

the Pondoland Uprising, much earlier than the standard narrative of their formation as a strategic response to the Sharpeville Massacre and ensuing state of emergency and banning of liberation movements in 1961. It also adds important context to the ways in which underground operatives of the ANC managed to survive the brutal years after the Sharpeville crackdown, particularly in Soweto, where Albertina Sisulu's role has been grievously underestimated in most accounts. It reveals, in granular detail, the ways in which the cross-border movements of activists were facilitated, particularly after 1976, and provides a fascinating insight into the politics of trade unionism in the 1970s and 1980s, when intense debates about the political role of unions took place.

For those interested in the complexities of the present, the book helps us better understand the ANC's deep connections with Cuba and Russia; the reasons why the stalwarts of the Struggle would be deeply disappointed in the behaviour of the ANC in government; and why key figures such as Nkademeng were not surprised by the greed many of the new ANC rulers have displayed.

Finally, the book is a methodological tour de force, demonstrating how important oral testimony is in narrative history, and how fragile that resource is as the bearers of historical memory grow old and die. But, further, there are substantial resources of oral history in South Africa that have already been recorded, if not well preserved, over the past fifty or more years. Many of these are falling into disrepair as tapes decay and those who might be able to transcribe them pass away.

Given the scale of this problem of oral history archives and the significance of attending to it, it is perhaps a pity that the book accords it only a passing mention in the 'Note on our research' at the end of the text. A clarion call to attention is surely what is required. All South African historians, no matter their interests, would be well advised to attend to the issues of the state of oral archives wherein the memory of their recent past is entombed and likely to be lost. If proof is needed, this book demonstrates the value of doing so.

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Juliette Leeb-du Toit, Ruth Simbao and Ross Anthony (eds), *Visualising China in Southern Africa: Biography, Circulation, Transgression*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press (pb ZAR 600/US\$80 – 978 1 77614 767 0). 2023, 376 pp.

The editors of *Visualising China in Southern Africa* have chosen no better time to release their volume than this era when the global South, with China as a main player, is initiating moves to balance global economic equation with the West. In the Introduction, Ross Anthony, Ruth Simbao and Juliette Leeb-du Toit set the stage

for the book's rationale. They argue that, although scholarly awareness has been paid to the political and economic relations between China and Africa, little attention has been devoted to the literature, arts, popular culture and other cultural spheres. Their volume serves just that purpose and I agree with them.

This work is divided into three parts: 'Biography', 'Circulation' and 'Transgression'. Leeb-du Toit captures memorably its central thematic thrust: that 'regardless of the origin of the artist, their relevance resides in a unique inside ability to give visual expression to contemporary life, as the mirror of a particular ethos and imminent change' (p. 343). With a total of 138 images – 114 pictures (including photographs of artworks in the exhibition gallery), twelve frame captures, eight paintings, two posters and two drawings – *Visualising China in Southern Africa* presents the contemporary Chinese presence in Southern Africa in artworks from a myriad of artists through the lens of Africa- or China-based authors and scholars. It traces the contours of unity between Africa, the continent with the most countries in the global South regional bloc, and China.

In the first chapter, Ruth Simbao analyses the film *A Letter to My Cousin in China* (1999), directed by Henion Han, which recreates the Wits gold mines, Chinese migration and recollections of the past aided by memories and memoirs, from personal lived experience as a modern migrant in South Africa. In Chapter 2, Binjun Hu weaves together narratives of his Chineseness in Africa as can be gathered from his examination of postage stamps collected by a Chinese immigrant over a period of time. The little-known Chinese Camera Club of 1952 in Johannesburg is the focus of Malcolm Corrigan's Chapter 3. The youthful migrants and those from families who had been in South Africa for several generations who comprised the group, which was noted for its landscape photography, were considered coloured and have borne the brunt of subsequent racist regimes in South Africa. Stary Mwaba and Ruth Simbao's Chapter 4 unveils how Chinese intermediaries in Zambia's Copperbelt have made a monumental impact on artisanal mining activities in the region. Kristin NG-Yang's contribution in Chapter 5 highlights her in-betweenness as a Chinese migrant in South Africa and the affordances this has offered her artistic career locally and internationally.

Esther Esmiol's Chapter 6 begins the second part of the volume, 'Circulation'. It trains its focus on the Chinese tradition of porcelain production, which exists side by side with African ceramic fabrication. From Chinese porcelain making, we are led to Chinese-made 'burial objects' (p. 141) originating in the Ming dynasty 'funerary tradition' (p. 144) some 2,000 years earlier and housed in a gallery in Nicola Kritzinger's Chapter 7, 'Hidden objects at the Johannesburg Art Gallery: Han dynasty *míngqi*'. In Chapter 8, Mark Lewis and Romain Dittgen take to task urban centres such as Johannesburg and Lusaka and argue that both cities have undergone structural and landscape adjustments owing to the Chinese presence there. Chapter 9 is an interview between authors Gemma Rodrigues and Marcus Neustetter. It presents the latter's engagement with China's presence in Africa, the experiences this offers him and the implications for his work as an art historian. In Chapter 10, Lifang Zhang describes how Chinese nationals and citizens in Zimbabwe strengthen engagements by importing cheap Chinese goods, despite claims that these imports exacerbate the fragility of local manufacturing industries. These imports, Zhang argues, are the flipside of the China–Africa relationship in Zimbabwe.

As we enter the third part, 'Transgression', T. Tu Huynh's Chapter 11 uncovers the improbable contributions of Chinese indentured labourers during the period following the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) through a description of the postcards of that era. In Chapter 12, three authors, Philip Harrison, Khangelani Moyo and Yan Yang, trace the implications of images deployed in the construction of junctures and events in the relationship between China and Africa, and how this enabled visibility of the Chinese. In Chapter 13, 'Wolf Warrior II: Chinese film, African settings and Western narrative convergence', a Western-influenced Chinese action film is analysed by Ross Anthony as fuelling fears currently espoused in Western media regarding Chinese dominance in Africa, especially because it was filmed in an unknown African nation. Politics again is the preoccupation of Rui Assubuji and Patricia Hayes in Chapter 14, which digs deep into the political underpinnings of the first sculptural image of the Mozambican freedom fighter and first president, Samora Machel.

In Chapter 15, Ying Cheng and Shuo Wang present an interesting perspective on mainland China's awareness of African art through an exhibition of the work of William Kentridge that opened in Beijing, offering a broad history of Afro-Asian engagements and the emergence of Sino-African interactions across political, economic, intellectual and social spectrums within the context of history. With power at the centre of many artists' debates and artistic representations in South Africa today, Juliette Leeb-du Toit, in Chapter 16, attempts to reveal how this node of expression has always touched, in part, on Chinese immigrants, from the era of apartheid to the present.

This is an impressive volume. It would have been better with more chapters devoted to art exhibitions and films. However, this is an issue of schematization, one that is compensated for by the sheer expanse of coverage, ranging from art, art history and exhibitions to stamps, ceramics, film, postcards, etching, performance, landscape photography, cartoons, cityscapes and autobiographical data. The work contains a huge web of information that will sustain its shelf life for a long time to come. I recommend this seminal work to art historians, anthropologists, sociologists, ethnologists, political scientists, literary scholars, film and media directors and experts, Africanists and all those interested in China–Africa relations yearning to update their knowledge on Afro-Chinese cultural relations yesterday and today.

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