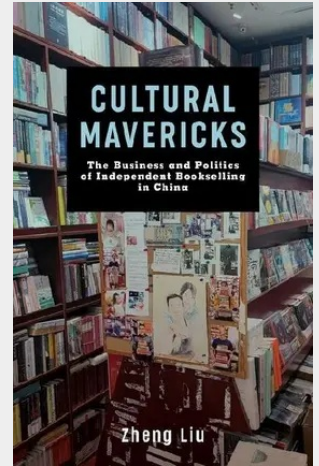


Liu

Cultural Mavericks

The Business and Politics of Independent Bookselling in China

In recent decades, self-proclaimed “independent bookstores” have arisen across China. In the West, such retailers represent an alternative to corporations and chains. In China, by contrast, they differentiate themselves from not only the state-owned Xinhua Bookstore but also other privately owned shops through an emphasis on intellectual independence and the free exchange of ideas. *Cultural Mavericks* takes readers inside the world of independent bookselling in China, showing how a wide range of figures navigate the challenges of book retailing in the digital age amid rapidly shifting social, political, and economic dynamics. Drawing on more than a decade of immersive research—including interviews, observations, and extensive documentary analysis—Zheng Liu unveils how these bookstores carve out a unique identity and market position. She develops the concept of “culturally adapted strategy” to explain how independent bookstores—as both dedicated cultural institutions and resilient business enterprises—balance economic imperatives with a deep commitment to intellectual autonomy. Liu challenges the tendency to understand nonstate cultural institutions in China in terms of resistance, arguing that independent bookstores engage with politics as a strategic means of differentiation from the competition. Richly detailed and compellingly written, *Cultural Mavericks* sheds new light on the interplay among culture, commerce, and politics in China, offering timely insights into the evolving dynamics of China’s book industry and wider cultural economy.



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