deep notion of citizenship. Kim (2010) suggested a flexible citizenship based on the concept of '*junzi*' (virtuous person), which would place particular attention on 'the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks, including the family, neighbourhood, church, and school' (p. 453). Moreover, the new Confucian citizen must deal with turning the Confucian preference for ritual-based civility and social harmony into a viable political vision by striking a balance with 'Confucian incivility', which refers to 'a set of Confucian social practices that temporarily "upset" the existing social relations' with the defining characteristics of being 'deferentially remonstrative and respectfully corrective (usually in the familial relations)' and 'sometimes uncompromising and even intractable (especially in the political relations)' (Kim 2011c: 27). This book aims to contribute fresh understandings to how the new type of Confucian citizen is constructed in contemporary China's political, social, and cultural conditions.

Confucian education revival in the 21st century: background and relevant studies

This book adopts an empirical approach (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) in addition to the theoretical to investigate the entanglement of Confucianism and citizenship by focusing on one specific domain of the general revival of Confucianism in contemporary China: Confucian education. In this section, I first offer an introduction of the background of Confucian education revival in the 21st century, and then move on to review relevant studies that comprise an emerging research area (Wang and Billioud 2022).

Background

The current revival of Confucian education, as part of the overall return of Confucianism in China, dates back to the late 1980s, when the socialist Chinese government began supporting the teaching of traditional Chinese culture at public schools (Yu 2008). It was not until the early 2000s that Confucian education initiatives experienced rapid growth and popularity across the country. Generally, this wide-ranging revival in Confucian education moves in two directions: from the top down, driven by the government and cultural elites, and from the bottom up, with grassroots forces as the main impetus (Billioud 2010, 2021). Although it is almost impossible to distinguish these two movements, the grassroots Confucian education movement has attracted great attention. Scholars (Billioud and Thoraval 2015) described this trend as part of the broad reappearance of 'popular Confucianism' (*minjian rujia*, literally 'Confucianism in the space of the people'), referring to Confucian-related activities instigated by ordinary people and 'carried on outside the party-state apparatus' (p. 8). Moreover, some studies (Dutournier and Wang 2018; Wang 2018) have observed a diversification of Confucian teaching and learning practices in *sishu* (old-style private schools) established by individual Confucian actors over the past two decades, where parents send their children for either full-time or part-time study of Confucianism. This development can be evidenced by a wide range of pedagogical ideas and methods having been reactivated and implemented while bearing the name of Confucianism, in both formal and informal educational settings (Wang and Billioud 2022). Among the various forms of Confucian education, the most influential type, and perhaps the most controversial (Wang 2018), is *dujing* (classics reading)

education, where children are required to spend their full day reading and reciting classics. This book sets its Chapters Four, Five, and Six to focus on Confucian *dujing* education.

Dujing education was initiated in Taiwan in the mid-1990s by Wang Caigui¹, a Confucian educator and philosopher, and began to grow rapidly in Chinese mainland in the early 2000s. Although official statistics are lacking, scholarly estimates (Billioud 2021; Gilgan 2022; Wang 2022b) suggest that there are now at least one thousand established private *dujing* academies or schools and hundreds of thousands of full-time students involved in the extensive study of Confucian classics. The influence of *dujing* education is so widespread that it has extended beyond the school system to government agencies and companies (Billioud and Thoraval 2015; Jiang Fu 2022).

