

China's economy (state-controlled tobacco production has contributed 8–11 per cent of total revenue in the past 15 years and supported a large part of the farming sector), many forms of tobacco control are a hard sell to both the public and policymakers. There are also fewer domestic sources for tobacco control pressure. For example, countries with strong tobacco control regimes also tend to have a medical profession united (at least politically – some doctors do smoke) in its blanket opposition to smoking and passive smoking. In China, less than half of the physicians surveyed had a comprehensive knowledge of the links between smoking and illness, while more than one-third admitted to smoking in front of their patients.

To its credit, this book addresses this unfavourable political context directly. Indeed, its main premise is that, while key policymakers in China appear to be receptive to tobacco control measures (such as the regulation of tobacco advertising, smoking in public places and sales to children) they are reluctant to implement measures – and particularly any increase in taxation on tobacco consumption – that will undermine tobacco's economic role (indeed, the subtitle could have been economics *versus* health) and produce other unintended consequences, such as the introduction of a regressive tax and a shift in consumption to cheaper but more harmful cigarettes.

Therefore, the book's primary focus is to highlight the evidence on tobacco use and explore the question of what tobacco control measures work best and what measures stand the best chance of being adopted. Its aim is to combine knowledge of the health costs related to smoking with the evidence-based argument that further tobacco controls will be economically advantageous. In this regard, its efforts are impressive, with measures on morbidity and mortality combined with health-economic measures developed to estimate the "health burden of disease of smoking and passive smoking" ("Disability Adjusted Life Years") and financial measures to estimate the direct (health-care) and indirect (productivity) costs of smoking-related illnesses (by gender and geography). Its authors then consider the likely effects of tobacco taxation, suggesting that an increased tax would increase revenue which, in turn, could be used to subsidize alternative forms of farming (the book also suggests that tobacco leaf production is less advantageous to farmers than other crops), finance healthcare to the poor and promote health education while reducing smoking prevalence (i.e. based on the argument that low-income smokers will not be economically disadvantaged if they give up smoking completely).

The data brought together in this book is an impressive mix of innovation (in terms of how, for example, surveys are applied to areas difficult to research) and speculation. However, projects of this kind must come with a health warning. Since agenda-setting is primarily about a biased presentation of facts, combined with an appeal to the emotions, it is tempting to conclude that the academic purist will not trust the information as presented. On the other hand, at least the authors of this book tell you what their biases are! The authors also provide most of us with an admirable lesson in how to foster collaboration between academics and practitioners.

There may be little in this book for an audience whose primary interest is in Chinese politics. Rather, this is written for a public health audience, to be used internationally and as a means to put further pressure on policymakers (since China's ratification of the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is unlikely to be enough).

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Art and China's Revolution

Edited by MELISSA CHIU and SHENGTIAN ZHENG

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From September 2008 till January 2009, The Asia Society organized a significant exhibition in New York, devoted to Chinese art from the first three decades of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Aside from familiarizing a Western audience with art works from a period that is usually associated with propaganda rather than with creative work, the exhibition's organizers also wanted to show the formative influence of revolutionary art on China's present leading artists, such as Xu Bing (pp. viii, 106–117), and (multi-media) projects (The Long March Project, pp. 200–211). This fine book was published to accompany the eponymous exhibition and to provide further background to the works on display.

One of the ways in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defined itself both to the people and the outside world was through art. After 1949, art was employed to give concrete expression to the many different abstract policies and the many grandiose visions of the future that the Party proposed and entertained over the years. Established artists from many disciplines were co-opted. Some had a commercial background, having worked for advertising agencies or commercial publishers. Other artists had joined the army or revolutionary movement and had been trained in the Army, or had gained prominence during the Yan'an period (1935–1946). They were well-versed in the political dimensions that their works now had to feature. The most important demand was that art and artists had to serve politics, as formulated in Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" (1942).

The "Talks" served as the basic literary and art policy and enabled the CCP, as both patron and educator, to control the arts. Officially recognized artists were those who were organized in art academies, art publishing houses, museums, associations, etc., organizations which for all intents and purposes functioned as (state) employers. The state thus was guaranteed absolute control: if artists failed to heed the directives coming from above, or failed to apply self-censorship so as to make their works comply with these directives, they faced ostracism and their livelihood would be at stake.

