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Hu Shih's 留學記 (‘‘Arriving in the US’’) and the impact of early Chinese study abroad efforts

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Hu Shih's 初到美国 ("Arriving in the US") and the impact of early Chinese study
abroad efforts

By

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Introduction

Hu Shih's paper, "Arriving in the United States" (初到美国) provides a unique perspective on one of the hundreds of Chinese students who studied abroad in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century. Many of these students participated in Chinese government-funded scholarship programs that urged China's top students to pursue education abroad. They studied at diverse US institutions and brought not only their technical skills back home, but also gained an intimate knowledge of US life, culture, and the English language.

In this paper, I have provided a translation of "Arriving in the United States," an essay that details Hu Shih's educational experience at Cornell and Columbia University. This essay has never been translated into English before. Therefore, this translation is unique and provides more insight into the life of Hu Shih and his time in the United States, while also providing insight into the life of a Chinese exchange student at the time. Hu Shih's schooling in the United States, made possible through the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, was a formative experience that provided him with the necessary skills to develop his own philosophical opinions and successfully served as a wartime ambassador to Washington, effectively interacting with the West over the course of his life and career.

Along with the translations, I have provided annotations and historical analysis to highlight Chinese study abroad programs and study abroad efforts to the United States during the late 19th and early 20th century. The two main scholarship programs the Chinese government established to sponsor students coming to the US were the Chinese Educational Mission and the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship. Focusing on these two scholarship programs and alumni of these scholarships, I will discuss the effectiveness of these study abroad efforts in producing intellectuals, government officials, and public servants that promoted modernization efforts in China and understood Western culture and customs. By looking at the accomplishments of Hu

Shih and other alumni, I will demonstrate the impact these programs had on their alumni and elaborate on the rich tradition of study abroad between China and other foreign countries.

An Introduction to China's study abroad efforts

The history of Chinese students in the United States started in 1854, and by the beginning of the 20th century, there were two main programs sending students abroad to study in the United States. Both of these programs produced successful alumni and had a lasting effect on US-China relations. The first was the Chinese Educational Mission, founded by Yung Wing, the first Chinese graduate of an American high school. The second program was the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, the same scholarship which would allow Hu Shih to graduate from Cornell and go on to impact Chinese academic and political spheres throughout the course of his life. Both of these programs were incredibly competitive and required passing a rigorous entrance exam. They also sometimes required the completion of a preparatory program before coming to the United States. These programs, combined with the many independent scholarships and independently-funded students who studied in the US and other countries, were the beginning of a rich tradition of China's educational engagement with other nations, a tradition that continues to this day.

Chinese Educational Mission

When a board of trustees at the Monson Academy offered to fund Yung Wing's study at Yale, provided he return to China and become a missionary after graduating, he declined, writing in his biography "A pledge of that character would prevent me from taking advantage of any

circumstance or event that might arise in the life of a nation like China, to do her a great service.”¹ Ying Wing was the first Chinese graduate of an American high school when he graduated from the Monson Academy, and he went on to become the first Chinese graduate of an American university when he graduated from Yale in 1854 and returned to China to establish the Chinese Educational Mission.² He founded the Chinese Educational Mission to ensure that Chinese students were able to receive a foreign education without having to worry about financing their education or compromising their morals. He dedicated his life and career to international education, demonstrating how profoundly his studies in the US affected him.

While the Chinese Educational Mission was ultimately ended by the Chinese Commissioner of Education in 1881, this program produced talented writers, scholars, and public servants and went on to catalyze study abroad programs between China and the world.³ These exchanges had a significant impact on Chinese-US diplomacy and produced Chinese leaders fluent in English and with a greater understanding of Western civilization than any Chinese intellectual in previous generations.

Over the course of its existence, The Chinese Educational Mission sent 120 Chinese boys between 12-15 years of age to study in the United States between the years 1872 and 1881.⁴ These boys studied at the Phillips Academy Andover and many went on to attend college in the United States on the same scholarship. When the mission ended in 1881, the Chinese government requested that the boys return home.⁵

¹ Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 35.

² Yung, *My Life in China and America*, 14-15.

³ Yung, *My Life in China and America*, 69-73.

⁴ Yung, *My Life in China and America*, 69-73.

⁵ “Chinese American Exclusion/Inclusion,” New York Historical Society, Accessed September 29, 2018, <http://chineseamerican.nyhistory.org/first-study-abroad-program/>.

Among these 120 boys was Yan Phou Lee, who wrote of his childhood and how he prepared to study abroad in the US in his 1887 book: “When I was a Boy in China”. He describes the efforts of Yung Wing who “was indignant at the wrongs which China had suffered at the hands of so-called “Christian” and “enlightened” nations,” and then describes how this education program aimed to put men in office who understood Western customs and traditions so that China would no longer suffer the same fate it had in the past.⁶

Ultimately, the alumni of the Chinese Education Mission did go on to make significant contributions to diplomacy, modernization, and governmental reform following their return to China. One alumnus, Liang Cheng, returned to Washington in 1903 as the Chinese ambassador to the United States. Chang Hon Yen was also an alumnus of the Chinese Educational Mission; he went to Yale before the Mission was ended. He later returned to the US to attend Columbia Law School and passed the bar exam in New York City after his graduation. He applied to practice law in California and, although he was denied because of his citizenship status, continued to work with Chinese immigrants in California as well as pursue a career in banking and diplomacy.⁷

Many Chinese Educational Mission alumni who studied at MIT went on to become Naval Officers or work in the burgeoning Chinese railroad industry. King Yang Kwong helped establish the Association of Chinese and American Engineers in Beijing. Founded in 1920, this association was supported by both the Chinese and US government and was dedicated to aiding China in solving engineering problems in order to promote the success of the Republic.⁸ With the

⁶ Yan Phou Lee, *When I Was a Boy in China* (Boston: D. Lothrop Company, 1887), 93.

⁷ New York Historical Society, “Chinese American Exclusion/Inclusion.”

