Finding Their Way Home: A Lifelong Journey of the Chinese Educational Mission Students in China

by

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Acknowledgement and Dedication

As a student of history, I have always believed in its paramount importance, in that one must understand and learn from the past in order to succeed in shaping the future. On my journey to understand the paths taken by my predecessors, I would like to thank Professor Stephan Angle’s irreplaceable tutelage, for without him, I would likely still be typing out my second chapter one week before the deadline. Professor Angle has offered me illuminating wisdom in finding the general framework and specific directions of thesis, for that I am greatly in his debt.

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At last, I would like to give my gratitude to all my fellow Chinese compatriots studying in America, in past, present, and future. They have given me the courage in taking on this topic, and I wish that one day we will all return to our home and make it a even better place. Like Professor La Fargue says so elegantly in his book, I dedicate this thesis

To all that great band of “returned students” who have tried to bridge the gap between China and the western world.
Introduction

A Preliminary Framework

Let me begin with an excerpt of an autobiography of a Yale professor, William Lyon Phelps, depicting the Chinese friends from his teens,

These boys not only excelled us Americans at athletics; you should have seen them cutting the double eight and grapevine! They cut us out in other ways that caused considerable heart-burnings. When the Chinese youth entered the social arena, none of us had any chance. Their manner to the girls had a deferential elegance far beyond our possibilities. Whether it was the exotic pleasure of dancing with Orientals, or, what is more probable, the real charm of their manners and talk, I do not know; certain it is that at dances and receptions, the fairest and most sought-out belles invariably gave the swains from the Orient the preference. I can remember the pained expressions on the faces of some of my American comrades when the girls deliberately passed them by and accepted the attentions of Chinese rivals with a more than yielding grace. And the Orientals danced beautifully.¹

This is a bizarre passage in two ways. Male Chinese students in America have been known neither for their athletic excellence, nor for their smoothness in social scenes. In fact, we have often been stereotyped as almost the exact opposite: skinny nerds who are far better at math than at any physical activities, and decidedly lacking in charm. However, the Chinese students in Professor Phelps’ memory seemed to have broken all aspects of that stereotype before it was even formed; in his memory, the students “had excellent manners, were splendid sportsmen, alert in mind, good at their studies, good at athletics.”² In addition to the clean break away from the modern

² Ibid., 83.
stereotype is the fact that this little anecdote dates back to 1870s, less than 10 years before the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

These Chinese youths were known in America as “the Chinese Educational Mission students,” whereas in China they were known as a simpler name, “Liumei Youtong,” which roughly translates to “the young children who stayed in America.” It is intriguing that even when observed from the naming traditions of the students they have been identified and defined differently; to the Chinese, they were defined by their “Americaness,” whereas in the United States, they were defined by their “Chineseness,” and such a difference in identity is one that most of them struggled with throughout their lives. They have not only excelled in academia during their time in the States, but claimed honor in social scenes and student politics as well. They were the constant guests of Mark Twain’s household, delivered beautifully worded political speeches in school in English as well as recited Homeric verses in Classical Greek; they were the most skillful athletes, ranging from the coxswain in Yale’s crew team to the pitchers in baseball team. They most surely earned the respect of the local communities through their intelligence and their good manners. Consequently, even decades after their departure from New England, many of the local communities as well as their classmates still sang praises of these students in their memoirs and personal correspondence.

The Chinese Educational Mission was originally conceived Dr. Yung Wing, the first Chinese to graduate from an American university. Arriving in 1847 with Rev.

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3 “留美幼童” in Chinese.
4 In the later chapters is sometimes abbreviated as “CEM.”
Samuel B. Brown, Yung Wing was educated in Massachusetts for three years. He entered Yale University in 1850 and graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1854. Though naturalized as an American citizen, Yung had made it his life’s mission to secure the “enlightenment and power” of his homeland through education. Shortly after his graduation, Yung departed for Shanghai, where he worked until 1863, when he was employed by one of the leaders of the Self-Strengthening Movement, Zeng Guofan, as a lesion and deputy in the acquisition of modern machinery from the west. Meanwhile, in 1864, in a report filed by Prince Gong, Li Hongzhang, the protégé of Zeng Guofan, wrote about the vital urgency of gaining mastery over western machinery through education, setting off the establishment of official translation agencies in several major cities. On the other hand, Yung, who returned to China in 1867, succeeding in accomplishing his task and earning Zeng’s trust, also submitted his formal proposal for sending students abroad, which was finally accepted by Zeng in 1870 as a response to the Tianjin Massacre, and approved by the emperor and empress dowager in 1871.

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5 Qian Gang 钱钢, and Hu Jincao 胡劲草, Daqing liumei youtong ji 大清留美幼童记 [Chinese Educational Mission Students] (Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe, 2010), 4-10.
7 Zeng Guofan (1811-1872) was a Chinese statesman and military commander. Along with a few other politicians Zeng facilitated the Tongzhi Restoration, a set of governmental policies to stop the decline of the Qing empire after the Opium War. Though a Confucian scholar, Zeng understood the importance of machinery, and set the tone for the subsequent Self-Strengthening Movement.
8 Prince Gong (1833-1898) was the brother of Xianfeng Emperor, a major politician wielded significant power from 1861-1884 due to his victory in the Xinyou Coup. He was a major facilitator and leader of the Self-Strengthening Movement, advocating for advancement in military technology, industrialization, and peace with the western powers. He was dubbed “the foreigner No.6” by the convservatists for his favor of “all things western.”
9 Qian and Hu, Daqing liumei youtong ji, 21-22.
10 Triggered in 1870 by the rumor of infanticide by French Catholic missionaries, the Tianjin Massacre led to the killing of Western missionaries and Chinese Christians alike, which in turn led to a diplomatic crisis.
The Chinese Educational Mission aimed to groom students in mathematics, engineering, ship making, and military affairs abroad for 15 years, fully immersing the students in a western environment so that they would break the linguistic and cultural barrier that had stood in many of Chinese bureaucrats’ way. Considering the duration of the project and the age at which students would return, the selection for the candidates settled at the 10-15 year-old-bracket.\textsuperscript{11} The selection process was supposedly strict, but due to the limited applicant pool, partially caused by the fear of foreign countries, a vast majority of the students came from merchant families from Southeastern China with business or occupational ties with westerners; some of them even attended missionary schools before the CEM.\textsuperscript{12} They were to be sent in four detachments from 1872 to 1875 into local New England host families and schools, both public and private, for primary and secondary education, some of which, such as the Philips Andover Academy and Philips Exeter Academy, are still among the most elite private schools in the United States today. In the States, they were to receive quarterly classes (two weeks every three months) in Chinese classics and customs, keeping up with their native language and moral values. From thereon the students were to enter universities or military academies to complete their bachelor’s degrees and return to China with explicit promises of official titles and ranks and serve as specialist politicians, bureaucrats, and military officers. However, the project ran into a series of issues and conflicts, including the conflict within State-side managements between Yung Wing and more traditionalist principals assigned by the court; the conflict between the principals and students, who supposedly were gradually being

\textsuperscript{11} Qian and Hu, \textit{Daqing liumei youtong ji}, 35-39.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 40-41.
Americanized; the domestic conflict between Li Hongzhang\textsuperscript{13} and the more traditionalist faction of the court; and the international conflicts between China and the United States, which include the emerging Anti-immigration campaign focused on the Chinese immigrants in California and the American government’s refusal to admit the CEM students into the U.S. Naval Academy and West Point Academy, the Chinese Educational Mission was scrapped in 1881 and students recalled in the same year. As a result, only two students have successfully graduated from University, while about one third to one half of the students had entered their studies in Universities.

From thereon the students departed upon different paths and the narratives of their stories varied greatly. Some have claimed that their story is a tragic one, that the project, and Yung Wing’s vision was ahead of its time, and thus doomed to fail from its inception. My thesis aims to focus on their development as a collective through a series of analyses on their individual as well as collective experiences and careers in China, in answering the question of what their professional life was like in China, how have their lives and career been shaped by the larger context of China’s political as well as social development, and vice versa.

In reviewing the literature and research on the students, I have found that the scholarship on the Chinese Educational Mission leans towards two extreme ends, in

\textsuperscript{13} Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) was a protégé of Zeng Guofan, similarly a statesman and military general, as well as a seasoned diplomat in late Qing period. During his time in power, he occupied the office of the Viceroy of Zhili and Minister of Beiyang, essentially giving him authority over the entire northern China. He was responsible for the establishment of China’s first navy, along with some of the earliest modern steel factories, artillery factories and shipyards. He was also responsible for the negotiation of various treaties with the foreign powers, which has resulted in his stereotypical image of a traitor who “gave away” China. However, in recent years, scholars have recognized his, some would say unparalleled role in China’s modernization effort during the late Qing period.
that it was either relatively scattered with extremely specific focus on one aspect of
one groups of students, or a much more generalized narrative that, while trying to put
the students in a larger context, failed to go into their individual development. The
former incorporated a series of very well researched topic-specific articles and essays
focusing on one issue or one aspect of students’ lives at a narrow span of time: for
example, Pan Xiangming’s analysis on the cancellation of the project, Gao
Hongcheng’s analysis on one of the principal’s background and his management of
the students, Michael Hunt’s analysis on the Boxer Indemnity Program, and Lo
Hsiang-Lin’s book on Liang Cheng’s diplomatic mission in the United States. On the
other hand, many of the works provided a more encyclopedic view of the students
without a unified theme, such as the canonical book written by Thomas La Fargue,
*China’s First Hundred*, and Edward Rhoads’ *Stepping Forth into the Word*, as well
as Mao Shizhen’s Ph.D. thesis on the students’ contribution to the technological
development of China. There is only one analytical work that simultaneously has the
breadth in time span, discusses the students as a group, and puts the story of the
students into a political and social context with a grand narrative and a point to make,
however, I have found that Shi Ni’s book, *Ideology and Tragedy*, sometimes gets lost
in the narrative of context that the discussion on students loses their individuality. I
think it is important to discuss them both as individuals and as a group, and I try to do
both in this thesis while retracing their life in China with a grand narrative, with
analysis and re-assessment on secondary sources and some direct analysis on primary
sources including letters, autobiography and documents.
In re-assessing these prior authors’ arguments, I have found the majority of the scholars’ conclusions to be generally correct, in that if we focus on the Chinese Educational Mission itself, it was indeed a failure. The students were not efficiently or effectively put to use; they were indeed discriminated against in various degrees throughout their career, with only a few of them being able to reach the center of China’s state machine. However, I have also found that their career developments and experience, aside from being shaped by the historical context and political events at the time, also shaped China’s future, and that their action and accomplishment, both individually and as a collective, has had a profound impact to China’s path of modernization. In many ways, they were not unlike their predecessor, Dr. Yung Wing, who envisioned a enlightened and powerful China through education. Through the remission of the Boxer Indemnity, and the establishment of the Indemnity program, the students, perhaps unconsciously and in an unorganized fashion, created a reincarnation of the Chinese Educational Mission, and in the end, Yung’s vision for China’s modernization, not only industrially, but intellectually, was achieved in part because of the CEM students’ effort. In many ways, this thesis is not only telling a story of struggle, or identity, but a story of legacy as well. Indeed, Yung Wing’s vision and the Chinese Educational Mission was tragically ahead of its time, but in the end, that vision was realized in two generation’s time.

This thesis has been arranged in four chapters chronologically, with the first focusing on the end of the Chinese Educational Mission itself, and the second on the initial Chinese attitude towards the students when they returned as defined by the press and by court, as well as students’ perception of that reception. The third chapter
focuses on their career developments under the historical context of China’s mentality shift as defined by the Sino-French War and Sino-Japanese War, and the fourth chapter discusses those who reached the power center, and their effort in passing on the CEM’s legacy through the Boxer Indemnity Program and the establishment of Tsinghua College.

As a Chinese student studying in New England, I often feel connected to these students’ experiences, which has, in large part, motivated me in choosing this topic. Similar to these students, I have also come to this country at a relatively young age, completing my high school education as well as my undergraduate education in the United States. As my education progressed, I have increasingly received comments from my family and friends in China that sometimes I feel more like an American than Chinese, constantly receiving both cultural shock and, in many ways, reversed cultural shock as I returned to China for summers. I often find myself contemplating over the question of identity, and often end up with a feeling of not belonging—not quite American, but not exactly Chinese either. As I graduate from a liberal arts college, I have grown intrigued by the experience of these students, who spent a decade in the States in their teens and early twenties, and conceivably, their life and identity were shaped by a similar but much more extensive “American experience” due to the lack of contact with their homeland. Furthermore, I also believe that their experience is an interesting point of reference for China’s modernization as well, in particular as to the Chinese attitude towards the west—how and why it has changed so much. Their experience, when put into a larger context, was in many ways an important reference point that the coming generation’s
education may be reflected upon, which in itself has certainly played major part in shaping China’s modern history—from the May Fourth Movement, to the National Southwestern Associated University, and to the recent reflection of a Chinese modern education versus a western one. In recent years, as China grows stronger economically, the number of students studying abroad has increasingly reached record high year after year, which has made study on the Chinese students abroad increasingly important, and I hope this thesis may be, in part, an effort towards just that.
Chapter 1

Tiger’s Head, Snake’s Tail: Cancelation of the Chinese Educational Mission

The series of conflicts within the management of the Chinese Educational Mission is largely responsible for triggering the cancelation of the project. Furthermore, it was the attitude and the reports from the more traditionalist principals that set the tone for the students’ reception and treatment when they returned to China. Thus, the cancelation of the CEM may be considered to be the beginning and the cause of their career development in China, which is why I have chosen this period to begin my thesis. This chapter aims to discuss the reasons for cancelation of the Chinese Educational Mission with the focus on the principal who filed negative report against the students, Wu Jiashan (also known as Wu Zideng in some sources). Through an analysis of his background and previous contact with the West, an assumption may be reached that Wu is not as anti-West as the consensus has considered him to be. Thus, I am compelled to move onto further analysis on the students’ behavior in the States and some contextual analysis on the traditionalist mentality of the Chinese officials, which led to my conclusion that, under the specific context in regard to the official’s background and the students’ behavior, it was reasonable for the officials to cast doubts upon the students regarding their loyalty.
The Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford has been the final resting place for governors, politicians and activists. Among them, there also stands the tomb of Dr. Yung Wing, whose name would ring unrecognized for many Chinese as well as Americans. In the grand epic of history, Yung’s time seemed especially thrilling. Wars have been waged, cities taken, a 300-year-old empire hanging in the balance, and eventually tumbled by the waves of revolution. Yung was by no means the protagonist in this drama. He held no royal blood like the Empress Dowager Cixi, nor did he hold any meaningful political control or military influence through Confucian education, like Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. He had no ambition for an empire of his own like Yuan Shikai, nor the vision of a republic like Sun Yat-sen. Yet for someone almost forgotten by history, his brainchild has aided almost all of the major political players mentioned. From the soldier-cadets and naval officers who served in Li Hongzhang’s navy, to the engineers who built Cixi her first modern railroad, to the diplomats and secretaries of Yuan Shikai’s political faction, to Sun Yat-sen’s comrades in revolution, many of them came from Yung Wing’s project, what Lafargue would later call “the First Hundred.”

Coming from an impoverished family in Canton, Yung Wing was educated in Morrison Memorial School in Macau and Hong Kong from 1835 to 1846. He was subsequently brought to the United States by Rev. Samuel B. Brown for further education, and graduated Yale University in 1854 with a degree of Bachelor of Arts as the first Chinese student to every attend and graduate from an American university. Upon his graduation, he returned to China, hoping to serve his homeland by introducing western knowledge to its people. He worked for many different sides
including the Taiping Rebellion, a foreign consulate, and ran independent business before finally settling down under the wings of Zeng Guofan, contributed his effort to the “Self-Strengthening movement” in the procurement of western machinery and technology. Eventually, he found the right moment after the Tianjin Massacre, under the support of Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and Yung’s personal friend, Ding Richang, to finally push for the emperor’s decision of sending students abroad.

In 1871, 120 young boys between ten to fifteen years old, having been recruited from merchant families of Southeastern coastal China, were sent to the United States to study for fifteen year. They were to receive education from middle school all the way to university, and to acquire whatever further training required in natural science, technology and military affairs before returning to China. They were placed into various host families to improve their mastery over English, and subsequently admitted to some of the best private schools in the states, supported and funded by the Chinese government. By 1880, about 50 students graduated from high schools and were admitted into universities. Among those can be accounted for, 22 of them attended Yale University, 8 of them attended MIT, 6 attended RPI, 3 attended Columbia University and one attended Harvard University. The students performed excellently in adapting linguistically, academically, athletically, and especially

14 Ding Richang (1823-1882) was a proponent of the Self-Strengthening Movement and was responsible for the proposal of setting up a Chinese Navy. He also built mining and telegram operations throughout his time in office as government of Jiangsu and later the vice president of the Ministry of Military Affairs.

