



WHEN THE EAST MET THE WEST-THE BRIDGE BUILDERS OF SINO-AMERICAN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL LINKS

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In 1854, Yung Wing graduated from Yale as the first Chinese graduated from an American university. Under his continuous endeavor, in 1872, China began to send 120 boys to study abroad within four consecutive years. The historical event not only opened the door for Chinese overseas study, but also played a very important role in China's early modernization. The Chinese Educational Commission (CEC) students were supposed to stay in America for a twenty-year training period. But, what with China's Confucian conservatism and America's anti-Chinese moods, together with some other incidents, the educational scheme was terminated earlier than scheduled. All the students were abruptly called back in 1881. On the recall, except two students who had just graduated from Yale University, the rest were forced to leave their studies unfinished. However, after returning to China, the majority of them performed very outstandingly in many fields. They contributed what they had learned to their homeland and received very distinguished achievement. Personal letters are important and helpful in highlighting many crucial events. Yung Wing and the CEC students left near one hundred English letters in America, dated from 1850 to 1939. They were invaluable firsthand materials to provide more understanding about those early Chinese students' learning experience in America. It is hoped that the study will serve to complete the blank chapter of the history of Sino-American educational/ cultural links.

Keywords: Sino-American cultural/educational links, Chinese educational commission, Chinese overseas study, Yung Wing.

Introduction The Pioneer of the Pioneers: Yung Wing (1828-1912)

Yung Wing was born on November 17, 1828, in Nanping, Guangdong Province, south part of China. In 1841, he entered Morrison School, the first foreign school in China under headmaster Reverend Samuel Robbins Brown (Yale, 1832). Upon his enrollment, there were five other Chinese boys who had already studied in that school for one year.

In 1847, when Rev. Brown was ready to leave for the U. S. due to his wife's illness, Yung Wing and other two Chinese boys, Wong Hsing and Wong Foon, voluntarily accompanied him to return to the U. S. to complete their education. Some patrons in Guangdong were willing to support them to study abroad for two years. They left on January 4, 1847, and arrived in New York City on April 12, 1847. Rev. Brown arranged the three Chinese boys to stay with Mrs. Brown's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Shubael Bartlett, and then enrolled them at the Monson Academy in Monson, Massachusetts in the same year.

Because of ill-health, Wong Foon soon returned to China, but Yung Wing and Wong Hsing remained till graduated from the Academy in 1849. They were supposed to go back to China after two years' study in America, but they both wished to continue their studies abroad.

As for Wong Hsing, after graduated from the Monson Academy in 1849, he went to Scotland to study medicine in the University of Edinburgh under the financial support of Andrew Shortrede, proprietor of the Hong Kong "China Mail". In 1855, Wong Hsing finished his medical studies and returned to China and became one of the most skilled surgeons on the China coast. But Yung Wing expected to be able to avail himself of whatever opportunities that might arise to serve his people, so he decided not to accept that kind of offer and to keep himself free from any obligations.

In 1854, Yung Wing received his B.A. degree in Yale and became the first Chinese graduated from an American university. One year after his graduation, Yung Wing returned to China, and then was involved in sizeable business transactions in both the United States and China. In 1863, he found employment in the service of the powerful Viceroy Tseng Kuo-Fan, and was sent to the United States to purchase machines from Putnam & Co. (Fitchburg., Massachusetts). Those machines contributed to the founding of the Kiang-Nam Arsenal in Shanghai, China's first modern arsenal. Between 1863 and 1881, Yung Wing fulfilled himself and successfully performed commercial, educational and diplomatic missions for the Chinese government in the United States particularly his celebrating the Chinese Educational Commission (CEC) of 1872-1881 was the most notable.

The Origins of the Chinese Educational Commission (1872-1881)

After the defeat of the Taipings (1850-1864), China realized her incapability of dealing with Western aggression and tried to self-strengthen by learning from foreign countries. Under the advice of Yung Wing, as well as the support of powerful Tseng Kso-Fan and Li Hung-Chang, China proposed her first Chinese Educational Commission (CEC) to the United States in 1872. In total, there were 120 students carefully selected with an average age of 12 (see Table 1) (Kao,1982).

Table 1. Age distribution of the CEC Students (1872-1875).

age on departure	1872	1873	1874	1875	total
10 years old	2	0	4	1	7
11	4	3	3	2	12
12	3	3	15	11	32
13	7	12	6	11	36
14	10	10	2	4	26
15	3	—	—	1	4
16	1	—	—	—	1
total	30	28	30	30	118

Note. Two students in the second detachment with ages unknown.