⁸ “King Yang Kwong,” China comes to Tech: 1877-1931, MIT, accessed May 31, 2019, <http://chinacomestomit.org/king-yang-kwong/>.

linguistic and cultural knowledge he gained from the Chinese Education Mission, he was able to strengthen a new China by exchanging technology and ideas with American engineers.

Overall, the Chinese Educational Mission produced a class of alumni that were primed for impactful careers. Their knowledge of English and Western culture made them important assets in the years preceding the fall of the Qing dynasty. They were the beginning of a new intellectual, foreign-educated elite that began to emerge in the early 20th century in China.

Boxer Indemnity Scholarship

One of the most formative events in 20th century US-Chinese relations was the Boxer Rebellion. The Boxer Rebellion was an uprising of a Chinese religious movement originating in the Shandong province. Angered by the weak Qing dynasty and its inability to protect China against foreign imperialism, they were eventually given the blessing of the Qing Empress Cixi to rise up against foreign powers in China. The Boxers attacked foreign litigations and missionaries until the rebellion was put down by military forces sent by the seven foreign powers with significant control in China— the UK, USA, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, and Italy. The Boxer Rebellion ended one year later in 1901.⁹ The rebellion ultimately failed and only served to increase the presence of foreign nations in China.

After the Eight-Nation Alliance put down the Boxer Rebellion, China was required to pay a significant indemnity to these countries as a result of the damages.¹⁰ According to a 1919 article in the University of California Chronicle, President Roosevelt “strongly urged and recommended” that all additional funds over the actual expenses incurred from the Boxer

⁹ Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁰ Hu Shih 胡适, *Wo shi zenyang dao waiguo qu de* 我是怎样到外国去的 [How I Went Abroad] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 2016), 134-135.

Rebellion be returned to China. After his recommendation, Congress made the decision that this used money would be remitted. The Chronicle reported this amount as being over eight million dollars.¹¹ As a sign of goodwill, China suggested using this indemnity to fund the overseas study of Chinese students in the United States. This scholarship would be named the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship.¹²

Many other educational periodicals and school magazines similar to the University of California Chronicle reported on the positive effects of this scholarship. In the Harvard Alumni Bulletin of 1915-16, Professor A. N. Holcombe wrote that of the \$25,000,000 China paid to the US, almost one-half of this indemnity was returned back to China. After China announced its intentions to use the money to fund the study of some 400 boys to study at US institutions of higher learning, Holcombe remarked that “this act of international justice will remain to honor the United States after many military victories have been forgotten.”¹³ This positive reception, particularly by US educators, emphasizes how the return of the indemnity and the dedication China showed to cultivating an educational and cultural exchange between the two countries was a positive step in US-China relations. According to Holcombe, after the return of the indemnity, “the emperor sent back a message saying that he was very glad to recognize ‘the noble exhibition of friendship’ and hailed the United States as a leader in ‘international justice’.”¹⁴

A 1910 article in the University of Michigan Newsletter stated that 30 Chinese students receiving funding from the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship were currently attending the University

¹¹ Victor Metcalfe, “Personal Recollections of Theodore Roosevelt,” *University of California Chronicle* 21 no. 2-4 (1919), 143, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0003606993;view=1up;seq=65>.

¹² Hu Shih 胡适, *Wo shi zenyang dao waiguo qu de* 我是怎样到外国去的 [How I Went Abroad], 134-135.

¹³ Arthur N. Holcombe, “Thursday,” *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, no. 18 (1915-1916): 386, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015075947633;view=1up;seq=464>.

¹⁴ Arthur N. Holcombe, “Thursday,” 386.

of Michigan, of which 14 had entered that semester.¹⁵ In addition to the University of Michigan, Chinese students attended many other diverse schools across the United States. Tsinghua University in China published the “Who’s Who of American Returned Students” in 1917, which listed biographies of all Chinese students who had studied in the US, as well as detailed where they had received funds. According to the pamphlet, these Chinese students receiving governmental support to study at diverse schools such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Illinois, and the Colorado School of Mines.¹⁶ ¹⁷ The presence of these Chinese students on a wide range of American university campuses demonstrates how far-reaching this scholarship was, providing students with the opportunity to learn a new language and culture and immerse themselves in American life.

Other than Hu Shih, notable alumni of this scholarship also went on to become involved in Chinese political and cultural life. Chee Sing Hsin became an official in the Chinese National government and worked in aviation, where he contributed to national defense against Japan and contributed to the aviation sector in many manufacturing capacities. After he graduated from

¹⁵ George B. Denton, University of Michigan News-letter, vol. 7 no. 248 (November 3, 1910): 7, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015010439761;view=1up;seq=689>.

¹⁶ A complete list of all universities attended by Chinese students receiving government support is as follows: Amherst College, Army Service School, Berea College, Boston University, Brown University, Central Wesleyan College, Chicago University, Clark University, Colgate University, Colorado School of Mines, Columbia University, Cornell University, Denison University, George Washington University, Harvard, Johns Hopkins University, Lehigh University, Massachusetts Agricultural College, Middlebury College, MIT, New Bedford Textile School, New York City College, New York University, Northwestern University, Oberlin, Ohio University, Princeton University, Purdue University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Stanford University, State University of Iowa, Stevens Institute of Technology, Syracuse University Trinity College, Union College, University of California, University of Chicago, University of Illinois, University of Indiana, University of North Carolina, University of Oregon, University of Pennsylvania, University of Vermont, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, Valparaiso University, Virginia Military Institute, Wooster University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Yale.

¹⁷ *Who’s Who of America Returned Students*, (Beijing: Tsinghua College, 1917), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044052957925;view=1up;seq=7>.