15 Yung, My life in China and America, 1-180.


Qian and Hu, Daguang liumei youtong ji, appendix.
socially as the representative of their country in diplomatic situation. However, the project was abruptly stopped due to a combination of factors. The students’ loyalty was called into question. Because of their malleability as children, they were considered “overly-westernized.” There have been constant reports of students wearing western clothing, attending church events or converting into Christianity, fraternizing with female classmates, and cutting their queue, which are all punishable offenses, as matters such as aversion from religious affairs were considered vital in maintaining a sense of Chinese culture and institution in the students’ hearts, so that their loyalty may be expected upon their return. Cutting one’s braid, on the other hand, signified the students’ rejection and betrayal from his Chinese identity, and thus must be punished by the managing principals headquartered in Hartford. As recorded, by 1881, when the students were recalled, only 94 were accounted for. Excluding the three students who deceased in the States, and the two who hid away from the Chinese authorities, there were 21 students who were recalled either because of sickness or the breaking of rules. However, while the concerns for the “westernization” and disloyalty against China is somewhat valid, it was not the only reason for the recalling of the students. Additionally, the financial and political burden was quite real: at the time, the Chinese Exclusion act was being passed in

Qian and Hu, *Daqing liumei youtong ji*, 82-100.
18 Qian and Hu, *Daqing liumei youtong ji*, 102-108.
20 Ibid.
Congress, and the expenses of the project, not as significant as China’s debt to foreign powers, still commanded an uneasy amount of 1.2 million tiles in silver.\(^{21}\)

Moreover, there seems to be an internal conflict within the on-site management in the United States. On the American side, top administration over the project was formed by two people—Yung Wing and an additional principal\(^{22}\). The relationship between Yung, who received higher education in the States and by this time had naturalized as an American citizen, and the additional principals, who were usually classically trained Chinese scholars, was quite troublesome.\(^{23}\) In fact, while Yung effectively founded the Chinese Educational Mission, he was named only as the deputy principal of the administration. The Chinese-educated principals, according to Yung, “detested the concept of western education,” and tried to stay as far as they could from it. Yung further wrote in his autobiography that, “they have been invited to explained through the American system and methods of instruction, but in cases where they were invited to visit schools, they failed to respond to their invitation in person or by their deputies.”\(^{24}\) However, during the latter part of the project, an official who is particularly unforgiving and unsympathetic to the effort by the name of Wu Jiashan was dispatched to the states to oversee the project.\(^{25}\) It is recorded that almost immediately upon his arrival, he sent multiple letters reporting back to the Qing government, stating that “the project has many flaws, thus it is wise to shut it

\(^{22}\) Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 72.
\(^{23}\) Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 105-108.
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
\(^{25}\) Yung, My Life in China and America, 213.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 103-105
down,” and that, “the foreign, western vices and cultures are filled with flaws; as the students are undereducated in Confucianism, and their virtues are not firm, they are prone to pick up the western vices even before they could study the science and technologies need to be studied. Although we have done our best in managing the situation, we still feel it is near impossible to keep them from the western influence, thus the project must be canceled.”

In Yung’s autobiography, he portrays Wu as a malicious member of the reactionary party in China, mediocre in both politics and academia. It seems that in Yung’s mind, Wu was no doubt the most direct cause the end of the project, and because of that, Yung has lashed out quite strongly against him. In My Life in China and America, Yung has stated that, “Wu should have been relegated to a cell in an insane asylum or an institution for imbeciles.” Because of Yung’s comment and his direct relations with the Chinese Educational Mission, his accusation for Wu has never been questioned until recently. In fact, it would seem that Wu was far from the witless idiot Yung has pictured. Wu passed the civil examination with flying colors (ranked 24th nationally), he was then selected as a member of Hanlin Academy, which signified the court’s favor for a young official, and a strong possibility of

27 Yung, My Life in China and America, 205
29 翰林院, a national academic institution, often serves as a preparatory school for those who have performed well in the exam, and from there they were often dispatched to political posts that may lead to further promotion.
future prominence.\textsuperscript{30} As for Yung’s negative judgement on his political acumen based on the fact that “he was never assigned to any government department, nor was he ever known to hold any of government office,”\textsuperscript{31} it is not factually false. Indeed, Wu had never held any meaningful government posts aside from the academic post in the Hanlin Academy, but the fact is, he did so by choice. In 1855, when the Taiping Rebellion laid sieges upon cities and occupied more than half of Wu’s hometown of Jiangxi Province, he chose to leave his post in the Hanlin Academy and to “return to his home, serve his mother, relocate and thus rescue her from war and turmoil.”\textsuperscript{32} While being physically away from the political realm, his talent was still recognized by the Chinese court. During his time off, the Minister of Governmental Personnel recommended him to the emperor based on his knowledge of the west.\textsuperscript{33} The emperor concurred, and issued an edict urging him to return to Beijing. Similarly, his talent and capability in both politics and academia was recognized by Zeng Guofan, who had traded letters with Wu and invited him to work under his administration in Canton.\textsuperscript{34} Even away from the political center of China, Wu remained in contact with some of the most powerful statesmen in China, and was also called upon by the emperor in the end. All sources indicating Wu being a academically talented, politically resourceful, and socially well-connected man, and it seems like his image diverges greatly from Yung’s portrayal.

\textsuperscript{30} Gao, “Wu Jiashan yu yangwu jiaoyu gexin”.
\textsuperscript{31} Yung, \textit{My Life in China and America}, 200.
\textsuperscript{32} Gao, “Wu Jiashan yu yangwu jiaoyu gexin”.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
In fact, Yung was inaccurate in his portrayal of Wu’s effort in learning as well. Yung points out that “he showed a decided taste for chemistry, but never seemed to have made any progress in it and was regarded by all his friends as a crank.”\textsuperscript{35} The crank bit aside, Yung was certainly incorrect in his assessment of Wu’s scientific interest. While Wu might have had some interest in chemistry, which we have no evidence today indicating so, his primary area of interest was mathematics. During his leave from Beijing, he has published multiple books and journals on mathematics,\textsuperscript{36} and likely taught mathematics as well as foreign languages in institutions such as the School of Combined Learning in Guangzhou.\textsuperscript{37} According to Gao’s research, one of Wu’s published works “Twenty-One Methods of Mathematics”\textsuperscript{38} matches very well with the teaching methods and course setup used in the School of Combined Learning in Beijing, which was founded after its counterpart in Guangzhou.\textsuperscript{39} Gao further concludes that “Twenty-One Methods of Mathematics” has not only incorporated the old Chinese methods in mathematical calculations, but also contains large amount of “newly translated” mathematical knowledge,\textsuperscript{40} demonstrating Wu’s extensive knowledge in Chinese mathematics, as well as his willingness to study the western methods, which at his time were not readily available to the public. Another more famous mathematicians in his time, Li

\textsuperscript{35} Yung, \textit{My Life in China and America}, 200.

\textsuperscript{36} The original Chinese being “算学,” which translates to “art of calculation” in English; it incorporates research into mathematical techniques developed in both the Chinese and Western traditions.

\textsuperscript{37} “同文馆” in Chinese, institutions set up for the study of foreign language, culture and technology, sometimes responsible for translation of documents and books as well.

\textsuperscript{38} “算书二十一种” in Chinese.

\textsuperscript{39} Gao, “Wu Jiashan yu yangwu jiaoyu gexin”.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
Shanlan,⁴¹ has concluded that, “I have translated more works in mathematics than anyone before my time, and out of all the Chinese people in my time, the only two people who are able to understand all of it are Wu and Hua.”⁴² Aside from mathematics, Wu also familiarized himself with other western technology and machinery. In one of the letters from Zeng Guofan to Wu, Zeng extended Wu an invitation to assist him in his post, based on Wu’s knowledge of the “western way of making machines.”⁴³ Thus, Wu seems to be far more accomplished in western science and technology than Yung has given him credit for. For someone who studied western science voluntarily (while most of the Chinese court chose not to), Wu seemed to be drastically different from Yung’s description of a cranky old man resentful of anything western.

Furthermore, during his time in Beijing, Wu also voluntarily studied English and French, which nobody in the Hanlin Academy, or even the Chinese court, was able to do. He was also said to be accomplished in the art of translation.⁴⁴ He published a dictionary which was republished three times in the 20th century.⁴⁵ Thus, it may be safe to presume that with his willingness to study western science and language, his experience in teaching such subjects, Wu should have been more

⁴¹ In whose name the Li Shanlan identity in calculus is named.
⁴² Gao, “Wu Jiashan yu yangwu jiaoyu gexin”.
⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁵ Li Zhiming 李志茗, “‘Liuxuejie zhi dadi’ Wu Jiashan de zaipingjia” “留学界之大敌”吴嘉善的再评价 [“The Enemy of Abroad Education,” A Reappraisal of Wu Jiashan], Historic Review 史林 3(1994), 34-35.
accepting to the western education than most of the Chinese court, which makes Yung’s writing questionable.

It has even been found by the research of Li Zhiming, that according to Viceroy Li Hongzhang’s published documents, it was Yung himself who recommended Wu, which would make sense when taking Wu’s previous experience into consideration.\(^{46}\) Thus, it begs the question: what really happened in Hartford? Was Wu acting purely of resentment and malice? Or is there truly just concerns for the disloyalty of the students?

I suppose an argument can be made in support of Wu’s “unbiased” attitude. As one of the pioneers for the “new education” (新式学堂), and someone who voluntarily familiarizes himself with foreign languages, it is somewhat unlikely for him to simply be resentful of an educational project that may yield the industrial backbones of the country. In contrast, his experience of studying foreign language precedes the practice of opening schools for foreign languages in China by about 10 years.\(^{47}\) Furthermore, it is also mentioned by Li Dingyi that Wu studied English from the missionaries in Beijing, and that he not only was fluent in writing of western languages and mathematics (and that he was able to read an extensive volume of foreign books), but also was familiar with the history of the western world. How likely is it that someone who dedicated a significant portion of time to acquaint himself with the foreigners, their language, science, culture, and history, and yet still has a fundamental bias against studying in a western country?

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 37.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., 25.
However, such an argument may still be countered with a statement that his experience and familiarity with the western culture does not necessarily mean that he would feel more at ease with it or find it likable for that matter. The most prominent slogan during the Self-Strengthening Movement proclaims that the Chinese needs to “learn from the foreigners’ skills in order to subdue them” (师夷长技以制夷) which represents the prevailing logic of the entire movement fairly well: the Chinese need to learn from the westerners in terms of industrialization and technology (and only in terms of industry and technology) with the purpose of preserving the core essence of the old Chinese dynastic institutions and culture and to ward off the invaders of China. Under such a logic, the westerners, advanced as they are in industry, technology and weaponry, were far behind in culture and virtue, and thus were barbarians. They could become civilized by being educated in the Chinese way, but at that moment, they were not. The Chinese sense of superiority in its culture has never been lost. It was essentially the same perception that the people of Song or Ming had on the Mongols, Jurchens and Manchurians—skilled in battle, but lacking in culture and civility. Granted, there were people during the Self-Strengthening movement and later period who thought that the western culture, social science and institutions were in some way either “superior” than the Chinese ones, or at least worth studying and being reflected upon, but they were by no mean the majority of the court. Even in the very end of the 19th century, when the Minister of Nanyang, Zhang Zhidong, another important political figure in the early modernization of

48 “Barbarian” is an English translation of the word “夷,” which originally means “the Barbarians from the East.” However, as time progressed, it was used to refer all foreigners in this scenario.
China,\textsuperscript{49} published an article articulating his vision for the reformation of China after the Sino-Japanese War, he still pushing for the similar logic of “the old Chinese knowledge serves as the guiding principle, while the western knowledge serves as the application (旧学为体，新学为用 or 中学为体，西学为用),”\textsuperscript{50} emphasizing the vital importance of the Chinese ways in politics and philosophy. Without making a judgement on the movement itself, it is safe to presume that in earlier times such as 1850s, when Wu’s perception of the west was beginning to form, most of them still believed in the cultural and moral superiority of the Chinese, even among the minorities who thought that China ought to modernize. Thus, it may be that Wu, even as someone who choose to study western science and history, still believed in that cultural superiority of China.

With that in mind, we would see a perfect embodiment of the Self-Strengthening movement when we take a second look at Wu: a man who was classically trained and was on a path upward in Chinese politics, whose belief was deeply rooted in the Chinese classics, but turned to western science, contributed his effort in the movement to either advance his position, or to help his country. However, in his core, he still believed the “old knowledge” and the legitimacy of China’s political and social institutions. He still believed the moral, civil and cultural superiority of the Chinese. Thus, it is possible that while he did not resent the

\textsuperscript{49} Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), during his time in office, was the counterpart of Li Hongzhang in Southern China. Though politically less powerful than Li Hongzhang, Zhang was also a proponent of the Self-Strengthening Movement. He was similarly responsible for founding many heavy industry factories, though sometimes criticized for his ignorance of the nuance in science. More notably, Zhang seemed to have established more educational institutions in military affairs as well as general education, advocating for the preservation of the imperial order while employing western science and knowledge.

\textsuperscript{50} Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 205.
westerners, he certainly had no love for them. While he did find value in a western education, he opposed and resented any assimilation.

There is some evidence supporting this conjecture. For example, as the letter from the American government notes, Wu refused to visit the schools where the students attended.\textsuperscript{51} Such a behavior may be interpreted as an avoidance of unnecessary contacts with foreigners and staying away from the possible “contamination” from western culture. Furthermore, the fact that his fluency in English and French is limited in reading and translating speaks volumes. There is no evidence indicating that Wu made any attempt to study western languages orally, despite having a great source for oral English practice as he was taught by missionaries directly. It is said that he could not speak a single word of English but was able to read and translate books. The reason for his “jumping” into reading and writing English, if we assume the previous conjecture to be true, may be that he did not have any desire to talk to foreigners. In that way, Wu might have been intentionally limiting his contact with foreigners, which speaks to the likeliness of his dislike to the western culture and certain fear of being “contaminated.”

On the other hand, the improper behaviors of the students that prompted his negative reports back to the Chinese government are mostly non-academic matters. Matters such as conversion into a foreign religion, fraternization with foreign female students (which of course would come with a possible future of “marrying into the foreign culture”), giving up Chinese clothing and cutting braids, are not academic.

\textsuperscript{51} Yung, \textit{My Life in China and America}, 213.
matters at all, but rather cultural matters. Wu must have had no problem with the student being acquainted with the western language, western science, and even western way to conduct business, but he was extremely sensitive about culturally “un-Chinese” behaviors, which must have offended his classical education. Neither the Chinese government nor he would want a “banana” who merely looks like Chinese but acts and identifies as a westerner. For he and the traditionalist faction, a betrayal to the Chinese culture, the Chinese “way,” is the worst outcome there is. In their minds, the proper Chinese way as dictated by the cultural and Confucian traditions, is closely associated to the Chinese institution. For example, the belief in filial piety is closely aligned with the loyalty to emperor, because the relationship between father and son and the relationship between emperor and subjects are closely related. The concepts such as “the three bonds and five relations” is vital to a peaceful order of the country, dictating harmonious relations between the superior and the inferior in parental relations, conjugal relations, fraternal relations and political relations (with friendship more or less on equal terms). Concepts as such often put “the political relation” and “parental relation” together, and cutting hair is an important symbol of disowning one’s parents, as dictated by the Classic of Filial Piety, which dictates that, “Our bodies — to every hair and bit of skin — are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety.” Thus, how can the government trust the students to be loyal to the emperor

52 In classical Chinese it is considered one concept of “三纲五常”
53 Specifically, father and son.
54 As in the relationship between subject and emperor.
when they have stopped believing and following the principles that have been the driving force for people’s belief in the institution for a millennium? Consequently, due to the parallel between the parental relation and the political relation, abandoning of one would inevitably bring about the discarding of the other. It has been noticed by both American and Chinese sources that the improper behaviors discussed above indeed happened. In that case, Wu, dictated by his education and the environment growing up, would be justifiably offended; it is, in a way, his duty to report back the government any hint of possible disloyalty.

It is also worth noting that, even when Wu advised the Qing government to call back the students, he recommended to retract in batches as well, leaving those who were already in college finishing their education, while pulling back the ones haven’t graduated high school, which does seem like a reasonable thing to do. It was commented as so even by the critics of Wu at the time, proving that Wu did think the project had certain potential, and that it needed to be finished. Thus, it is far too overgeneralizing to judge Wu to be simply resentful to the students.

However, it further begs the question that, was Wu and Qing government’s justifiable concern for the possible disloyalty legitimate? Did the students’ behavior, to the eyes of an outsider, signify their assimilation to the West?

The objection of Chinese authorities of the students’ experience abroad can broadly be distinguished in three categories: education, social life, and sports. The primary objection regarding the education that the students received in the United

56 Gao, “Wu Jiashan yu yangwu jiaoyu gexin”.
States was that it focused too much on the “western studies.” According to Rong Zengxiang (the Chinese teacher of the CEM), Yung Wing’s project was too “western centric” in both language and moral lessons, leading to students “unlearned in Chinese studies.” According to the writings of Li Gui in “The Diary for Traveling Around the Globe,” the students were to be grouped into teams of 12, and each team rotated to go to the headquarter in Hartford for 14 days to study Chinese classics from dawn to dusk, focusing on reading and writing of the language as well as the understanding of classics and compositions of essays. It is said that the rotation allowed each team to have such a 2-week camp every three months.

