

## Studies on Chinese Students in America at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Yunxin Chen<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Chinese students in America have sparked significant interest in academia. Scholars have published numerous books and articles detailing their life and learning experiences in both China and the United States. However, despite the substantial body of related scholarship, literature on those students during the years between China's large-scale study-in-America programs remains insufficient. It is essential to analyze existing studies and highlight their key themes for the benefit of future researchers. After reviewing relevant publications in both English and Chinese, I have observed that they primarily focus on three sub-topics: plans to send students across the Pacific, student experiences in the United States, and American perceptions of students. I conclude the essay by proposing that more attention be given to the intricate motives of Chinese students behind their decision to pursue studies in America during those challenging years.

*Keywords:* Chinese students; the United States; research; themes

### 1. Introduction

Gold was discovered in California, North America in 1848. The news quickly spread to the Pearl River Delta in southern China, where a severe depression was ravaging. Lured by the prospect of making easy money, a large number of people packed their belongings and embarked on a gold-seeking journey to California, initiating a massive Chinese immigration to the United States. In the first years of their arrival, local Californians felt well disposed toward these "strangers from a different shore," impressed by their industry, frugality, and subservience. However, as time went on, Chinese competition with Americans intensified in workplaces, leading the latter to disparage the gold-diggers and laborers from China. They condemned the perceived problems that they found among the Chinese and incited waves of anti-Chinese sentiment.<sup>2</sup> Under the pressure of nationwide Sinophobia, Congress finally passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, banning Chinese labor immigration to the United States for ten years. Extended for another decade in 1892, this decree became permanent in 1904, remaining effective until 1943, when China was already America's wartime ally after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

While enforcing exclusion, Americans devised a wide variety of draconian rules and regulations to keep as many Chinese as possible away from the United States. Despite these hostilities toward Chinese laborers, Chinese students remained exempt from the restrictions, receiving exceptional treatment similar to that given to merchants, travelers, and diplomats from the Celestial Kingdom. The 1882 exclusion act did not specifically exempt students from the prohibition, but it clearly targeted "both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining" as the groups that it intended to prevent from entering the country. The law, however, committed to honoring existing treaties between China and the United States.<sup>3</sup> These bilateral agreements guaranteed unhindered travel for Chinese individuals coming to America for study. The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 specified that "Chinese subjects" could attend "the public educational institutions under the control of the government of the United States," promising Chinese the right to receive education in America. The Immigration Treaty of 1880 further affirmed that Chinese students would "be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord."

<sup>1</sup>School of English Studies, Sichuan International Studies University

<sup>2</sup>Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 32-34, 80-82.

<sup>3</sup>"Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>, accessed 17 July 2024.

Even the Treaty of 1894, which compelled the Qing government to accept Chinese exclusion, continued to exempt Chinese students to safeguard their right “of coming to the United States and residing therein.”<sup>4</sup> As these treaty provisions consistently upheld, students were among the few groups of Chinese individuals who could travel to and stay in the United States during the exclusion era.

Nevertheless, the Chinese government had stopped its first-ever study-in-America program one year before the passage of the exclusion act. This program was the Chinese Educational Mission, which sent 120 boy students to the United States between 1872 and 1881. The students’ rapid Westernization and America’s refusal to admit them to military academies led the Qing government to recall all of them in 1881. Still, eight students managed to remain in the United States and complete their studies.<sup>5</sup> Government-sponsored study in America did not resume until 1909, when China used the indemnity surplus returned by the United States to fund the academic careers of selected Chinese students in that country.<sup>6</sup>

The hiatus struck people that there was no official Chinese study program in the United States from 1881 to 1908. However, this conception is false. Even though the central government had stopped providing fellowships, a small number of students continued to travel across the Pacific on provincial government grants or at their own expense. Additionally, Chinese merchants and diplomats exempt from exclusion policies could bring their children to the United States and enroll them in American schools, increasing the number of American-educated Chinese students. Some Chinese laborers who were permitted to remain in the U.S. formed families, and a minority had children of school age. These groups, along with the eight male students who persisted in their studies despite China’s recall order, constituted the Chinese student population in the United States during the period when the Qing government ceased sponsoring education in America. It is evident that the termination of the Chinese Educational Mission did not deter Chinese individuals from seeking education across the Pacific. Chinese students attended educational institutions at all levels, but due to the absence of statistics, the exact numbers at each stage cannot be determined.