MIT in the US, he gained experience working as a naval architect in Newark before returning to China.¹⁸ This experience abroad and knowledge of mechanics and aviation helped him succeed and contribute to national defense in China. Ziang-Yeng Chow was another alumnus of the Boxer Indemnity scholarship, and he served as mayor of Hangzhou three different times after his return to China, even hosting the US Ambassador when he came to the city.¹⁹

Almost every alumni of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship went on to enter prestigious professions and take up political and professorial roles. Due to the rigor of the entrance exams and the value of their education abroad, all alumni of these study abroad programs had an advantage when returning to China. Their proficiency in English and knowledge of Western culture helped shape and modernize China during the early Republic years. After the Nationalist regime fell in 1949, many of these influential alumni fled China for Taiwan, Hong Kong, or the United States. Unfortunately, those that chose or were forced to stay in China were negatively affected by their connections with the West.²⁰

Other International Study Abroad Efforts

China and the US Government's agreement to use the extra indemnity for educational purposes also inspired the British to create their own Sino-British Boxer Indemnity Scholarship

¹⁸ "Ziang-Yeng Chow," China comes to Tech: 1877-1931, MIT, accessed May 31, 2019, <http://chinacomestomit.org/cs-hsin>.

¹⁹ "Chee Sing Hsin," China comes to Tech: 1877-1931, MIT, accessed May 31, 2019, <http://chinacomestomit.org/zy-chow>.

²⁰ "China comes to MIT," China comes to Tech: 1877-1931, MIT, accessed May 31, 2019, <http://chinacomestomit.org/>.

from their leftover indemnity. As a result of this scholarship fund, 193 Chinese students studied in the United Kingdom from 1933-1946.²¹

Aside from study abroad programs in the United Kingdom, the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and Chinese Educational Mission also catalyzed additional study abroad programs between China and other European countries, as well as between China and Japan.²² Particularly, after the defeat of China in the First Sino-Japanese war in 1894, the Chinese government began to sponsor Chinese students to study in Japan. The Chinese government hoped for Chinese students to learn from Japan's successful modernization efforts. However, after Japan was involved in colonization efforts in China, many Chinese students considering going abroad for their education began to choose Western countries over Japan. Therefore, from 1910 onwards, Japan's popularity with Chinese students fell and interest in studying in the US grew. This is one of the reasons that, by the 1910s, the US received the most Chinese study abroad students out of any country.²³

By 1920, there were more than 2000 Chinese students studying abroad in the United States, a remarkable number that illustrates the success of China's efforts to send students abroad as well as efforts of the US to attract Chinese scholars to schools and universities.²⁴ The alumni of these early study abroad programs went on to shape China as it transitioned from the dynastic system into a republic.

²¹ Ren-Jie Vincent Lin, "Eastward Expansion of Western Learning: A Study of Westernization of China's Modern Education by Chinese Government Overseas-Study Scholarships," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48, no. 12, (2016): 1211.

ebSCOhost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1111977&site=eds-live.

²² Lin, "Eastward Expansion of Western Learning: A Study of Westernization of China's Modern Education by Chinese Government Overseas-Study Scholarships," 1209-1211.

²³ Lin, "Eastward Expansion of Western Learning: A Study of Westernization of China's Modern Education by Chinese Government Overseas-Study Scholarships," 1211.

²⁴ Lin, "Eastward Expansion of Western Learning: A Study of Westernization of China's Modern Education by Chinese Government Overseas-Study Scholarships," 1209.

The effects of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship were not limited to the alumni of the program, but instead, the scholarship itself also helped encourage other students to pursue independently-funded study in the US and other foreign nations.

An Introduction to Hu Shih

One of the most prominent alumni of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship was Hu Shih, a Chinese philosopher, intellectual, and diplomat. In 1910, Hu Shih received the Boxer Indemnity scholarship to study agriculture and philosophy at Cornell University in the US. He went on to complete his doctoral dissertation under philosopher John Dewey at Columbia University in 1917.²⁵ When he returned to China he became a professor at Peking University and affirmed his place as a scholar and intellectual through his contributions to China's "New Culture Movement." Later, Hu Shih became a wartime ambassador to the United States between the years of 1938 and 1942.

Hu Shih promoted the use of the vernacular Chinese language when writing and was an ardent believer in education as a way to modernize Chinese thought and reform traditional Chinese ideology. On Cornell's campus, Hu Shih and a group of Chinese students debated issues that would become central to China's New Culture Movement. In these debates, they discussed the merits of using vernacular language instead of classical Chinese, and whether or not written Chinese should be changed or simplified to adapt to the times. In a rebuttal, Hu Shih once wrote a poem entirely in vernacular Chinese to prove his point about the validity of using common language. Later, Hu Shih published a treatise for a "literary revolution" titled "Preliminary

²⁵ Lien Chan, "Hu Shih," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified February 17, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hu-Shih>.

Discussion on Literary Reform". This paper was published in "La Jeunesse", a Shanghai literary journal that played a key role in the New Culture movement for Chinese youth.²⁶

During the turmoil of this time in Chinese history, Hu Shih believed less in revolution and instead in evolutionary change. He urged a slower, more realistic change for China, "bit by bit, drop by drop."²⁷ Hu Shih's contributions to Chinese thought and diplomacy were catalyzed and greatly aided by his time abroad where he learned the English language and Western cultural traditions while networking with American philosophers and intellectuals. His command of English and Western philosophy gave him a greater understanding of China's need for modernization as well as the motivation to make China a strong nation in the face of Western power and influence.

Hu Shih and the Chinese Study Abroad Experience

Hu Shih, like many Chinese leaders who had studied abroad, was profoundly impacted by his experiences in the United States. The time he spent outside of his home country gave him the opportunity to reflect on Chinese history and culture. He also had the advantage of Western education, which he would later use to make comparisons between China and the West and draw parallels between the two. These experience advised Hu Shih's intellectual pursuits.

Hu Shih's essay "Arriving in the US" is a key example of how deeply he was impacted by his experiences abroad. Firstly, Hu Shih was interested in religion, specifically Christianity, and in his essay, he chronicles his interactions with religious followers and scholars. Even after

²⁶ David Damrosch, "From Ithaca to Beijing: Hu Shih's Peripheral Centrality," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*, vol. 43 no. 3 (2016): 360-361, [doi:10.1353/crc.2016.0028](https://doi.org/10.1353/crc.2016.0028).