The majority part of the students (70%) came from Yung's hometown-- Guangdong province. The families those CEC students came from were those who either were accustomed to foreigners by their daily contact or had friends and relatives who had some first hand knowledge of the foreigners and who persuaded the reluctant parents to let their sons leave their homeland for a 15 year stay in a strange and unknown country. The geographic origins of the CEC student group list is shown in Table 2 (Kao, 1982):

Table 2. Geographic Origins of the CEC Students Group List.

Province	1872	1873	1874	1875	total	%
Guangdong	24	24	17	19	84	70.0
Jiangsu	3	2	7	8	20	16.7
Anhui	1	–	1	–	2	1.6
Zhejiang	–	4	3	2	9	7.5
Shandong	1	–	–	–	1	0.8
Fujian	1	–	2	1	4	3.4
total	30	30	30	30	120	100.0

The first group landed in San Francisco on September 12, 1872. Ten days later, they arrived in New England. The group was led by Commissioner Chen and included two instructors of Chinese classics and one English interpreter. Yung proceeded the first group of students and went to New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. B.G. Northrop, then Commissioner of Education in Connecticut advised Yung to distribute the students by twos and threes to New England families where they could be cared for and instructed until they were able to enter junior high school.

To show her high expectation for the program, in 1877, Chinese government spent US\$ 7,000 to erect its own CEC building at 352 Collins Street in Hartford to serve as headquarters and a center for Chinese studies, providing accommodation for 75 students. The curriculum included the Chinese classics, poetry, calligraphy and composition. To the newly Americanized Chinese students, the Chinese studies soon became a burden, and they referred to the CEC building as "Hell House".

The Impacts of U.S. Education on the Chinese Students and Their Performance While They were in the U.S.

With scarcely a single exception, the Chinese students performed very well in schools. They were almost always at the top of the class rankings. From 1872 to 1881, the Chinese students' academic achievements were matched by their victories on the baseball diamond and in the ballroom as well as in their social lives.

The Chinese students' good morals, manners, and behaviors soon earned popularity for the families, the schools, the cities and villages where they had resided. And they seemed to adjust to American mores very quickly.

Above all, the Chinese Educational Commission's stay in the U.S. coincided with a great period of scientific and technological innovation, which had a great impact on the students. Before they came, the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. The students witnessed Alexander G. Bell's first telephone (1876), Thomas Edison's phonograph (1877) and incandescent lamp (1879), as well as George Selden's "gasoline carriage" (1879) (Kao, 1982).

In July 1876, the Chinese students, under the supervision of Superintendent B.G. Northrop, and accompanied by six American teachers and two Chinese interpreters attended the United States Centennial Celebration at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Samples of their homework which were to be displayed in the Education Pavilion as part of the educational exhibit for the State of Connecticut won merit awards from the Board of Jury. During the Exhibition, most of the Chinese students took more

interest in machinery than in anything else. Their accomplishments even drew the attention of then President Ulysses S. Grant who hosted a special reception for the Chinese students during which he shook hands with each of them. After they returned to Hartford, the students were supposed to write a composition on "What I saw at the Exhibition" (Kao, 1982).

The Chinese students witnessed how 7 candidates ran for president in 1872. Additionally, in 1881, Garfield became the 20th American President, but on the morning of July 2, he was shot at the Washington railroad station and died on September 19, before the last detachment of Chinese students were ready to return to China. They might be shocked by the political tragedy and nightmare.

Meanwhile, during their stay, education in the United States was blooming. For example, in 1870, there were only 500 public high schools in the United States. But the number increased tremendously to 6,000 in 1900. When the Chinese students arrived, C. W. Eliot was the president of Yale University with 1,000 students. However, within ten years, he made the number of students increased to 4,000, and professors from 60 to 600, and accordingly, established Yale's distinguished academic reputation till today.

However, there were still some tragedies happened during their stay in the United States. Four deaths occurred and Spring Grove Cemetery in Connecticut served as the place to bury those poor Chinese died in the foreign country:

- (a) 1875, 4.-- Cao Jiajue, aged 12 years and 9 months, who came to the U.S. in 1874, died of scarlet fever, and buried at Spring Grove Cemetery, the first Chinese burial in the history of Hartford.
- (b) 1877, 5.17-- Mrs. Kuang Qizhao (interpreter), aged 22, came in 1875. Their son was born in 1876. She died of bronchial pneumonia. Mr. Kuang and his son went back to China in 1882.
- (c) 1879, 4. 25-- Mrs.Ou Eliang (commissioner), died of illness, placed in the repository at Spring Grove Cemetery to await the return to China on June 12, 1879.
- (d) 1879, 8, 28--Pan Ming-guan, who came in 1872, died of tuberculosis. He was very popular among his friends.

