



The Immobile Empire

Alain Peyrefitte

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In 1793, Lord George Macartney and an enormous delegation—including diplomats, doctors, scholars, painters, musicians, soldiers, and aristocrats—entered Beijing on a mission to open China to British trade. But Macartney’s famous refusal to perform the traditional kowtow before the Chinese Emperor was just one sign that the two empires would not see eye to eye, and the trade talks failed. The inability to develop a trade relation would have enormous consequences for future relations between China and the West. Peyrefitte’s vivid narrative of this fascinating encounter is based on extraordinary source materials from each side—including the charming and candid diary of Thomas Staunton, the son of one of Macartney’s aides. An example of history at its finest, *The Immobile Empire* recaptures the extraordinary experience of two great empires in collision, sizing each other up for the first time.

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