

from the United States and Mark Oliphant from Australia. In Oliphant, Zhou found an interlocutor both open and sympathetic to socialist causes. While seemingly enjoying an unusual latitude at the conference (Zhou talked freely to other conference attendees without a hovering team of minders and translators), Zhou hardly operated as a free agent. Before he attended these conferences, Zhou received extensive briefings, including, in 1957, a meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai before his departure for Pugwash (71). All his interactions and background information on the scientists with whom he conversed then went into confidential after-conference reports submitted to the Foreign Ministry (75).

On the eve of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, during which the Chinese Academy of Sciences shut down and many elite scientists suffered devastating political attacks and violence, China hosted two international scientific meetings in 1964–66. Preparations for these symposia involved both senior scientists and foreign relations personnel. The PRC spared no expense in hosting foreign scientists and providing roundtrip airplane tickets and other travel costs. The expensive changeable tickets that Argentine scientists received proved extremely helpful, allowing them to choose the dates of their departures from China. A right-wing military coup took place in Argentina shortly before the 1966 physics colloquium hosted by the Shanghai Scientific and Technical Association (146–47). The PRC went a long way to fostering goodwill by bearing the considerable costs of hosting these scientists from the Global South. Strong foreign attendance at the conferences belies the misconception of the PRC's diplomatic isolation during the Maoist years. Barrett convincingly shows that science was a critical way for China to reach out and engage with the outside world.

Barrett's work is part of a growing wave of scholarship that situates science in modern China in a transnational context. In *China's Cold War Science and Diplomacy*, Barrett provides a significant contribution to the literature on diplomacy in the early PRC by exposing the partisan nature of science and, at the same time, its centrality to China's engagement with the outside world. As the forestry scientist Liang Xi succinctly put it in the inaugural issue of the *Scientific Worker* (*Kexue gongzuo*) in 1948, "Science is inseparable from politics. Politics is just like soil and science is just like a plant. A plant can only grow with strength from the soil and science can only develop with strength from politics" (23).

An Object of Seduction: Chinese Silk in the Transpacific Trade, 1500–1700

By Xiaolin Duan. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022. 230 pp. \$100.00 (cloth)

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When one thinks of silk in the early modern world, silk from China immediately comes to mind. Sericulture practices in the Americas and their transcultural connections to Chinese craftsmanship and global markets are, however, somewhat less explored or well-known. In

her book *An Object of Seduction*, the historian Xiaolin Duan discusses the ecological, political, technological, mercantile, aesthetic, and legal dimensions of silk production and consumption in both China and the West, with a particular focus on colonial Mexico and Spain and special attention to Manila as the connecting point between the two worlds.

The book presents a connective and comparative history of silk and its role in early modern globalization on the basis of material, visual, and textual primary evidence. Ecologically informed, it draws on the work of anthropologists, economists, and historians of technology and art. In terms of argumentation, throughout all chapters Duan emphasizes aspects of empowerment through the production and consumption of silk—the empowerment of states and indigenous communities, and of individual laborers, women, and members of particular social groups. She fully uses the potential of visual and material records to nuance official histories of resource and labor exploitation, which often served glorified local ruling elites or foreign colonizers. Duan successfully takes into account the voices of laborers and consumers, writing a story of silk in the early modern world that traverses boundaries between social groups and empires.

The terminology Duan applies evokes certain theoretical perspectives that remain conceptually underexplored in the book. For instance, while the book's title highlights "seduction," Duan goes no further than using words with seductive connotations in various contexts. She writes of the "global desire for silk" (17), for example, refers to the centuries between 1500 and 1700 as "among the most vibrant and sensual periods in Chinese history" (14), describes how "the circulation of things and people, set in motion by administrative and economic structures, spurred the desire for sensory pleasure" (138), and states that silk textiles were "inducing people to pursue them" (137). Duan's engagement with the agency of objects, for example in relation to the emotional responses they might cause through sensual engagement, seems to be very much in line with ongoing discourses in the histories of art, technology, and craftsmanship. But an explicit engagement with positions in these fields, for example those proposed in Jonathan Hay's study of Ming and Qing decorative artifacts in *Sensuous Surfaces* of 2010,¹ would have enriched the book and made it even more relevant, even if Duan ultimately rejected such positions. In the absence of deeper discussion of these theoretical frameworks, one wonders how Duan's understanding of silk as an object of "seduction" can productively be differentiated from silk artifacts as objects of "desire" on the market and silk fashion as an object or perhaps even an agent of "subversion" in terms of social norms and gender conventions.

Similarly, the reader is left pondering how silk's potential to qualify as an "object of seduction" differs from that of other globally traded Chinese products of the time that were imitated worldwide, most notably porcelain. As Meha Priyadarshini has argued, "the development of a colonial ceramic aesthetic" in Mexico was fueled by wares from Jingdezhen, and Puebla ceramics became "a symbol of Mexico's unique appropriation of Asian goods and evidence that the trade with Asia was influential in the making of a colonial Mexican identity that was distinct from that of the metropole."² The interplay that Priyadarshini analyses in the case of Mexican ceramic production between materiality, artisanship, trade, and governmental restrictions against the background

¹Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion, 2010).

²Meha Priyadarshini, *Chinese Porcelain in Colonial Mexico: The Material Worlds of an Early Modern Trade* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 171, 168.

of exchanges between Chinese, Spanish, and indigenous practices through the Manila Galleon Trade, would have made a conversation between Duan's account of silk and Priyadarshini's book on porcelain in transpacific settings particularly fruitful.

In *Objects of Seduction*, Duan presents an ecologically aware study of sericulture, silk, and fashion in a global context that contributes to the Pacific turn. Both its interdisciplinary approach and its transcultural focus make it a perfect fit for the book series "Empires and Entanglements in the Early Modern World" and a highly useful addition to the rapidly growing literature on the material worlds of the early modern period in a global context.

Zhu Xi: Basic Teachings

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Zhu Xi: Basic Teachings (hereafter *Basic Teachings*) offers a selected translation of the first thirteen chapters of the *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu* (Zhuzi yulei) along with selections from Zhu Xi's other writings. Ever since the publication of *Chu Hsi and the "Ta Hsueh": Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* in 1986, Daniel Gardner has continued to publish important works on Zhu Xi, arguably the most influential thinker in Chinese history after Confucius, in highly readable English including a selected translation of chapters seven through thirteen of the *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu* (*Learning to Be A Sage*, University of California Press, 1990). Indeed, there could be few people better qualified to translate Zhu's works than Gardner in the English-speaking world.

If we exclude its bibliography, *Basic Teachings* is composed of 142 pages, with an additional eighteen pages for the Introduction and the translator's note in which Gardner offers a brief survey of Zhu's life, the historical and intellectual background and significance of Zhu's teachings, and characteristics of the *Classified Conversations*. The main body of *Basic Teachings* consists of five chapters: "Foundations of the Universe" (1–31), "Human Beings" (33–61), "Learning" (63–85), "A Theory of Reading" (87–110), and "Moral Self-Cultivation" (111–128). Throughout the book, Gardner's translation is not only accurate in most cases but also reads extremely well. His pithy annotation also provides necessary intellectual and historical background of given phrases or figures. For example, one of the difficulties of tackling texts written in classical Chinese is that authors, in the case of the *Classified Conversations* "speakers," freely quote classic texts without clarifying the sources. Gardner takes pains to identify each of important classic texts quoted (30). I believe one can assign this book in undergraduate classes on Chinese thought or intellectual history. As a reviewer of this superbly translated work, however, I am still compelled to raise questions, no matter how trivial they