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Cultural artifact, ideology export or soft power? Confucius Institute in Peru

Abstract:

This paper presents a critical analysis of the transnational interplay of cultural, educational and economic forces that culminated with the establishment of a Chinese language and cultural centre in Peru, the Confucius Institute. Confucius Institutes are government-sponsored cultural centres devoted mainly to Chinese language education around the world. They have been referred to as examples of China's soft power and subjected to criticisms. With a substantive theory of power as the departure point, this article analyses the power relations surrounding the case of Confucius Institutes in Latin America.

Keywords: Power relation; transnationalism; soft power; Confucius Institutes; Latin America; Peru

Introduction

Confucius Institutes (CIs), which teach Mandarin as a foreign language worldwide, have recorded a growth rate about ten times faster than that of the GDP growth rate of China, renowned for its steady and fast economic growth that often defies the laws of economics and patterns of global recession. These language and cultural centres resemble a dozen other international language/cultural centres subsidized and monitored by governments or state agencies, such as the Alliance Française (since 1883), the British Council (since 1934) and the Instituto Cervantes (since 1991), which are also known as soft power structures and infrastructures or, loosely speaking, outlets of state power configuration.

However, CIs differ significantly from these other institutions. The first CI was established only in 2004, and by 2011, the number of CIs worldwide had soared to 358, without counting 500 Mandarin speaking classrooms at the elementary and secondary education level called Confucius Classrooms (Hanban 2010; Liu 2011). The Chinese state agency overseeing CIs, Hanban, has been dispatching one thousand Mandarin language instructors a year to some of the 105 countries and regions where they are established, and between 2009 and 2010, had doubled the number of instructors from two to four thousand (Liu 2009; 2010). "The total number of full-time and part-time faculty and staff reached over 10,000 and the total number of registered students reached over 500,000" (Liu 2011).

This remarkable and abnormal growth of CIs did not pass unnoticed. At first, the rapid growth of the CIs raised some eyebrows, and later aroused suspicions that they were a form of disguised state power. At least two European operations of the CIs were severely questioned by the hosting institutions and states and they also attracted attention from the academic world (Yang 2010). They were referred to as soft power, which can be defined vernacularly as a type of state power by which “countries get their way in the world without having to resort to military might” (Monocle 2010, 41).

In contrast to most of the studies that have dealt with CIs as homogenous world-wide and with cross-sectional analysis (Gil 2008; Paradise 2009; Yang 2010), this article offers a historically grounded analysis focusing on the case of Peru. It will be argued that CIs as Chinese language and cultural centres are state apparatuses in pursuit of a particular form or technique of power that unveil the late stage of power flux reversal of Sino-Peruvian relations.

Chinese transnationalism in Latin America has an almost two-centuries-old presence intertwined with local social imageries, power structure and narratives. Analysing the transnational relationship between Latin America and China with only today’s data would be both incomplete and distorting. For this reason this article focuses on the relational aspects of power rather than an exclusively substantive dimension, and examines the Sino-Peruvian ties using the historiographical method, which Foucault termed ‘archaeology’:

Archaeology does not seek to rediscover the continuous, insensible transition that relates discourses, on a gentle slope, to what precedes them, surrounds them, or follows them (...) but [does seek] a differential analysis of the modalities of discourse. (Foucault 1972, 139)

In addition to historiography, the later section of this article, devoted to the establishment of the CIs in Peru, uses the empirical data set from the interviews with administrative-teaching staff and students of a Confucius Institute in Peru conducted in 2010; direct observations and written information from the conference of Confucius Institutes in Beijing held in December 2010; and, tacitly, the author’s personal experience in Peru during the years of armed conflicts.

Human capital export from China to Peru

Chinese transnationalism in Peru started and matured during the “Hundred Years weakness and poverty,” from the 1840s to 1949 of the impoverished Qing empire followed by a republic divided by civil wars and invaded by Japan (Wang 1993). African slavery in Peru was abolished in 1854, about twenty years after Britain and ten years earlier than the 13th Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution. The abolitionist law caused a serious shortage of manpower in the land of the Incas, which had been undergoing a fast-paced industrialization since its independence in 1821. The scarcity of manpower was more glaring in sugar plantations, copper mines and guano beds because of their harsh working conditions. It was then that labourers of the impoverished Qing Empire were seen by Peruvian planters, politicians and traders as an alternative manpower source—to that of British Indian coolieism (cf. Rodríguez Pastor 2001).