If such a record may be trusted and strictly enforced, the students would have about one sixth of their life in the states focused on Chinese studies, which is not a lot, but certainly not too few, considering they were indeed dispatched to this foreign land to learn about the West, not the East. However, the arithmetic confounds me, as there were 120 students grouped into 12 student teams, which makes 10 teams studying at a 2-week (half-month) period, and if it is a rotation of 10 teams, and indeed they were taught one team at a time, then the rotation for each team would have to be about once in five months instead of three, which is a significantly shorter time and effort spent on the native language and moral lessons, which is usually considered as of paramount importance to not only one’s education, but to his loyalty to the imperial authorities as well. The students, on average, would have had just

59 “环游地球新录” in Chinese.
60 Ibid.
about 10% of their time dedicated to the Chinese studies, which could be argued as insufficient, and judging from the behavior of the students, the moral lessons regarding the manners and the formalities between different classes (especially between students and teachers) had failed quite obviously (per records in Yung’s autobiography in terms of refusal to kneel and braid cutting incidents).61

It would seem like the CEM students had a decidedly different perspective regarding China. With significantly more exposure to the “western way of life” than any Chinese person have ever had in that time: living in host families, not being able to return to homeland for almost a decade, spending almost every single moment of their waking minutes with New England Americans in some of the best boarding schools in the country; they spoke the language, played sports, recited Shakespeare and Mark Twain, waltzed and flirted with local female students as well as an American, if not better (as per Dr. Lyon Phelps’ autobiography). While there is no evidence found regarding any political behaviors of these students, many of them did convert to Christianity. It is concluded by Rhoads that all of them are required by their host families to go to Sunday school and attend Church prayers in both high schools and colleges; he also explicitly writes about a Societas Condita Causa Augendarum Rerum Chinensium Christiana62 founded by eight Christian CEM

61 On a personal note, I have attended a boarding school as well, with far more Chinese classmates than the CEM students, aided by the access of internet and other available media to acquaint myself with the Chinese language. Additionally, I spent about three to four months every year in China over breaks. It is safe to say that I had far more exposure to Chinese culture and language than the students ever did, yet as the years I have spent in the states grow, my skill in Chinese writing has deteriorated quite significantly, and have, at best, stayed at levels of middle school or high school. Even as I return to Beijing twice a year, I feel estranged from Chinese cities and Chinese culture. Conceivably such a sentiment can only be more pronounced for these CEM students.

students, attracting at least 25 members within the Chinese Educational Mission,\textsuperscript{63} hence the self-evidence of Christian influence among the CEM student.

Consequently, I conclude that the reports from Wu, with his disapproving tones aside, were largely true. From another perspective, some of the students, after a lifetime in China, still behaved like Americans. Per the memoir of Ding Zhihua, son of Ding Chongji, one of the CEM students, Ding worked as a custom administrative official in Shanghai for most of his life. One of the moments written was that, in their old age, when his father and two other CEM classmates met up and hung out, they drank brandy, conversed in full English, such a unchanging habit speaks volume, in that many of the students stayed like an American throughout their lives in China. Then it begs the question of paramount importance: Is it possible for one to behave almost entirely like an American, yet feel just as dedicated and loyal to the ultimate cause of the project (to serve China) as a Chinese civil servant? More importantly, is it possible, with such an identity, to be loyal to not only the concept of China (as their motherland), but also to be loyal to the concept of a dynasty, and an emperor?

\textsuperscript{63} Rhoads, \textit{Stepping Forth into the World}, 151-154.
Chapter 2

Returning to China: Students’ Initial Reaction to Their Reception

Having discussed the causes for the cancelation of the project, I proceed to talk about the students’ career development. With respect to the Chinese Educational Mission as a group, I begin with a brief discussion covering the career development of those who have either chosen to stay in America or decided to return to the United States after a brief time in the Chinese system in regard to their perception of China. Then I proceed to an extensive discussion of those who followed the order and returned to China, regarding their initial response to their poor reception which they received upon their return. This chapter mainly incorporates analyses of the primary sources in terms of letters written by the students within two years of their arrival back in China. Through the discussion, I have reached the conclusion that the students’ attitudes towards their poor treatment is, in fact, more diverse than the previous scholarly consensus has suggested, and might have played an interesting part in influencing the career of the students.

The students’ answer to the question of loyalty seems to be many-fold. However, while the students who followed the order of return had a more complex answer to the question of identity and loyalty, for a few of the students, the answer seemed simpler, which comes in the form of a capitalized “NO.” Among the 120 students, two—Rong Kui and Tan Yaoxun, after being expelled for their conversion
into Christianity, refused to be sent back to China, and fled from the CEM in secret, said to be supported financially by other CEM students. Of the two, Rong was the nephew of Yung, who also seemed to have acquiesced his action, and gave him financial support through college on the condition that upon graduation, Rong is to take a position to serve China, even indirectly. Both of them completed their bachelor’s degrees from Yale College with excellence. It was noted that Tan was well versed in public speaking and politics, while Rong went on and completed another degree in Mining in Columbia University. Both of them went on and “served” China in some sense: Tan worked briefly in the general consulate of China before his untimely death due to heart conditions, while Rong worked first in journalism, and later joined diplomatic service in the consulate and as secretary of Tang Shaoyi, himself a CEM student, when he visited the United States. Later in his life, he took part in the effort to request the remission of Boxer Indemnity, spearheaded by his former CEM classmate, Liang Cheng. After the indemnity was returned, and a scholarship founded in its name (along with the famous Tsing-Hua college, now Tsing-Hua University, founded as a prep-school for the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship students, the scholarship is perhaps the most famous educational projects in modern Chinese history, sending students to the United States just like CEM and producing some of the most influential Chinese scientists, scholars, politicians, intellectuals in its time), Rong took charge in managing and overseeing the Chinese students’ lives in

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64 La Fargue, *China’s First Hundred*, 45; Rhoads, *Stepping forth into the World*, 162-163.
65 Qian and Hu, *Daqing liumet youtong ji*, 126-128.
66 Ibid.
the United States and American colleges.\textsuperscript{67,68} It is quite undeniable to assert that Rong has indeed dedicated his life to China, and its future, but it would also be fair to argue that his dedication of effort was to China alone, it was neither for a specific government, nor for a dynasty.

The experience of three other students who either legally or illegally took off from the naval school assignments in China and returned the United States were more or less the same. Li Enfu, upon finishing his degree in Yale College, entered journalism and later took effort in fighting against the Chinese Exclusion act;\textsuperscript{69} Zhang Kangren, after obtaining a law degree from Yale, became the first practicing Chinese Lawyer in the United States; he has also fought against the Chinese Exclusion Act, and later joined the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco in diplomatic service, and oversaw Chinese naval students in the U.S. and Britain.\textsuperscript{70} Lu Yongquan, after obtaining a bachelor’s degree and finishing a graduate course in Lehigh University, returned to China as a railway engineer and later joined the Chinese consulate in New York.\textsuperscript{71} The students who have refused to serve the dynasty in military capacity and found their way back to the United States, seem all have found their way, again, back to the service for either China or Chinese people abroad. There is some inevitability in circumstance, due to the Chinese Exclusion Act and its negative impact on

\textsuperscript{67} Qinghuadaxue Xiaoshi Yanjiushi 清华大学校史研究室, \textit{Qinghuadaxue Shiliao Xuanbian 清华大学史料选编 [A Collection of Historical Primary Documents Regarding the History of Tsinghua University]} (Beijing: Qinghuadaxue chubanshe, 1991), 132-133.
\textsuperscript{68} This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 4.
employment opportunities as a Chinese person. Yet they still actively chose to work for the diplomatic service of China, alongside other various occupations. Admittedly, their allegiance might have been swaying more so towards a general “Chinese” identity rather than specific loyalty to the Qing government, but observed even from their career development alone, it seems premature to draw any definitive conclusion regarding the “defected” student’s answer to that question of loyalty.

On the other hand, for the rest of the students, their answer is more so shadowed by the poor treatment upon their return. The circumstances under which the students returned to China was less than ideal. They had become a pariah in both the Chinese court as well as in the public opinion. In addition to the numerous reports and judgements in the political scene, citing their eccentric character and behavior, they have also been tried in the court of public opinion with the limited and severely biased information available domestically. Truly there has never been a force as fearful as that of the mob. Upon their return, the Shanghai News\(^72\) published a paragraph as such on September 29\(^{th}\), 1881:

> the country sacrificed a vast sum in money to send these students abroad. Yet the students couldn’t keep themselves from [bad] influences. None of the first Chinese students abroad came from peerage or upper-class families, thus most of the students were from uneducated\(^73\) and working-class family background, thus were of [to a certain degree] unsatisfying qualities. How can one talk about [giving] western education with these kinds of people? How can one talk about [commissioning] them into the navy or the way of military, etc? Their character is mostly belligerent and aggressive, their talent mostly limited and of intelligent, brutish nature. It is said that when these people were in America, whenever talking about the matter of the state and any state responsibility involving hardship, they grow tiresome as if they were falling asleep. How can it be expected that they would

\(^72\) Shun-Pao, one of the first Chinese Newspaper agencies.
achieve any greatness [that the state and country has envisioned for them previously]?”

When one glances at this paragraph, a strong sense of disappointment is undoubtedly evident. It reads as if a stern parent is berating his or her children for their incompetence and lack of effort. However, when taking a closer look at the paragraph, it is quite a different sentiment from the previously discussed judgement delivered by the Chinese officials such as Wu. The likes of Wu develop more or less of a “naturalized foreigner” view of these students. They have conformed themselves to the behavior and practice of westerners, which in turn renders them no longer being Chinese, and for not following “the Chinese way,” their allegiance to the state could no longer be expected. However, this paragraph doesn’t so much concerns itself with the loyalty or allegiance of the students. It would seem like at this point, the author, and presumably by extension, the Chinese public did not regard them as Americanized foreigners as the political officials have, but rather a group of unqualifying brats who squandered their life and the country’s fortune, who has wasted the precious opportunity to dedicate their lives in saving this nation. With extreme negativity, the students were regarded as unintelligent in mind, mercurial in temper, and unwilling to shoulder responsibility. They are a group of people who are unfit to take charge in state matters not because they are not Chinese, but rather

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74 Youtong 幼童 [The Children], Documentary, directed by Hu Jincao 胡劲草 (Beijing: CCTV-9, 2011).
75 which was, to a certain degree, not entirely incorrect, among the 94 recalled students, while many have had their career serving the Qing government, many have also taken profession in the private industries in medicine, business, and journalism. However, it may also be argued as an unavoidable outcome regardless of the “patriotism,” for lack of better words, of the students, as in that they were likely forced out by the government and its officials, who were unwilling to fully trust the students.
because they were not elite enough: they do not have the qualification as many of the traditionally educated elites did in terms of family background and civil examination. It wasn’t even that they did not know the western science or that they were not properly educated in the western manner, it was that, as a common Chinese person, they didn’t deserve the responsibility and investment the country has placed upon their shoulders—they weren’t transformed into foreigners, they were just too ordinary as Chinese to be deservedly transformed.

Admittedly, this version of the “public opinion” in terms of the press is extremely elitist in evaluating the students, in large part, by their socio-economic background and make assumptions about them almost purely based on the condition of their families. One would even see the argument that the consensus of the press at this time cannot even be called “public opinion” due to the novelty of journalism in China at the time and the low literacy rate, which consequently produced the newspapers’ elite audience who most likely come from a more affluent background that afford them their education. In fact, Chinese journalist agencies such as the Shanghai News, which was published in Chinese, was founded by an English businessman as a modernizing effort catering to the middle-upper class. However, a rebuttal may be proposed here that to the students, who had received western education from some of the most elitist educational institutions in the United States and were promised a bright political future from the beginning, were equally high-minded as the elites in China. They did not seek the approval of the public opinion as we define it today, but rather a more bourgeois version of the “public opinion” that sat outside the political realm, but with many intrinsic and subtle ties to it.
Hence, there is a subtle difference that lies between two narratives, “the non-conforming foreigner,” as projected by the secondary sources and the “low-born Chinese” as projected by the *Shanghai News* comment, and the latter may be the plausible cause for the students’ poor treatment upon their initial arrival. It would seem like there was a mistranslation from the governmental report to the “public opinion” at the time. Indeed, in certain reports filed by the principals of the CEM, it is indeed mentioned that there were some students who were less than intelligent in the context of them being less prone to foreign influence and did not achieve as much as they should have. However, such an aspect was not so much taken into the account in Li Hongzhang’s narrative about the students in his reports to the court. Even when it was, it appears to be taken as a compromise to his traditionalist peers in the court to keep the program running: that the unintelligent ones should be recalled, so that the remaining students may finish their education, as will be shown in the beginning of Chapter 3. Yet this “stupid kids” narrative was magnified and stretched in the court of public opinion, resulting in a much more degenerate, much more extreme version. Almost all later research suggests that the students were of no such character, even the American government, and the then-president Grant wrote letters after the Sino-French war testifying as to the good characters of these students. While the reports from the officials had certain element of truth to it, the negative public sentiment for the student really did not have much standing.

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77 As discussed in Chapter 1, principals such as Chen Lanbin, and the more aggressive and traditionalist Wu Jiashan has filed reports on the poor condition of the program, and therein mentioned the somewhat naïve and uneducated brutish nature of the student (in that they lack in virtue).

78 Pan, “Liumei youtong chehui yuanyin kaolue”, 95.

79 Chapter 3 of this thesis, 45-49.
Upon their arrival in Shanghai, the students were treated rather inhumanely by the local administration, and it would appear that the narrative of the newspaper is a plausible cause to the initial poor treatment to the students. All that they were when in America—private boarding school students who were top of their class, the college students who were active in various extracurricular activities—a counterpart of the American elite in a Chinese appearance, were brought low not so much by the accurate accounts about their nonconformity, but rather by this image of low-born brutes who did not deserve any good treatment. Among the letters collected by La Fargue, there are some gruesome details listed in Huang Kaijia’s letter to his host parent, Mrs. Bartlett. They were forced to travel the street of Shanghai in wagons and on foot, “many of us had to get down and walk, carrying our bags in our hands, an almost in excusable act of debasing oneself in the eyes of the co-called Chinese gentleman.” They were led to a “institution,” with “pavements turning greed with mold, the wooden frames of the windows and doors rotting in the damp atmosphere. An unwholesome breath of damp air greeting us as we entered its folding doors caused us to think the shadowy beings pitied our miserable plight.” They were forced to sleep with wet covering and mattress in such a prison-like environment until they were assigned, and they were not permitted to leave the institution most of the day. While no official explanation for such a poor treatment was provided, one would naturally imagine that it was either caused by indifference or intentional ill will. In my opinion, surely such a treatment might have come from a directive from above to

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81 Ibid.


make the students feel unwelcomed, but an alternative possibility, just as plausible, may just have been that the assignment for the reception of the students was kicked down the chain, and in the lower end, driven more by the public sentiment instead of any knowledge of high politics in Beijing. Such a treatment for the students is somewhat of a perfect representation of how the country thought of them: resentment compounded with indifference, a failed experiment ready to be crossed off and tossed away.

Huang expressed as much in his letter by means of sarcasm. He often mentions the “generosity of the government” and the “paternal government” while he was depicting the inhumane treatment enacted against the students. The feeling of neglect is also evident, “whether we are liable to be frozen to death or not they care nothing about that, that is our own look out. Whether our families are in danger of being starved and frozen, that is still further from the minds of the government.”

Such a feeling of disappointment from the government naturally fostered a disappointment in return. It would seem like in mere weeks, the impression which their motherland has made in their mind was a poor one. Huang depicts a filthy nation with an antiquated and corrupted government entangled with disease and addiction quite literally,

After walking through the French settlement, we entered the Chinese territory, and if you ever wish to find a paradise, and the infernal regions placed side by side you had better come here; the filth and fifty-seven different kinds of foul smells, and the muddy uneven slippery walk made of stones fairly sickened me. We struggled on cursing our fate, our cool reception, our stupid manager, and last, but

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82 For example, “our government was so generous yet so well versed in political economy that it barely keeps above the point of starvation. “
83 Ibid.
not least, out Chinese shoes which pinched our feet, and cramped our toes...we commenced our journey in the midst of crowds of spectators whose comments were far from being flattering, and marched through piles of dirt and filth which commanded the entrance of Taotai Yamen. Now a huge edifice time-worn and worm-eaten met out sight; rusty swords broken blunderbusses ancient cannons, opium-struck soldiers and servants presented a strange appearance to our unsophisticated eyes which were accustomed to barbaric splendor and not to eastern dilapidation and culpable negligence. Alas, the Taotai who gets then or fifteen thousand of tales, equivalent to $20000 to $25000 for his legal income besides presents from those who court his favor, cannot keep his official residence and the outer court in repair.  

Perhaps it was indeed a factual depiction of the state which China was in, yet one naturally wonders if Huang would still have depicted China in the same manner if he had been greeted with a warmer welcome. However, the facts remain that the depiction and the tones which the author chose to employ gives to a relatively clear preliminary answer to the question posted in the last Chapter, namely, “were the students loyal to the state?”

Huang’s answer seems to be a no, as he, along with his peers, were facing an extremely bleak future in a toothless government. Aside from mocking by means of imagery, there were some sharp language towards the post they were prepared to be sent to, chief among which was the Beiyang Naval school, and the closely associated Chinese Imperial Navy.  

There has been longstanding consensus about the factual “toothlessness” of the Chinese navy at the time. Admittedly, the politicians who spearheaded the Self-Strengthening movement (led by viceroy Li Hongzhang and Zhang Zhidong) put the

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84 Ibid.  
86 Ibid., 25; Qian and Hu, Daqing liumei youtong ji, 134-136.
heavy industry and the military industry such as ship building and steel production as the top priority of China’s modernization and industrialization, investing the equivalent of millions of dollars today into shipyards and weapon production as well as acquiring foreign help in the manner of either hiring expert or direct purchase of machinery and battleships. In fact, it should not be forgotten that the chief purpose of the Chinese Educational Mission was to groom industrial and military elites who could understand and manage these projects. Li initially planned for the students to be sent to West Point to study warfare but was refused by the American government. It was only afterwards that the students were sent to various engineering schools as well as factories as interns to study machinery. The emphasis which the politicians and the sovereign put on military industry, and specifically, navy-building, cannot be overstated. Almost simultaneous to the students’ arrival in 1881, the Qing government also finished their acquisition of a series of battleships from Germany and Great Britain, including the ironclad battleships such as Dingyuan and Zhenyuan that were German-made and carrying the most advanced technology and weaponry at the time. By that time, the Beiyang fleet accounted for two ironclad battleships, eleven cruisers, fourteen gunboats, and twelve torpedo boats. By the beginning of the its war with Japan in 1894, China still had a much larger fleet than its opponent. In fact, China boasted about having the most powerful fleet in Asia in 19th century. Yet here was Huang’s sentiment towards their potential assignment:

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87 Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 63-64.
88 Yung Wing, My Life in China and America, 208-209.
89 Just to give an idea of exactly how much the Qing government have spent on the navy, Dingyuan alone cost the government 1.7 million silver taels, equivalent to 6.2 million German Goldmark at the time, while the government income of the time was roughly 80 million taels.
The rest of the boys are distributed in various places to finish their education not according to their predilections…but more in accordance with the wishes of the Chinese officials whose ignorance and stupidity render them unfit to judge in such matter. Several boys intended boys intended to take law as their profession were carted to the Naval Academy where they have a change to become Captains and Admirals of the future navy of China! Let a Nelson command the Chinese navy and she will be able to overcome the canoes of the Fiji Islanders. The entire military force of a province combined with a naval force for the Coast defense could not for months capture one piratical band composed at the most of 200 men though the leader had put to death one captain of a gunboat, beheaded several military mandarins with the red buttons and burned several villages. Poor Hong Yen is not pining away in the Imperial Chinese Naval Academy, high sounding in name but in reality a dungeon.  

