

Austin Coates: Souvenirs and Letters

Ramon Rodamilans

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It was a single, short book, discovered in a Hong Kong bookshop, that prompted Ramon Rodamilans to establish contact with its author, an expatriate Englishman, Orientalist and former special magistrate. And so a new, brilliant and illuminating chapter opened in their lives, revealed in this elegant and amusing exchange of letters, which cover a decade of great change, and only cease with Austin's death in 1997. We witness Hong Kong at the crossroads, sightseeing in Macao, Singapore, Spain and Portugal, family visits, musical soirees, projected publications and forays into colonial history. Two 'ghosts' haunt the correspondence: the composer Eric Coates (Austin's father) and the Filipino liberator, Dr Jose Rizal, the subject of an acclaimed work by Austin and a martyr for his belief in freedom. Here then is a record of an unforced friendship, easy affection and informed comment spanning a world of contrasts. It is also a lasting portrait of an excellent writer and an admirable companion.



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