The Peruvian flag vessels anchored in the coolie trade ports of Macao and Amoy (Xiamen today) usually outnumbered all other foreign flag vessels except those carrying the French Tricolour. Tens of thousands of Chinese men were systematically lured and deceived during their recruitment by local crimps and foreign dealers with promises of a voyage to great fortunes at ‘Gold Mountain’ (idealized Chinese name for San Francisco) during the Gold Rush and the Central Pacific Railroad construction (Cuba Commission 1970). As a result of these and other astonishing motives, such as selling local revolutionary prisoners instead of executing them, or disgraced gamblers selling themselves to pay their debts, some 90 to 100 thousand Chinese labourers were shipped to Peru after a three-month transpacific passage, with an average mortality during the voyage of 11 per cent between 1849 and 1874, with its peak at 16 per cent during 1860-1869 period (Meagher 2008).

Typically, Chinese coolies to Peru signed a contract for eight years, twice as long as British indentured servants and 17th-18th century French *engagés* in North American and Caribbean territories. They were often called ‘chino macao’ or ‘chino manila’ depending on their ports of origin. Their working and living condition in Peru were appalling:

Their situation was so horrible that they were generally called ‘slaves’; only, if scarcely, in legal documents were they defined by the term ‘free laborers’, which was the official designation for them. In the haciendas and farms, they were treated much worse than black slaves. (Pérez de la Riva 1976, 20)

The reason was that African slaves were owned and therefore better taken care of. Although Chinese coolies were called free bonded labour or indentured servants, such terms do not match the reports and the literature about them (Irick 1982; Meagher 2008; Stanley 1998; Stewart 1951; Yen 1985). Only young and strong males would survive their first eight years of indenture, particularly in the guano islands (Stewart 1951). Furthermore, upon completion of the contracts after eight years, instead of being freed, they were usually thrown back into a cycle of never ending re-indenture for financial and legal reasons such as inability to pay their own right of abode or to obtain a passage back to their homeland (Meagher 2008). The Peruvian press at that time denounced these abuses against human rights, which would be chartered a century too late: “The greatest part of those being newly contracted by the

plantations are coming to replace, not those who are completing their contracts, but rather those who died fulfilling them” (Stewart 1951, 105). They witnessed striking similarities between African slavery and Chinese coolieism. *El Nacional*, a Peruvian newspaper, defined Chinese coolieism as “another African slave trade (except that now) the trade was not in ebony, but in copper” (Stewart 1951, 117).

Research on Anglo-American labour law in the nineteenth century refers to this period as a time in which “unfree serf labor gave way to regulated wage labor and finally to free wage labor” (Steinfeld 2001, 1). However, English and to a lesser degree American wage workers of that time were subject to non-pecuniary pressures, i.e., criminally charged and sent to gaols, a practice masterfully described by Charles Dickens. We can quite safely say that certain aspects of 19th century Western wage-labour constituted coerced or ‘unfree’ labour. Chinese coolieism in Peru was synchronous with these legal and social developments, which defined coolies’ legal, social and juridical identities. Borrowing from Adam McKeown (1999), we can say that the history of Chinese coolies in Peru was a chapter of ‘diaspora-as-exile’ and not of ‘diaspora-as-diversity’.

Such physical violence and flat denial of human dignity eventually, although agonizingly slowly, caused the Qing empire to react (Irick 1982; Yen 1985). The treaty of Tien Tsin (1874) between the Qing emperor and the Peruvian republic marked the start of their formal diplomatic relationship (Rodríguez Pastor 2001) as well as the official end of coolieism in Peru and Latin America, one of the most embarrassing narratives of human incivility.

It is against this backdrop that the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CIs) in Peru should be examined. As stated in an official site of a Confucius Institute in Peru, the CIs arrived in this part of Latin America after “a historical contact of more than 160 years” (PUC 2012, my translation). Daniel Katz categorizes the sources of international conflicts into economic interests (competing for resources and market), nationalistic ideologies (justification of ways of life and values) and power struggle. They are not mutually exclusive, for example, “power is not only a means for securing economic advantage or ideological maximization, it is also a source of conflict in its own right” (1965, 374). The conflicts in the early transnational relationship between China and Peru hinged principally on national and global economics.