Wang Caigui has played a leading role in the development of *dujing* education. He even proposed a comprehensive pedagogical system for *dujing* education that has influenced a large number of Confucian education practitioners, including *sishu* founders, teachers, parents, and pupils. In his theory of *dujing* education, Wang (2014) emphasized three key points (pp. 41-66). First, he proposed that all teaching content must include the great classics that had been published throughout human history because he deemed these ‘most valuable books’ to represent ‘the crystallization of the profound wisdom of mankind’ (Wang 2009: 5-6). Second, he proposed that students would primarily learn through the extensive and mechanical memorization of the classics, without having to comprehend the literal meanings of the texts or their hidden principles. This proposition relates to Wang’s third point that children were considered to possess strong memories but weak comprehension abilities. In accordance with such a perception of human development, *dujing* education requires its learners to read and memorize a large number of classics, which are supposed to lay the foundations for their character development and moral cultivation (Wang 2014: 6-15). Wang’s *dujing* education pedagogy has substantially shaped the landscape of teaching and learning classics in present-day China. Learners (mainly children but also adults) are encouraged to read and recite a large number of classics—primarily Confucian classics, such as the Four Books (i.e., *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects of Confucius*, and *Mencius*), but also texts from the Taoist, Buddhist, and Western canons.² Wang (2014) argued that such a pedagogy would help learners grasp the essence of Chinese and Western civilizations and access the common wisdom of humanity, thus effectively enhancing their moral cultivation and nurturing their fine personalities.

Relevant studies

A relatively small but growing number of empirical studies on grassroots Confucian education has appeared recently. Billioud and Thoraval have contributed pioneering and impactful research on the rediscovery of Confucianism in mainland China in the field of education. They have examined how the Confucian education revival has taken form and become institutionalized (Billioud and Thoraval 2007; Billioud 2010, 2016); how this phenomenon exhibits a paradoxical feature of anti-

¹ A detailed introduction to Wang Caigui (born in 1949) can be found in Billioud and Thoraval (2015, Chapter Two).

² Western classics include the works of ancient Greek philosophers, such as *The Death of Socrates*, as well as Shakespeare’s plays, such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. It is noted that the list of classics books is from Wang Caigui.

intellectualism (Billioud and Thoraval 2007, 2015); the religious motivation for individual engagement in the learning of Confucian classics (Billioud and Thoraval 2008); and why certain Confucian educational institutions should be regarded as '*jiaohua* (literally "to transform the self and others through teaching") organizations' (Billioud 2011) or 'redemptive societies' (Billioud 2016).

Other researchers have explored how Buddhism is playing an important role in the nationwide success of the classics reading and national studies movements through its well-developed networks and organizations (Dutournier and Ji 2009; Ji 2018); the tensions and vagaries of Confucian education as a 'holistic' educational experience (Dutournier and Wang 2018); the practice of education through music, from an initiation into classical music for children to Confucian self-cultivation for university students (Ji 2008); and the ongoing debates about classics reading and the widening disparities in practising Confucian education (Wang 2018). Moreover, some other studies have investigated how moral anxiety has affected these parents' engagement in Confucian education and their preference for a memorization-based pedagogy (Wang 2022c), and the tension between students' personal aspirations for independence and autonomy and the authoritarian expectations of their teachers and parents (Wang 2022a).

Besides these descriptive studies, some scholars have attempted to provide theoretical explanations for the empirical findings on the revival of Confucian education. For example, Wang (2022a) used the theory of Chinese individualization to understand parents' engagement in their children's study of Confucian classics. Billioud (*Forthcoming*) referred to Hartmut Rosa's concept of resonance to explain why many people are reading Confucian classics and voluntarily reappropriating them today. Gilgan (2022a, 2022b) drew on the grounded utopian movement theory to assess the underlying utopianism of the capacity for change in the classics reading movement and the civil sphere theory to explain specific socio-political conditions for bringing change into society.

In summary, empirical studies on a variety of relevant aspects and dimensions of Confucian education have burgeoned over the past few years. But these studies have not properly dealt with Confucian education from the perspective of citizenship studies; neither do they investigate the possible relations between Confucianism and citizenship from the empirical view of Confucian education practitioners. The present book aims to contribute to filling this literature gap. In the next section, I move to describe the research setting, data sources, and research methods to lay the methodological foundation for the empirical chapters (i.e., Chapters Four, Five, and Six) of this book.