The conventional belief that no significant group of Chinese students remained in the United States in the years 1881-1908 discourages scholars from paying as much attention to this period as to those years either before or after that date. Still, upon reviewing existing literature, one could find that related studies are indeed inadequate but not lacking. Since there is no review of this literature yet, it is essential for us to systemize its emphases and themes so that future researchers can more easily explore the field’s less-studied areas. After a thorough reading of current studies, I would like to argue that they need to give more attention to this special group of Chinese students and the complexity of their motives for studying in the United States.

### China’s Study-in-America Programs

Concerning the history of China’s study-in-America programs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one could discern several significant focuses. Foremost among them is the process through which China sent students to the United States in the late Qing and early Nationalist periods. Studies of this subject place their emphasis on Chinese students’ motives, means of travel, and details of their trans-Pacific journey, with an eye toward highlighting the overall features of their sponsoring programs. Stacey Bieler is a scholar that should not be ignored when one attempts to gain a comprehensive understanding of China’s sending of students to the United States. Bieler divides the dispatch history into three stages: 1872-1881, 1909-1930, and post-1978 years, with each having its own historical mission. The first stage aimed to train urgently needed talents for China, while during the second, China expected to take advantage of America’s educational resources to carry out experiments in democracy. Sending the third wave of students to the United States reflected China’s intention of furthering its modernizing effort. Of these three, Bieler concentrates on the second stage, offering a detailed analysis of its origin, unfolding, and consequences while also addressing the students’ contribution to China after their return.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Charles I. Bevans, comp., *Canada-Czechoslovakia*, vol. 6, *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776-1949* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1968-76), 683, 686, 692.

<sup>5</sup>Madeline Y. Hsu, “Transnationalism and the Emergence of the Modern Chinese Elite: National Rejuvenation and the Ascendance of Foreign-Educated Elites (Liuxuesheng),” in *A Century of Transnationalism: Immigrants and Their Homeland Connections*, eds. Nancy L. Green and Roger Waldinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 110-12.

<sup>6</sup>After the Boxer Uprising of 1900, the United States demanded and received excessive indemnity from China for its supposed losses in property and life during the chaos. Due to persistent lobbying by the Chinese Minister to the United States, the U.S. government eventually agreed to allocate the surplus to support Chinese students studying in America. See Michael H. Hunt, “The American Remission of the Boxer Indemnity: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1972): 539-59.

<sup>7</sup>Stacey Bieler, *“Patriots” or “Traitors”? A History of American Educated Chinese Students* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Other scholars also explored this subject. For example, Zhou Mian and Wang Rongguo reconstruct the entire process of government-sponsored study in America against the grand backdrop of late Qing students studying in Euro-America. They argue that the Chinese government sent students overseas to “implement new policies and address critical talent shortages.” The study in America unfolded within this historical context, leading to initiatives like the Chinese Educational Mission and the surplus indemnity program. After examining the origins and consequences of these programs, Zhou and Wang highlight that most Chinese students in America focused on science and engineering. They represented the pinnacle of modern China’s scientific and cultural achievements, facilitated Sino-American cultural exchanges, and advanced China’s scientific development.<sup>8</sup> Hongshan Li presents a similar viewpoint. Viewing the early twentieth century as the beginning of government-controlled educational exchanges between China and the United States, he suggests that Chinese students’ travel to the United States and other educational interactions either started or ceased abruptly due to forceful government intervention. Governments took these actions to address issues affecting their domestic politics and diplomacy, transforming educational exchanges into a governmental responsibility that reshaped internal societies and bilateral relations.<sup>9</sup>

