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Trajectories of Cultural Diplomacy:

East Asian Texts and Artefacts in the Anglosphere

For both Australia and New Zealand, the relations with the PRC are among their most important international relations. I think politicians, policy makers, scholars (especially historians and international relations scholars), and the general public whom are interested Sino-Western relations would welcome this book, and enjoy reading it. However, there is a lack of consistency with Chinese names in this book. Sometimes, the author put Chinese family name first, and sometimes they would put Chinese family name last. A writer could put Chinese family first, and then put Chinese family last in the same chapter. This can confuse readers to follow the more important discussions in the writings. If the central theme of this book, is about China's cultural diplomacy with the nations in Australasia since the Cold War, then I think Sophie McIntyre's chapter may not fit well with the book. In Chapter 10, McIntyre writes about the soft power and the role of art in the development of mainland China and Taiwan relations, but it discusses neither China's cultural connections with Australia nor New Zealand. Instead, if the editors would use the final chapter of the book to summarise the key themes and arguments of book, I think it would then make the structure of the book more logical. Further, there are many smaller Pacific Island nations in Australasia, and the writers of this book mention little about China's cultural connections with them (for example, Fiji and Samoa). I have written elsewhere that, China appointed its first consul to Western Samoa in 1908 (Li, *Dancing with the Dragon*, 2018, p.9). Thus, future scholars should focus more of China's official and/or cultural relations with these Southern Pacific nations.

Today, perhaps Australia and New Zealand should take China more seriously culturally! If I have learnt anything during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is that cultural diplomacy still matters in the current global climate. Indeed, China's cultural connections with Australia and New Zealand are extremely important growing nationalism among these nations. Personally, a key takeaway from this book, is that it is hard to separate cultural diplomacy from political/official diplomacy. In this sense, the writers of *China in Australasia Cultural Diplomacy and Chinese Arts since the Cold War* have started an important conversation.

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James Beattie, Richard Bullen, Maria Galikowski (eds.) *China in Australasia: Cultural diplomacy and the arts since the Cold War*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019, 190 pp. ISBN 9780815384786, (hardcover and eBook).

The authors of the ten chapters in this edited volume address the uses of the arts in Chinese cultural diplomacy in Australia and New Zealand. The book is the fruit of a conference held in Christchurch in 2016 and one of a series of studies published by Routledge on the modern history of Asia. The backgrounds of the contributors and the contents of the chapters highlight fluid boundaries among the disciplines of history, politics, art history, visual culture, museum studies and performance.

Several of the terms used in the title of this book immediately drew my attention. Editors James Beattie, Richard Bullen and Maria Galikowski address the meaning of the term cultural diplomacy in the first chapter. They define it as a subset of soft power

where culture and the arts are deployed in the service of the foreign policy goals of a state. The authors of subsequent chapters draw attention to the interface between formal diplomatic interactions between states and other kinds of diplomacy, variously characterised as people's diplomacy, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and soft power. Responses to the manifestations of Chinese cultural diplomacy from Australia and New Zealand have come from a variety of sources, ranging from government-to-government diplomacy to the initiatives of individuals who are not associated with the institutions of the state. Although Australia and New Zealand have sponsored reciprocal initiatives in cultural diplomacy, their number and scale have not been comparable to those that have come from China.

The question of the geographic and cultural boundaries of Australasia is one that is worthy of exploration, but the book deals only with China's relations with Australia and New Zealand. The editors do not refer to Papua New Guinea or the island nations of the Pacific, where China's soft power diplomacy is also very much in evidence. The reference in the title to the Cold War is also puzzling. The term evokes the period between the end of the Second World War and the dismantling of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Relations between the United States and China were also tense during this period, but Australia and New Zealand, though constrained by their relationship with the United States, experienced fewer difficulties in dealing directly with China. The chapters in this volume are primarily concerned with the period from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the present, but they also reference events within a time frame of about a century, starting in the 1920s and 30s. The entry of the PRC into the United Nations and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand in the 1970s, seem more pertinent to the content of the chapters in this book than the Cold War.

Nicholas Thomas's chapter traces relations between Australia and China in the years from 1949 to the 2000s. Thomas identifies a number of key institutions in both countries that fostered this relationship. An early instrument of Chinese soft diplomacy outreach was the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. This body worked closely with the newly formed Australia China Friendship Society and Australian China Council. In New Zealand, the New Zealand China Friendship Society was founded in 1956 and the New Zealand China Council in 2012. Reciprocal student exchanges with China began in Australia and New Zealand in the 1970s and both countries experienced rapid growth in the numbers of people of Chinese descent who make their homes here. The provision of a timeline drawing together information garnered from this and the other nine chapters in this book would have made it easier for the reader to relate the developments in cultural diplomacy that are the principal focus of this book to the "hard" diplomacy of evolving diplomatic relationships.