Research setting and methods

Focusing on *dujing* education, this book empirically explores the relationship between Confucianism and citizenship by examining two sets of resources: (1) written materials by Wang Caigui and (2) fieldwork data with founders, teachers, parents, and students at Yiqian School (a pseudonym), a Confucian classical school strongly influenced by Wang's pedagogy. Placing Yiqian School in the grander field of Confucian education revival as clarified above, I choose it for this study first because it is one of China's earliest established Confucian private schools in

contemporary and has undergone changes and shifts throughout; second because of its officially recognized compulsory school status but featuring Confucian education (details below). In the empirical Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I merge the two types of materials. One advantage of combining the data in this way is to present more straightforwardly the consistencies and inconsistencies between purported educational ideals and everyday schooling practices.

First, given Wang Caigui's profound influence on *dujing* education, this study uses his written materials to uncover the theoretical discourses on cultivating learners' citizenship through the extensive study of classics. In particular, I examine one of Wang's collections of public speeches, entitled *Dujing ershi nian (Two Decades of Reading the Classics)*. Published in 2014, this book includes six speeches about *dujing* education, which Wang carefully selected and believed to be most representative of his main ideas on *dujing* education. The book also has an Introduction and Conversation section, where Wang summarized the achievements and inadequacies of *dujing* education over the past two decades and directly responded to challenging questions. Furthermore, I collected and analysed some of Wang's other speech texts, in which he referred to key elements of citizenship when advising Confucian education practitioners on how to address the strict regulations of local government.

Second, Yiqian School is located in a small, mountainous town in a developed province on the southeast coast of China. The history of Yiqian School can be traced back to 2002, when the school's founder, Mr Chen, gathered a few preschool children to read *The Analects of Confucius* at home. In 2010, Yiqian School was endowed with the official status of a private school (*minban xuexiao*, 'school run by the people') by the local government. Despite its approval as a nine-year compulsory school, Yiqian School does not routinely offer the comprehensive state-stipulated curriculum; instead, it requires students to read and memorize Confucian classics such as *The Analects* and *Mencius*, in addition to some Taoist classics such as *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* and western English classics throughout the school day. This paradoxical situation results in Yiqian School struggling between teaching Confucian classics and delivering the national curriculum.

I visited the Yiqian School for two months in 2012, one month in 2013, and six months in 2015, during which periods I collected data through interviews with school administrators, teaching staff, and students, and participant observations of the routine teaching and learning activities and teacher-student interactions inside and outside the classrooms. The student population at Yiqian School varied greatly across these three visits. The school catered for approximately 300 students in 2012 and 2013 but had only about 120 students divided into six classes in 2015. Most students were at the age of compulsory primary and middle school education (6-15 years old). In theory, students could study at the school from Year 1 to Year 9; in practice, very few students did so because of the national curriculum incompatibility mentioned above. Consequently, many students ultimately transfer to state schools or other Confucian schools. In 2015, Yiqian School had 20 staff members for teaching and administration. Most of the teaching staff had some knowledge of traditional Chinese culture, and a few had previously worked in other Confucian schools.

I incorporate interviews with the school's founder, headteacher, and 17 parents of students (6 fathers and 11 mothers) in the analysis for the empirical chapters of this book. I recruited the

parental participants by snowball sampling. Most of the parents lived in urban areas, and they had educational backgrounds ranging from high school to Master's degree level. They held a variety of occupations: for example, white-collar employees at private companies, low- and mid-ranking civil servants, self-employed entrepreneurs, full-time mothers, and engineers. The parents were affluent enough to pay the high tuition fee of RMB30,000 (equivalent to \$5,000) per year charged by the Confucian school in 2015. The background information indicates that the parental informants were at an advanced socio-economic status.

All interviews and oral communications during the fieldwork were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, which is the common native language of the researcher and the informants. The school founder and headteacher were interviewed on multiple occasions from 2012, and phone interviews with parents were held mainly from May to August 2015. Each interview with a parent lasted one to two hours and was audio-recorded with the consent of the informants. I personally transcribed the interview recordings verbatim. All participants are anonymized in this article.