When studying the history of Chinese students in America, scholars pay attention to the less-noted groups among them as well. One example is Mao Shizhen’s inquiry into Chinese female students’ venture to the United States. According to her narration, very few Chinese women went overseas in late Qing. However, Yamei Kin and three other young women bravely crossed the oceans to become pioneering Chinese female students in America. Their numbers increased significantly during the Nationalist and WWII years. While attempting to reconstruct the historical process of these special students’ scholarly pursuits, Mao notes the reasons for their small percentage in the total Chinese student population. Among other factors, the underdeveloped state of female education in China is considered responsible.<sup>10</sup> Gong Hongyu not only focuses on Chinese female students in America but highlights those who studied music. After reviewing the official accounts of American educational institutions and Chinese students’ publications, he believes that a total of seven Chinese women had pursued musical studies in the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century. Gong provides a detailed description of their experiences in both America and China, emphasizing that they originated from the relatively enlightened southeast coast, where they established connections with the Christian Church and received church-related education. These Chinese students made notable contributions to China’s musical discipline upon returning to their homeland.<sup>11</sup>

Several other researchers focus on the Chinese Educational Mission, which was the first wave of study-in-America in Bieler’s classification. For instance, Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller direct their attention to those “fortunate sons” that the Qing government sent abroad to learn about innovation from the West. The two scholars vividly describe the school and daily lives of the 120 Chinese boys in New England, as well as their struggles with conservative forces upon their forced return to China.<sup>12</sup> Qian Gang and Hu Jincao’s analysis begins with the planning of the mission by Yung Wing, the first Chinese graduate from an American university. They offer readers a comprehensive overview of the mission’s entire process, including the selection, preparation, arrival in America, and eventual return to China of the young students. They provide lively details for each stage of their experience.<sup>13</sup>

### Student Experiences in America

Also arousing the interest of academia are Chinese students’ experiences in the United States. Their school life unsurprisingly catches the attention of many scholars. Founded in New York in 1926 by Chinese and American educators, the China Institute in America has acquired a well-deserved reputation as a well-known nonprofit organization dedicated to deepening people’s understanding of China through a variety of means. It was also an agency that provided much-needed help to Chinese students in the United States.

<sup>8</sup>Zhou Mian and Wang Rongguo, “Qingmo Liuxue Oumei Yundong Xilun [An Analysis of Study-in-Euro-America in Late Qing],” *Lishi Dang’an* [Historical Archives], no. 1 (2016): 105-13.

<sup>9</sup>Hongshan Li, *U.S.-China Educational Exchange: State, Society, and Intercultural Relations, 1905-1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup>Mao Shizhen, “Jindai Zhongguo Nvzi Liumeishi Yanjiu [A Study of Chinese Females’ Academic Pursuits in America in the Modern Era],” *Fuyang Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Fuyang Normal Institute] (Social Science Edition), no. 2 (2008): 1-5.

<sup>11</sup>Gong Hongyu, “Qingmo Liumei Yueren Kao (1900-1910) [A Study of Late Qing’s Music Students in America (1900-1910)],” *Zhongguo Yinyuexue* [China Musicology], no. 4 (2020): 46-60.

<sup>12</sup>Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller, *Fortunate Sons: The 120 Chinese Boys Who Came to America, Went to School, and Revolutionized an Ancient Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).

<sup>13</sup>Qian Gang and Hu Jincao, *Youtong Liumei: Zhongguo Zuizao de Guanpai Liuxuesheng* [The Chinese Educational Mission: The Earliest Government-Sponsored Overseas Study Program of China] (Shanghai: Wenhui Press, 2004).

