

CHINESE STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA 5TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 1997

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The Fifth Conference of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia was convened at the University of Adelaide from 16-18 July 1997. Sponsorship of the Conference was shared by a range of corporate sponsors including the Economic Development Authority of South Australia, Ansett Australia and Cathay Pacific in addition to the University of Adelaide. Marking as it did the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia, this conference was an important one in the history of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia. Furthermore, the timing of the conference so soon after 'the Hong Kong Handover' provided a valuable opportunity for debate on Australia's policy approach to the change in sovereignty as well as the implications of the change for Australia.

The conference was officially opened by the First Deputy Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, Dr Jim Bettison. This was followed immediately by a Plenary Session - "Australia and China 25 Years" in which the speakers were Zhu Qizhen (Vice-Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress) who led the first group of Chinese diplomats to Australia to set up the Embassy in Canberra and was subsequently China's Ambassador to Washington, and Penny Wensley (First Assistant Secretary, North Asia Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). The programme offered a rich choice of topics with the remaining plenary sessions devoted exclusively to Hong Kong and addressed by authoritative speakers who brought expert and inside knowledge to their presentations including Professor Michael Yahuda from the London School of Economics (LSE), Dr Jocelyn Chey from the University of Sydney and Professor Joseph Cheng from the City University of Hong Kong.

During a varied three-day programme of both individual papers and panel discussions, the conference examined a wide range of varied topics and included papers on cultural studies, minorities, history, literature, classics, computer-aided language learning, education and the market, democracy, urban reform, provincial China, labour issues, nationalism, ideology, the economy, the environment and Internet access to deliver distance education. Abstracts for most of the papers which were presented by distinguished national and international scholars were included in the programme documentation.

Of special interest to members of EALRGA was the Presentation of Library Books donated by Center for Chinese Studies and The National Central Library in Taiwan to celebrate the occasion of the fifth conference of the

CSAA. The Book Exhibition of this valuable donation, which included some 365 items including both monographs and serials, was displayed in the Ira Raymond Exhibition Room in the Barr Smith Library where the formal presentation took place.

Delegates to the conference were also treated to the Conference Opening and viewing of an exquisite exhibition. The exhibition, "Chinese Trade Ceramics and Miniature Paintings: East-West, West-East" which ran from 18 June to 3 November was mounted by the Art Gallery of South Australia and opened for the conference by the Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Mr Dick Richards. The exhibition featured beautiful ceramics dating from the Tang dynasty (618-907) when China began serious trading with South-East Asia. The majority of the ceramics, however, were Ming and Qing dynasties blue and white porcelains made for the overseas market as well as the wares they inspired in Europe, Persia and South-East Asia. The exhibition also included examples from the Gallery's own collection of fifteenth century Thai and Vietnamese wares, the design of which was influenced by China. The Gallery walls were hung with Chinese miniature paintings from the 19th century - delicate illustrations of traditional Chinese shop signs and carriages.

The conference provided a valuable opportunity to meet and talk with delegates in the field of Chinese Studies from Australia and overseas. The University of Adelaide is to be commended for hosting and organising this most interesting and successful conference, as are all the sponsors for their support. The conference represents an important contribution to understanding of a country of the region which is bound to be a major player in determining the future of us all.