The holistic coding method was applied to the analysis of Wang Caigui's textual materials and of the observation and interview data, out of a desire 'to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analysing them line by line' (Dey 1993: 104). Through holistic coding, the content of the collected data was analysed, and some meaningful themes were determined. Specifically, I did three phases of coding with the assistance of NVivo: 'developing categories of information (open coding), interconnecting the categories (axial coding), [and] building a "story" that connects the categories (selective coding)' (Creswell 2007: 160). In addition, critical discourse analysis was used to interpret how the participants spoke and understood their feelings and actions. In doing so I aim to unpack how their narratives are associated with the cores of citizenship.

The rise of the Confucian citizen in China: implications and limitations

By combining theoretical reflections and empirical explorations, this book provides solid evidence to complement existing scholarship that challenges the oversimplified interpretation of the controversial relationship between Confucianism and citizenship. The consistency between Confucianism and citizenship, as exhibited in Confucian education activists' narratives and actions, is understandable under modern conditions, as the government of China constantly seeks to cultivate modern citizens to contribute to the building of a powerful state (Yan 2010). The current revival of Confucian education reflects the transformation of contemporary China: a rapid process of individualization has resulted in increasing awareness of individual rights and the development of multiple channels through which to assert one's rights (Yan 2009). Against this background, the story of Confucian education offers a chance to investigate how Confucianism may inspire the creation of a new type of citizen – the Confucian citizen.

This book offers various descriptions of the Confucian citizen in dispersed chapters throughout. Overall, I understand the Confucian citizen to bear a resemblance to the 'gentle citizen' (Wang 2021). The latter is proposed as a synthesized, thick subject who makes 'the civic attributes the subjective underpinning', is inspired by and supplemented with Confucian virtues, and pursues

'the integration of inner sageliness with outer kingliness' (Ibid: 295). In light of this, I argue that the formation of the Confucian citizen stems from a process where Confucian moral values extend from the individual to civic awareness of identity, rights, responsibilities, action, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

I emphasize that the appearance of the Confucian citizen contributes new theoretical implications for citizenship studies. First, it provides an embodied example to Chen (2020), who suggested that scholars should rethink citizenship by integrating its fundamental values with local Chinese traditions and experiences. Second, I go further in indicating that the Confucian citizen, embodying the compatibility of Confucianism with modern citizen elements, serves as a perfect window to exhibit the shifting moral and civic ethics of Chinese individuals and the emerging varieties of moral life and civic subjectivity in China.

Furthermore, this book joins other studies to affirm Confucianism's commitment to certain core elements of citizenship, such as rights and responsibilities (Wang 2022d), equality and social justice (Nuyen 2001), human rights (Tiwald 2012), and public participation (Guo and Chen 2009). These contributions from Confucianism have nourished and opened up novel directions for the discussion of citizenship and citizenship education. On this basis, I agree with Chen's (2020) proposal to problematize and challenge the essentializing tendencies of current citizenship education, which limit the concept of citizenship to the Western experience. I further argue that this can be done by rethinking citizenship from a post-orientalist perspective and thus uncovering and critiquing the Western-centrism of the dominant citizenship paradigm (Guo 2022; Zhao and Wang *Forthcoming*). Accordingly, there is a need to explore the peculiarities of citizenship in non-Western contexts by integrating the shared, basic values of citizenship (e.g., liberty, equality, rights, and global awareness) with a variety of local experiences (Chen 2020).

