

The Chinese Chameleon Revisited: From the Jesuits to Zhang Yimou

Zheng Yangwen



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The Chinese Chameleon Revisited: From the Jesuits to Zhang Yimou Zheng Yangwen By examining how the Middle Kingdom has been portrayed by foreigners and the Chinese themselves, this volume advances a new perspective in our reading and interpretation of the Chinese past by placing these producers and presenters of China in the spotlight. The chapters probe how these figures produced or presented the country, cross-examining their backgrounds and circumstances. Their gaze upon the Middle Kingdom was dictated by religious and political conviction, but also particularly by the consumers of that gaze. Like invisible hands, producers and consumers of China continue to constrain representations of the country, looming larger than the literary, artistic or journalistic works they produce. This volume also addresses scholars of Europe and America who have overlooked what Western writers on China reveal about their own contexts which is indeed often more than they reveal about their ostensible subject. As such, the Middle Kingdom serves as a convenient mirror to reflect European and American anxieties and ambitions.

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