

In den letzten Jahren hat ein neuer Trend in der China- und Geschichtsforschung eingesetzt: Das Erklären der Transformation Chinas seit den späten 1970er Jahren als globales Phänomen, das mit einem vermehrten Wissensaustausch, vertieften Handelsbeziehungen und diplomatischen Beziehungen mit der Welt einherging, hiervon beeinflusst wurde und wiederum die Welt beeinflusste. Das aktuelle Jahrbuch für Kommunismusforschung verzamelt die zu diesem Thema forschenden Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler und bietet einen gelungenen Überblick über Themen und Trends im Bereich der global- und wirtschaftsgeschichtlichen Erforschung der Transformation Chinas und Osteuropas.

#### Anmerkungen

- 1 China and the end of the Cold War in Europe. *Cold War History* 17 (2017) 2; F. Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979. Als die Welt von heute begann*, München 2019.
- 2 Vgl. z.B. P. Vámos, A Hungarian model for China? Sino-Hungarian relations in the era of economic reforms, 1979–89, in: *Cold War History* 18 (2018) 3, S. 361–378.
- 3 J. Gewirtz, *Unlikely partners. Chinese reformers, Western economists, and the making of global China*, Cambridge MA 2017.

**Sean Metzger: *The Chinese Atlantic. Seascapes and the Theatricality of Globalization*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020, 274 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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A number of recent studies have widened the analytical horizon for comprehending the increasingly intricate relationship between the arts and processes of globalization and transnational mobility. Scholarship has shifted from bounded epistemologies that situate artistic production largely within national or local contexts to expansive frameworks which highlight circulatory flows, fluid geographies, and liquid connections. The new conceptual zone that Sean Metzger expertly demarcates in *The Chinese Atlantic* broadens the contemporary theoretical semantics of fluidity and liquid spatiality by foregrounding the “seascape” as the book’s central image and method. Metzger presents the seascape as an original framework for understanding “the theatricality of globalization” as articulated in China-inflected artistic production across the Atlantic.

Following a prologue that outlines the project’s evolution over many years of research in Trinidad, Martinique, South Africa, and other locales, the volume offers a theoretical introduction, five chapters, and an epilogue. The chapters are structured around five aquatic keywords – “reeling”, “incorporating”, “flowing”, “ebbing”, and

“eddying” – each defining the “logic” of a specific type of seascape. The artworks examined therein thus resonate with different aesthetic engagements and affective responses to these distinct categories. As the volume’s conceptual anchor, Metzger’s seascape is modelled partly after Appadurai’s well-known ‘scapes’ of cultural globalization and genealogically linked to “the theatricality of marine scenes” (p. 21) found in European paintings such as Géricault’s *The Raft of the Medusa* and Turner’s *The Slave Ship*. Each seascape and corresponding keyword are associated to a specific art form and informed by a specific articulation of Chineseness in the context of wider-ranging economic and geopolitical histories that contribute to Metzger’s formulation of the notion of “Chinese-inflected globalization”. Hence, the seascape is not only “an epistemological frame” but also “an event”, “action”, and “practice” (p. 17). These articulations are, furthermore, often contested and their meanings contingent to specific localities, as evidenced by the artworks under analysis.

Metzger’s Chinese Atlantic centres on ‘Chinese’ (racial, representational) imaginaries and transnational movement across small islands, therefore complementing as well as complicating established epistemologies of the “Black Atlantic” and the “Pacific Rim”. It does so by linking the Atlantic and Pacific (but also Indian) oceanic spheres, by foregrounding territories that are often seen as ‘minor’ in the global cultural economy, and by delinking the Atlantic seaways from an almost-exclusive focus on black trajectories and totalizing narratives of transoceanic migration, labour, and global capitalist expansion. A view of the Atlantic as a Chinese seascape furthers

the understanding of spatialized dynamics of racial construction and identification; it also assists the critical decoupling of notions of capitalism and globalization from assertions of Western-centric modernity and economic development rooted in neoliberalist narratives. The “Chinese-inflected” mode of globalization that Metzger situates within the long history of China’s transoceanic trade and against the background of Dutch and British colonialism is significant in its effort to decentre and decolonize entrenched views of globalization as an inheritance of European imperialism and synonymous with Americanization (p. 114). It also problematizes the assessment of China’s economic expansionism as a contemporary and somewhat ‘sudden’ phenomenon. Moreover, in keeping with its intent to look critically at narratives of capitalism and globalization through the Chinese-inflected lens of the Atlantic seascape, the book accentuates the value of the seascape as an epistemological descriptor for “fiscal and cultural” processes of Chinese investment in the Atlantic (p. 18). Metzger draws attention to the inherent theatricality of both globalization and Chineseness “as a symptom, or even a feature, of globalization” (p. 35) to explore not only the cultural flows but also the flows of capital that have shaped creative expressions as well as financial and infrastructural development in the region. Chapter 1, “Reeling”, examines two groups of documentary films categorized as “Chinese Caribbean domestic ethnography” and “Chinese Caribbean synaesthetic documentaries”. Films by Rigoberto López, Natalie Wei, Jeanette Kong, Peter Chin, Jeremy Mimnagh, and Richard Fung record peripatetic trajectories of Chi-

nesses in and between Cuba, Trinidad, Jamaica, Panama, the United States, Canada, and China that disrupt stable notions of Chinese, black, and (Asian) American identities and dislocate conventional geographies of globalization, capitalism, and cultural circulation. The logic of “reeling” evokes marine practices (deep-sea fishing) along with the cinematic pursuit of the real in visualizing experiences of Chinese migration to and across the Caribbean. Additionally, reeling accounts for the affective, performative, and sensory facets of documentary realism, which justifies Metzger’s examination of these films within the frame of theatricality.