Ideology export from China to Peru

Chifa is the Spanish term for Chinese restaurants that exists only in Peru. It probably derives from the Cantonese *chiu-fan* (to eat) or *chau-fan* (fried rice). Popular with young people and families, *Chifa* is a showcase of how Chinese culture introduced during the coolieism and post-coolieism period has been

incorporated into Peruvian culture in a more extensive and deeper way than in other countries. Humberto Rodríguez Pastor says that the level of Chinese cultural influence among ordinary Peruvians could be regarded as the most significant in Latin America (2006).

It is widely recognized that more than the French Revolution and its aftermath, the independence of Peru from Spain in 1821 resulted in a shift in the balance of power from monarchist to nationalist *señores feudales* [feudal lords]. Latin-Americanist and Peruvian thinker J. C. Mariátegui argues in his 1928 opus magnum that Chinese coolies were to the new Peruvian republic what black slaves were to the Viceroyalty—“not humans but working hands” (Mariátegui 2008). By and large, Peruvian lands and their industrial exploitation remained in the hands of the same landowning ruling class until the land reforms *cum* forceful expropriation in 1969 by a Marxist military regime. The latter also brought about a considerable growth in leftist political movements in the Andean highlands (Taylor 1983). One of them, led by university activists and academics in the late 1960s, became the *Sendero Luminoso* [Shining Path] (Paredes 2009; Zucha 2007). Sendero’s leaders called themselves a Maoist movement, and they had been ideologically and militarily trained in China between 1964 and 1967 (Barnhurst 1991) (Zucha 2007). This was a logical turn of events because when the Communist International or *Comintern* was dissolved in 1943, followed by the death of Stalin ten years later, Mao became the *de facto* leader of the international communist cause.

However, in the 1980s, the already established guerrilla organization of Sendero was not on good terms with the modernizing Chinese state. Sendero regarded Deng Xia-ping as a reactionary promoting a market economy in China, which clashed with Mao Tse-tung’s ideals and undermined Sendero’s ideological foundations. A single event best describes their discontent:

The Shining Path announced its war against the Peruvian state by burning ballot boxes in the small Andean town of Chushi on May 17, 1980 during the first presidential election since 1963. Later in the year, on December 26, citizens in Lima awoke to find dead dogs adorned with signs reading ‘Deng Xiao-ping son of a bxxxx’. (Zucha 2007, 2)

This marked the start of the Peruvian version of the People’s War nurtured by Maoist ideology, but weaned from Deng’s Chinese state, which had been engaged in implementing the ‘socialist market economic system’ since 1978 (Evans 1995). The social cost of this typically terrorist war was enormous: Since it began operating in 1980, Sendero had mobilized some eighty thousand subversives in a war that killed over twenty-five thousand people (Soto 2002). Sendero’s theory and praxis of power, its propaganda and action, were responded to by the armed forces with the same language—violence. Casualties on either side of the conflict and the suffering of ordinary people were the daily bread in Peru. The war rapidly subsided after 1991 with the arrest and

imprisonment of Abismael Guzman, the leader of Sendero, also known as ‘President Gonzalo’. From the perspective of the conflict theory of Daniel Katz (1965), the war between Sendero and the Peruvian state could be attributed to disagreements over values and ideology although struggle over economic and political hegemony was not negligible. “A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities” (Foucault 1983, 220). Today, a weakened Sendero Luminoso still operates between cocaine plantation-rich Peruvian Amazon and Los Andes highlands.

No sooner had the leaders of Sendero fallen than totally different news, about China made the front pages of Peruvian newspapers. A state-backed company from Beijing had purchased an important iron mine that used to be owned by Americans prior to its nationalization by a dictatorial regime; the buyers were hailed as heroes (Romero and Zárate 2010). From then onwards, China never stopped purchasing and selling in Peru and became its greatest trade partner and investor. Chinese investments in Peru amounted to US\$ 10 billion as of 2010, about the same level as in the UK (Minperu 2010). Chinese investments are focused on copper and iron mine mega-projects such as Toromocho, Galeno, Rio Blanco, Mina Justa, Marcona and Pampa del Pongo (Minperu 2010). What makes these companies different from other international mining companies based in Peru is that their entire production is exclusively shipped to Mainland China.