Huang has accurately pointed out a major disadvantage of the Chinese navy, and in certain important ways, the Self-Strengthening movement in general—human error. While the hardware of the fleet was quite advanced, the Chinese progress in the development of its navy was quite lacking in the modernization of its military personnel training. Similar problems have emerged in, for example, steel industry, where the acquisition of blast furnaces was not even compatible with the ore types in China due the lack of Chinese specialist. Huang’s letter expresses the distinct disappointment for the government not only for his own treatment of being sent to “dungeons” by the ignorant and stupid Chinese officials, but for, in their eyes, the objectively poor performance and sheer incompetence in statecraft as well.

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91 Zhang Shi 张实, “Guanyu Hanyang tiechang feiqi beilu de zaitantao” 关于汉阳铁厂废弃贝炉的再探讨 [Abandoning Shell Furnace in Hanyang Iron Plant Revisited], *Journal of Hubei Polytechnic University (Humanity and Social Science)* 湖北理工学院学报(人文社会科学版) 6(2018), 2.
The combination of seeing an impotent state and a sentiment of being letting down by a country and administration that, perhaps, should have looked up to these students, drove Huang to certain aspirations. He also noted the students’ diverse attitudes for their future. Some desperately awaited the arrival of the founder of CEM, Yung Wing, though vaguely being aware of Yung’s loss of political influence over this failed program. Some sought help from the local foreigners who could appreciate their character and education, looking to better their image in the mind of the Chinese people, or at least for a sense of appreciation from the expat community. In fact, to a degree, their effort has indeed somewhat shifted the public opinion, changing the narrative from a group of common and uncivil brats to a group of misfits, who perhaps should never have returned to this country, but not because they were of evil and brute nature, but rather because “China is not ready for us.” However, Huang’s personal opinion seemed to be more extreme than simply seeking help and surviving the Chinese society. Perhaps prompted by the underdevelopment of China, politically as well as socially, his vision for China’s future seemed to be radical, some may say a hint of revolutionary. In his letter, he wrote down words as such, “such is the progressive policy of China so civilized under

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92 “His long delay in coming made some doubt his power in influencing the Viceroy.”
93 We draw on us the pity of many interested and sensible foreigners. They are powerless though they can do a good deal by writing for the papers…it is so pleasant to find some friends who can appreciate you and your education and your ambition.
95 See 30-31 of this thesis, when the students have put in their hard work under extreme low wages and had to take on part time job to make ends meet, they were punished by the government for doing so. The Shanghai News, with no more than two years after its extreme negative comment for the students, soon changed its tone to a much more sympathetic one towards the students, accusing the government for not taking care of the obvious competent and diligent students.
foreign influence. She deserves no pity, she needs a good thrashing and a thorough washing before she is fit to govern her millions."96

I was personally somewhat shocked by the radical and sarcastic language which he employed throughout his letters. His deep distrust and hostility against the Qing government, and the antiquated institutions it stood for, comes somewhat in conflict with his apparent love for his homeland, and even his ambition to do good for the nation.97 In fact, when one further researches on Huang’s career, one would find that he still chose to dedicate his life in public service and diplomacy for the Qing government, eventually achieved the rank of Taotai, a rank bestowed upon someone he so vilely denounced in his letter.98 Huang deceased before the Xinhai revolution that finally brought down the Qing government and the imperial institution, yet one wonders if he would join the revolution after a career in Qing government, even though certain aspect of the revolution paralleled a lot of the sentiments in his letter. Did his hostility against the Qing government just gradually wear off? Did he come to accept his fate? Or did he eventually become trusted by the government and that changed his view on the state? One wouldn’t know, yet in such plight, Huang still wished that Yung Wing’s arrival would “do a great deal both for out benefit and for the good of China.”99 Rong Shangqian, another CEM student, similarly expressed

97 Huang, in fact, refers in the letter that he hopes Yung would put he and the CEM students to proper use, “for the good of China.” Presumably, judging by his previous negative comments on the government, he is talking more so about China as a nation and as a people rather than China as the Qing government or the sovereign.
99 Ibid.
such sentiment in his autobiography, that if given a fair chance, he would absolutely
be able to prove himself to have the resolve and fortitude to achieve anything.100

In fact, some may even argue that their hard work in the dungeons such as the
Beiyang Naval School eventually paid off in washing off their reputation in the public
opinion, along with the wave of more progressive thoughts that pointed directly to the
mismanagement of the government. Merely months after their return, there have been
columns in the Shanghai News criticizing that the Qing government’s assignments for
the students was neither what they have specialized in, nor what they have any
interest in, and thus was a waste of their talent.101 A year later, in 1883, the Shanghai
News further reported the wage problem of these students—two of the students were
only paid two taels in silver, which drove them to open part-time business of their
own in Shanghai and were arrested accordingly.102 The Shanghai News commented
as such, “Their wages were not even as much as the waiters in western businesses,
and their treatment from superiors were almost like being treated as vile criminals.
(For a government that) employs talent like that, how could they ever find the proper
and competent talent to serve the country and conduct the self-strengthening
development so important to this nation?” From there, the public, or at least the
literate public, seemed to have changed their mind about these students, who has
proven themselves by dedicating their lives (sometimes quite literally as happened in

100 Rong Shangqian 容尚谦, Chuangban chuyangju ji guanxuesheng lishi 创办出洋局及官学生历史
chubanshe, 2006), 6-17.
102 Ibid.
the Sino-French War in 1884 and the Sino-Japanese War in 1894) to assignments many of them were not even interested in.

However, as La Fargue comments in his book, the hostility and distrust from the government against these students never faded away, and the students themselves often needed to battle between identities, as Huang did in his letters. Surely, he enjoyed his short trip home, and presumably were sentimental about seeing his parents and siblings for the first time in a decade; yet in his time of hardship, he looked for help from the expatriate community in Shanghai, and when sleeping in that “prison” of an institution, he dreamt of his “happy home far across the sea…where loving voice taught them first the words of our Lord’s prayer…and they must have visited once more our dear Alma Mater, and have their ears ring again with the familiar tunes of ‘Amici’ and ‘Auld Lang Syne.’” Despite wanting to contribute his share for the motherland, Huang, to a certain degree, distanced himself from the identity of a Chinese person, he addresses his return as “we are like the shoots of young trees transplanted from the rich soil and luxurious climate to the arid desert of ignorance and superstition.” While Huang also describes in disdain that some of the students were in fact able to adapt to the environment relatively quickly, “some have shown symptoms of degenerating into their countrymen’s mode and manner of

103 La Fargue, *China’s First Hundred*, 65-66.
104 Which was written extensively in his letter to Bartlett, however, I have found it quite strange that he wrote much more about the reaction of his family to him rather than expressing his sentiment towards his family. However, it is also reasonable to presume certain inappropriateness in talking extensively about personally sentiment towards Huang’s “real” family when he is writing a letter addressing his host family.
106 Ibid.
living,” but he was able to sympathize with the majority of the students who presumably felt almost everything he felt.

Unfortunately, the letter from Huang to Mrs. Bartlett is the only known writing from him; thus, all there is to find is a snapshot of Huang’s life and sentiment. Presumably, for someone who is twenty years of age, and having spent more than half of his life in the United States, Huang’s narrative was one in shock. He found the Chinese country to be, if not vulgar and uncivil, certain unsanitary. He was not greeted by the crowds but rather mocked and looked down upon by them. He found the government and institutions to be much the same as the land itself: unfamiliar, corrupted, antiquated, and resistant to change. Despite a joyful meeting with his parents, he wrote much more about their reaction to him than what he feels about them (of course, it is also possible that, considering to whom his letter is addressed, Huang did not feel comfortable expressing too much sentiment about his biological parents to his “adopted” family). All the sudden sense of “stranger in a strange land,” surrounded by unfriendly people who, tough look like him, certainly did not behave or think like him, catalyzed by the insulting treatment he received from the administration (which some would argue to be a possible “normal” treatment for common people at the time, though I strongly disagree based on the fact that the treatment itself has made quite a few number of students, who were excellent athletes on top of their physical conditions, sick with malaria) turned

107 Liang Cheng 梁诚. Zhongguo liumei youtong shuxinji 中国留美幼童书信集 [The Letter Collection of the Chinese Educational Mission Students], ed. and trans. Timothy Kao (Zhuhai: Zhuhai chubanshe, 2006), 22-23. Unfortunately, the letters available were written in English, but published in Chinese translation, with the English original unavailable; for the purpose of comprehension I have re-translated the Chinese translation back into English as best as I could.
into sheer disappointment and anger, which gave birth to the near-seditious conclusion that China, along with her government, must be “thrashed” to be reborn as a modern nation. These emotional words mere months after his return is an excellent depiction to his mental state at that moment, but as excellent as it was, it remains a snapshot of one mind, of one person, in one time, at one place, instead of a full film depicting a life-long belief and disappointment against his country and government.

When one looks further into his career, Huang took upon himself the occupations of a translator, a diplomat, a railway commissioner and secretarial figure to some of the most prominent industrialists and politicians at the time. He had his time of drifting-away from governmental employment soon after his arrival, opening a translation and real estate agency no later than 1882, one year after his return, and likely only months after his bitter utterance to the Bartletts, which follows the trend demonstrated in the letter quite well. Within the decade, Huang became the English translator and a personal staff of Sheng Xuanhuai, who was an extremely influential (if not the most influential) merchant, industrialist, and a gifted politician as well. Sheng’s business bridged between public and private; he worked in close conjuncture with the modernizing politicians at the time, set up many businesses and factories across shipping, mining, textile, banking and telegraph industries. Such a figure, who had a much more hands on approach than other more typical bureaucrats of the Qing government, who worked both as a private businessman as well as a politician, is

109 Ibid.
110 The letter was composed in January 28th, 1882.
much more akin to the American industrialists Huang must have been more familiar with, and Sheng’s identity as a, for the lack of better words, part-time politician, provides Huang with an excellent transition from the private industry back into the political circle. Such a transitional period, one may conjecture, might have been a sign of partial reconciliation in Huang’s mind, whom, in his own words, has his own “ambition,” so it is likely that he chose such a job that bridged between the public and the private—not completely working for the government, but certainly not away from it as well. From here, a possible pattern emerged that Huang was working his way into the government and administration throughout his career. In 1898 he assumed the office of secretary of Imperial Railway Administration,111 undoubtedly with the approval and reference from Sheng, and was also the commissioner of Hankou-Canton Railway; thereon he finally stepped from industry administration to politics/diplomacy, much like his former employer. He served as a Secondary Secretary to the special embassy, accompanying Prince Tsai Chen to attend the coronation of Edward VII of the Great Britain.112 The Same year, on his way back to China, Huang attended the Washington Conference, meeting and dined with Teddy Roosevelt, the then president of the United States.113 In the last three years of his life, Huang almost worked almost non-stop on the behalf of the Chinese government on the international stage. He attended the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1903, accompanied Prince Pu Lun during his diplomatic tour as the Assistant Imperial Commissioner in

112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
1904, and attended the Portsmouth Peace Conference as a member of the Chinese
delegation in 1905, before his sudden death in 1906.

On behalf of the Qing government, he witnessed the coronation of a British
king, wined and dined with an American President, and presumably tried to defend
China’s interest as Russia and Japan effectively split the occupied land in Manchuria.
While Huang was by no means an important political figure that shaped or
contributed much to the political modernization of China, he nonetheless was on his
way to partially, if not fully, fulfilling his ambition as someone who was gradually
moving from periphery to the center of the state machine. There is no way to speak of
his motive without further primary sources. Whether his decision of working for the
government was out of a more noble motive or motivated by the simple desire of
becoming prominent is unknown. It seems to me that Huang, being able to make such
a transition from private industry to politics in his career, was no less resourceful than
any of his classmates, some of whom easily set up private practice and business
overseas in countries like Japan. Thus his decision of staying in China and working
his way into the state apparatus seemed to be of active choice rather being forced by
circumstances. It is my conjecture that, very possibly, he had a epistemological shift
in regard to his thoughts on China and the Chinese government, enabling him to work
for the benefit of the administration, instead of either against it (like Kang Youwei) or
staying relatively as far away from it as possible (like Ouyang Geng, one of Huang’s
more documented classmates, who was constantly mentioned as never returned to
China after acquiring various diplomatic posts).\textsuperscript{114} There are certain elements from that letter that remained unchanged. For example, his will to do good for China, as mentioned in the end of his letter, has been consistent. It is also possible that his vision of an antiquated institution remained unchanged, yet he chose to work “within the system” with hopes to modernize it, and to protect the “thrashing” from foreign power as a diplomat.

Sadly, there is little one can do in this case other than hypothesizing in regard to Huang’s state of mind. However, with other sources, one may gain a more complete vision as to other students’ mentality on their first arrival. It would seem that among several letters addressed to the students’ American acquaintances, Huang’s letter is on the extreme end of the spectrum. Among the letters, Xue Youfu’s account differs the most from Huang’s narrative.\textsuperscript{115} From Xue’s perspective, the trip back to China was a joyous one, he depicted the view of Tokyo in a picturesque manner and qualified the return to his homeland as “exciting.” It would seem like Xue’s experience was nowhere near as traumatic and grotesque as Huang’s experience, and he was able to maintain in positivity throughout his trip. Xue seemed to have remained in close relation with his extended family in China and was hopeful in introducing his host family to his original family members as well. Xue was

\textsuperscript{114} Ouyang eventually settled down in Beijing as late as 1927, 16 years after the demise of Qing Dynasty.


assigned to the Naval School in Fuzhou to become a naval officer and was killed in battle during the Battle of Fuzhou in 1884, merely three years after his return.

Another revealing letter was from Liang Cheng,116 in his letter to a Mr. Shaw, he gave a similar account to Huang’s story. In Liang’s letter, the objective condition most of the students were put in were exactly as Huang had written about: that they were assigned to an old building that has been closed for years and was very humid, and he would prefer “not to talk about the treatment they have received in detail.”117 Liang also mentioned that several students have been infected with malaria, and he was only able to avoid being affected by staying with his friends in the cleaner concessions. It would also seem like that Liang had been in a relatively foul mood for his entire trip and had an especially negative opinion against the Japanese. He stated that the Japanese people are a “very immoral class of people,” and it comes as no surprise that they were called “the Frenchmen of the East.”118 However, Liang seemed to have a relatively more positive view on China and the Chinese government than Huang did. Liang commented that “the government gives us sufficient and good allowance in wardrobe and living quarters, but the Chinese bureaucrats make their living through corruption, and the allowance gets peeled off little by little, as it goes down the political food chain. When it finally comes into our hands, only a precious little is left.”119 From his account, Liang obviously had a sense of good faith towards the decision-making level of the government; in his eyes, the plight of himself and his

116 Named originally as Liang Pixu.
117 The text of this letter has been translated into Chinese and published, but the original English text is not available.
118 Liang, Zhongguo liumei youtong shuxinji, 21-22.
119 Ibid.
peers are caused, more than anything, by the mid-level bureaucrats. Liang also had a much more detailed account in terms of their initial assignments. Liang, who belonged to the fourth detachment of the 120 students, was only able to barely finish his high school education in Phillips Andover Academy, and was assigned to the Beiyang Naval School by order of Li Hongzhang.120 It is mentioned that Li Hongzhang gave a direct order of an appropriate living quarters and better treatment, presumably due to the knowledge of the previous experience of the students. Liang, along with some other students, were then examined on their knowledge in the western science. Liang, after explaining that they have only had a limited education in any specialized field, reached a high score along with all nine students in mechanical engineering, civil engineering and international law.121 They have also been asked to write an essay titled “Origin of Property.” Liang has also given an account of meeting Li Hongzhang, the primary backer of the Chinese Educational Mission, and sang praises for the forward-thinking politician; Liang even went so far as to compare Li to the American president James Garfield. It is safe to conclude from the letter as well as Liang’s later appointment as interpreter and secretary to Zhang Yinhuan, a known associate and follower of Li Hongzhang, Liang had firm faith in the modernizing faction of the government, if not the institution itself (in comparison to Huang’s total despair).

