

The Alcock Dress Regulation and Extraterritoriality for Ethnic Chinese with British Citizenship

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The long 19th century marks the British Empire's transition from a mentality of imperialism to the local application of colonialism. Once it had confirmed its extraterritoriality through a series of Sino-British treaties, the British Empire had to apply this extraterritoriality to its subjects in China. Among the different types of such subjects, the most controversial one was ethnic Chinese with British citizenship as the Qing Empire also considered them to be its subjects. In order to reconcile this judicial and diplomatic dispute, Rutherford Alcock issued a provisional solution, i.e. the "Alcock Dress Regulation" for confirming whether or not ethnic Chinese were British subjects. However, in the case of Wang Ju-yü of 1892, the British government ignored the "Alcock Dress Regulation" and insisted on Wang's British citizenship so that Wang was protected by the extraterritoriality. The Qing Empire likewise cited Qing law and custom in maintaining that he was a Qing subject. The British and Qing Empires then put aside the provisional solution and discussed the core of this judicial and legal debate. This was a representative case in the Qing Empire's gradual adaptation to the western legal system governing nationality.

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