These preconditions gave rise to an art form with Chinese characteristics that closely followed political dictates and was politicized to the extreme. As Ralph Croizier demonstrates in his contribution (pp. 56–73), even artists working in traditional modes of expression such as Chinese ink painting were forced to modernize their work, if not in style then at least in contents. New artistic styles were prescribed, the most important being Soviet socialist realism; the bright colours and the happy and prosperous atmosphere that radiated from socialist realist works were seen as a continuation of the essential features of the traditional Chinese New Year prints, beloved by the peasantry. By the end of the 1950s, artists were to use revolutionary romanticism and revolutionary realism instead, to reflect the hopes and urgency of the Great Leap Forward campaign. Although the political situation seemed to become less tense in the early 1960s, the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in fact would be the climax of direct political interference with art. This tumultuous era is introduced succinctly by Roderick MacFarquhar (pp. 40–55).

The high tide of Maoism in the Cultural Revolution did not mean the end of all art, on the contrary. Art was turned into propaganda to support the political movement, as Shen Kuiyi describes in his chapter on propaganda posters (pp. 148–163). Unofficial artists, i.e. those not employed in the state system, were lionized as true creators, as can be seen from the numerous Red Guard art exhibitions featuring "amateur" works, organized from 1967 onward (Wang Mingxian, pp. 187–199). Moreover, painting Mao became an art in itself, regulated by prescriptions to render him "red, bright and shining," as Yan Shanchun details (pp. 90–101). And in the

midst of this highly politicized atmosphere, a group of artists managed to engage in the creating of “themeless,” or a-political art and to organize underground exhibitions; they are known as the No Name Group and, although reclusive, remain active to the present day (Gao Minglu, pp. 178–185).

The book misses a wonderful opportunity to enlighten us further about the conditions Chinese official artists had to work under. Zheng Shengtian’s interview with Liu Chunhua, creator of the iconic oil painting “Chairman Mao goes to Anyuan” (pp. 119–131), and the reminiscences of Shen Jiawei pertaining to the design and execution of his masterpiece “Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland” (pp. 132–147) present us with a peek behind the scenes. But these chapters raise more questions than answers about the relative freedom these artists seemed to enjoy, even in the midst of political turmoil and repression; and about the system of patronage that continued to exist between political leaders and artists, as it had in pre-modern China, to mention just a few topics.

Nonetheless, the varied and rich contents of this book, including relevant historical documents (pp. 213–227), as well as the high-quality reproductions of the art works, some better known and others from private collections, make this publication one that will remain essential for a long time to come.

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Chinese Connections: Critical Perspectives on Film, Identity, and Diaspora

Edited by SEE-KAM TAN, PETER X. FENG and GINA MARCHETTI

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“Transnational Chinese cinema” has become an ever-more handy portmanteau term for the cluster of industries, people and products that have turned film from the Chinese-speaking world into a global commodity. Like most portmanteau terms, the phrase is fuzzy; but that vagueness is crucial to its value. The reality is that film which is in some way “Chinese” is now so multi-form that it stumps attempts to define it in tidy ways. Yet its importance – to the societies of the Chinese-speaking world, to how the world understands China, and to cinema itself – is such that scholars need ways to describe it. Essentially, *Chinese Connections* is an attempt to unpack the term “transnational Chinese cinema” in its various guises so as to give this sometimes slapdash description more rigorous meaning. The volume’s basic frame of reference is the “three Chinas” (the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan), the Chinese diaspora and, most intriguingly, the cinematic crossbreeds that are appearing as Chinese film encounters global screen culture.

According to its editors, it is in this latter regard that *Chinese Connections* blazes a new trail, and it is easy to agree with them. The first section of the three-part collection presents a group of exciting essays on the unruly ways in which Chinese cinemas are interacting with their Hollywood and European others, and vice versa. Here, chapters on films as varied as *The Matrix*, *Hulk*, *Rush Hour*, and *Irma Vep* sit alongside analyses of how Elvis Presley and hip hop have inflected Chinese-language cinemas, and of how Hong Kong action films are received in France. Sheldon Lu has argued elsewhere that what we see from the late 20th century onwards is the