Exhibitions of Chinese objects have been a major aspect of the operation of Chinese cultural diplomacy. The most politically prominent of these have been Chinese government-sponsored exhibitions of paintings, ceramics, bronzes, jades and other objects. Benchmarks for such exhibitions included major exhibitions in London in 1935 and 1973. In New Zealand, Chinese government-sponsored exhibitions have included the Huxian peasant paintings in 1978, the Terracotta Warriors from the tomb

of Qin Shihuang in 1986–87 and again in 2003, the Throne of Emperors exhibition in Wellington in 2014 and the return of the Terracotta Warriors to Wellington in 2019. Other exhibitions have featured objects that were collected privately and then donated or loaned to public museums and galleries for display. Chris Elder's, Richard Bullen's and James Beattie's chapters document Rewi Alley's collections of ceramics which were donated to the Canterbury Museum. Claire Roberts' chapter deals with the exhibition of forty traditional Chinese ink paintings in the National Gallery of Victoria in 1974. The majority of these paintings came from the private collections of academics Pierre Ryckmans and Harry Simons. Furthest from the foreign policy goals of any state is the exhibition of private collections of objects in private spaces. David Bell's chapter on Judith Neilson's White Rabbit gallery is the sole example of an arrangement of this kind. Predictably, the differences in each of these three different kinds of structural arrangements for the sponsorship of collections and exhibitions are reflected in the kinds of curatorial decisions and interpretive material that accompany them.

In his chapter on Chinese Gardens, Duncan Campbell identifies gardens as spaces where many of the potentially conflictual issues of interpretation can be resolved more readily than in state-sponsored exhibitions of objects. Writing eloquently of the Dunedin Lan Yuan, the Huntington Library's Liu Fang Yuan and the Hui Yuan planned for Wellington, he argues convincingly that the dynamic, protean, constantly evolving nature of gardens uniquely suits them to be vehicles for communication across cultures which, by their very nature, share these characteristics.

One of the great pleasures of this book is the chronicling of the contributions of the individuals who negotiated and drove the collection of Chinese objects, the mounting of exhibitions, the exchange of cultural troupes and the establishment of museum collections of objects from China. For New Zealand, this is engagingly described by former NZ Ambassador to China, Chris Elder, who introduces readers to the words and deeds of diplomats, Alister Macintosh, Foss Shanahan and MP Warren Freer. Maria Galikowski reminds us of the public responses of Rob Muldoon and Bill Rowling to the death of Chairman Mao in 1976. Nicholas Thomas notes the observation of Stephen Fitzgerald, Australia's first ambassador to China that local Chinese communities were key to the success of cultural diplomacy. Claire Roberts discusses the hopes of Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam that cultural exchanges would lay a firm foundation for increased understanding of China by the people of Australia.

Despite the importance of governments and their representatives in cultural diplomacy, in chapter after chapter, the importance of the actions and initiatives of private individuals is highlighted. We meet New Zealanders Rewi Alley, Canterbury Museum director Roger Duff, farmer, film-maker and activist, Bill Youren and farmer and Member of Parliament, Ormond Wilson. We find Professor of Music Frederick Page welcoming a Chinese opera troupe to Wellington in 1956 and Evelyn Page attending Beijing Opera performances featuring Mei Lanfang night after night on a three-week visit to China. While Chris Elder, Nicholas Thomas and Henry Johnson all acknowledge the importance of the local Chinese communities in cultural diplomacy, none of the chapters highlight their contributions.

Of all the individuals whose work is described in this book, Rewi Alley and Pierre Ryckmans stand out. Rewi Alley was among an early group of foreigners including Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley who lived in China in the decades after 1949 and made it their mission to interpret China to the English-speaking world. Pierre Ryckmans took a different tack in his approaches to Chinese politics and Chinese arts. He spent his youth and early career engaged in a passionate study of Chinese language and Chinese art, aiming to become both a practitioner and a connoisseur. We find him studying painting with the cousin of the last Chinese emperor and talking things over with Han Suyin. Both Alley and Ryckmans seemed to position themselves as privileged insiders and as curators and interpreters of Chinese culture to audiences in New Zealand and Australia.

The chapters in this book evoke a multiplicity of images of Chinese objects that have featured in exhibitions from the 1930s to the present day. They include the Flying Horse and the jade funeral suits from the 1973 Genius of China exhibition, thirty-two intricately carved ivory balls encased within each other, Xu Bing's 1988 Book from the Sky, Ai Weiwei's non-functional bicycles and Cai Guo-Qiang's exploding cars exhibited at the Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts in the 2000s. Despite the enormous variety and number of objects in many media that are discussed, the book contains only thirteen images and eight of these illustrate the works of twenty-first century artists. As the authors of the chapters in this book repeatedly demonstrate, works of art have meanings that can lend themselves to a wide range of interpretations in an equally wide range of political and cultural contexts. Readers whose memories are not already populated with such images would find the meaning of the chapters easier to interpret and recall if more images had been provided. It would have been invaluable, for example, to have seen more of the objects collected by Rewi Alley, some of the Terracotta Warriors that have been exhibited in Wellington and Auckland, one or two of the works of Huang Binhong, Qi Baishi and the other artists exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1974 and one or more of the vibrant and colourful Huxian peasant paintings that were exhibited in Wellington in 1978.

In her chapter on the Huxian peasant paintings, Maria Galikowski reminds us of Chairman Mao's famous dictum that art can never be above politics. Sophie McIntyre's chapter on art and the development of relations between Taiwan and the PRC explores the particularly intense connection between art, museum exhibitions and politics in that politically super-charged environment. Though it would be hard to argue with Chairman Mao's view in general terms, the relationship between art and politics is never static. Through its explorations of the interconnections between art and a range of cultural and political issues in a dynamic process of evolution, this book makes a significant contribution to the history of China's cultural diplomacy in Australia and New Zealand.

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