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Trajectories of Cultural Diplomacy:
East Asian Texts and Artefacts in the Anglosphere

Review Articles

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).

Maria Galikowski, James Beattie and Richard Bullen's *China in Australasia Cultural Diplomacy and Chinese Arts since the Cold War* is a very timely collection, and it contributes to our knowledge of the China's relations with Australia and New Zealand between 1950 and present (around 2019—when the book was published). In 2019, People's Republic of China (PRC) is both Australia and New Zealand's largest trading partners. Scholars have previously focused on studying the two nations' economic and political ties with PRC, but have paid little attention to the cultural aspects of the relations between China and Australasia. Thus, *China in Australasia Cultural Diplomacy and Chinese Arts since the Cold War* has made a significant contribution to the development of our knowledge of recent and current Sino-Australian/New Zealand relations.

This book tells the little-known story “of the loan, exchange, and gifting of Chinese art, museum exhibitions—and the use of Chinese arts more broadly—in growing diplomatic relations with Australia and New Zealand, from 1949 to the present day [2019]”. It also discusses how, for their part, Australians and New Zealanders worked to enhance understandings of their powerful northern neighbour within changing political contexts. Australians and New Zealanders, are often facing to make choices based on China's internal and/or historical events. Chris Elder's chapter ‘Better late than never: New Zealand and China, 1949-2016’ is a study on New Zealand and PRC's changing political relations. As a former New Zealand diplomat to China, Elder has offered its readers some valuable accounts. For example, both Australian and New Zealand governments (between 1949 and 1951) carefully considered recognising the PRC, but they were often under internal political and international pressures. In other words, Australia and New Zealand's official relations with China was (and still is) part of larger Sino-Western relations (Duncan M. Campbell, Chapter 8, p.123). The PRC's relations with the United States and the United Kingdom could strongly influence the PRC's relations with Australia and New Zealand (Maria Galikowski, Chapter 6, p.88). For Elder, although New Zealand did not recognise the PRC in the 1950s, it was always preparing for diplomatic relations with China (*Better late than never*, p.19). Elder's Chapter 2 has laid a foundation for the rest of the book.

Australia and New Zealand's cultural connections with China also closely intertwined with the two nations' identity issues. Historically, Australia has strong links with Europe, especially Britain. However, geographically Australia is much closer to Asia, and its economy is largely depended on China. China's official relations with Australia and New Zealand began as early as 1909 [Tiger Zhifu Li, *Dancing with the Dragon: Australia's Diplomatic Relations with China (1901–1941)*, MA thesis, 2018, p.9]. When there were no official relations between the PRC and

Australia/New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s, people-to-people cultural diplomacy played significant role (Henry Johnson, Chapter 7, p.107 and p.110). Claire Roberts has reminded her readers that Chinese students came to Australia to study as early as 1930s (Chapter 5, p.67). Since then, Chinese international students have always played significant roles in the Sino-Australian/New Zealand cultural diplomacy. Nicholas Thomas's chapter 'From friendship to fear? Australia-China relations, 1950s-2000s' has shown the exchanges between the two nations in sports, academia, and cultural institutions. Thomas also mentions the large number of Chinese international students studying in Australia. The Chinese students not only have become a 'significant economic force for the domestic Australian economy' (Nicholas Thomas, Chapter 3, p.36), but also have played a strong role in terms of the people to people diplomacy between the two nations. However, Thomas also suggests that since the early 2000s, there seems to be a growing anti-China feeling in Australia. A poll conducted by the Lowy Institute in 2017 points out that some Australians (46% of respondents) would see China as a major threat (Nicholas Thomas, Chapter 3, p.40). Similarly, there is also a growing anti-Australia feeling among the Chinese population in mainland China (Nicholas Thomas, Chapter 3, p.39). I think this is partly because the current Australian government chose to follow Donald Trump's administration closely, and therefore adopted a tough policy towards China.

However, some individuals admired Chinese culture and played positive roles to the Sino-Western relations. Rewi Alley (1897–1987), a Christchurch-born New Zealander, spent 60 years in China, 'the last 30 years of which in the employment of the PRC' (James Beattie and Richard Bullen, Chapter 4, p.47). James Beattie and Richard Bullen have suggested that, as a friend of the PRC, Rewi Alley's 'idea of using art to encourage appreciation of China overseas had developed in Shandan' (Chapter 4, p.47). Shandan county is a county in the Gansu Province, and it is a place not many Chinese people have visited. Beattie and Bullen have shown Alley and Canterbury Museum director Roger Duff's contributions to the development of cultural diplomacy between China and New Zealand. In this chapter, however, I wish James Beattie and Richard Bullen to use more Chinese primary sources. Similarly, it would be good to see many other authors (except Campbell) in this book to use more Chinese primary and secondary sources. However, one of the strengths of Duncan M. Campbell's writing is that he used some Chinese sources. Campbell described the Chinese garden as something by way of 'a structured platform for the interactions between cultures' faces (and has faced) to immediate objections, those of authenticity and of agency (Chapter 8, p.126). In cultural diplomacy, Chinese garden can play a role similar to a museum or a gallery (Ibid). In this chapter, I wish Campbell to write more on Chinese Scholars' Garden in Hamilton and the impacts it may have on Sino-New Zealand relations. David Bell's chapter *White Rabbit, contemporary Chinese arts and soft power in Sydney's Chippendale* is another intriguing part of the book. For Bell, White Rabbit's soft-power capacity is richly resourced and well-equipped to inform "Sydney visitors' appreciations of diverse Chinese cultural worlds" (David Bell, Chapter 9, p.138). Bell's writing leads me to a key question, do you have to criticize mainland China (or Chinese central government in Beijing) to be considered as Chinese art in Australia or in the West in general?

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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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