



Anglo-Chinese Encounters since 1800: War, Trade, Science and Governance

Wang Gungwu

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Chinese encounters with the British were more than merely those between two great powers. There was the larger canvas of the Empire and Commonwealth where the two peoples traded and interacted. In China, officials and merchants had to place the British beside other enterprising foreign peoples who were equally intent on influencing developments there. There were also Chinese who encountered the British in personal ways, and individual British who ventured into a 'vast unknown' with its deep history. Wang Gungwu's 2003 book, based on lectures linking China and the Chinese with imperial Britain, examines the possibilities in, as well as the limits of, their encounters. It takes the story beyond the clichés of opium, fighting, and the diplomatic skills needed to fend off rivals and enemies, and probes some areas of more intimate encounters, not least the beginnings of a wider English-speaking future.

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