These are the cultural, ideological and economic backgrounds in which CIs were exported from China to Peru in 2004.

Culture and Education export from China to Peru

With around a thousand university presidents, vice-chancellors and language institute directors from host countries, and incurring an expenditure of not less than US\$ 2-3 million, the Confucius Institute Conference is a significant yearly effort for Confucius Institute Headquarters, or Hanban. Nevertheless, this is just a tiny amount for a Chinese state with a purported expenditure in external publicity work of US \$8.9 billion in 2010 (Monocle 2010). The profiles of the participants in the conference highlight a key characteristic of CIs—administration and management partnership between a local university and a mainland Chinese university.

For some participants, this conference appears to be something more than mere experience and know-how sharing. Asked by the researcher why he used the term ‘Confucius Institute Movement’, the vice-chancellor of an important university in the UK justified his choice in the following way:

I am a linguist. Movement has several meanings. The first one is change. CIs are mechanisms for change in mutual understanding in language, business and politics. A second meaning is direction. CIs as movements mean a next step with a direction and towards a global recognition. Third, movement also means shared understanding in works being done, exchange, sense of purpose and change. (X28V5C)

The implications and scope of CIs *qua* movement depend on the intentions of and the actions taken by both sides of the agreement. Such intentions, sense of direction and actions converge into the quest for international recognition of the culture, language and social status of both the Chinese state and the host institutions. Although struggle for recognition is not always explicit, to think that CIs are merely charm displays would be mistakenly simplistic. It should be remembered that such intentions and actions at the macro level are translated into the micro level. CIs worldwide have a basic set of personalized goals, namely to help individuals to learn the Chinese language and culture and increase their competitiveness in upward social mobility.

The Peruvian case is no exception. There are four CIs in Peru, two in the capital city of Lima and the other two in provincial capitals. All four are located on the campuses of prominent private universities; three of them are publicly known to have been founded on conservative Roman Catholic religious ideals. The most recently established CI, at the Ricardo Palma University, aims to train future interpreters (Castro 2009), but all four CIs share comparable Putonghua language instruction and cultural activities.

The Peruvian CI in this study is located in Piura, the capital city of the most populated Northern province, which carries the same name. As is usually the case for other CIs around the world, a national university in Beijing shares about half of the budget required to run this CI. This particular CI offers Mandarin learning at basic, intermediary and advanced levels; it also functions as a national venue for the international Mandarin proficiency test. The courses are not credit-bearing and take in non-university students who account for half of the student population. The CI is located within the compounds of the university language centre, where English and French are also taught. The tuition fee is less than a half that of other CIs in the capital city of Lima. According to its director, the CI is expected to contribute to regional development by easing language barriers for people in business with Greater China and Asia under various trade frameworks, such as Free Trade Agreements and Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); furthermore, they can facilitate students' access to scholarships (UDEP 2010).

In the case of one 30 year-old female student with technical training in the garment industry, her main motivation to learn Mandarin language was:

...to improve my professional future. The tie between Peru and China has strengthened in recent years, and increasing business between the two countries will demand [the use of] Chinese language. I would like to be an interpreter or a language

teacher. I know that the road to it is long, but I am hopeful of achieving it. (T3u74m, my translation)

Social mobility may be one of the main motivations for studying Mandarin, but it is not the chief one in this particular CI. An administrative member of staff from Beijing who is also a Mandarin instructor said that around 10-15% of her students have some Chinese ancestors. She believes that cultural interest is perhaps the most important motivation for her students. She said that their genealogical background truly motivates them and creates a friendly and hospitable environment in teaching and learning.

Another student, a mother of two aged 55 years, is the daughter of a first generation immigrant father from China and a Peruvian mother:

I have always been interested in learning languages since I was a girl. My father is native of Guangdong, and his conversations with his friends and stories about China have always fascinated me. I wish I could one day visit it. Moreover, Chinese written characters intrigue me, and I am very eager to learn them. (L2e26ta, my translation)

To these interests for leisurely learning about culture and language, the on-going globalization adds some altruistic elements. A CI in the capital city of Lima states on its website: “We work towards bridging understanding among people with different cultures, and contributing to friendship and the construction of a harmonious world” (PUC 2012, my translation).

