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Jenny Huangfu Day
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Qing Travelers to the Far West

Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China

Prior to the nineteenth century, the West occupied an anomalous space in the Chinese imagination, populated by untamable barbarians and unearthly immortals. Firsthand accounts and correspondence from Qing envoys and diplomats to Europe unraveled that perception. In this path-breaking study, Jenny Huangfu Day interweaves the history of Qing legation building with the personal stories of China's first official travelers, envoys and diplomats to Europe. She explores how diplomat–travelers navigated the conceptual and physical space of a land virtually unmapped in the Chinese intellectual tradition and created a new information order. This study reveals the fluidity, heterogeneity, and ambivalence of their experience, and the layers of tension between thinking, writing, and publishing about the West. By integrating diplomatic and intellectual history with literary analysis and communication studies, Day offers a fundamentally new interpretation of the Qing's engagement with the West.

Jenny Huangfu Day is Assistant Professor of History at Skidmore College, New York.

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