²⁷ Jerome B. Grieder, "Hu Shih: An Appreciation," *The China Quarterly* no. 12 (October 1962): 92-101, http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=029_grieder.inc&issue=029.

he returned to China, he continued his studies of Christianity where he collected Chinese language bibles. He said that at the time of the Chinese Bible Society's 50th anniversary, he had a collection that almost rivaled theirs!²⁸ This demonstrates the lasting cultural impact of studying in the US, showing that Hu Shih maintained an involvement and interest in American and Western culture even after his return to China.

This post-study abroad involvement in American affairs extended past personal interest and into the public sphere as it affected Hu Shih's political and intellectual pursuits. These pursuits were what had a marked impact on China and Sino-American relations.

Hu Shih had a significant effect on Sino-American despite his self-proclaimed "disinterested-interest" in politics, Chinese and American alike.²⁹ Most notably, Hu Shih served as China's first wartime ambassador to the United States from 1938-1942. While Hu was never solely a political writer or activist, his involvement in the New Culture Movement and his writings that continually promoted reform and change were influential to China's political sphere at the time. In 1928, Hu Shih wrote that China's problems were not solely because of the encroachment of foreign powers, but mainly because the Chinese population was riddled with poverty, disease and "haunted by ignorance."³⁰ This was in contrast to many of his contemporaries, who blamed Western powers for China's decline. He also continuously found a middle ground between Chinese and Western ideals, recognizing the richness of Chinese culture and society due to their long history, but criticizing the idea of China's spiritual superiority to the West, saying that this traditional way of thinking has also crippled China.³¹

²⁸ Hu Shih 胡适, *Wo shi zenyang dao waiguo qu de* 我是怎样到外国去的 [How I Went Abroad], 140.

²⁹ Hu Shih 胡适, *Wo shi zenyang dao waiguo qu de* 我是怎样到外国去的 [How I Went Abroad], 149.

³⁰ Grieder, "Hu Shih: An Appreciation," 92-101.

³¹ Grieder, "Hu Shih: An Appreciation," 92-101.

His cosmopolitan thinking can almost certainly be credited in part to his studies in the United States, where he learned English and became intimately acquainted with Western ideas. He was an ardent proponent of moderation and once remarked against the “turmoil of the newspaper”, or the inciting remarks that urged Chinese people to change abruptly.³² Hu Shih continuously criticized the Nationalist regime, but after the regime fell he moved to Taiwan where he lived out the remainder of his life.³³

Introduction to Translations

The translations provided in this paper are literary translations of Hu Shih’s essay: “Arriving in the US.” This essay was taken from a 2008 Chinese-language compilation of Hu Shih’s autobiographical essays titled “How I went abroad.” These essays vary in subject matter, ranging from an account of his life before he came to the US, to the portion of his life he spent in Shanghai, to his time studying at Cornell and Columbia.

As a reference for my translations, I used online dictionaries to aid with word-level and basic sentence-level translation. When possible, I have kept the form and structure of the original Chinese sentence. In many cases, if the form was not preserved it was to break up longer sentences as well as to adapt the Chinese sentence structure to an English paper. These more flexible translations maintain the content of the original work while making the sentences more intelligible. In some places, I have kept the original Chinese idiomatic phrasing to preserve as much of Hu Shih’s original voice as possible. I believe this also adds cultural context to the paper and is important for understanding a Chinese student’s experience. In other places, I have

³² Grieder, “Hu Shih: An Appreciation,” 92-101.

³³ Grieder, “Hu Shih: An Appreciation,” 92-101.

done corresponding translations, in which I exchange Chinese idiomatic phrases and expressions to corresponding phrases and expressions in English. This helps English speaking readers understand Hu Shih's perspective. In this way, I have tried to preserve Hu Shih's style as much as possible with changes made to aid in the understanding of an American and English-speaking audience.

Additionally, the 2008 compilation of essays that I used as my original source text provided footnotes on many names and people mentioned in these essays, such as Professor Dewey and the Rockefeller Foundation. I have translated these footnotes for two reasons. Firstly, I found it very interesting where footnotes were provided for Chinese readers. This provides some additional culture insights into what the editor of this compilation found important for a modern Chinese audience. Additionally, the information that these footnotes provide, especially where they elaborate on historical and cultural events of the United States in the early 1900s, is also useful for English speaking readers. These footnotes provide background information to readers who may not be familiar with historical figures mentioned or the intricacies of historical presidential elections.

Translations

Arriving in the US—student life at Cornell University³⁴

Writing on contact with different races and religions

³⁴ Cornell University is a world-renowned private research university located in Ithaca, New York (the other two campuses are located in New York City and Education City, Qatar). It is a member of the prestigious Ivy League.

Today I want to talk about the different aspects of my study abroad in the United States. These observations were all written in the first decade of the 20th century—particularly from 1910 to 1917—on my perspective on the different aspects of the family, religion, political affairs, and international ideology of American students. It was certainly no easy task to observe these aspects of American life as a Chinese student whose thought and training was not mature at the time.

It is known that large quantities of Chinese students came to the United States to study abroad, mostly beginning from the year 1909 after the establishment of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship (庚款奖学金). Originally, in the year 1908, the US Congress passed a law deciding to return to China the remainder of the reparations paid in 1901, which were a result of the damage done by China to the Eight-Nation Alliance (UK, USA, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, Austria whom all helped to suppress Boxer Rebellion). In other words, the US deducted just compensation for the loss of life and property (as well as the interest accrued over one year) suffered in the chaos of the Boxer Rebellion.

After America decided to return the additional indemnities China had paid, the Chinese government voluntarily put forth to take advantage of this opportunity and return this sum of money. This deed, therefore, paid the tuition and school fees of a delegation of study abroad students. After the American government agreed, the Boxer Indemnity was therefore paid back for the second time. This is how the Chinese Education and Culture Foundation (中华教育文化基金会) was created—abbreviated the China Foundation (中华基金会). This, of course, is another matter.

Thanks to the seventh section of the refund, after the two countries, China and the US, passed the government exchange memorandum, the first of the “Boxer exchange students” went

to the US to study abroad. The first 47 people who arrived included the future Tsinghua University president Mei Yiqi as well as other Chinese experts who have attained much achievement amongst scientific and technological circles. The second 70 people who arrived were tested in Beijing in the year 1910, and then afterward were recommended to move on and attend American universities to further their studies. In addition, there were 70 people on a waiting list who were required to enroll at the “Tsinghua School”, established between 1910 and 1911, as preparatory classes for the US.

