

The inherent ambiguity in the term ‘Chinese’ is immediately dispelled when translated into Chinese. But one is faced with choices and dilemmas of a different kind. The following terms, *hanyu*, *zhongwen*, *huayu*, *huawen*, and *guoyu*, can all be used to translate ‘Chinese language’, however, each suggests a different way of conceptualizing the Chinese language. Shih, for example, translates ‘Sinophone literature’ as *huayu yuxi wenxue* (lit. ‘hua-language family literature’). But what is in the Chinese label? Historically, *hua* was used by (Han) Chinese people to refer to themselves. It was pitted against *yi* (‘barbarians’, especially from the East), and has a strong connotation of ‘being civilised’ in the sense of being well-clothed. In modern Chinese, *hua* can refer to China (e.g. *huadong* ‘East China’; *huabei* ‘North China’), but it also has ‘cultural’ and ‘national’ senses. For example, *zhonghua minzu* refers specifically to ‘China citizens’ nation’. *Yu* (‘spoken language’) can be problematic, too. It implies a certain degree of standardization and that the ‘tongue’ has also gained certain official status. It is the modern Chinese emulation of the European idea of *language*. Much of the ‘Sinophone articulation’ is constructed in and out of, and made possible and facilitated by, the English language.

In spite of the controversies surrounding how to label ‘Chinese diaspora literature’, what is crystal clear is the centrality of the role of language in self-definition. This thought-provoking anthology has opened up many fascinating questions. Although its intended readership is scholars from literary studies, anyone who is interested in the interplay between language, ethnicity and identity should not miss it.

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Michael Wesley, *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia*, Sydney: New South, 2011, vii + 195pp. ISBN 9781742232720

Michael Wesley is the Executive Director of the Sydney-based foreign policy think-tank, the Lowy Institute for International Policy, and a former Professor of International Relations at Griffith University, Queensland and official in one of Australia’s intelligence agencies.

The first thing to say about Wesley’s book is that it is a riveting read. He takes the history and power shifts of the Asia region and turns them into the page-turner that they are. His book is neatly divided into six chapters: Australia rising, the great convergence, the geometry of power, the psychology of power, insular nation, and here comes the world.

And this is a book, by the author’s own admission to this reviewer, designed for airport bookstores. Readers’ who take this book expecting scholarly analysis, nuanced arguments, engagement with a wide range of sources from Australia, Asia and beyond, will be disappointed. This is a book without footnotes (though accompanying notes to each chapter are appended at the end) and heavily reliant on anecdote and selective statistics. While there is an index, it is limited: New Zealand appears too briefly in this book, but not as brief as its index entry suggests.

Nevertheless, despite the general readership it is aimed at, this book has upset some academics, who don't see it as scholarly enough, and some Australian diplomats, who feel that their efforts in the region have both been ignored and slighted (especially in the book's final chapter). Some of these complaints are certainly sour grapes and professional jealousy. But Wesley isn't after nuance: his is a grand argument, a big story, "shock therapy" (according to journalist Paul Kelly's quote on its cover). You'll either read this book and be converted or you'll read it and think it a load of tosh. It's that kind of book.

Wesley relies a lot on hyperbole and sweeping generalisation; he is never without an adjective or three. His creative writing sometimes gets the better of him: the term "shyster" should probably be avoided anyway, but it is especially out-of-place when put alongside "Chinese" (p. 78). Australia as the 'lucky country' is attributed with much more than it probably deserves and as a continuous ringing bell in the book might not resonate beyond Australian readers: it sounds appealing and patriotic, but is hard to prove.

One of the flaws of Wesley's generalisation is his tendency to talk of 'Asians' as if they are homogenous. For example, "The inequalities and indignities that Asian countries faced internationally sat uncomfortably with the pride in their civilisational history they were fostering internally... even under colonial rule; Asian societies preserved their inner sense of cultural and spiritual distinctiveness and superiority..." (p. 107). Such rhetoric comes very close to the 'Asian values' debate, which Wesley criticises later in the book. Moreover, to use this comment as just one example, these generalisations also lead to a slippery kind of history: not all Asian societies were "under colonial rule" nor did they all experience "struggles for independence" (*Ibid.*)

The second half of his book, and especially the final chapter, is the most engaging. Where Wesley discusses the fundamental and significant challenges of a rising Asia he does so noting the many nuances, multi-layered alliances and inherent tensions for all countries in the region.

So, given the book's strong Australia-orientation, what might New Zealand readers take from this book? Well, there's much in Wesley's thesis that applies to New Zealand: the shifting power relations in the region, the economic integration with the region, and the increasing prospect of instability both within and between Asian countries. Other themes will resonate less. New Zealand does not have the thick ties with the United States that Australia does, nor does it spend anywhere near as much money or time on defence.

Some of these differences are a factor of New Zealand's small size; others, a factor of a different national identity. While much New Zealand's interaction with the region is hyphenated with Australia, New Zealand's "soft power" is demonstrably its own asset. And it is on national identity where New Zealand readers will want to depart furthest from Wesley. The significant and geographically concentrated minority of ethnically Asian New Zealanders, the importance of biculturalism, and its diverse and changing demographics generally, are all distinctive features for New Zealand and its place in the world. The rise of Asia is no less important for New Zealand than for

Australia, and this book charts this rise in a readable and engaging way. Next time you board a plane buy this book and read it.

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