Chapter 2, “Incorporating”, addresses visual artworks by Nicole Awai, Carlisle Chang, Willi Chen, and Christopher Cozier that highlight the financial dimensions of Chineseness in Trinidad through the semantics of seascapes. Metzger’s “logic of incorporating” considers the cultural (re)production of Chinese migrant labour – historical and contemporary – “as a figure of and for capitalism” (p. 130) that is deeply enmeshed with Chinese investment in the region, hence central to the discourse of Chinese-inflected globalization.

Chapter 3, “Flowing”, probes the performative aspects of Chineseness by looking at non-Asian practitioners of tai chi in Francophone Martinique through the lens of “Oriental sensitivity”. The logic of flowing informs both transnational migratory and networking patterns and local embodied practices that constitute “live seascapes” (p. 138) of intercultural tension in a Caribbean site characterized by substantial Chinese entrepreneurship. In this chapter, too, Metzger underscores the theatricality of globalization in that the artworks and

actions under analysis generate phenomenological effects in the viewer or, in this instance, the practitioner.

Chapter 4, “Ebbing”, examines Nick Broomfield’s 2006 documentary, *Ghosts*, and Isaac Julien’s 2010 installation, *Ten Thousand Waves*, as “screen seascapes” (p. 164) that memorialize the drowning of 23 Chinese cockle pickers at Morecambe Bay, England, in 2004. The logic of ebbing evokes the actual receding tide that uncovered the victims’ bodies and the mnemonic structures that reveal their subjectivities in these immersive artworks.

Chapter 5, “Eddying”, revisits Julien’s installation (as exhibited in Cape Town in 2018) alongside artworks by William Kentridge, Pieter-Dirk Uys, and DAleat to affirm the centrality of the Western Cape in the demarcation of the Chinese Atlantic and the spiralling assemblage (eddy) of Dutch colonial histories and Chinese cultural-economic currents in South Africa.

The epilogue consolidates the book’s key ideas through a discussion of New York-based Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang’s 2014 Shanghai installation, *The Ninth Wave*, which further probes the critical construction of the Chinese Atlantic as “an analytical rubric” (p. 238) and “conceptual metaphor” (p. 239) and its links to theatricality and globalization.

Early in the volume, Metzger specifies that, unlike paradigms such as Shih Shu-mei’s *Sinophone*, his investigation of Chineseness does not emphasise language but visibility. Still, as I read about the Caribbean documentaries surveyed in Chapter 1, I would have wished to see some more details about the languages spoken in those films. Secondly, since the volume centres on island cultures and references assem-

blages, constellations, and island clusters, I wonder how Metzger's conceptual model might relate to the "archipelagic turn", namely the engagement of the archipelago as a methodology for thinking through networked formations and clustered imaginaries. Nevertheless, these minor points do not detract from the book's undisputed value as hitherto the most comprehensive study of Chinese-inflected artistic connections across the Atlantic. Especially with regard to the emergent corpus of Chinese Caribbean scholarship, Metzger's book is unrivalled in its scope and depth of analysis and will surely become a key reference for future studies in this field.

**Anne Booth: Living Standards in Southeast Asia. Changes over the Long Twentieth Century, 1900–2015, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019, 317 pp.**

Rezensiert von  
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This book synthesizes the huge research work done by Anne Booth, former professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, on the development of living standards and social inequality in the world region between India and China. Trained as an economist, she develops an in-depth systematic analysis primarily based on quantitative indicators and set within a chronological order. The result is a standard work, which is compulsory

reading for anyone interested in Southeast Asian economic development as a whole and social inequality in particular.

Chapter 1 starts with setting out the composite indicators used to comparatively measure changes in living standards and the broader debate on the pros and cons of using these. For this purpose, Booth has collected country data not only on distribution of income and expenditures but also on human development indicators such as life expectancy, educational levels by region, gender, and social class. These indicators offer a much more complex picture of social inequality than is offered by GDP or HDI statistics. Her approach is part of a much larger standard of living debate between economic historians in Britain and elsewhere on the correlation between economic growth and changing living standards, the great divergence between the 'West and the rest' and the fact that growth often did not result in better living standards for large parts of the population.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the colonial period, which is treated in a balanced and multifaceted manner. On the one hand, colonial powers after 1900 did promote the economic development of the territories they controlled, on the other hand economic exploitation prevailed over possible social transfers to the colonized peoples. Population growth and rising agricultural output were accompanied by differences in access to land, job opportunities, and non-agricultural income. On the whole, real wage levels rose but, paradoxically, did not lead to improvement in living standards, a.o. because availability of food fell and malnutrition increased. Mortality rates on the whole declined but gaps