I am one of the 70 people who passed the first batch of exams and was sent with the second group. The year of 1910-1911 was also the first year that the Chinese government recommended large quantities of students for admission to American universities. After arriving in the US, these recommended students were well received due to the foresight of Americans such as the chairperson of the North American Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), John R. Mott, and others. A few years later, when the Rockefeller Foundation³⁵ funded the construction of the widely known New York “International House,” Mott’s son ran the society as the executive secretary. Their international spirit has continued through generations.

Mott and similar Americans, who are keenly aware that the US has the most opportunities related to these types of things, told China’s study abroad students that the places to receive an American education are not limited to within the classroom, laboratories, and libraries, but that they must deeply experience the American way of life and culture to gain important and foundational knowledge of the country. Through the YMCA, they appealed to

³⁵ Rockefeller Foundation, the world’s premier charitable organization. Originally established in 1904, it was formally established in 1910 as a complementary organization to the Public Education Foundation. Through experience and Rockefeller’s massive investment, the New York Legislature finally issued a formal independent establishment on May 14th, 1913. From the beginning, the foundation has been run on a donation system with the members of the Rockefeller family as heads of the foundation. The focus of the foundation is on education, health, civil rights, and urban and rural poverty alleviation.

other Christian leaders and families across the US, to receive the Chinese exchange students in the same fashion and let them know the conditions and practices of the lives of American Christian families. Therefore, the Chinese exchange students came into contact with the most kind-hearted men and women in American society, separating the Chinese exchange students and sending them to be taught in the center of American Christian family life and morals. This was precisely the aim and goal of their appeal. Many Christian families responded to this appeal, which was greatly beneficial to the Chinese exchange students at that time.

In the Ithaca³⁶ region, the Christian families around Cornell-- including many Cornell professors and administrators-- all took in Chinese exchange students. They organized many informal organizations to receive us. They also organized many Bible study classes. If the Chinese exchange students had any religious needs or religious sentiments, they also helped to introduce the Chinese exchange students into their Christian church. So, for the first time in my life, in Ithaca and the Cornell area, I came into close contact with an American family. To a foreign exchange student, this was an extremely rare opportunity to understand and enjoy the warm-heartedness and hospitality of American families, education, and especially the well-known professors and scholars of Cornell.

Like other similar college towns, Ithaca had many different types of churches. There were large numbers of Christian churches. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, are not the only church, but Cornell University's French Professor, Professor Comfort (W. W. Comfort) is a member of the Quaker church, made up of regrettably unrecognized talent. After Cornell, Comfort took up the post as the headmaster of Philadelphia's Quakers Haverford College. I sent my son to this school to study for two years. Professor Comfort is a Quaker Christian, and his

³⁶ Ithaca, a city in the north of the state of New York.

family life is an extremely fine example of the family life of a Quaker church member. From the first time I came into contact with the history of the Quaker church, I became interested in it and made acquaintance with the founder of this sect, George Fox (1624-1691) through studying his letters written with Voltaire³⁷ (1694-1778) concerning England's Quakers church. This encounter, therefore, attracted me to American followers of the Quaker church and many years of their friendship.

The followers of the Quaker religion believe in the guidance of Jesus and the conviction of nonviolence. I became interested in this religious doctrine because I myself have been influenced by the doctrine of Laozi, who came 500 years earlier than Jesus. There was one time where I visited the Philadelphia Congregational District and Professor Comfort told me "You definitely must meet my mother and visit her house. She lives in the German town on the outskirts of Philadelphia." Thanks to Professor Comfort's special introduction, I dropped in on his mother. Comfort's mother then brought me to participate in a Quaker meeting. This was the first time in my life I participated in such a meeting, and the impression and experience were both unforgettable. Owing to the deep impression of this experience, I now have many lifelong friends in the church. Afterward, I frequently went to the Quaker's assemblies to give speeches and I brought my young son to the Quaker's college.³⁸

Of course, I also came into contact with many unusual branches of Christianity. In my "Study Abroad Diary," I also recorded coming into contact with Mormonism in Utah. I also have unexpectedly run into a few Mormon scholars and students. My impression of them was also

³⁷ A European writer of the Enlightenment

³⁸ Hu Shih's youngest son, Si Du, later attended Haverford College

extremely profound. At the same time, it also changed the superficial misunderstanding of Mormons that I used to have along with the average person.³⁹

A few Jewish people and I also got very close. Among my Jewish friends included professors and students. First in Cornell and then in Columbia, I was deeply impressed with the Jewish spirit of learning and their spirit of conquering obstacles and aiming for the highest results. In my reading of the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, I held the Jewish people in high esteem. Therefore, I can say these are all a part of my experiences-- this is how I have come to understand the aspects of American life.

In the summer of 1911, the summer between my first and second year of college, I went to Pocono Pines in Philadelphia to participate in “Chinese Christians Student Union” summer assembly. The site of the assembly was two thousand feet above sea level, on the top of a quiet and secluded mountain. Even in the heat, there was a slight chill in the air. The area had its own on-site facility for small religious gatherings. In my “Study Abroad Diary” I recorded that, one night, I was touched by the atmosphere of this gathering. I promised to study Christianity in the future. In my diary, and later in my correspondences with friends, I said that I was almost Christian. But then, at the same time, I repented.

As of today, I am still an unreformed heretic, but I carefully recorded these experiences in my diary because they make up a part of my youth.

Today, I reflect on and cherish these experiences of my youth, experiences that led me into direct contact with Christian leaders and gave me an understanding of the lives of Christian families. These experiences also led me to a wider understanding of the lives of American people, as well as the lives of the teachers I respect. I am especially thankful for the guidance of

³⁹ The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, considered a zealous Christian sect

Professor Comfort, who enabled me to learn about and appreciate the Bible. I have read through the entire Bible, and I admire at least three of the four gospels in the New Testament; I also enjoy the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. John. I am continuously rewarded by the knowledge the Bible has inspired in me.

