



The Remarkable Commissioner Lin Zexu: An Old Tale Retold



By Professor David G. Atwill

Professor of History, New York University Shanghai

Discussant: Professor Sebastian Veg

Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia (IASA), UTokyo

Moderator: Pattajit Tangsinmunkong (IASA, UTokyo)



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Hand-picked by the emperor from among the empire's best and brightest officials, Lin arrived in the southern coastal city of Guangzhou in March 1839 to serve as Imperial Commissioner on Opium Affairs. Within three months, he confiscated and destroyed nearly 3 million pounds of opium and by the end of the year persuaded the emperor to issue an edict renewing the ban on all opium trade and production in China. And yet most accounts suggest, Lin was "conservative," "antagonistic," and hopelessly unworldly. In this talk, Professor Atwill (NYU Shanghai) explores the ways Lin's tactics to end the opium trade, the ways the British attempted to justify their actions, and the manner in which Lin was unceremoniously banished to Xinjiang have often obscured and twisted the historical treatment of the man himself.



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Inquiries: gas@ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp



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