Based on the Chinese graduate theses and dissertations it collected, Lin Xiaowen examines Chinese students' approach to Western thoughts, technologies, and the problems that China encountered daily between 1902 and 1928. Believing that they utilized Western research methodologies to interpret traditional Chinese culture, she praised them for "promoting China's social transformation." As they facilitated East-West communication, understanding, and integration, Lin writes, Chinese students actually "spearheaded the connection between the native consciousness of China and the perspective of the world."<sup>14</sup>

Other scholars contribute to the expanding literature with their own investigations. Yuan Qing's research on Chinese students' China-themed doctoral dissertations in the early twentieth century reveals that their writings not only covered various disciplines but also demonstrated their authors' intention to apply their newly acquired knowledge to address issues in order to better serve their homeland. Chinese students learned extensively from American sinologists regarding research style, content, and characteristics. These influences aided their own research endeavors, reflecting their scholarly principles and values.<sup>15</sup> Collaborating with Wu Lufeng, Yuan also examines how late Qing students transmitted Chinese culture to the West, including the United States. According to their findings, Chinese student associations in America were successful in dispelling many misconceptions about China through activities such as gatherings, lectures, publications, and translations. In so doing, they not only helped Americans become more acquainted with Chinese culture but also encouraged the diversification of human civilizations, injecting fresh perspectives into Sino-Western interactions.<sup>16</sup> Wu Yuanyuan highlights the significant role of Chinese students in advancing American sinology. He contends that while absorbing American culture and technology, Chinese students acted as intermediaries for American sinologists. They utilized these opportunities to introduce Chinese society and culture, as well as to write dissertations related to China. Through these efforts, they effectively enriched the primary sources and understanding of China among American sinologists, broadening their perspectives and fostering the advancement of American sinology.<sup>17</sup>

While studying Chinese students' academic activities, scholars do not ignore their daily lives. For instance, it is through the presentation of routine activities that Weili Ye analyzes America's Chinese students in the late Qing and early Nationalist periods. In her view, they were among the first Chinese to incorporate modernity into their daily lives, even though they were not the first to think differently from most Chinese. They made significant efforts to adapt to modern norms in both lifestyle and living standards. Through personal examples, Chinese students played a role in hastening the emergence of China's modern identity, according to Ye.<sup>18</sup>

The activities of Chinese student associations capture scholars' interest too. Against the background of the Paris Peace Conference that concluded the First World War, Lin Wei's research delves into Chinese students' expectations and protests in the United States. At the onset of the conference, they expressed their hope to witness "justice prevailing over power" either individually or through their associations. Upon learning that China did not regain sovereignty over Shandong, a province that was previously a German colony but became a Japanese possession in Paris, Chinese students voiced their protest and disappointment through various organizations. Lin argues that these activities prompted the students to reconsider how to safeguard their homeland and fulfil their mission.<sup>19</sup> In the same historical context, Lei Lejie examines the Patriotic Society established by the Chinese students and merchants in New York. He focuses on its patriotic allegiance to China, emphasizing the specific forms of their activities. While the Paris Conference was under way, the society produced and distributed several pamphlets addressing Sino-Japanese relations and the Shandong dispute.

<sup>14</sup>Lin Xiaowen, "1902-1928 Zhongguo Liumei Xuesheng Xuwei Lunwen Xuanti Fenxi [An Analysis of the Subjects That Chinese Students Chose for Their Graduate Theses and Dissertations in the United States, 1902-1928]," *Jiangsu Shehui Kexue* [Jiangsu Social Sciences], no. 3 (2013): 212-28.

<sup>15</sup>Yuan Qing, "Minguo Shiqi Liumeisheng Zhongguo Wenti Yanjiu Yuanqi: Yi Boshi Lunwen Xuanti wei Zhongxin de Kaocha [The Origin of Nationalist-Era Chinese Students' China-Themed Studies in America: An Inquiry into the Subjects of Their Doctoral Dissertations]," *Nankai Xuebao* [Nankai University Journal] (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), no. 5 (2015): 96-105.