CIs are almost always established in partnership between a Chinese university and a university in the host country. This model contrasts with Western state-sponsored language and cultural centres, which seldom operate on campus. CIs take advantage of the pre-existing university system, a time-honoured global institution that assures basic standards, administrative structure and perhaps even prestige. CIs also have pretensions to become instrumental in university-based research, Sinology in particular (PUC 2012). However, this is the least developed area shown not only by the exclusive character of their yearly conference in Beijing (closed to the public and researchers), but also by the fact that most of the Sinology research centres in the host universities were established prior to the CIs and run by researchers unrelated to the CIs. Indeed, these clearly overlapping functions and interests between the two parties, CIs and pre-existing research and language education centres, have probably caused a good deal of tension, if not imbroglios.

A fourth CI with an emphasis on training interpreters was established in Peru in 2009 (Castro 2009). Its graduate interpreters are intended to contribute to mutual understanding between China and Peru, trade and business in particular. However, the type of tasks waiting for them could be rather unsettling:

“The Chinese see us as little more than slaves,” said Hermilia Zamudio, 58, a

resident of Ruta del Sol, whose husband was fired from the mine after working there for almost 30 years. “They deem it beneath them to talk to us, and when they need to address problems here, they do so with their thugs.” Clashes with private security guards and with the police, who receive a monthly stipend paid by Shougang [Company], are common in Ruta del Sol, on land where Shougang says it has concessionary rights to exploit deposits of dolomite, a mineral it hopes to extract for smelting iron and steel. (Romero and Zárate 2010)

Chinese coolies were little more than slaves upon their arrival in Peru more than a century ago. Many Peruvians were also little more than slaves, and subjected to degrading conditions and physical violence during the Maoist civil war. What is fascinating is the metamorphosis of power forms; what is perhaps even more fascinating is the complexity of power relations, the control of power, its perpetuation and, above all, the change of direction in power flow and gradient.

Discussion

Substantive power discourses deal with the origin, nature and ownership of power, particularly with its excesses, abuses and falls. However, traditional discourses such as that concerning power as a threat that needs to be moderated by laws (Aristotle 1996); or power that is ruthlessly repressive yet eventually beneficial by necessity (Machiavelli 2010); or Montesquieu’s taxonomy of state power are inadequate for examining the case of CIs. First, these discourses focus on the system of overt might, which is not exactly the case of CIs; second, they usually look at power structures within a geographically delimited nation-state, whereas CIs exist on the transnational stage.

Park (2009) suggested that the distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, described in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* and scholarly expounded by Adcock (1952) and it might be useful in discussing the case of the CIs. In the referred text, Emperor Augustus describes how, after turning the Roman Empire into a republic with senatorial system, he himself possessed all the *auctoritas* but limited *potestas*. The meaning of *potestas* here is a form of power by imposing obedience, that is, by coercing others to act in a determined manner. In contrast, *auctoritas* is a form of power that is supported or justified by earned prestige and recognition, which enjoys corresponding level of legitimacy. A feature of *auctoritas* is that it cannot be obtained by pecuniary pressure or physical violence of the ruler or ruling class.

This distinction in turn might be useful in analysing the concept of soft power. The concept of soft power coined by Joseph Nye (2004) formulates a non-military and non-economic state power from the perspective of *auctoritas* in the international arena. While hard power is military and economic might used to intimidate others in global politics and is identified with *potestas*, soft power is “getting others to want the outcomes that you want (and) rests on the

ability to shape the preferences of others” (Nye 2004, 5).

The CIs as a movement is inextricably related to a wide range of powers that China possesses. Most of these powers are a blend of soft and hard forms. For example, China’s international health aid has been noted as being linked to China’s access to natural resources (Wharton Health Economics 2011). However, softness evaporates from China’s rhetoric when it comes to international territorial disputes or secessionist movements from within. CIs have been empowered by direct state intervention, and they count on robust financial and administrative support from the state. The Chinese state in turn is a state centred on executive power at the expense of legislative and judicial powers, and its participatory powers such as private social institutions, regionalisms and syndicalisms are, to be fair, still embryonic. Indeed, CIs little resemble the participatory kind of power structure.