The Reasons of Its Withdrawal

The Chinese Education Commission was supposed to stay in the United States for 20 years. But in 1881, the Chinese government decided to call all the students back. The reasons of its withdrawal were described as follows:

- (a) Confucian Conservatism vs Liberalism: To the old elite, any modernization scheme was viewed with suspicion and regarded as a threat to essential Chinese cultural and political values. The Chinese students began to adopt western manners. Chen Lan-Pin was shocked at the degree of Americanization among the students. He believed that the educational process had resulted in the alienation of the youth from Chinese tradition and created a new elite who would pose a challenge to the Confucian elite.
- (b) Chinese reaction to students' being baptized Christian: In May 1878, the Chinese students organized the Chinese Christian Home Mission which they intended to transplant to their native land upon returning home. In 1880, Woo Tsze-Tun became the new Commissioner of the CEC and expressed great displeasure when he found that the students were becoming Christians.
- (c) The military academy disappointment: On November 23, 1874, the American Minister to China, Benjamin Avery, reported to the State Department that Viceroy Li Hong-Chang "wished to know if Chinese could be admitted to the military academy at West Point". In addition, Yung Wing also inquired at the State Department about admission of Chinese to the academies. He later recalled, "The answer to my application was 'There is no room provided for Chinese students!'" (Yung, 1909. p.207) .Until 1880, no single Chinese student was admitted into an American military academy, despite several Chinese attempts. China became convinced that the U.S. had

violated the pledge of the Burlingame Treaty by barring her students from the American military academies.

- (d) The Anti-Chinese moods in America: A growing hostility toward Chinese in America resulted from the importation of "coolie" labor for the mines and railroads of the western states. Although then-President Hayes resisted the mood when he vetoed the Chinese Exclusion Act of February 1879, it eventually passed in 1882. These developments offered a pretext for the conservative Confucians who sought to terminate the American educational experiment.

The Chinese government decided to call back all the students. Many eminent Americans, including former President U.S. Grant, President Porter of Yale University, and Samuel Clements (Mark Twain), petitioned the Chinese government not to withdraw the students to no avail. At the time of the recall, only two students had graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University, about sixty students were in other colleges, and the rest were in high schools. During August and September of 1881, the young Chinese returned home and the CEC came to an end.

The Contributions of Yung Wing and the CEC Students

As the first Chinese graduate of an American university, Yung Wing received from Yale first his B.A. in 1854, and then was conferred an L.L.D in 1876. He played an important role to build Sino-American relations. Without Yung's experience, the ECE would never have been founded in Hartford, Connecticut.

In 1877, Yung wrote to Yale's librarian proposing to establish a collection of Chinese books and a professorship for Chinese Language and Literature. Yung began the collection by donating 1,237 volumes of Chinese books (Yung, 1909). In 1878, Yale appointed Samuel W. Williams as the first professor of Chinese studies. That same year, Yung served as the first Chinese Associate Minister to the United States, finally normalizing Sino-American relations.

The achievements of the students of the CEC deserve to be mentioned. They provided China with her first generation of railroad builders, engineers, medical doctors, diplomats, college presidents, and naval admirals (see Tables 3 & 4) (Kao, 1982).

Table 3. The Occupational Distribution of the CEC Students (A).

occupational Distribution	number
Imperial Telegraph Administration	21
Foochow Naval Yard and Shanghai Arsenal	23
Chinese Northern Fleet (including Torpedo, Telegraph, & Medical School, etc.)	50
total	94

Table 4. The Occupational Distribution of the CEC Students (B).

Occupational Distribution	Number	Occupational Distribution	Number
Premier	1	Ministers of Foreign Affairs	3
Ministers	2	Foreign Service	11
Vice-Ministers of Navy	2	Admirals	2
Navy Officers	12	Medical Doctors (Navy)	4
Inspector (Custom House)	1	Officials (Custom House)	2
Teacher	1	Directors (Railways)	3
Railway Officials	3	Railway Engineers	6
Mining Engineers	9	Telegraph Officials	16
Businessmen	8	Civil Service	3
Medical Doctors	3	Attorneys	1
Journalists	2	Unknown	4
total			99

Among the CEC students, Tong Shao-Yi, who studied at Columbia University for two years, was the first premier of the Republic of China in 1912. Tong Koh-On served as the first President of the famous Tsin Hua College in Beijing in 1911. Chang Hon-Yen graduated from Columbia University Law School, was at first barred from practice because he was not an American citizen. Due to the argument of his petitions, the New York State Legislature passed a special bill in 1887 to allow him to practice. He was the first Chinese activist for civil rights.