A few years after, when I was at Peking University, I began collecting translations of both the New and Old Testament into various dialects of Chinese. The main purpose of my collection was to study Chinese dialects. There are many different Chinese dialects that had I had never seen in writing or print or used as any sort of literary or communication tool. But, for the first time, the Christian Church has utilized these dialects to translate the gospel, even later translating the New Testament and part of the Old Testament.

These Bibles, which I have accumulated through my studies, have increased rapidly over time. At the “Chinese Bible Exhibition” held by the Chinese Bible Society to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their founding, my collection was ranked second-- only slightly less than the collection of the club itself. The second best Bible collection, where, in actuality, I am only a heretic not influenced by God!

My Interest in American Political Affairs⁴⁰

When I arrived in the US in 1910, I knew nothing about the organization of the political parties, the presidential election, and the entire election system. I was utterly ignorant of the meaning of the US Constitution and the structure of the American government. In October of

⁴⁰ This text is selected from Hu Shih's oral autobiography. There is minor abridgement in the content that does not affect the meaning.

1911, China's Xinhai Revolution broke out. In only a few months, the dynastic system that governed China for 270 years was overthrown. In January of 1912, the Republic of China was formally established. This year was an election year in the United States. Election years are also the most interesting and exciting years in the United States. Woodrow Wilson⁴¹ was the candidate for the Democratic Party. At the same time, the Republican party divided itself into two. President Taft, who is currently in power, leads the conservatives. Former President Roosevelt⁴² led the Progressive Party, which split from the Republican Party to create America's third largest political party. Roosevelt is both the leader of the party and their presidential candidate. This time, the three parties are all evenly matched opponents, so even foreign students here are extremely excited.

This year Cornell's political affairs department appointed a new professor named Samuel P. Orth. Before this, he was an innovative lawyer in Cleveland. He is an important player in the revolutionary movement of the city and state⁴³ and was promoted by the Ohio State Bar Association to teach political science at Cornell. To this day I consider Professor Orth as one of the best professors I have ever had in all of my life, advising my knowledge of the US government and political parties. He is an exceedingly good professor. I remember the year of the US presidential election (1912-1913), I took his class.

The following paragraph was his lecture on the first day of class as it started:

This year is an election year. I want every student to subscribe to three newspapers—three newspapers published in New York, not your city's small newspapers—The New York

⁴¹ Theodore Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), America's 28th president

⁴² Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), often translated in Chinese as "old Roosevelt", American military strategist, politician, and the 26th president. A distant cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) was later elected to the American presidency, so in Chinese he is often called "little Roosevelt".

⁴³ Referring to the state of Ohio

Times supports Wilson, The New York Tribune supports Taft, and The New York Evening Journal (I didn't know that this newspaper was the Hearst family's news source, but the newspaper is not a major newspaper) supports Roosevelt. You will order each of them for three months, and you will gain nothing in the future. In these three months, take each of these newspapers and read them in their entirety. After reading each newspaper's coverage of the election, you must present to me a summary of their points. Newspapers serve as this course's essential textbook and the reports as homework assignments. Additionally, you will write a comparative analysis of campaigns in the forty-eight US states, and turn it in as your final exam at the end of the semester!

After my comparative analysis of each states' election activities, I was quite familiar with American politics.

After Professor Orth's lecture on what he required of his students, he said "...and that's it! In regards to other questions, just listen to my class."

I was very interested in this class!

Professor Orth is very familiar with history. From the history of political leaders and political parties—from the Federalists (the founding party of the United States of America) to the Progressives (who arose in the early 20th century)—and even to the biographies of the founders, he is very knowledgeable. He is from Ohio, and therefore he knows famous politicians related to former President McKinney, such as Marcus Hanna, the famous man who helped McKinney win the presidency. Therefore, Professor Orth told us: "Read three papers and watch the election. At the same time, identify a single candidate as the object of your support. That way, you may look at the gains and losses of your personal presidential candidate and become more excited about the election!"

He gave us one more piece of advice—to participate in every political gathering held in Ithaca. I took Professor Orth’s suggestion to heart and chose Theodore Roosevelt of the Progressive part as my candidate to support during the 1912 election. Four years later (in 1916), I again chose a candidate to support, Wilson. In 1912, I ran around wearing a bison-like badge;⁴⁴ In 1916 I again wore a badge, this time in support of Wilson.

I participated in many political rallies in 1912, where Roosevelt once again sponsored the progressive candidate Oscar Strauss for governor of New York State. One of the most exciting rallies in Ithaca happened after the assassination attempt against Roosevelt. Roosevelt was hit with a single bullet, which remains inside of his body because it could not be taken out. I attended this rally along with many professors. To my surprise, the director of this rally is an office worker in the Goldwin Smith Hall at the university. This building holds Cornell’s offices and the Center for the Arts! The democratic spirit of this assembly presided over by a simple office employee, is truly fascinating to me. In this assembly, we all prayed for the safety of our party leaders and passed some relevant motions. This is one of the most memorable political rallies I have ever attended.

Another unforgettable meeting that year was a debate with Professor J. E. Creighton representing the Democratic Party, and Cornell’s Professor Alfred Hayes in the College of Law on behalf of the Progressive Party. I was very impressed by the participation of these professors in US political affairs. I can say that my interest in these meetings has affected me for the rest of my life.

After the election, I went to talk with ethics professor Frank Thilly. All of a sudden, Professor Creighton came in. The two men stood in front of me and enthusiastically shook

⁴⁴ The symbol of those who supported Roosevelt

hands, saying “Wilson has been elected! Wilson has been elected!” I was also moved by this emotional display. Both of these professors supported Wilson. Both had taught at Princeton, and both had known Wilson personally, as he had been president of Princeton for many years. Both of them had a disinterested-interest in his presidency.