However, Liang’s faith did not extend to every corner of the Qing institutions. In his letter, he cast doubts about the teaching methods and the

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121 Which does indeed make one wonder what exactly they have been studying in high school, as subjects such as engineering and law are certainly not a part of today’s education.
qualification of the teachers in the naval school.\textsuperscript{122} As mentioned above, the Beiyang (or Tianjin) Naval School was a military school founded by Li Hongzhang to train naval officers in not only matters of naval warfare, but also western natural and social science. The principal\textsuperscript{123} at the time was Yan Fu, who is considered as one of the foremost modern thinkers of his time, famous for translating Huxley’s \textit{Evolution and Ethics} and Adam Smith’s \textit{Wealth of a Nation}, he later also became the president of Imperial University of Peking.\textsuperscript{124} Yan had, to a degree, a similar educational background as Liang, he was educated in the Fujian Naval School, and was later sent to the British Royal Naval College in Greenwich for two years, studying English and other subjects. Unlike the Chinese Educational Mission students, Yan was much more valued by the Qing court, which have entrusted him with the position of the principal of the Beiyang Naval School. There have been multiple principals appointed in the inception of the school, but Liang has specifically mentioned that the principal had studied in the Great Britain,\textsuperscript{125} so it is safe to conclude that the person Liang is talking about is indeed Yan Fu. It is hard to fathom that anyone would have enough qualification to question the method of such a figure, yet Liang, with more than eight years of American education under his belt, seemed to be comfortable enough to do so. Liang claims that the principal, just like all other Chinese educated teachers, does not know how to teach.\textsuperscript{126} Liang is apparently disgusted by him whenever he opens his mouths. Aside from the personality, Liang also finds his teaching to be

\textsuperscript{122} Liang, \textit{Zhongguo liumei youtong shuxinji}, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{123} 总教习 in Chinese for reference.
\textsuperscript{124} Later became what we know today as Peking University.
\textsuperscript{125} Liang, \textit{Zhongguo liumei youtong shuxinji}, 24.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
questionable. “It would seem like mathematics is a specialty of him, but we often find his methods solving geometry and algebra causes unnecessary problems, and he reads the textbook word for word.”127 Liang also had some complaints for the rigid course structure and the prison-like environment: they were only allowed out for three times in five years. Again, it appears that during their study, they were much taken cared by Li Hongzhang: it was Li who personally gave the students his permission when they wanted to visit their families, despite the vehement protest of the principal. The hindrance seemed to only come from the teachers and the administrative staff. This experience parallels well with Liang’s experience in Shanghai, in that it would seem Liang has never lost faith in the system and its leader, it is only the middle-men who bother him. Thus, overall, Liang was still full of hope in the leadership of the modernizing faction of the government and was also longing for any advice that leads him onto an honest and meaningful life. He even attempts to solicits participation of the friend, to whom he was writing, in “service for our ignorant people.”128

From the writings of both Xue and Liang, it may be observed that there is certainly more than one narrative about the students’ return—there are the joyful ones, such as Xue; the bitter ones such as Huang, and there are the in-betweens, such as Liang. Among them, Liang is certainly the most astute; his view for China at the time gets quite close to what we know today. He is both optimistic and pessimistic at the same time. He is pessimistic in the short run, sighing in his mind, “Lord, how long does it have to be.” However, he seemed to be quite optimistic in the long run,

127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
favoring Li Hongzhang’s vision of a modern China, and was prepared to work for that cause upon his graduation.

Liang later embarked on a similar career path as Huang’s later years. Almost fresh out of school, he began working for the Chinese Minister to the USA, Spain and Peru, Zhang Yinhuan, and soon became a trusted advisee to Zhang while working his way up the cursus honorum.\(^{129}\,^{130}\) By 1894, he had become a first rank consultant to Zhang’s embassy to Britain. Then, in 1902’s special embassy to the coronation of Edward VII, he served as the First Secretary to Prince Zaifeng along with his classmate Huang Kaijia.\(^{131}\) On the same year he served as the Minister to USA, Spain and Peru, taking over the office from his mentor, Zhang. Whilst as the Minister to USA, Liang was almost single-handedly responsible for the return of Boxer indemnity, which was later used by the Qing government, pushed by the remaining Chinese Educational Mission alumni to set up another program very much akin to the Chinese Educational Mission itself, sending the top students across the country to various colleges and universities in the Unites States, the preparatory school for the program later was named Tsinghua College, the precursor of now Tsinghua University, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

It would seem like, while Liang and Huang were on a similar career trajectory, their initial reflection upon their respective experience has set them apart.

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\(^{130}\) As I struggle to find an equivalent notion in English terms, I chose to opt for a classical term (literally means “a path of honor”) denoting a traditionally followed political path upwards once one takes on a certain position.

\(^{131}\) Ibid.
Huang’s resentment towards the Qing government likely pushed him away in a direction against politics and any governmental employment, and it still took him a period of time to work his way back to the political and diplomatic circle. Liang’s faith for China, and its modernizing force seemed to have encourage him to go through the prison-like naval school education, enabling him to take political and diplomatic assignments that, in his words, serve the Chinese people well.

Huang and Liang had similar but different career paths. Both settled down upon a life-long career in diplomacy, yet it would seem like for all of Huang’s ambition, his sense of superiority, he wasn’t the one who brought much change for China. Dying young at the age of 46 is certainly a contributing factor, but I would argue that it was not the determinant factor, as Liang was already negotiating the deal that would change China’s future in education that provided China with the backbone in its industry and academia.

It is hard to say that whether their initial reaction to the shock they have received was the determinant factor in shaping their career in China, but naturally, the state of mind reflected by their respective letters indicated a tendency towards or away from politics, and as unlikely as it seems, the perhaps most efficient way to change the China Huang so despised was indeed from within. However, through such an analysis on different letters, it would also seem that the former scholarship (especially Chinese scholarship) that has denounced the harsh treatment against these students based on Huang’s letter alone were not entirely correct, there are still some, if not plenty of, students who were not only positive in envisioning their future. Moreover, it would seem that, at least as reflected by Liang’s letter, the leadership at
the time, especially viceroy Li Hongzhang, still believed in the value and the talent of these students and tried to take care of them as best as he could.
Chapter 3

Baptized by Fire: Careers Made by War

Having discussed the initial treatment of the students after their return, I proceed to the discussion of their career development in general, under the context of two major wars that had both direct and indirect impact on the students’ career. Many of the CEM students fought in Sino-French War in 1884 and Sino-Japanese War in 1894, demonstrating their valor, and with the help of individual high-ranking politicians such as Li Hongzhang, their performance in the war became grounds for political promotion, allowing many of them to rise in ranks. Meanwhile, the wars, in particular the Sino-Japanese War, also reshaped China’s psyche, finally and completely shattered China’s illusion of cultural supremacy. Consequently, a full-scaled institutional reform was able to be launched, and students with knowledge of the west again valued to a greater degree, indirectly allowing relatively more upward space for the CEM students. However, the fundamental distrust in the “Americanized” students still remained, limiting their political potential, with only a few students being able to break the ceiling by means of forging patronage relationship with some of the more “open-minded” high-ranking politicians such as Zhang Zhidong, Li Hongzhang, and Yuan Shikai, and achieve political prominence.

Li Hongzhang, the primary supporter of Yung Wing’s project, has played a major role in elevating the students’ status prior to the Sino-Japanese War. Thus, it
seems worthy of further analysis regarding his attitude for these students. Despite the institutional discrimination exerted upon the students, Li maintained the trust and faith he instilled in them since the beginning of the project. Admittedly, his trust waivered at times, when he received reports from the officials abroad such as Wu Jiashan and Chen Lanbin, as discussed in previous chapters. However, even in an environment where the consensus of the court was leaning towards officials who judged these students to be unintelligent, uncivil, rebellious and discourteous, Li, though at times in partial agreement with the court, still sought to defend the students, directing the cause of their faults towards external conditions instead of directly speaking ill of them. Li’s letter to the Zongli Yamen is translated as such,

When I inspect them with a fair mind, due to the fact that the majority of the students are from Canton, and that they have gone abroad at such a young age, the adaptation of western customs is unavoidable. Zideng (Wu Jiashan) sought to control them in a manner that it is overly strict, which led many conflicts. Then he further concluded (based on the conflicts) that all students should be recalled, which can be said to be somewhat stubborn….

In a letter that was supposed to acknowledge the improper behaviors of the students, Li still saw fit to exonerate them from their faults, and concluded the causes of this visible disharmony of the program to be external, bringing up factors such as the birthplace of the students, the young age at which the students departed China, and most importantly the improper care of the principals such as Wu. Li takes on a very different perspective from the previous reports from Wu and Chen, and other letters of accusation filed by more traditionally inclined political officials, which directed the

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132 The other principal of the program, whom Wu later replaced.
133 Pan, “Liumei you tong chehui yuanyin kaolue”, 95.
cause of the disharmony towards the innate character of the students discussed previously in Chapter 1, which they claim to “have no benefit for the nation, but rather harms for the society.”\textsuperscript{134} Furthermore, in his letter of compromise to the emperor, which recommended the suspension of the program in stages, Li still avoided speaking ill of the student’s character; instead, he simply discussed in extreme brevity as to the state of the program, “flaws appear as time passes, and the program has lost its substances.”\textsuperscript{135} Thus, it seems safe to conclude that Li has always been defending and protecting the students as best as he could throughout the program, which is in line with his proximity and care for the students after their return.

It would also seem that from Liang Cheng’s letter to Shaw, that Li’s concern and prejudice for these students, if any, perished upon meeting them in person. Aside from citing that Li’s order of well-treatment in regard to the students, Liang, judging by his high praises for Li Hongzhang, also had a decidedly positive in-person experience with Li, who “praised and consoled them much.”\textsuperscript{136} Presumably, their exceptional test result has also satisfied Li that the students’ time abroad had not been wasted. His affection for these students has not proven a mistake. Upon the students’ completion of the naval courses and their participation in the Sino-French War, Li was thoroughly impressed by their training and achievements. He sang praises for the students about their talent and dedication in one of his reports to the emperor,

…The students answered the call in their childhood, traveled across the seas, and returned home with their learnings. As they were

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Liang, Zhongguo liumei youtong shuxinji, 24.
assigned to different post, they were able to continuously work hard and progress on a daily basis. Some were assigned to the naval academy to study the way of torpedoes, which was the most complex. Whenever the foreign teacher has chosen to preserve his own way instead of teaching it to the students, they spent years on the matter to solve problems presented to them, and was extremely proficient in the western way of naval warfare. They were also extremely accomplished in teaching other cadets, whose bravery is proven. Some were assigned to stand duty of operating telegram, and in delivering important military message they have done so in a speedy manner and never made a mistake. For those who were assigned to posts such as engineering and medicine, all of them are able to acquire deep knowledge in the matter. The foreigner teachers and other foreign military officers have commented that the students have achieved great accomplishment……they should be assessed in their skilled, kept in their ranks and given promotions as a way of encouragement.¹³⁷

It would appear that Liang’s trust and admiration in Li is not misplaced, the viceroy has always been an adamant supporter of the students and has helped them whenever an opportunity presented itself.

A different passage from Yung’s autobiography also goes to show how much the viceroy seemed to genuinely care for the students. After the Chinese Educational Mission was canceled, Yung was no doubt frustrated, and it would seem that his professional career had been ended by the demise of the CEM. Upon the expiration of his tenure as the assistant Chinese Minister to the U.S., he visited Li Hongzhang in Tianjin as a courtesy, and the strangest thing happened: Yung said that, to “his great astonishment,” Li asked him why he had allowed the students to return to China; Li further told Yung he never wanted the students to be called back, that Yung should have detained them in the States against the official order,¹³⁸ presumably to wait and

¹³⁷ Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 163.
¹³⁸ Yung, My Life in China and America, 218.
trust Li to resolve the issue at home. This is a passage unseen in any Chinese sources, and I think it shows perfectly how much Li had to cope with the domestic pressure instead of making his own decisions, and how much he genuinely wanted for the project to succeed, to a point that he was secretly hoping his subordinate would go rogue to save the program.

However, some may argue that a distinct possibility that may lead many to question the validity of Li’s concern and care for these students is obviously a possibility of self-preservation, in that the Chinese Educational Mission was partially Li’s brainchild. He was an adamant supporter of the program until the very end, and he had to convince the government to appropriate tens of thousands of silver taels into the program. Admitting failure, in his position, might naturally lead to attack from the traditionalist oppositions to undermine his political power and further potentially dismantle his vision for China. Similar is the possibility of the traditional Chinese notion of “saving face.” A public figure would naturally want his public image to remain intact, and by exaggerating or even potentially fabricating these students’ achievement would be a way to “get back” at his political oppositions while also saving face, subtly saying “see, I’ve been right about them all along!”

However, I would conclude that Li was not exaggerating or fabricating the achievements of the students, as their excellence has been corroborated by multiple external sources. For example, as discussed by Shi, a British naval lieutenant named William F. Tyler, while serving on board the ship Dingyuan, has worked with some of the CEM students, including Cao Jiaxiang and Wu Yingke and an unnamed CEM
alumnus. In his memoir *Pulling Strings in China*, he complimented on their excellence as well,

I visited the flagship Dingyuan and began my long-lasting friendship with Lieutenant Wu Yingke, Cao Jiaxiang and Lin Zengtai which remains till this day…When I recall Wu and Cao’s guidance for me on their ship, I am impressed by their birth of knowledge as well as their capabilities, I had nothing to contribute but to write a report for the Chinese fleet…There were outstanding naval officers, Lin was among them, and Wu as well, along with a student who studied in America nicknamed “the stork”…and our sister ship gunnery officer Cao…Many names I have trouble remembering, but in any respect, they were excellent military officers.  

Additionally, after the students’ participation in the Sino-French War, the American government has also applauded the students’ bravery and sacrifice, taking pride in what their country has produced for China, the American ambassador wrote to the then secretary of state Fredrick T. Frelinghuysen,

…As such, in the recent incident in Fuzhou, these “Americanized” students have demonstrated exceptional bravery and patriotism, the education they have received in America has enabled them to make great contribution to their homeland, which is why I have brought up the matter to the Prince in an informal setting. The Prince has expressed that after the resolution of the conflict between China and France, he will entertain the serious reconsideration of sending Chinese students to the U.S. again.

With corroborating sources on the performance of these students available to the court, I am fairly satisfied in the validity of the students’ bravery and Li’s factuality in his statement.

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139 Ibid., 165-166.
140 Ibid., 162.
Nonetheless, despite the hopeful dispositions of those who accepted the governmental assignment and the obvious care demonstrated by the few high-up politicians who value western knowledge, the students were still subjected to an institutional discrimination. Despite their devoted effort in whatever they have been assigned, even when their assignment did not coincide with their interest or their specialty as indicated by Huang in his letter, they were not valued by their superiors. Within their contract which they signed before their initial departure, the students were promised that “upon the completion of the education and the return to China, they will be assigned posts and awarded with political ranks.” Needless to say, the contractual promises have been thrown out of the window, but certainly the students must have expected certain recognition of their status, as demonstrated by Huang and Liang’s eagerness to prove themselves. That expectation has certainly fell through.

As discussed before, the students were hardly well-paid, to a point that some of them had to work additional part-time jobs to make ends meet. As to their political status, as commented by Shi, almost none of the students had a political rank higher than the ninth rank, which is the lowest rank in Chinese imperial political food chain. Most of the students were assigned as either students or teachers in naval school, medical school, or telegram school. As dedicated as they were in their jobs,

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141 Qian and Hu, *Daqing liumei youtong ji*, 36.
142 Jiupin (九品) in Chinese, translated as the 9th rank, the imperial political structure was designed with political ranks ranging from ninth to first, each with corresponding status, privileges and salary, with the first rank being the most prominent, commonly assigned to heads of ministries, and the ninth ranks being the lowest, assigned to those provincial, county level officers with virtually no political power.
they were not in any position of prominence, or in any proximity to it. It would seem that the students were somewhat caught in a trap where their future has been written in front of them—those who study telegram would become operators, the medical students doctors, and naval cadets soldiers or petty officers. In the minds of most of the politicians at the time, the CEM students were ready to be forgotten. However, it appears that their status and pre-determined career path were somewhat shaken by wars.

The Sino-French War and the Sino-Japanese War has changed the lives of many students. Ironically, wars were the turning points for many students’ lives, as battle is the cruelest but also the most efficient form of test, where the students’ skill, bravery and loyalty were tested by bullets and blood; meanwhile, the wars have also reshaped the Chinese political psyche, forcing the politicians to re-examine their view on the need and method of China’s modernization.

