Departmental Seminar

Through the Eyes of Lin Zexu: Barbarians, Borderlands and Ethnicity in 19th Century China

SPEAKER
A/P David G. Atwill

Day, Date, Time, Venue
Wednesday, 15 September 2010, 3 pm, AS1-04-01

Chair
A/P Yang Bin

Abstract:
Alternately venerated, reviled and derided for his role as Imperial Commissioner in the First Opium War (1839-1842), Lin Zexu (1785-1850) has come to symbolize late imperial China’s ignominious decline at the hands of Great Britain, France and the United States. But Lin’s role in the Opium War (or subsequent exile to Xinjiang) did not end his career, rather, he remained an influential and trusted troubleshooter for the court right up until his death in 1850. Significantly, Lin’s appointments to the far-flung corners of the empire suggests a growing apprehension by the Qing court over the interactions occurring along all of China’s internal and external borders between Han Chinese and the non-Han. Contextualized within the career of Lin Zexu, this seminar will examine how Lin’s conceptualization of China’s ethnic borders and the non-Han border peoples suggest a far more unified vision of Qing statecraft.

About the Speaker
Dr. David G. Atwill is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He received his PhD from the University of Hawaii, Manoa in 1999 and joined the Penn State Department of History and Religious Studies in 2002 specializing in late imperial and modern Chinese history. He has carried out his research as a visiting scholar at the Academia Sinica's Institute of History and Philology, Yunnan University and at the Humboldt University (Berlin). He is the recipient of several prestigious fellowships including a Fulbright to pursue research in the People's Republic of China and a Mellon New Direction Fellowship.