Executive power-centred states try to move away from exercising *potestas* towards exercising *auctoritas*, both in the national and in the international arena. Indeed, it is in the global arena that CIs could be most relevant to China. Beyond consideration of structure and origin of power, CIs appear as useful instruments to bridge the chasm between the state and its outreach points overseas, playing an ancillary role for the former. In the same way that the *Alliance Française* has been serving the French state for more than a century, CIs have for the past few years played an outstanding auxiliary role for transnational projections of a state seeking *auctoritas*; in other words, CIs are state apparatuses. Althusser argues that state apparatuses often function through education and culture, and typically through schooling since “no other...state apparatus has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven” (2006, 97).

Discourses on educational and cultural activities, including schooling, are seldom neutral socially and politically. In fact, educational institutions are usually depicted as one of the most politically sensitive social institutions due to their “fundamental role in maintaining the existing society [by] cultural transmission, role socialization, and value acquisition around a preoccupation with the principles of consensus, cohesion, and stability” (Giroux 1983, 48). Thus the sociological hermeneutics of Bourdieu and Passeron equate pedagogic interventions with symbolic violence in pursue of social reproduction (1977). An excellent example from China could be the situation and role of schools and universities during the Cultural Revolution (Chung kung chung yang tang shih yen chiu shih 1991).

With its power—both *potestas* and *auctoritas*—rapidly declining, the 19th century Qing China offers an interesting contrast to the case of the CIs. The transnationalism that followed Qing’s weakened power caused great diasporas and human capital exports (Wang 1993; 2001). During this period, Chinese subjects in Peru and several other Latin American nations were at the mercy of

private businessmen, planters and coolie clipper owners in cahoots with state apparatuses:

All the State Apparatuses function both by repression and by ideology, with the difference that the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology. (Althusser 2006, 94)

The chief cause of these abuses by state apparatuses during the 19th century was an earlier form of globalization called industrialization, regardless of its capitalist or socialist ideology behind it. Chinese indentured labourers, their culture and language were introduced into industrialization-blind power structures of Peru, to encounter a repressive practice of power apparatuses with an underlying utilitarian ideology. Today, economic growth at all cost continues to be the leading *raison d'être* of state apparatuses. Economy is the golden yardstick to gauge state *auctoritas*. This was the precise context in which CIs were established in Peru. After having put behind a 160-year-old transnationalism loaded with coercion and violence, CIs emerged as new state apparatuses in pursuit of new resources (language and culture), new values (multiculturalism and leisure) and new power (soft) that are all globally plausible. About this change, the head of Hanban and Communist Party member Liu Yandong was rather explicit:

The 21st Century is a century of economic globalization and cultural diversity. The existence of different civilizations makes today's world so colorful; and the interaction of different civilizations makes our history moving forward. Civilizations do vary from one another...It would be impossible to imagine creating a so-called 'unified civilization' to replace the diversified civilizations formed by people of different countries through history. We would never be able to accept... 'unified' civilization losing its diversified characteristics. (2009, 2)

This multiculturalism of unity *cum* diversity echoes Chinese President Hu Jintao's call for "a new upsurge in socialist cultural development...and enhancing of culture as part of the soft power of our country" (Hu Jintao 2007, Section VII). From the perspective of substantive power discourse, CIs are state apparatuses, exercising soft power on the international stage, which are equally international and capitalize on the globally plausible currencies of cultural studies and language instruction. The uniqueness of the CIs and their openly declared soft power lies in the speed and intensity of an endeavour that could easily be perceived as overwhelming.

To some extent, every substantive power discourse includes relational aspects because power transactions occur among people and institutions in 'alterity' positions (Park 2009). For this reason, dialectical arguments dominate power discourses in the field of education, such as that of Freire's pedagogy of

oppressor-oppressed (1972), or Bourdieu's education as perpetuator of social strata through reproduction of habitus, taste or consumption (1984; 1977). A relational approach to CIs (as phenomena of power) enhances our understanding about their substantive characteristics and, more importantly, opens a novel perspective. Michel Foucault calls this relational approach 'a new mode of inquiry' consisting of a discursive method focused on relations among 'subjectivized' people rather than on the phenomenon of power itself, and by intentionally avoiding the excesses of substantive and rationalistic kind of arguments (1983, 208-210). His relational discourse of power focuses on the process of centralization and rationalization of state institutions (apparatuses for Althusser): "power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions" (Foucault 1983, 224). Foucault also argues that power relations take place only when the one over whom power is exerted has previously enjoyed freedom, but as soon as power is exercised, her/his freedom banishes.