Perhaps above others, Jeme Tien-Yow's achievements are worthy of record. Jeme was eleven years old when he came to Connecticut in 1872. He graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1881, and upon his return to China he dedicated thirty-two years of his life to the design planning, and construction of China's railroad. One of these railroads, the famous Peking-Kalgan Railway, was built solely by the talent and efforts of Chinese engineers without any foreign assistance. Today, the name of Jeme Tien-Yow is synonymous with the spirit of self-sufficiency on both sides of Taiwan Straits, and represents the drive for modernization of the Chinese people (Ling & Kao, 1991).

In 1894, Jeme was elected an Associate Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers of Great Britain and a Member of the Shanghai Society of Engineers and Architects. In 1910, Jeme was the first Chinese member in the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Concerned with the rights of Chinese engineers as professionals, in 1912, he was the founder and the first president of the Chinese Engineers Society in Canton, the first professional society for Chinese engineers. In 1913, he was one of the founders and the first president of the China Institution of Engineers. He established the Medal for Jeme's Essay, an annual contest awarding the best engineering paper. This award continues today in Taiwan to honor the best engineers every year.

In 1916, he was the first Chinese conferred the honorary LL.D degree from Hong Kong University. The same year, the thirty-fifth anniversary of his class, his Alma Mater Yale offered him the honorary degree of M.A., but he was unable to go to the United States to receive it. In the severe winter of 1918, he was the Chinese government representative to the Allied Technical Board meeting in Harbin. He died on duty due to heart failure and overwork in 1919.

Conclusion

Although the Chinese students were suddenly called back from the United States, yet they had already developed a very good relationship with their American friends and guardians. All could be found by the returned students' frequent correspondence and remained in touch with their American friends.

Personal letters are important and helpful in highlighting many crucial events. Yung Wing and the CEC students left near one hundred English letters in America, dated from 1850 to 1939. They were invaluable firsthand materials to provide more understanding about those early Chinese students' learning experience in America (Cheng, 2012, list in appendix).

The friendly relationship existed between Americans and not only those Chinese students but also their next generation. Many returned students later sent their sons to the United States under the charge of their American friends. Many of the second generation had their college degrees in the United States, particularly in the New England area. Among them, Dzau Linson, son of Dzau Chih-Foo, the first detachment, fulfilled the goal that those 120 students were unable to reach--to enter the United States Military Academy. Dzau graduated from the West Point in 1917 and became the fourth Chinese who were graduated from the United States Military Academy (Cheng, 2004). Yung Wing should have been satisfied if he knew that both purposes of his educational proposal had been reached, though by next generation.

After the withdrawal of the CEC in 1881, China hadn't sent students to the U.S. until 1900's. The loss is far more estimated. However, the historical event not only opened the door for Chinese overseas study, but also played a very important role in China's early modernization. If the Chinese government had not stopped learning from the West then, is it possible that China would not have become what it used to be? The Chinese people should have learned some lessons from the experience, particularly, all the Chinese

people should not forget the pioneer of the pioneers, Yung Wing, and the CEC students, who were the bridge builders of the early Sino-American cultural/educational links.

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Appendix

List of Yung Wing's, CEC Students' and relative letters, materials.

No	Date	Name	CEC list	No	Date	Name	CEC list
1	1873.02.12	Yung Wing		52	1938.10.22	Robinson	
2	1881.08.21	Mary Bartlett		53	1938.10.26	Wu Yang Tsang	22
3	1881.09.01	Si Yau Fu	79	54	1938.10.26	Liang Yu Ho	78
4	1881.10.16	Robert Brown		55	1938.10.27	Margaret	
5	1882.01.10	Si Yau Fu	79	56	1938.11.16	La Fargue	
6	1882.01.28	Wong Kai Kah	8	57	1938.11.16	La Fargue	
7	1882.03.06	Liang pe Yuk	108	58	1938.11.16	La Fargue	
8	1885.11.24	Tsai Shou Kee	6	59	1938.11.16	La Fargue	
9	1887.02.23	Wu Yang Tsang	22	60	1938.12.03	Robinson	
10	1887.	Lee Yen Fu	51	61	1938.12.13	La Fargue	
11	1891.	Mr. Bryson		62	1938.12.16	La Fargue	
12	1894.03.24	Margaret Bartlett		63	1938.12.16	Blakeslee	
13	1896.02.15	Jeme Tien Yow	21	64	1938.12.19	Robinson	
14	1900.07.02	Wang Kok Shan		65	1938.12.19	Holter	
15	1903.10.09	Yung Kwai	60	66	1939.01.10	Yung Liang	24
16	1906.05.03	Jeme Tien Yow	21	67	1939.01.16	Liang Yu Ho	78
17	1906.08.02	Low Kwok Sui	26	68	1939.01.18	Robinson	