However, the findings of this book should not be extended to the whole body of Confucian education participants in contemporary China. The present study relies on a relatively small sample of Confucian education participants and does not imply that the participants' perceptions and understandings of citizenship elements necessarily represent the masses. The research findings are indicative, not representative, not only because Confucian education, in general, is now experiencing a palpable diversification in teaching and learning methods but also because of the increasingly diverse socio-economic status of Confucian activists. I acknowledge that most of the parental informants in this study came from the recently emerging middle class (Rocca 2017), and their socio-economically advantaged background entails idiosyncrasies in their perceptions of the civic elements embedded in concrete social class conditions. Nonetheless, I emphasize that the demonstration of the participants' Chinese citizenship features of identity, rights, responsibilities, action, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism in this book is indicative of the (re)fashioning of Confucian citizen. Further studies are needed to adopt a social class lens to explore the implications for the Confucian activists' conceptions of Chinese citizenship in contemporary China.

Additionally, this book reveals the Confucian activism in the formation of Confucian citizen. It discovers that the acts by Confucian citizens are presented as disruptive and creative when they challenge the hegemonic state system and carve out new options for education. These acts of

citizenship, however, are performed privately by individuals rather than collectively. The foundation of Confucian activism relies on the individual, who acts separately rather than collectively and who reflects on the truth of education in solitude. As the rise in consciousness of individual rights is subject to the power of the state in contemporary China, individuals may only act within the boundaries defined by the regime (Yan 2009). Some scholars argue that Chinese citizens are expected to prioritize the party-state interests and submit to the absolute ideological authority (Chia 2011; Kennedy et al 2014; Chen 2020). For the time being, Confucian citizens and grassroots Confucian education remain under the management of the party-state, as reflected by the Chinese Ministry of Education's recent designation of full-time classical schools as 'illegal' and subsequent order for a full-scale investigation. In future research, scholars could explore the implications of state management of grassroots Confucian education on the formation of citizenship in the revival of Confucianism.

Outline of the book

This book emerges from the junction of Confucian philosophy, citizenship studies, ethnographic research, educational studies, Chinese politics, religious studies, and China/East Asia studies. In the following chapters, I combine theoretical and empirical approaches to investigate the relationships between Confucianism and citizenship in the context of China. The theoretical approach, covered in Chapters One, Two, and Three, is used to construct new frameworks through which we can examine the nuances and complexities of the relationship between Confucianism and citizenship. The empirical approach, applied in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, is used to explore the process of citizen making through Confucian education and contributes robust arguments based on first-hand fieldwork materials. Considered together, this work disrupts the conceptualization of citizenship as a Western concept and draws attention to Chinese traditions and values that encourage us to rethink the localization of Chinese citizenship. The book's overall achievement is to provide solid evidence from theoretical and empirical perspectives for the rise of the Confucian citizen, a new type of citizen emerging in contemporary China, and to offer an explanation of how this rise challenges the popular characterization of Confucianism as a contradiction to citizenship.

The book is divided into two parts: theoretical reflections and empirical explorations. The first half—Chapters One, Two, and Three—presents theoretical reflections. Chapter One is a review of opposing conceptualizations of Confucianism and citizenship. In this chapter, based on a comprehensive review of the literature, I differentiate 'liberal Confucianism' from 'illiberal Confucianism' and contrast 'thin citizenship' with 'thick citizenship'. Based on these four categories, I establish three models to represent scholarly discussions of Confucianism and citizenship: (1) the incompatibility interpretation, which assumes citizenship to be thin and Confucianism to be illiberal; (2) the compatibility interpretation, in which citizenship is seen as thin and Confucianism as liberal; and (3) the reconstruction interpretation, which accommodates the concepts of thick citizenship and both liberal and illiberal Confucianism. I argue that the reconstruction model holds the most potential to generate novel types of the Confucian citizen in contemporary China, exemplified by the concepts of the '*junzi* (virtuous person) citizen' and '*tianxia* (all-under-heaven) citizenship'.