Critical analysis of the historical backgrounds of CIs in Peru seems congruous with Foucault's power-freedom correlation. Chinese coolies were relatively free when they signed a contract, but they led slave-like lives due to the Peruvian state apparatuses enforcing the indentured bondage legalistically but unjustly. A century later, during the Maoist popular war, the freedom of people ceased to count there and then at gunpoint. Similarly, today, a robust functioning of CIs could well be seen as conditioning or delimiting freedom. This is because CIs as any other linguistic and cultural instruction systems provide and create a situation that Foucault describes as the privileges of knowledge, the "effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification" (1983, 212).

Indeed, nowhere else in the education sector are language and communication more critical than in language-cultural centres. For CIs, the Mandarin language is both the medium and the message. If the Baconian *dictum* "knowledge is power" were valid, language would be power (Fairclough 1989). Then, in the case of CIs, the medium, message and power contribute altogether to a system of differentiations, namely the "linguistic and cultural differences, differences in know-how and competence" (Foucault 1983, 223). The system of differentiations is the basis for laying down the objectives of a power relation; something that is at stake and intentionally sought after. Furthermore, the objectives of CIs are explicitly aligned with the state strategy of cultural development through soft power (Hu Jintao 2007) and almost all major state interests such as growing trade, greater exploitation of natural resources, international fraternity and so on. For example, if it were true that there is an 'over-dominance' of the English language in global education (De Bary 2007), it would not be unreasonable to regard Chinese language education offered by CIs as a counter-hegemonic movement.

After identifying a system of differentiations and its objectives, the next steps in the analysis of power relations should be determining the means of bringing power relations into being and the ensuing forms of institutionalization (Foucault 1983, 223). Chinese transnationalism in Latin America doubtlessly went through all these stages: Chinese coolieism as an institutionalization of human capital trade in Latin America during the 19th century; the war of Sendero Luminoso as a process of juxtaposing a new order upon an existing democratic order, ‘one man-one vote’, in Peru; lastly, CIs as an institutionalized system of language and culture education. Inserted into the host nation’s legal structures and well-established educational institutions, namely universities and schools, CIs possess distinctive hierarchical structures, yet with relative autonomy in their functioning—techniques of power. Foucault articulates the techniques of power with the Panopticon prison design analogy. He looks at structure rather than infrastructure; the operational mechanism of power rather than the nature of power. CIs resemble the Panopticon because they describe not only a symbolic presence (linguistic and cultural capitals), but also a way of reifying the power relation between the Chinese state and the host country/university. CIs could be regarded as apparatuses of Panopticism with their “connection between bodies, space, power, and knowledge (Dreyfus *et al.* 1983, 192)” that are central to the degrees of rationalization and perpetuation of any power relations.

If we take a step back for a panoramic view and re-examine the entire discussion so far, we will notice that Chinese transnationalism in Latin America has evolved through several stages of rationalization, with various layers of adjustments to the situation of every époque, unveiling a power exercise that is “elaborated, transformed, organized” (Foucault 1983, 224).

Conclusion

A relational power discourse needs to be added to a substantive power discourse, if we are to look at Confucius Institutes in the context of global power transactions. Foucault’s historiographic method, namely archaeology, allows us a critical review of the establishment of China’s cultural, educational and economic influence in Latin America, exemplified here with the case of Confucius Institutes in Peru. The manpower shortage in an industrializing Latin America and the dire poverty of Qing China fatefully blended and converged into coolieism in the 19th century Chinese transnationalism. Greed met need. The Maoist transnationalism in the 20th century ended in the institutionalization of violence as currency for power relations. At the dawn of the 21st century, Confucius Institutes and their sponsoring state seem to be deploying a new power technique, capitalizing on the internationally more plausible soft power, with a set of charm display-like activities such as cultural export and language

education. Confucius Institutes capitalize on the time-honoured and innately global institution of universities. Although education is a meeting point of state power and free individuals, it would be rather unfair to consider the worldwide operations of Confucius Institutes as repressive, physically violent or mentally coercive. What is fairer to argue is that the historiography of power relations between Latin America and China has evolved with distinctive forms and techniques to culminate in a power flux inversion; Confucius Institutes as Chinese language education and cultural centres are the latest ‘velvet glove’ state apparatuses in pursue of state *auctoritas* for a change in global imageries and recognition.

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