After a few years (in 1915), I went to New York City. I transferred from Cornell to Columbia University and stayed in Columbia University’s Furnald Hall. While 1915 was not an election year, it was the year of the famous women’s suffrage march on Fifth Avenue. I witnessed many celebrities taking part in the march. John Dewey⁴⁵ and his wife were in attendance. Professor Dewey also gave a speech. At the end of 1915, Dewey participated directly in this mass movement. The example of the direct participation of professors in the politics of this time left a profound impression on me.

I would also like to talk a bit about the 1916 elections. The glory of old Roosevelt had lost its appeal to me, however, my faith in the international statesmen Wilson had taken hold. Firstly, in 1914, I joined the World Student Conference as both a staff member and representative. This conference was jointly organized by “The Association of Cosmopolitan Clubs” and the “International Federation of Students of Europe.” The rally was first held in Greece, and then Washington. In Washington, we were personally met by Wilson and Williams Jennings Bryan, both of whom gave speeches at our rally.⁴⁶

I distinctly remember that at the height of the 1916 election, a few Chinese students and I went to New York’s Times Square to see the election results. On the way, we saw the numbers issued by the New York World Journal. The World Journal is a prominent supporter of Wilson,

⁴⁵ John Dewey (1859-1952), American philosopher, educator, and pragmatist

⁴⁶ The “Cosmopolitan Club” was an international student organization in the United States at the time, with chapters in each of its elite schools. Hu Shih was elected president of the Cornell chapter.

however, this time it was reported that the Republican candidate Charles E. Hughes had the potential to be elected. We were disappointed, but we still went to Times Square to see the red and white cursors on the Times Building, and it still looked bad for Wilson. We were even more disappointed, of course, but we still stayed until midnight. When the New York Evening Post was published, Hughes was still in the lead. The publisher of this newspaper is Oswald Garrison Villard, who is a famous sponsor of the world peace movement. We were so disappointed, so we decided to just go back to school. The subway⁴⁷ tunnels were so crowded that no one could get in or out, so a few of us decided to walk to school—from West 42nd Street to West 116th Street (about 5 kilometers).

The next morning, the first thing I did was read the news of the election. All of the papers reported that Hughes might be elected, but I was unable to buy the New York Times. It was sold out. I did not believe the reports of the other newspapers, so I walked 6 blocks and was finally able to buy a copy of the Times. The headline of the Times was “Wilson may win!” After reading it on that block, I walked back to school to have breakfast. As you may recall, the ballots of this popular general election were cleaned up for three days, and after the California vote was totaled, Wilson was elected president with a victory of three thousand votes!

There are also a few vignettes worth mentioning. When I was almost finished with my exams, as I wanted to finish my doctoral dissertation in either 1916 or 1917, I felt the strong need to get out of the Columbia dormitories. At that time, Chinese students were mainly concentrated in three dormitory buildings—Fiona Hall, Hartley Hall, and Livingston Hall. All of the Chinese students lived together and socialized too much, affecting their academics, so I moved 60 blocks (3 miles) away from Columbia, to 921 West 17th street near the Hudson with my classmate Lu Xi

⁴⁷ metro

Rong from Yunnan. We hired an Irish village woman to help with the cleaning, which she came and did once a week. Before the general election of 1916 (as, at that time, women did not have the right to vote) I said to her, “Mrs. Murphey, Is there a favorite candidate in your neighborhood?”

“Ah! We are all opposed to Wilson being elected” she said, “because Wilson’s wife died and less than a year later, he remarried!”

A few weeks later, I attended a dinner party. The speaker was the president of the West Coast’s Stanford University, David Starr Jordan. He is a leader in the world peace movement. When everyone was talking about the issues of the general election, Jordan said: “It was very difficult for me to decide who to vote for, and after much deliberation, I finally decided to vote for Wilson!” His remarks made a great impression on the ladies in the peace-promoting community that were present at the dinner. So someone asked Jordan why he had felt unsure at the time. Jordan said, “I used to teach at Princeton, so I am familiar with Wilson. When he was at Princeton, he gave flowers to another professor’s wife!” That was the main reason that Jordan didn’t want Wilson to be president of the United States. His reasoning was really one and the same with that presented to us by our Irish maid.

My interest in American politics and my research on the American political system had a decisive influence on my later interest in Chinese politics and government, mainly because of the two elections that I have witnessed as a student. In my lifetime, I have had little involvement in actual politics except for a four-year wartime ambassadorial position to the United States. But in my life after my adulthood, I have always had a disinterested-interest in politics. I think this type of interest is an intellectual’s duty to society.

Giving up agricultural science and turning to philosophy

When I entered Cornell University in 1910, I was originally an agricultural science major. But after studying for three semesters at the college of agronomy in New York State College in Connecticut, I made a major sacrifice and moved to the liberal arts college. Later, when I spoke to young students in China, I often mention reasons for the change, especially the “pomology” course. This course is devoted to the methods of cultivation for fruit trees. At that time, New York state was a course devoted to the cultivation of apple trees. In addition to learning in the classroom, there was an internship. This internship is what finally led me to change my major.

There are a few places I’ve mentioned this little story in my collection. It goes like this:

During the internship, each student received between 30 to 35 apples. Each student was required to classify the thirty or so apples according to the training guide. For example, the length of the stem, fruit umbilical size, the characteristics of the fruit edges and rounded features, peel color, and, after cutting, the measured flesh tenacity, the sweet and sour flavor, the fat and thin record, and so on. This is called apple classification and this classification is very general. What a headache for foreign students who had no knowledge of apples on that first day!

But for American students, these classifications were too easy. They knew exactly how to categorize all of the types of apples just from one glance! They also did not have to cut into the apples and taste them. All they had to do was flip through the index or guidebook forms and fill in the names of three dozen apples, which took about 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Then, their experiment was finished. They just picked a few apples, stuffed them into their coat pockets, and left the field laboratory. But us two or three Chinese exchange students felt very bitter. We

stayed in the laboratory and tried to fill in the results according to the table, and the result was hundreds of errors and a poor grade.

After these experiments, I began to do some self-reflection. I thought, has trying to study agriculture been a great mistake? I have little to no interests in these classes and, as I learned in my early years, I have no use for them. They run counter to all aspects of my confidence that I have an interest in or talent for. The fruit tree lesson—and especially the experiment—helped me decide how to face this problem.