The turning in the students’ life path did not come without sacrifices. During the Sino-French war over the French Indochina, the French navy decided to ambush the Fujian fleet in Fuzhou in August 1884, destroying half of the fleet. The Chinese ships, under the order of “no sudden unauthorized movement” from the superior officer who was waiting for the negotiation in Tianjin to settle, were utterly unprepared for war. During the battle, there were seven CEM students serving onboard the corvette Yangwu, the flagship of the fleet, including the later famed railway engineer Zhan Tianyou.\textsuperscript{144} Zhan advised the captain on the ill intention of the

\textsuperscript{144} Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 159-160.
French ships, recommending the captain to prepare for attack. Upon unannounced ambush, Yangwu, with previous preparation and warning from Zhan, was the only ship that could respond to the attack and return fire. However, with the half of the fleet sunk, Yangwu was eventually outpowered by a siege of five ships and sunk. During the battle, four of the seven CEM students were killed in action. However, the courage of the students was well documented and praised by newspapers such as the North China Daily News, especially noting the bravery of Zhan, reporting him being “calm and fearless,” courageously saving a number of shipmates from the sinking ship. The battle of Fuzhou was no doubt a slap in the face for the China administration. Yet, as unfortunate as it sounds, it was also a rare opportunity for the CEM students to shine, at the expense of four lives of their own. It was only after the Battle of Fuzhou that the previously discussed letters from Li Hongzhang and the American ambassador were drafted and filed; consequently, the CEM student were again brought into the public light, to be reexamined. Shi has argued that, despite Li and other’s effort to bring the students back into the spotlight, the students’ status was still not so much more recognized in the Chinese court. He points out that many students received a raise in the rank as a result of Li’s letter, some of them even rose from the ninth rank to the sixth, a three-level bump that was quite rare. However, Shi concluded that most of the students received no more than a title bump, their duty and post remained unchanged, he explained the raise as an effort from Li to

145 Ibid., 161.
146 Ibid., 164.
147 The sixth rank is commonly awarded to the lower staffs in the ministry in Beijing as well as higher staff in provincial areas.
148 A bump from the 9th rank to the 6th
legitimize them, to assimilate them to the political officials who rose through the civil examination.¹⁴⁹

With respect to Shi’s theory, I posit his interpretation to be somewhat inaccurate. While much of the biographical information for the students are incomplete without accurate time information, for many students, 1884-1885 (and for the same reason, 1894-1895) appeared to be a shifting point. It could not be more accurate for the three students who fought in the battle. After the war, out of the three surviving students from the devastation of the battle of Fuzhou, Wu Qizao and Rong Shangqian, upon the conclusion of the treaties, were incorporated into the Beiyang fleet, and promoted in ranks. By the time of the Sino-Japanese War, both of them have achieved the rank of captain of separate ships.¹⁵⁰ Zhan Tianyou, on the other hand, successfully made a return into his field of specialty since the Sino-French War. Zhan, as one of the only two students who completed their bachelor education before being recalled, was a graduate from the Sheffield Engineering School of Yale University specialized in civil engineering. Barely a year after the war in 1885, he was commissioned by Zhang Zhidong, the viceroy of Canton (also another pioneer in the Self-Strengthening Movement), to conduct “the first survey of the Canton coastline for naval defense purposes.”¹⁵¹ Such a commission was undeniably extraordinary for two reasons. Firstly, Zhang Zhidong was a political star on the rise, recently taking on the position of a viceroy, whereas Zhan was merely a petty officer

¹⁴⁹ Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 164.
¹⁵¹ Ibid.
from the recently defeated Fuzhou navy. Between their political ranks there sat just
about every rank existed from the 9th rank where Zhan was, to the 2nd and 1st rank
usually bestowed with the viceroy post. It was unthinkable that Zhang would possibly
know who Zhan was if the war had never taken place, and the students were never
mentioned in Li’s report to the emperor. The other reason is that the survey project
was not necessarily a military project. A survey of the coastline for naval defense can
be just as much as an engineering feasibility report as it is a militarily strategic one.
The survey was the first step towards his area of interest. In 1888, he was again
recommended by his classmate Kuang Jingyang from the Caiping Mining operation
to take on the position of assistant-engineer of Chinese Railway Company, under the
chief engineer C.W. Kinder, and from there he was able to further his cause as an
engineer rather than a naval officer.152

Even those students who have not fought in the war seemed to have benefited
from it. Take Liang Cheng, the student whose letter I previously discussed, for an
example. His career took a significant turn in 1885-1886, when he suddenly bumped
from the rank of a clerk in Zongli Yamen and a “student by purchase.”153 to the
secretary and a second-rank interpreter of Zhang on his mission to the States.154 There
are many examples signifying a promotion of the students not only in name in rank,
but in terms of their position and duty as well, presumably as a result of the Sino-
French War of 1884. From such a perspective, Shi’s conclusion seems misleading.

152 Ibid.
153 监生, a student of the Imperial College.
154 “Liang Pe Yuk”, Chinese Educational Mission Connection, 1872-1881, last date modified N/A,
hp://www.cemconnections.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=100&Itemid=54.
By similar logic, the Sino-Japanese War also had a profound influence for the lives of the CEM students. The Sino-Japanese War was fought by the two nation’s navy on a much greater scale, and since there were more students serving in the Tianjin Naval Academy, there were more CEM students fought and killed during the war. By this time, many students have achieved a relatively high rank as either the equivalence of a commanding officer or an executive officer of the ship partially as a result of the Sino-French War, and their bravery naturally meant further promotion for those who survived. By the early 20th century, some of the surviving students still serving in the navy have achieved admiralship.

More importantly, the Sino-Japanese War has also profoundly reshaped the political psyche in a way that the Sino-French War never could. The Sino-French war was obviously fought between the Chinese and French, but on a more macro scale, it was also fought between an Eastern Asian nation and a Western European one, one represented the weak, colonial world while the other a member of the industrialist imperial one. It was somewhat of an expected result for China to lose, so it did not come as a surprise when she did. However, the Sino-Japanese War was between two Eastern-Asian nations, and more importantly, in the mind of the Chinese people, between a historically stronger power and an island-nation that has always been the weaker of the two, within China’s traditional sphere of influence. Thus, the utter defeat of the Chinese shattered whatever pride still remained in the heart of the Chinese politicians, and the dream of the strongest nation in the east with it.

The Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894 over a series of conflicts between the Qing empire and Japan over matters of the Korean Peninsula, which remained a
client state of China until then. Japan, as the first successfully industrialized and modernized (westernized) Eastern Asian nation, was looking to expand its political and economic influence in its neighboring territory, not unlike what its western counterparts such as Germany, Britain, France and the United States was doing at the time, attempting to either formally or informally colonize various coastal regions throughout Eastern and South Eastern Asia. China, in its own narrative, was looking to defend itself from foreign aggression looking to invade and challenge its assumed supremacy for centuries.

The revered sinologist John K Fairbank has commented on traditional China’s view in regard to the “world order” as “unified and centralized in theory by the universal preeminence of the Son of Heaven. It was not organized by a division of territories among sovereigns of equal status but rather the subordination of all local authorities to the central and awe-inspiring power of the emperor.”\(^{155}\) By drawing connection between the Chinese intellectual perception of its internal order and external order, Fairbank hints at the traditional mentality of sinocentrism often assumed by the government throughout history. Of course, its presence should not be exaggerated, as the history in the sense of Chinese superiority in international relations is also often argued to be a “myth” or at times illusion constructed by later historical authorities, who themselves a part of a political institution as well.\(^{156}\) Wang has argued that, for example, the Ming’s perspective of its international relation,


outlined by the statement, “ever since the earliest emperors ruled all-under-Heaven, China has controlled the barbarians from within while the barbarians have respectfully looked to China from without,”157 to be somewhat of a perversion and simplification of a much more complicated issue. Similar was Yang’s theory suggests there has never been a unified theory on China’s strategy and perception of the foreign countries, and China’s perspective of foreign countries158 changes from time to time and is more case specific.159 Wang has also argued that the sense of superiority of China was also subject to change and is at times “completely demolished by events.”160

That being said, it would seem like since Ming dynasty, with the myth of China’s superiority having been constructed, there has been at least a continuity of China’s general sense of superiority as determined by its virtue, that even when China is overpowered by a foreign people like the Mongols, it is based on a “superior fighting ability” rather than on “anything the Chinese could call virtue.”161 Furthermore, Wang also hints at the point that when China make compromises to foreign countries, even in its intellectual thoughts,162 it could be merely “a rational decision of strategy” without true belief in an international relation with equal status

157 Ibid., 34.
158 Some would translate as “barbarians.”
160 Wang Gungwu, “Early Ming Relations with Southeast Asia”, 36.
161 Ibid., 35-36.
162 Which is crucial in determine the nation’s psyche.
from one state to another,\textsuperscript{163} that China was the mastermind playing foreign barbarians off each other.\textsuperscript{164}

As to the case of Qing empire, aside from employing a few European missionaries in the matter of calendar making and watch-maintaining, China didn’t know much about the west. According to Fairbank, with that ignorance, “China’s ruling class applied to it the ancient theory of tributary relations—the grand an ancient concept that the Middle Kingdom was indeed the center of civilization…that all the surrounding tribes and people should naturally recognize this central fact.”\textsuperscript{165} The west, on the other hand, did not choose to break away from this tradition, and thus enforced China’s sense of supremacy, “the record contained nothing to show that European were not tributary to China like other countries, whenever they wanted relations with China at all,”\textsuperscript{166} and that between 1655 and 1795, among 17 diplomatic missions from Europe to China, all but the British had performed the kowtow,\textsuperscript{167} which was a formal declaration of the Chinese Emperor’s, and by extension, China’s supremacy. Such an illusion of supremacy thus managed to survive and thrive until the First Opium War.

Naturally that pride came crashing down after 1840, and it was very much that loss of sense of superiority that gave birth to the Chinese Educational Mission in the first place. However, I concur with Shi’s opinion, that before 1894 the Qing

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
government was still very much clinging to the ideal of supremacy in all respect in East Asia. Presumably it was why they have taken so much pride in the naval fleet, as it was supposedly the largest and most advanced fleet in East Asia. In that regard, the utter defeat of the Chinese Navy during the Sino-Japanese War was fundamentally different from the defeat received by the Chinese during the Sino-French War. To a certain degree, the Sino-French War was received merely as “just another war lost to the West,” it didn’t really matter it was losing to the British or the French, as they were somewhat all lumped together as the "western powers.” What made Japan different was that it was also part of the “Sinosphere” within which China has historically exerted influence for over a millennium, with its neighbor as its subordinates. The extensive diplomatic and cultural relations between Japan and China dated back as far as Tang dynasty, a time when Japan adopted many of the Tang custom ranging from political system to religion. However, whatever diplomatic relationship was conducted in the very tributary system where China claimed the superior status and Japan the inferior. It has been an accepted fact that the mentality of claiming Japanese as an inferior client state was in continuity. Such was the case during the latest major war fought between China and Japan before 1894. During Ming dynasty, which immediately preceded the Qing dynasty, when the Chinese and Japanese fought during the Japanese invasion of Korea in the 16th century. China, following the historical precedent, naturally viewed Japan as an inferior state; so much so that even during negotiation, China “granted permission” to the Japanese daimyo168 Toyotomi Hideyoshi to use the title of “King of Japan,” along with the

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168 A Japanese feudal title.
permission to allow Japan to enter into formal tributary relations with China.\textsuperscript{169} Such a sense of superiority naturally ensued during Qing dynasty until the utter defeat of the Qing military in the hands of the Japanese.

Shi’s theory posits the defeat was the key factor that truly, fundamentally shifted China’s attitude towards modernization/westernization. He refers to the renowned scholar and reformist Liang Qichao’s words, “our nation’s waking up from a four-millennia-long dream really began with the defeat of Sino-Japanese War, the cession of Taiwan and the indemnity of two hundred million taels of silver.”\textsuperscript{170} He further points out, in accordance to Liang’s lament, that Chinese reform and westernization, not in terms of mere industrialization but institutional reform, what now known as “Hundred Day’s Reform” or “Wuxu Reform,” was directly in response to the defeat by the Japanese, which made the government and the emperor acutely aware of the need to politically and socially modernize, and more specifically, to study after Japan.\textsuperscript{171} As opposed to the Self-Strengthening movement, the Wuxu Reform touched upon many aspects, including reforms in education, economy, military and even political system, there had even been talks of the establishment of constitutional monarchy. It was Shi’s point that as part of the reforming effort, the push for western education in China, and sending students abroad in a massive scale to Japan has helped to change the government’s view on the Chinese students and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{169} To which Hideyoshi had a very dramatic response of throwing the edict from Ming emperor to the ground and supposedly uttered words along the lines of “I have the control of Japan, and would have made myself king if I wanted, why would I need a foreigner’s permission?” An episode aptly expressed the different understanding from different state on the tributary system and relations with China.
\textsuperscript{170} Liang Qichao 梁启超, Wuxu zhengbian ji 戊戌政变记 [The Story of Wuxu Coup D’état] (Beijing: China-America Digital Academic Library), 1.
\textsuperscript{171} Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 148-149.
\end{footnotesize}
helped to lift their status. He further cites political official Yang Shenxiu and Zhang Zhidong’s words that Japan, due to its cultural and geographical proximity to China, and its experience in adopting western institutions, was the optimal destination for the students.\footnote{Ibid., 150.} As a result, the volume of study-abroad students reached a staggering number of ten thousand in 1906. Compounding with the suspension of the traditional civil examination system, the study abroad students were increasingly given access to the proper “cursus honorum”\footnote{As I struggle to find an equivalent notion in English terms, I chose to opt for a classical term (literally means “a path of honor”) denoting a traditionally followed political path upwards once one takes on a certain position.} of Chinese politics, and the government was finally willing to officially accept the students with abroad experience and to put it to full use. He further states that the reformists also was acutely aware that a full experience abroad in the west was indeed better, but was not pragmatic or remotely cost efficient considering the high expenses of sending students across the world.\footnote{Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 149-152.} However, indeed it makes sense to put the students already with the full experience in the west to full use as well, which resulted in the relatively fast paced promotion of many CEM students in the post-Sino-Japanese War era. However, Shi still maintained that the Qing government still remained defensive against the study-abroad students, citing Yan Huiqing’s autobiography, “on one hand, the government was eager to employ the modern education and the new knowledge we possessed in service of the nation, but on the other, they were afraid of us becoming the revolutionaries and overthrow the Qing dynasty, they (the government) were very much conflicted.”\footnote{Ibid., 153-154.} I further concur with Shi’s theory that the government remained distrustful of the
students, and were only willing to elevate their status to “use” them instead of “trusting” them. I would like to offer further evidence of the remaining systemic distrust in the most visible elevation of status of students.

The visible promotion of the students after the Sino-Japanese War did not go amiss in La Fargue’s research, albeit in a simpler, clearer manner. La Fargue described the government’s attitude as trusting, that, “Now they advanced rapidly up the scale of official promotion as they were entrusted with increasingly important tasks.”176 He seems to view the war as a simple and very effective “shock therapy” where the government refused to put the students to use on one day and grew fully trusting in them on the second. Yet the truth is, indeed, many students rose in ranks gradually in years, few assumed statuses of great political importance, many of them were still plugging away in industrial posts where they were assigned, admittedly with administrative duties, but remained in the “hands on” works they were dispatched to do in the first place. The few students who were able to continuously rise in ranks and reach the very center of the statecraft of the empire did not reach there because of their competence (though most of them were obviously competent at whatever they did), but rather achieved in high ranks due to political patronage. In fact, La Fargue introduced some of them in a separate chapter specifically dedicated to the student who were lucky enough to find and engage in a political patron-client or mentor-mentee relationship and become “someone who matters,” these students include various mentee and advisor of important political figures such as Yuan Shikai and Zhang Zhidong, and were in fact among some of the most famous CEM students,

176 La Fargue, China’s First Hundred, 78.

These students were among the most distinguished and the most decorated alumni of the Chinese Educational Mission, however, almost every one of them was able to launch their career thanks to a few open-minded politicians like Zhang Zhidong, and especially Yuan Shikai. A few of them, such as Zhan Tianyou and Liang Dunyan, were taken on by Zhang Zhidong after the Sino-French War. As discussed before, Zhang’s commission for Zhan was the first step for him to move from a naval post to his specialty of engineering. Liang Dunyan, on the other hand, was recommended by Zhang in 1890 to the rank of Zhifu, and later gradually rose in ranks, from the Customs Daotai of Hankow all the way to the vice president of the Foreign Ministry in 1907. From thereon he entered Yuan Shikai’s circle as the president of Foreign Ministry even after the collapse of Qing dynasty.

Others had similar encounters. Tang Shaoyi, Cai Shaoji, Liang Ruhao and several others all worked with Yuan in Korea during his time as the Imperial Resident of Seoul, and many of them were later known explicitly as members of Yuan’s inner circle. Cai Shaoji and Liang Ruhao had very similar careers to Tang, so much so that they served back to back in Tianjin — which at the time was the heartland of Yuan’s dominion as the viceroy of Zhili — as the customs Daotai and the

177 Roughly the equivalent of a mayor’s rank.
superintendents of Beiyang University.\textsuperscript{180} Yuan, during his tenure in Korea, seemed to have developed a special liking for the CEM students, and actively sought out suitable students to fill out his staff. For example, he saved Cai Tinggan’s career after the Sino-Japanese War, while Cai was framed and imprisoned for being captured during the war.\textsuperscript{181} In the report Yuan filed on Cai’s behalf, he judged Cai to be “excellently knowledgeable and loyal.”\textsuperscript{182} Cai Tinggan eventually was able to rise to the rank of rear admiralty in charge of the Department of Naval Administration; Tang later became the first Premier of the Republic under Yuan’s presidency and similarly, Cai Shaoji, Liang Ruhao and Liang Dunyen were all appointed as high-ranking ministers in Yuan’s cabinet.\textsuperscript{183}

In conclusion, it seems that the students, through their bravery, competence, and sacrifice on the battlefield, proved their loyalty to the Chinese government, and were promoted in return. However, while the government was willing to elevate their statuses, the students still suffered from a systemic distrust. Only very few were permitted to enter the political center, and fewer still were able to make long-lasting

\textsuperscript{181} Shi, “Guannian yu beiju”, 171.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
impact, to pass on their legacy. Yet they forged on, and some, despite all hinderances, prevailed.
Chapter 4

Cultivating the Future: The Reincarnation of the Chinese Educational Mission Through the Boxer Indemnity Remission

This chapter aims to discuss the relation between the CEM students, centered around Liang Cheng and Tang Guoan, and the establishment of the Boxer Indemnity Program and Tsinghua College. Against the overall academic consensus, I argue for a strong personal connection between Liang Cheng and the remission of boxer indemnity from the United States to China, and that Liang, perhaps in conjunction with Rockhill, was responsible for the initial plan to use the indemnity in establishing and funding a study abroad program. Furthermore, by analyzing Liang’s argument and the initial planning and functioning of the program, I argue that the Boxer Indemnity Program was, in fact, a re-creation of the original Chinese Educational Mission as envisioned by Dr. Yung Wing.