18	1906.10.24	Auyang King	16	69	1939.01.21	Wu Yang Tsang	22
19	1906.10.24	Jeme Tien Yow	21	70	1939.01.25	Wu Yang Tsang	22
20	1906.12.11	Jeme Tien Yow	21	71	1939.01.26	Wu Yang Tsang	22
21	1907.10.22	Low Kwok Sui	26	72	1939.02.08	Liang Yu Ho	78
22	1908.01.21	Robert Hart		73	1939.02.18	Wu Yang Tsang	22
23	1908.10.18	Jeme Tien Yow	21	74	1939.03.11	La Fargue	
24	1909.05.15	Low Kwok Sui	26	75	1939.04.12	Hamer	
25	1910.03.14	Jeme Tien Yow	21	76	1939.05.04	C.K.Chow	
26	1923.12.23	Won Bing Chung	57	77	1939.05.08	C.K.Chow	
27	1924.05.11	Liang Tun Yen	3	78	1939.05.12	Wu Yang Tsang	22
28	1925.10.13	Sze Sao Ke		79	1939.05.22	Yung Yew Huan	89
29	1929.01.23	Annie Smith		80	1939.09.10	Woo Chung Yen	43
30	1930.04.01	Liang Yu Ho	78	81	1939.09.10	Woo Ying Fo	41
31	1930.06.30	Chow Shou Son		82	1939.10.13	Wu Yang Tsang	22
32	1932.10.22	Yung Liang	24	83	1940.01.20	La Fargue	
33	1933.07.01	Wong Yan Chang	47	84	1940.01.24	Robison	
34	1933.08.09	Yung Liang	24	85	1940.01.26	La Fargue	
35	1935.10.08	Yung Liang	24	86	1940.01.26	La Fargue	
36	1936.02.10	Yung Liang	24	87	1940.05.23	Liang Yu Ho	78
37	1936.06.26	Yung Liang	24	88	1940.05.28	H.R.	
38	1936.08.12	Liang Yu Ho	78	89	1946.03.08	Katte Patte Agin	
39	1936.10.27	Yung Liang	24	90	1946.03.24	LaFargue	
40	1936.11.30	Yung Liang	24	91	1946.03.24	La Fargue	
41	1937.03.11	Yung Liang	24	92	1946.03.27	Ivy Lewellen,WSU	
42	1938.01.09	La Fargue		93	1954.05.21	Robinson	
43	1938.02.16	La Fargue		94	1954.05.21	Robinson	
44	1938.03.03	Edward Lockwood		95	1954.05.27	Armstrong, WSU	
45	1938.03.31	La Fargue		96	1954.05.27	Armstrong, WSU	
46	1938.03.29	Yung Liang	24	97		Sue Yi Chew	33
47	1938.05.18	Robinson		98		Auyang King	16
48	1938.05.20	La Fargue		99		Chung Mon Yew	20
49	1938.08.26	Yung Liang	24	100		Shen Ke Shu	80
50	1938.08.27	Robinson		101		Wong kai Kah	8
51	1938.10.17	La Fargue		102		Keight	

Eastern Culture (refer to the culture map above) has these characteristics listed below: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Shenism, Taoism, and Islam are some common religions practiced in the Eastern world. The population in Eastern countries is more traditional than people in the West when we consider their clothing, rituals, and so on. For example, Indians pay respect to their elders or parents by touching their feet. East Asians bow as a gesture of welcoming guests, apologizing and expressing thank you. Cultural and Intellectual History: Between East and West. For Prospective Students. For Prospective Students.Â The programme is a wide-ranging inter-faculty and inter-university project that is unique in its combination of two components. Alongside common courses, future Masterâ€™s students will be able to create their own educational programme based on individual interests and objectives. For Prospective Students. For Students.