Exhibition-Related Public Talk
2019/02/16
16:00-17:30

The making of a special relationship: Houqua and his American business partners in the early nineteenth century (in English)

Through the lens of the prominent Chinese merchant Houqua, this talk explores the growth of Sino-American trade into a sustainable business in the early nineteenth century. His partnership with select American merchants allowed Houqua to maintain a complex balance between his commercial interests and those of his Western counterparts, all in an era of transnationalism before the imposition of the Western world order. The success of this early Sino-American alliance in configuring its networks in the fluid context of the early nineteenth century remains instructive today, as the contemporary balance of political power renders the imposition of a West-centric world system increasingly problematic, and requires international traders to adapt to a new world order in which China, once again, occupies centre stage.

John D. Wong
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John Wong’s research focuses on the flow of people, goods, capital and ideas. With a particular interest in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta area, he explores how such flow connected the region and its residents to the Chinese political centre in the north as well as their maritime partners in the South China Sea and beyond.

Studying the China trade in the context of early-nineteenth-century global exchange, John’s first monograph, Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System (Cambridge University Press, 2016), demonstrates how China trade partners sustained their economic exchange on a global scale long before Western imperialism ushered in the era of globalization in a Eurocentric modern world. He has published in various academic journals including Business History Review, Law & Literature, and Asia Major.

• Free with museum admission
• Central Pier No.8
• Enquiry: 3713 2500

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Hong Kong Maritime Museum

THE DRAGON AND THE EAGLE
American Traders in China
A Century of Trade from 1784 to 1900