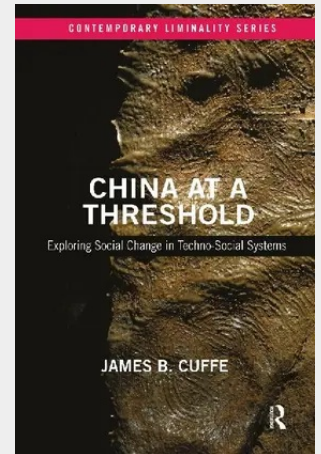


China at a Threshold

Exploring Social Change in Techno-Social Systems

Once the world's most technologically advanced civilisation, China is poised to yet again take this mantle, having made incredible technological strides over recent decades; but what does this in fact mean? What will this mean for Chinese society, and what ramifications might it have for the future? This book offers an account of social change under the growing influence of communications technology in media-saturated urban China. The challenges presented by the rise of technology and its pervasive nature in the mediation of all facets of everyday life pose questions not just for Chinese society but for all contemporary media societies. Drawing on theories from the philosophy of technology and conceptual tools from political anthropology, this title moves beyond debates surrounding mediative technology as a liberating or malevolent force. China at a Threshold addresses academic concerns surrounding communications technology and state control, looking for an interpretative approach to understand the role media might play in social change so that we might ascertain its impact on social relations. Urging a reconsideration in our understanding of technology as neither liberative nor oppressive, the author advances a proposal that brings social forces into play in their own right. Taking inspiration from thinkers in philosophy and anthropology, this title investigates storytelling and liminal characters as real agents in social change so that we might identify alternative forces for change not reducible to technological impact or human proclivity.

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