In Chapter Two, I develop the concepts introduced in Chapter One and go further to compare *junzi*, the idealized figure of Confucianism, with citizens, as understood through modern politics. I also construct an analytical framework using ‘politico–legal’ and ‘moral–ethical’ classification criteria. I divide *junzi* into ‘governing’ and ‘moral’ subjects and citizens into ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ citizens. I then compare these four categories to come to two conclusions: in terms of the moral-ethical dimension, *junzi* is broadly compatible with the idea of the citizen. In terms of the politico-legal dimension, *junzi* is largely incompatible with the idea of the citizen.

In Chapter Three, I build on the discussions in Chapter Two to identify potential ways in which the concepts of *junzi* and citizen can be combined. I propose two pathways towards such a combination. One pathway involves cultivating civic *junzi*; that is, *junzi* characteristics form the subjective underpinning and are supplemented with civic properties to transform the traditional Confucian *junzi* into a modern *junzi* characterized by civic ethics and equal status. The other pathway involves cultivating the *junzi*-style citizen; that is, civic qualities, as the subjective underpinning, are supplemented with Confucian *junzi* traits to transform an individual into a new type of citizen. This new type of citizen possesses Confucian morality and ethics and pursues the integration of sageliness within and kingliness without. Of these two approaches, I propose that the approach towards the *junzi*-style citizen is most practical, considering modern China’s political, social, and cultural circumstances.

The second half of the book—Chapters Four, Five, and Six—focuses on empirical explorations. In Chapter Four, I investigate four dimensions of citizenship—identity, rights/entitlements, responsibilities, and actions—by examining how Confucian education activists (teachers and parents) engage in full-time classical education at a Confucian school. I begin by presenting the shaping of the activists’ Confucian identity, which involves discourses around Chinese culturalism and criticism of state education. I then identify the widespread circulation of the discourse of rights (*quanli*) within Confucian education. Following this, I discuss the emerging discourse around righteousness (*yi*), revealing how this particular Confucian ideology, articulated through local terms such as ‘humanity’ (*renxing*), ‘the Way’ (*Dao*), ‘principle’ (*li*), and ‘rationality’ (*lixing*), generates a sense of civic responsibility and obligation. The final section of Chapter Four examines the Confucian idea of ‘extending innate knowledge’ (*zhi liangzhi*) and the contribution of this idea to the conversion of internal, individual ethical reflection into creative civic acts. Based on these findings, I emphasize the previously understudied civic dynamics underlying the Confucian classical education movement and the general Confucian revival.

In Chapter Five, I shift the focus away from the teachers and parents who feature in Chapter Four to students at the same Confucian school. Using interviews with and observations of these students, their parents, and their teachers, I explore the moral, institutional, discursive, and practical paradoxes inherent in educating students to become Confucian cultural citizens through reading the classics. I begin by presenting students’ use of a type of moral discourse to differentiate state education from Confucian education and based on this separation, to cultivate four typical Confucian-inspired civic virtues—spirit of learning, ethical reflection, awareness of cultural rights, and sense of cultural responsibility. I then discuss the practical and discursive contradictions

between individualistic and authoritarian ideologies in students' reading the classics to transform themselves into Confucian cultural citizens. In the final section, I uncover the institutional dilemmas that students and their parents face when striving to ensure that the Confucian study experience is recognized by the state and society. To conclude, I argue that the empirical findings of Chapter Five provide fresh evidence that Confucianism is compatible with modern citizenship and that a new type of citizen, the Confucian citizen, is being constructed in today's China.

In Chapter Six, I examine the nationalist and cosmopolitan orientations in creating the Confucian cosmopolitan citizen through *dujing* education. I first investigate the nationalism and cosmopolitanism by critically analyzing the relevant discourses in the *dujing* theory. Then I unpack the conceptualization of 'cosmopolitan citizen' in the discourse context of a Confucian school, describing how students' national identity and cosmopolitan awareness are cultivated through the school's teaching and learning processes. This chapter concludes with the main argument that the revival of Confucian education involves an interweaving of nationalism and cosmopolitanism and faces pedagogical challenges in cultivating students as Confucian cosmopolitan citizens with a Chinese national identity.