

Wu, Xiao, Northwestern University, United States

A Curious Case of Cultural Piracy: Unveiling the Diverse Film Consumption in China

China stands at the heart of the international cultural piracy epidemic. However, attention has been paid primarily to the dynamics between global capital and the nation-state, and cultural globalization discourses have been generally applied to its implications. The local, namely the large Chinese population consuming pirated films, has been unjustifiably overlooked. Via ethnographic and archival research, this paper reveals a rich account of the evolution of the considerably diversified cinematic repertoire of the Chinese piracy market. Multiple forces have accounted for this curious anomaly: peculiar ramifications of the contention between globalization and the Chinese state, the local bottom-up market mechanisms, including the symbiotic relationship between piracy and print press, the representation of the piracy viewing public, and online film criticism. In scrutiny of how the diverse Chinese piracy consumption has been oriented and sustained, the paper advances our understanding, both factually and theoretically, in film piracy, globalization, and cultural market.