The story about the remission of the Boxer Indemnity is a complicated one. Between 1899 and 1901, an anti-foreign nationalist rebellion, under the initial acquiescence and the later active support of the government, attacked the expatriate community in China. They devastated western churches, lynched missionaries and businessmen, and attempted sieges on various embassies. The rebellion quickly escalated into a war declaration from the Qing government to the western powers. The movement was quickly suppressed by an international legation comprised of
militaries from Britain, Russia, Japan, France, Italy, Germany, Austria-Hungary and the United States, causing the Qing court, including Empress Dowager Cixi, Emperor Guangxu, and a handful of the most powerful and trusted political officials, to flee west into Shanxi province. The war ended with being occupied by the legation for months, followed by yet another treaty, namely the Boxer Protocol, that included exile of key political officials, increase of foreign control over certain areas, demilitarization of the Qing empire, and most importantly, a jaw dropping amount of indemnity of over 450 million taels in silver going to the winning parties, supposedly covering the losses and the military expenses caused by the Boxer rebellion.

However, a partial amount of the indemnity, spearheaded by the United States and followed by other countries, was repatriated to China over a course of three decades, and dedicated to different aspects of China’s economic and social development. The first and perhaps the most famous among them was the remission of the Boxer Indemnity by the United States, which was directly used to create and fund the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and its preparatory school, Tsinghua College, the precursor of Tsinghua University today. There have been a large amount of scholarship and theories on the establishment of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, which undoubtedly produced a generation of crucial diplomats, politicians, scientists and intellectuals for China, the importance of which cannot be overstated. The theories, while various in nuance, can be mostly categorized into two groups. The former argues for a complete American creation, concluding that the program was created by the American pressure exerted upon the Chinese government to use the indemnity specifically to send students to the United States. The latter focuses on the
effort of Liang Cheng, the then Chinese Minister to the United states and one of the CEM students, who was supposedly responsible for the negotiation of repatriation and thus ultimately responsible for the creation of the scholarship. It would seem that the consensus today, due to the scholar Michael Hunt’s publication, leans towards the former. Predictably, I think the truth, again, sits somewhere in between. Indeed, the American pressure indeed cannot be ignored, but the involvement of the students from the Chinese Educational Mission was equally crucial in the creation and the running of the program. In many ways, the Boxer Indemnity Program was the re-incarnation and a more properly adapted version of the Chinese Educational Mission, and it was through this re-creation of the CEM, Doctor Yung Wing’s vision of modernizing China through sending Chinese students to America came into fruition.

The traditional American narrative for the remission of the Boxer Indemnity is simple: the American government, led by Theodore Roosevelt “spontaneously and unconditionally” returned the money out of concerns regarding justice and altruism, and the Chinese accepted in gratitude.184 As Hunt comments, “this act of generosity became almost at once the object of myth-making and of rhetorical excess.”185 Both countries considered the repatriation of the indemnity signifies a sign of friendship and goodwill between the two nations.

Yet, Oscar Wilde said it best, “truth is rarely pure and never simple.” The process of returning close to 12 million dollars in 1908 (which roughly equates to over 300 million dollars in 2018 with inflation rate adjusted), as can be imagined, was

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185 Ibid.
anything but simple. Hunt’s theory mostly focuses on the American process of remission and insistence upon using the money to fund education. It is the consensus in academia that the representatives of the American government, including the secretary of state John M. Hay and the United States Minister to China William W. Rockhill were keenly aware that the demanded for indemnity was inflated and excessive.\textsuperscript{186} Hunt concedes to the point that idea of remission was indeed initially floated by Liang Cheng, before being subjected to enormous hostility between two nations due to the busting trade relations and conflicts over Canton-Hankow. As Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1905, although he intended to “do the Chinese people justice” in regard to the indemnity, any consideration of settlement in such circumstances may be viewed as a sign of weakness, that the hostility demonstrated by the Chinese people would somehow be rewarded.\textsuperscript{187} However, it would seem that in Hunt’s narrative, the United States was always in a slow but steady pace in its spontaneous process of indemnity remission, and that it was merely catalyzed by Liang’s effort.\textsuperscript{188} Liang then turned to the public opinion, granted interviews to journalists, gave public speeches and even rallied some congressmen to his cause, and when he failed to change the mind of the secretary of state,\textsuperscript{189} he further mobilized the secretary of interior and the secretary of commerce to speak on his behalf, which finally led to Roosevelt’s promise of a speedy settlement on the matter. In turn, the executive decision led to audits, congressional hearings, and the eventual remission. At this point the two groups of theory do not diverge significantly. However, it

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 542.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 544.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 545.
\textsuperscript{189} At this time Hay had stepped down and was succeeded by Elihu Root.
needs to be said that, imaginably, without Liang’s effort, Hunt’s so called “leisurely pace toward settlement” could easily have taken decades and multiple administrations, furthermore, judging by the mercurial nature of diplomatic relation between the United States and China, the remission could easily have been shelved under a different administration with a different agenda. In fact, in Liang’s report to the Foreign Ministry, he made a similar argument, “I shall improvise and stay updated on the matter, urge the acceleration on the matter whenever there is an opening. The matter must be discussed and executed as early and as soon as possible, otherwise if dragged too long there might be (unforeseeable) changes…”

However, the more significant divergence in narrative between the “American led theory” and the “Chinese led theory” lies in the intended usage of the returned fund and Liang’s role in it. Hunt insists that it was the United States who initially demanded that the money should be used on education in sending the students to America. However, Hunt offers no specific evidence substantiating any conversation in the early stages that it was the U.S. administration’s request that the money should go to education, other than himself saying so. In writing the passage regarding early talks between Liang and Rockhill, Hunt writes, “Rockhill left Liang convinced that the Roosevelt administration expected China to finance education with the money.” He cites Liang’s report to the Foreign Ministry in May 13rd and November 1st, 1905 in support of the former statement. However, there was nothing in the letter that can substantiate Hunt’s claim that it was indeed Rockhill or any American’s idea that the money should be used in education. Although it is true

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190 Ibid., 547.
that it can be corroborated by both American and Chinese sources that the American administration wanted to know the specific plan that would put the money to good use instead of otherwise. Indeed, in Liang’s May 13th report he specifically mentioned the U.S. government desired to know what the money is going to be used for, that “if it should be re-distributed towards the public.”\footnote{Presumably similar to a tax refund.} However, when it comes to the proposal of usage, Liang simply says,

\begin{quote}
It seems appropriate to inform the American government, as we invite them to return the funds, that after which it should be used to set up school and send students abroad, so that the States’ court may be not only glad to see justice done, but also happy to see the accomplishment of having talents educated, In this way, even if there is some minor dissent in the states, with the purpose of the fund’s usage being proper, it will be welcomed by the Americans as a people, and in this way, the large sum of money wouldn’t fall into other people’s hands. In our own nation, by using our own money, we can groom endless amount of talents…as opposed to return the money to the people, there is nothing to be benefited from. Instead of negotiating through placing blames and merely and fruitlessly try to fill the stomach, why not transfer the money to the most needed (aspect of our nation and) cultivate the plan for growth!”\footnote{Qinghuadaxue Xiaoshi Yanjiushi, \textit{Qinghuadaxue Shiliao Xuanbian}, 77.}
\end{quote}

From the passage, one can see that there is nothing indicating that the concept of using the money for education came from Rockhill, or anyone else. The American government seems simply wanted to know what the money would be used for, and Liang argued, as it appears quite naturally and originally, that as opposed to give the money back to the public as the president guessed, it is better to use it on education, to send students abroad.
Hunt’s argument further suffers from some flaws in logic and chronology. In his theory, he suggests that not only was the idea was presented by the American administration in early 1905, it was immediately followed up and pressed by Rockhill in Beijing for the next three years, from as early as July 1905, with plenty of supposed back and forth between him and the Foreign Ministry. However, Hunt also wrote that on American side, even the president required some extra convincing from the missionary Arthur H. Smith, and potentially did not make up his mind until April 1906, when he wrote a letter responding to Smith stating his clear intention of dedicating the money towards education conditional to the administration being able to execute the policy suggested. Roosevelt seemed to be finally convinced by Smith, but their meeting did not take place until March, 1906. On the other hand, Zhu’s argument, which closely follows Hunt’s theory, also stresses the importance of a series of writing on the persuasion Roosevelt received from mid-1905 to early 1906, including letters from Rockhill himself advocating not so much for letting China use the money for education, but for just returning the money in the first place. Furthermore, the persuasion also includes letters from the president of University of Illinois, Edmund James, also written in early 1906. Zhu also made the similar claim stating that Rockhill hinted Liang during their meeting that the money should go to

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193 Cui Zhihai 崔志海, “Guanyu Meiguo diyici tuihuan bufen gengkuan de jige wenti” 关于美国第一次退还部分庚款的几个问题 [Some Problems concerning America’s First Return of Part of the Boxer Indemnities], *Modern Chinese History Studies* 近代史研究 1(2004), 57.


195 Ibid., 21.

196 Ibid.
education, but his statement, similar to Hunt’s, is uncited and unsubstantiated.

Considering the timing, it is somewhat unreasonable for Rockhill to press the Chinese government before the president even made his mind on the matter; such a conflict in timing may render Hunt and Zhu’s conclusion,\(^{197}\) namely the notion of using the repatriated Boxer indemnity for education has always been the official stance of the American government, questionable.

With that being said, another scholar, Cui has also made mention of Rockhill’s personal correspondence with a U.S. senator prior to his meeting with Liang, advising that it is in the interest of the U.S. and Sino-American relation to accept Chinese students in military academies such as West Point and the Naval Academy.\(^{198}\) However, it is inappropriate to contribute this foresight of using the money on education to the American government simply judging from one private correspondence alone. On the other hand, considering this piece of evidence, I think a more plausible scenario would be that Rockhill and Liang Cheng made the decision collectively, and each was responsible in convincing their respective government.

It seems highly unlikely to me that the first mentioning of the re-creation of Chinese Educational Mission just happens to come from the report of a former CEM student. Moreover, judging by the obvious enthusiastic manner of persuasion, it also seems quite unlikely that Liang Cheng, as Zhu and Cui suggests, simply argued so vehemently for the plan just for the simple purpose of getting the money back sooner.\(^{199}\) Personally, I think from the words written in that report, Liang obviously

\(^{197}\) Ibid.
\(^{198}\) Cui, “Guanyu Meiguo diyici tuihuan bufen gengkuan de jige wenti”, 57.
\(^{199}\) Cui, “Guanyu Meiguo diyici tuihuan bufen gengkuan de jige wenti”, 56.
believed in what he said, and was presumably personally invested in the project. It wouldn’t surprise me that while writing that letter he was having flashbacks of his own experience in the States and Yung Wing’s belief in the CEM. Harkening back to Liang’s letter to Mr. Shaw, he expressed his fond wish to return to the U.S. “to again sit in your study, listen to you talk about Bible,” that “even the government will not resume the CEM, and even if we cannot meet again in the land of the free, I wish to see you on our impoverished land, and that you would come in service for our people and the same time spread the gospel of God.” Liang obviously wanted the similar education he received for Chinese people as well. Thus, It is not unreasonable to conjecture that in his conversation with Rockhill, Liang saw the chance to revive the Chinese Educational Mission in a new form, to fulfill Dr. Yung Wing’s wishes, and to “groom endless talents, and cultivate plans of growth.”

Meanwhile, Rockhill also engaged in a fair share of persuasion on his end, trying to convince the president to finalize on the intent toward education. It seems fair to presume from the report filed by Liang in May 3rd, 1905 that the American government is not so much of meddling but rather wants to be assured that the money would be put to “good” use, that it would be used properly, or at least not against American interest. In fact, one of the reasons that Liang gave in support for using the money to send students abroad was to, after all, “have a proper claim.”

To Roosevelt, it was in the United States’ best interest to accept studying abroad students. Edmund James, the president of University of Illinois, said it best in
his letter to Roosevelt, “The nation which succeeds in educating the young Chinese of the present generation will be the nation which for a given expenditure of effort will reap the largest possible returns in moral, intellectual and commercial influence.”

Having control in the academic matter of these students is to have control over the future Chinese leaders in their knowledge and their spirit. He is not wrong; when the Boxer indemnity students finally returned to a republican China, much of the good relations between the ROC and the U.S. is precisely forged between the American politicians and the American-educated Chinese diplomats.

Nevertheless, once the matter has been set, and the American government was informed of the Chinese intention of using the money on education, Hunt is quite right that the American government was quite insistent on it.

Another point of contention is the chronology of the initiation of the Boxer Indemnity’s remission, which has often been cited as the clear evidence that it was the American government that spearheaded the effort. Hunt cites the Rockhill papers, stating there had always been an intention from the American government to return the funds, represented by the American Minister to China William Rockhill, the Secretaries of the State John Hay and then Elihu Root, and the Presidents at the time, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. It is argued that all Liang Cheng had done was to expedite an existing effort.

The Chinese scholarship in support of

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201 President Edmund J. James of University of Illinois to President Theodore Roosevelt, Memorandum Concerning the Sending of an Educational Commission to China, 1906, Office of the President, Edmund J. James Publication Scrapbooks, University Archives of UIUC, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 0205013, 2.
202 Now stored in Haughton Library in Harvard.
204 Ibid.
such a view argue along close line with Hunt’s article, citing a unfiled memorandum drafted in 6th of December 1904 by Rockhill as requested by Hay, stating the amount of the indemnity exceeded the loss and expenses of the United States during the Boxer Rebellion, and recommending the remission of about half of the indemnity back to the Chinese.\(^{205}\) Liang Cheng’s report back to China, on the other hand, has been assumed to be filed at January 19th, 1905, which has led to the belief of the scholars that the meeting between Hay and Liang took place on that same day or mere days prior to the filing of his report.\(^{206}\) All three scholars have thus claimed that, due to the chronology of events, the American government reached the conclusion that partial remission should be done prior to the meeting between Liang and Hay, which in term proves that the remission was not so much as “chased” back by Liang but rather initiated by the American government and spearheaded by the political leaders at the time. The consensus on the date issue in academia thus is set with the conclusion that the meeting between Liang and Hay indeed should have taken place either in late December or early January, both of which seemingly supports the American initiation theory, as the memorandum was filed almost a month prior to that meeting. From such a perspective, it would seem reasonable to conjecture that certain hinting coming from the American government indeed could have taken place, and in combination with the vehement American effort in the subsequent years to push through and to lock the commitment from the Chinese government to use the fund on education, one certainly see the plausibility of the argument that the Boxer Indemnity


\(^{206}\) Cui, Guanyu Meiguo diyici tuihuan bufen gengkuan de jige wenli”, 51; Zhu, “Shilun Meiguo gengkuan xingxue, yi Xiaoduo Luosifu yu Roukeyi wei zhongxin”, 20.
program being an American program from the start. It was certainly the public sentiment in the 1910s and 1920s, as Tsinghua College was once dubbed “the Indemnity School.”

However, all the argument listed above seems to hinge on the validity of the chronology, which is questionable to say the least. I was able to locate one academic article published on the Tsinghua Alumni Association discussing the chronology issue of the Indemnity remission process. While the article seems to not have caught the attention of the academia, I have found the argument made by the author to be extremely thorough and compelling, referencing multiple primary sources with analysis on the specific difference between methods of information transmission in the Qing government, and reaching the conclusion that the meeting between Liang and Hay has been mistakenly confused with the date of delivery of Liang’s report. Meng, the author of the article has argued that according to the categorized archival collection of the Foreign Ministry, currently stored in the National Library of China, Liang has filed two reports immediately after the meeting with Hay, one by telegram, and the other by seafarer shipment. Presumably, the cost of telegram is much higher than physical mailing, which has resulted in this method double reporting—telegram for immediacy, and the mail for the accuracy and comprehensiveness. In the telegram sent by Liang Cheng is written as such:

Chen, (I) respectively file this report informing the Foreign Ministry. The American president has held a meeting and stated (to

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208 Chinese character “辰”, indicating the decryption method to be used for the letter.
me) that the congress would certainly reject the proposal if all other countries’ indemnity is paid in gold standard while the United States is the only country paid in silver. The Foreign Ministry has also stated the difference is not large enough to be executed in a different manner. I have tested the idea of reducing the indemnity. While the ministry had some doubts, we think it is achievable; the money reduced, if achieved, would easily cover the loss of paying in gold standard. The only issue at the moment is that it is best to be kept in secret for the moment, so that other countries (receiving the indemnity) would not be confused or let down. When the matter is finished in negotiation we can proceed as ordered. Liang, 29th.209

This report merely 83 characters in length, but the matter discussed is an almost exact synthesis of the January 19th report, which also discusses a meeting between Liang and the secretary of state beginning with the form of the payment and ending with the possibility of a remission, thus it seems reasonable to presume that the two meetings are not merely similar but identical. It is also clear that the above report filed in the 29th is through telegram, as it begins with the character “Chen”, a character used to indicate the decryption procedure to be used for government telegram message, and due to the expensive nature of telegram, it is only logical to presume its immediacy—an urgent and important message filed soon after the information is acquired. Thus, Liang and Hay could only have met before the date of “29th,” which was the 29th of the 10th month of 1904 in Chinese lunar calendar and December 5th of 1904 in Gregorian Calendar, thus in turn puts the date of Liang-Hay meeting safely on or before that date. The January 19th report, on the other hand, does not have anything indicating method of decryption, which has led to my belief that it has been shipped by sea. Consequently, I conclude it to be a much longer report to be shipped by sea,

209 Meng Fanmao, “Cong shijian xijie kaocha Meiguo diyici tuihuan gengkuan de jiaoshe guocheng”.
containing much more detailed information such as the specific usage of the remission and other subjects discussed in the meeting, and it was delayed by more than a month.