I was young and had a good memory. On the eve of the exam, I studied hard and was able to sort the apples and do well. But I knew that after the exam was over, in two or three days or a week later, I would completely forget the over 400 types of apple classifications. In China, there are not as many types of apples. So, therefore, I think farming is contrary to my personal interests. To me, learning farming would be a waste, even a type of stupidity. Therefore, later in my public lectures, I always encouraged the youth to make their own choices in their education instead of taking into account the social fashion or social needs of the country. They should use their own interests and endowments as the main criteria when making their selection.

Apart from this, there were other factors that led me to transfer to the school of Arts and Science to study philosophy, literature, politics, and economics. The other fundamental factor in this is my interest in philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and the study of historiography. At an early age, I read almost all of the basic works of ancient Chinese philosophy as well as the more recent discussions of Confucianism in the Ming and Song dynasties. From my personal cultural background, I have developed a basic interest in these subjects.

When I left the agronomy school, my test scores were not that bad. At that time, as long as my test average was higher than 80 points for the compulsory 18-hour course, I could take an

extra 2-hour course that aligned with my own personal interests. This was Cornell's rule. I later introduced this to China's educational system, specifically in Peking University. I was one of the earliest advocates for this system in China.

Taking advantage of these optional two or three hour courses, I chose the "History of Philosophy" class taught by Professor Caledon in the College of Liberal Arts. Professor Caledon is not very eloquent, but his seriousness in teaching and his objective research into the history of thought in various times and factors gave me a deep impression. His teaching revived my interest in philosophy, especially Chinese philosophy.

Another reason I changed majors was because of the Revolution of 1919, which overthrew the Manchus and established the Republic of China. Since China was the only republic in Asia, many people and communities across the United States took a keen interest in the emerging Chinese government. There was a great need for speakers on this issue, both on and off campus. Among the Chinese students, at that time the most popular and eloquent speaker was Cai Jiqing, a fourth-year student in the school of engineering. Cai is a graduate of Shanghai's St. John's University. He taught English at his alma mater before leaving for the United States. He is a very mature man and a wonderful English speaker. However, there were too many invitations at the time and Cai was so busy with his courses at the College of Engineering he could hardly spare any time, so sometimes he had to decline the invitations. But, he still looked to find replacements among the Chinese students, and so he thought that I would be a good potential candidate to give a speech about the Chinese situation.

One day Cai came to me. He had heard me speak a few times at a Chinese Alumni Association and had been very impressed. He also knew I was versed in Chinese classical literature. He asked me to come over and perform a few less difficult speeches for him,

explaining the Chinese revolution and the new Republic government to American audiences. After a little hesitation, I made a few appointments and, with a great deal of preparatory work, the lectures were excellent training for me. Because of this opportunity, my career has been given a new opportunity and I have had the chance to become a better English speaker. As a result of my colleague's interest in public speaking, I have carefully studied the Chinese revolution and the lives of the leaders of this revolution over the past few decades.

My interest in politics is the second factor that caused me to change my major!

The third reason that prompted this change was my interest in literature. My interest in classical literature is quite strong. When I was a teenager, my prose and poetry work was still unsatisfactory. When I was in my first year of Cornell's College of Agriculture (also the New York State College of Agriculture), English was a compulsory subject, which we took for five hours per week. The class was very demanding. In addition, we had to choose two foreign languages—I chose German and French. These compulsory subjects gave me a keen interest in English literature, as I not only had to read classical works but study and converse about them. Learning German and French also allowed me to discover German and French literature. I don't speak German or French, but I am quite capable of reading both French and German. My friend and teacher who taught me French, Professor Comfort, is also the host of the Bible study classes for Chinese students.

My two years of German training led me to dabble in the poetry of Goethe, Schiller,⁴⁸ Heine, and Lessing. My interest in English—especially English literature—has led me to continue to take literature classes outside of the required subjects. So when I transferred to the

⁴⁸ Also a German writer

Faculty of the Arts from the Faculty of Agriculture, I had enough credits (twenty credits in English literature) to complete the department's course sequence.⁴⁹

At that time, each student was required to complete at least one "liberal arts sequence" to graduate. But when I graduated, I had already completed three programs: philosophy and psychology, English, and politics and economics. These programs are within three different academic areas, so I cannot say which one is my main subject. But the growth of my interest in English, French, and German literature has aroused my interest in Chinese literature. This is also my third reason for moving from agriculture to liberal arts.

The fact that I graduated from three different sequence programs in three different departments explains the cultural life that I developed in the years after my graduation. Sometimes I call myself a historian, and other times I call myself a historian of thought, but I never claim to be a philosopher or any other kind of expert. Today I am almost 66 years old, I still don't know what I was born to study, but I never thought that it was a pity!

Conclusion

Hu Shih's time in the United States was a catalyst for his career in both politics and education and deeply shaped his intellectual and philosophical works. For many other alumni of Chinese government scholarship programs, their education in the United States afforded them the opportunity to gain a unique perspective and return back to China with the knowledge and connections to make impacts in their respective fields. While this paper examined the accomplishments of government scholarship alumni, there were countless other Chinese students

⁴⁹ At that time, Cornell's course "sequence" was equivalent to the current university's "major"

who studied in the United States with funding from outside sources-- families, religious institutions, and private scholarships. These alumni also helped contribute to a vibrant community of US college graduates of Chinese ethnicity, both in China, North America, and other countries as well.

Hu Shih's essay provides a glimpse into his life as an exchange student, but while his experience is personal and interesting, it is not exclusive to him. Many other Chinese students had similarly complex and dynamic experiences with American culture, religion, and ways of life as they studied, lived, and worked in a foreign country.

The Chinese Educational Mission and the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship helped to promote cultural exchange and understanding. These scholarships created a foreign-education intellectual elite of scholars in China, joining the ranks of some of the most recognizable names in Chinese history of this time period. The positive reception from both Chinese and American educators and scholars would help set a precedent for future students, laying the groundwork for a to a rich tradition of foreign education and exchange that still exists today between China and the United States.

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