What Meng seems to have missed is that the corrected date of the Liang-Hay meeting is simultaneous almost to that day with the drafting of that unfiled memorandum by Rockhill as requested by Hay (which is December 6th). If we opt for the latest possible assumption that Liang telegraphed the message to his government immediately after the meeting on the same day, it would still have been one day earlier than the drafting of the memo. The vast majority of the scholars discussing this topic has always taken the chronology difference as an underlying foundation of the American initiation theory, as it was conceived a month prior to its first occurrence in the Chinese sources, which in turn supports the theory that the remission program has been an American effort all along. However, with this key piece of evidence put into question, it would seem like unreasonable to rush to the conclusion of an “American initiation” of the remission. Of course Liang’s letter cannot be taken as without bias, he certainly had the motive to exaggerate his own contribution in the matter, as Hunt has hinted,210 however, I still would maintain that Liang’s letter was not too far from the facts, as he was the not only source of information for the Qing government—Rockhill as the American Minister to China could have easily be a source of corroboration if any of Liang’s statement was put into question. Thus, hopefully, by discussing the flaws of the arguments and theories of Hunt, Zhu, and Cui, I believe I have, if not successfully refuted their theory in entirety, succeeded in presenting the

strong possibility that Liang was indeed the initiating party of the remission negotiation, and played a crucial role in its process and the usage of fund. He has never been the hinderance or a mere catalyst of a leisurely American process as Hunt has been suggested, but at the very center of its creation.

However, Hunt was right at least in part. Liang, as the initiator of the program, did not see the remission through, as he was reassigned to other posts in 1907, replaced by Wu Tingfang, who was said to be much less likable by the American administration.\(^{211}\) Furthermore, the American government has indeed put into much effort in ensuring the commitment of the Chinese government that the money should be put into education. Hunt has emphasized the Rockhill’s effort in negotiating with the Foreign Ministry in many occasions, to encourage, urge and sometimes even threaten the Chinese government with withdrawing the remission if they use it on anything other than education. Hunt has made a reasonable argument for both the personal benevolence of Rockhill and more ideologically pursued needs of the American people to have another educational program to send the students abroad to “dominate” the future Chinese leaders intellectually and spiritually.\(^{212}\) Meanwhile, Hunt has missed the sentiment that there is also a certain arrogance that goes into the American effort in ensuring an educational plan. He mentions the words of Huntington Wilson, the Third Secretary of State, in support the ideological motive, “The return of the indemnity should be used to make China do some of the things we want. Otherwise I fear her gratitude will be quite empty.”\(^{213}\) Granted, an educational

\(^{211}\) Ibid.
\(^{212}\) Ibid., 550.
\(^{213}\) Ibid., 549.
program was certainly something that America “wants,” but there is also a strong sentiment of a demonstration of force, of letting China know who is in charge.

Another possible motive would be my own conjecture. Almost all sources have pointed out that the negotiation of the remission is hindered by the Sino-American conflict over the ownership of Canton-Hankow Railway, which has exacerbated the anti-foreign sentiment in China, and a political sentiment of a showing of force in Washington D.C. Meanwhile in China, mere days after Liang’s mailed report arrived, Yuan Shikai filed a report to the emperor suggesting moving the usage of the remission towards a more urgent needs for the country—to establish railway networks and financial institutions such as banks in Manchuria, which was gradually falling into the control of the Japanese government economically, industrially and politically. Imaginably, it could not have sat well with the American government knowing that there might be a possibility that the Chinese government might use the “American” money on a touchy subject such as the railway industry while the two governments are fighting on the matter, which could have driven the American effort to lock down the money in a field that posts not even any symbolic threats to the American interest in China.

Another argument may be raised on this topic against the idea of the Boxer Indemnity Program being the reincarnation of the Chinese Educational Mission is the participation of another former student, Tang Shaoyi. Tang has certainly been one of the most prominent and thus most discussed figures among the students. He rose in the political ranks in an almost unparalleled pace after the Sino-Japanese War, from the Chinese consul in Korea, to the governor of Shandong, to the custom Daotai of
Tianjin, and then junior vice-president of the Foreign Ministry when the remission was negotiated. As a quickly rising political star, Tang may be considered the student at the most optimal position to aid the effort of using the remission to build another educational program. However, Tang worked against the program. As he was assigned to the governorship of Manchuria, Tang personally lobbied for the reallocation of the fund in the railway and banking industry in Manchuria to fight off the Japanese encroachment. It has been argued by scholars to be a more urgent need of China to have full territorial control over its dominion, and the educational program, as excellent as it is as an opportunity, should take a back seat, and that it may be funded by the interest collected from the banks. In fact, in 1908, as Tang was sent as an special ambassador to the United States to convey the gratitude of the Qing government, he was simultaneously charged with the secret task of lobbying and swaying the American stance on the allocation of the funds, and building an alliance between China, Germany and the U.S. to fight off the increasing Japanese grasp in Manchuria, a task he failed to achieve due to the signing of Root-Takahira Agreement, in which the United States recognizes Japan’s position in Northeast China in exchange for the Japanese recognition of the annexation of Hawaii and Philippines. Despite his failure in relocating the remission money, Tang’s stance on the matter was brutally clear; he was working against the notion of using the returned indemnity on education.

However, Tang’s stance was not entirely indefensible on two accounts. First, Tang’s ascendance in politics was largely determined by his relationship with Yuan
Shikai,²¹⁴ aside from his own capability in diplomatic and state matters. As a matter of fact, many of Tang’s promotions has been the result of Yuan’s recommendation. Yang has concluded that for the 20 years until the end of Qing dynasty, Tang has been so closely associated with Yuan, in charge of any diplomatic aspects of politics, economy and industry in Yuan’s dominion of the Chinese North, and that Tang has always been considered as a well-known member of the “Yuan faction” in the Late Qing era.²¹⁵ Yang further concluded that throughout Tang’s career in the Qing government, he has never deviated from Yuan’s political agenda, and in terms of Tang’s railway effort in Manchuria is also closely in line with Yuan’s political vision, and the idea of “aligning China with America to constrain Japan” has always been a key concept of Yuan’s Beiyang administrative team,²¹⁶ which may lead to a speculation that Tang’s action in the matter of railway industry came from Yuan’s directive, and that he was not fully in control of what to do in his position, as opposed to the relatively autonomy that comes with Liang’s position abroad. On the other hand, what Tang has proposed was not in direct conflict with an educational program, but rather use the returned indemnity as a collateral for banks and use the profit to fund the educational program. Thus, I don’t believe Tang’s opposition for the

²¹⁴ Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) was a major political figure in the Late Qing and Early Republic time. As a protégé of Li Hongzhang, Yuan succeeded him as the Viceroy of Zhili and Minister of Beiyang, responsible for the training and establishment of China’s first modern army. He later became the Prime Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, responsible for essentially all state matters. He was responsible for the negotiation between the Republicans and the imperial government during the Xinhai Revolution and was eventually appointed the first president of the Republic of China. Though often criticized for his later attempt to claim an emperorship, Yuan was no doubt a major part of the modernizing force in not only China’s industrialization, but institutional modernization as well.
²¹⁶ Yang Yifan, *Zhe chong nei wai*, 77.
immediate use of the returned indemnity on education is conceived in his disbelief on the potential of another study abroad program, but rather a combination between the pressure from Yuan and his own version of triage in terms of what is the most imperative need for the country.

Nonetheless, I believe that I have demonstrated the connections, or at least the lack of detachment, between the conception of Boxer Indemnity program and the Chinese Educational Mission by ways of Liang Cheng, and I shall proceed on to a brief analysis on the connection between the programs in their purpose as well as in their functioning, many of which included the students from the CEM. According to the official history of Tsinghua University, all commissioners and personnel appointments were determined by the Foreign Ministry, which at times were led by Liang Dunyan, who played a major part in negotiating the remission and presumably participated in the decision making of the appointment of personnel. As a result, among the three people appointed as the commissioners, there was one former Chinese Educational student.

Tang Guoan was one of the few students who, by 1882, was not only enrolled in college, but also studied non-STEM subjects; he was one of the very few law students. Like Huang Kaijia, Tang Guoan was one of the more radical students, having been converted to Christianity in the States, he escaped from his governmental duties after a few assignments in the mining and railway administrations, entered into a partnership with the future premier and president of the Republic of China, Yen Wei Ching, developing the English publication of the South China Journal,
participated in the social activism at the time against the western political aggression taking advantage of the Christian missionary in China.

He entered diplomatic service in 1907, participated in the negotiation of the Boxer Indemnity remission negotiation as an interpreter and later represented China in the International Opium Conference in 1909. Upon his return, he was appointed with his fellow colleague Zhou Ziqi, who studied on private cost in Columbia, and Fan Yuanlian, who studied in Japan. However, according to the salary manifest in 1911, the head commissioner Zhou and the commissioner Fan both collected a half salary of 250 taels and 200 taels separately, while Tang was paid 400 taels. Scholars has concluded that Zhou mainly served in the function of a par-time oversight of the project due to his various diplomatic duties abroad, while Fan, who had no experience in the west and served mainly in the ministry of education, likely served as a liaison between the foreign-ministry led Boxer Indemnity program and the ministry of education. In fact, Tang Shaoming\(^\text{217}\) referenced a memoir from Yen, who for a time filled in for Zhou as the head commissioner of the program, that his job merely included two days a week in the school, which would mean that the majority of responsibility fell onto Tang’s shoulder. During his tenure, he locked down the funding for the program and was largely responsible for setting up the specific program and the selection of students, which naturally led to his appointment as the first resident of Tsinghua College, a school set up as the preparatory school for the

Indemnity program, and was responsible for the course settings as well as the creation of the mission of the school.

While the school he set up is in no way the Tsinghua University as we know it today, much of the elements, such as the mission of the school and to certain degree, the spirit of liberal arts education, was passed onto the university from him. The Tsinghua College, being the preparatory school, prepared the students in their studies up to the high school level, offered a wide range of courses. Presumably, Tang would be one of the only few Chinese local with the expertise on how a western styled preparatory school is run. Under Tang’s management, Tsinghua became vastly different from any traditional public Chinese “western styled” schools, which until that time has remained largely professionally oriented, such as the naval academies and the telegram/telegraph schools. However, Tsinghua manifests a fundamentally different image, presenting a curriculum that is obviously American styled, liberal-art-like, a school that educates its students in a more complete way instead of specializing in any specific field. The old self strengthening schools founded under the orders from people like Li Hongzhang were run with the specific purpose to produce soldiers and telegram operators, while in comparison, Tsinghua’s curriculum did not only prepare the students academically, but extracurricular as well; in many ways, Tsinghua was grooming citizenry. Subjects taught in the curriculum included necessary academic subjects such as western languages, history, politics, economics, and other natural sciences, but also arts and humanities as well, including drawing, music, literature, even sports, none of which were absolutely necessary in term of students’ qualification, but was taught more so for the welfare of the students; which
contrasts significantly with Liang Cheng’s pained description of his life in the Naval Academy. In many ways, the original Tsinghua College is very much akin to the liberal arts education the students have received in the prep schools in New England. Just as the motto suggests: one should “progress in morals and academics alike” through a modern liberal arts education, and maintain “the everlasting self-discipline” as a model citizen, 218 which indeed harken back to Yung’s own words that laid the foundation for the Chinese Educational Mission should have been, “‘What am I going to do with my education?’ Before the close of my last year in college I had already sketched out what I should do. I was determined that the rising generation of China should enjoy the same educational advantage that had enjoyed; that through western education China might be regenerated, become enlightened and powerful.”219

218 Qinghuadaxue Xiaoshi Yanjiushi. Qinghuadaxue Shiliao Xuanbian, 146.
219 Yung, My Life in China and America, 41.
Conclusion

A Story of Hope and Legacy

This thesis, through various analyses on multiple crucial moments of the students’ lives in China, tries to form a narrative with continuity and closure. It confronts the question of identity and reception through the lens of the development of their careers. Chapter One contributes to the narrative by examining the cause of the cancellation of the CEM. We see that the conventional argument of simple “traditionalist resentment” is far from a coherent and complete cause of the curtailment of the program, and that the students were indeed “in fault” in their cultural assimilation that led to the conflict between the program and its management. In Chapter Two, the thesis discusses the initial reception of the students and their responses, which has led to my conclusion that, while the validity of poor treatment and reception from both the upper-class “public opinion” and the Chinese court is indisputable, the conventional impression of uniform resentment from the students is not. In fact, from various letters, it may be observed that, while the sense of disappointment was present in the minds of many students, the students’ sentiment for China and its administration was far from uniform, with some decidedly positive hopes for her future. The third chapter aims to reflect upon the students’ career development as defined by the two wars between China and foreign powers, and proposes the theory that, while much of the recent scholarship is indeed correct in concluding the elevation of students’ statuses over time, they were still confronted by a systemic discrimination and distrust from the Chinese court.
Indeed, as La Fargue comments, that distinct sense of “apartness” always remained through time. Yet, it certainly does not warrant La Fargue’s conclusion that “they had served China faithfully and magnificently but more as foreigners employed in Chinese service than as Chinese.”220 The students had been much more personally invested in the fate of China than any of the foreign experts employed by the Qing government. In multiple letters, the students mention their conviction in doing what is good for China. I distinctively remember a letter written by one of the students, Huang Jiliang, to his father on the eve of Sino-French War. Huang says in his letter, “my only wish for you is to not keep me in your thoughts, for I know too well the uncertainty of one’s fate in battle. Yet, as I have been deeply obliged to the court for making me who I am through their care and the education I have received, I shall dedicate my body and my life to its defense. I still recall in one of your letters, you told me to transform my filial love for you into loyalty, and that I shall fulfill my filial duty to you by being a faithful soldier. I will not waiver in giving my life for the nation….221 This letter speaks volume against La Fargue’s conclusion and has reaffirmed my belief in the students’ genuine care and loyalty to China, whatever China may mean for each individual. I believe it is precisely the care for China that drove what transpired in Chapter Four. Despite the previous theory and consensus in academia, I have concluded that the establishment of the Boxer Indemnity Program and Tsinghua College is indeed a Chinese effort spearheaded by multiple CEM students including Liang Cheng, the then Chinese Minister to the United States, Liang Dunyan, the vice-president of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Tang Guoan, the

220 La Fargue, China’s First Hundred, 161-162.
221 Qian and Hu, Daqing liumei youtong ji, 139.
commissioner of the Boxer Indemnity Program and later the president of Tsinghua College, Rong Kui, the superintendent of the Boxer Indemnity Program, and multiple other students who contributed their efforts, including Tang Zhanyuan and arguably Tang Shaoyi. In the end, I have further concluded that the Boxer Indemnity Program and Tsinghua College, two institutions that changed China’s education for decades to come, was indeed a more well-adapted version of the Chinese Educational Mission that truly fulfilled Dr. Yung Wing’s vision for China’s enlightenment through education.

This thesis is as much a story as it is an argument. When people first glance at the students, they often gaze at them with fascination, marvel at their incredible experience in this country. However, when one carefully examines the lives of these students, as La Fargue, Rhoads and Shi all have, one always comes up with mixed feelings, lamenting the tumultuous journey of the students. Shi titles his book with the word "tragedy"; La Fargue reflects upon the fact that, “their experiences had made them strangers in their own land and to a marked degree they had remained strangers.”\(^{222}\) Rhoads, on the other hand, concludes his book with a statement that the Chinese Educational Mission was never intended to transform China, that, “even if the CEM had not been curtailed, the returned students would not have revolutionized Chinese society.”\(^{223}\) The authors often tell a story of distrust and disappointment: the court’s distrust for the students, and in turn, the students’ disappointment in the court. Without putting the program and the students in a larger context, their assessments

\(^{222}\) Ibid., 161.
\(^{223}\) Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World*, 217.
are not wrong. However, when examine closely, one would find that the students were much more influenced by Yung than by other commissioners, and Yung’s vision, differing from the specific purpose of CEM, has always been, in Rhoads’ words, to “transform China” through education, and I think on that front, the students had done exactly that in merely two generations. This is not only a story of despair and regret for a vision too early for China’s time, but a story of hope and legacy that finally ended with that vision coming into fruition.

However, it certainly cannot go amiss that this story is also part of a larger narrative of China’s modernization, and that one needs to contemplate over what modernization truly meant for China. For Yung, Liang Cheng and Tang Guoan, it meant an enlightened and powerful China through western education. Similarly, the story of modernization in many Asian countries has also been a story of westernization. From the Meiji Restoration, to the Xinhai Revolution, to the Declaration of Independence in Vietnam, it seems like China, like many of its peers, was following the footsteps of the western nations in industry, in economy, and even in political and social institutions. Naturally, the concept of, to some degree, educational imperialism or imperialism through education, has always been surrounding the Chinese Educational Mission and the later Boxer Indemnity Program, which I have intentionally left undiscussed. I believe that it is certainly true, at least from an American perspective, that educational imperialism was beneficial to the future diplomatic and socio-economic benefit of the country and its people. However, for China, its right and wrong did not matter as much, because it was a necessity with no alternative in the short term. In a more realpolitik logic, one can either grow strong
like the West or become dominated by them. Similar was Japan’s modernization, in that it had to forgo much of its historical customs and traditions to push for a thorough westernization in its society. A Chinese saying that often carries negative connotation states, “when correcting a wrong, one achieves it by bending the standard so much that it becomes a wrong itself,” but sometimes, doing so is the only way to achieve the objective in the short term. Only in the long term can people afford to ask, is westernization the best way to modernize? What would be the alternative? Such is a question that plagues China still. From the events such as the economic reform in the late 70s, to the June Fourth Movement in the late 80s, to the recent constitutional reform conducted by the current administration, China is often caught between the expectation to become more liberal and democratic like the vast majority of the western countries, and the ideal of staying “Chinese” while doing so. The problem of reconciliation between western ideals and Chinese tradition always seems like an unsolvable conundrum. However, I have always believed in the power of education, in the bridge between the Chinese and western knowledge as represented by the abroad students, to not only learn about the west, but to understand China as well, so that in the end, that reconciliation may be achieved.
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