<sup>16</sup>Yuan Qing and Wu Lufeng, "Qingji Liuxuesheng Qunti de 'Zhongxue Xichuan' Huodong [Qing Students' Transmission of Chinese Culture to the West]," *Nankai Xuebao* [Nankai University Journal] (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), no. 1 (2021): 120-33.

<sup>17</sup>Wu Yuanyuan, "Minguo Shiqi Zhongguo Liuxuesheng dui Meiguo Hanxue de Gongxian Lunshu [Nationalist-Era Chinese Students' Contribution to American Sinology]," *Jiangsu Shifan Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of Jiangsu Normal University] (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), no. 3 (2013): 2-7.

<sup>18</sup>Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>19</sup>Lin Wei, "Xiwang yu Shiwang: Bali Hehui Qianhou Liumei Zhongguo Xuesheng de Qidai yu Kangyi [Hope and Disappointment: The Expectations and Protests of Chinese Students in America before and after the Paris Peace Conference]," *Lilun Yuekan* [Theory Monthly], no. 5 (2017): 77-82.

Using logic, emotion, and rhetorical strategies, they sought to persuade the American public of the legitimacy of China's efforts to reclaim Shandong.<sup>20</sup> Guo Jingping is intrigued by the inception and development of Chinese student associations on the west coast of the United States. She argues that it was just in California where Chinese students established their first association, the Chinese Students' Alliance of America, and published the initial newsletter for the Chinese student community in America. While compiling the earliest known roster of Chinese students in the United States, the alliance organized diverse activities for its members and advocated on their behalf within the broader society.<sup>21</sup>

Though not focusing on Chinese students as her primary subject, Stephanie Hinnershitz acknowledges their presence and perspectives while studying the history of the civil rights movement in America. She provides a unique insight into their everyday experiences. Hinnershitz is particularly struck by their involvement in campus Christian associations alongside other Asian students. Together, they worked to build inter-ethnic and interracial coalitions to combat racial discrimination. These efforts demonstrate the commitment of Asian students to civil rights and shed light on the influence of Christianity on cross-racial initiatives in the early twentieth century.<sup>22</sup>

Another focus of the literature is the contribution of Chinese students to the development of China. Qian Yuanqiang attributes the establishment of China's political science to Chinese students who were educated in America. These young Chinese individuals brought back the prevailing norms of the United States, forming a professional political science society, devising a standard curriculum, and overseeing research. Qian concludes that Chinese students played a crucial role in initiating the field of political science in China.<sup>23</sup> Du Changsheng uses the China Science Society, founded in 1914, to highlight the pioneering efforts of students returning from America in promoting science. Through this organization, they published journals, wrote papers, established scientific societies, translated books, gave lectures, managed libraries, and organized exhibitions. All these activities were aimed at disseminating America's scientific knowledge, methods, and spirit among Chinese. In doing so, they made noteworthy contributions to the advancement of modern science in China and became key participants in Sino-American cultural exchanges during the Nationalist era.<sup>24</sup> Guo Zhengping reveals the strong connection between Chinese individuals educated in America and the new literature of China. She achieves this by examining the "Literature Lab" set up by the renowned scholar Hu Shi and other Chinese students in America. By placing their works in an American context, Guo demonstrates that Hu Shi and other students revolutionized China's traditional literature by dismantling its "original structure and norms." They then transplanted their reformed literary styles and principles back to China, leading to the emergence of vernacular Chinese literature.<sup>25</sup>

### Chinese Students as Viewed by Americans

In contrast, scholars have paid much less attention to Americans' attitudes toward Chinese students. Since Chinese students could legally come and stay in the United States, they inevitably interacted with American people on a daily basis. Both ordinary and elite Americans would form views of them. While more scholars seem to be interested in the tangible politics surrounding China's study-in-America programs and the lives of its students in America, only a few are observant enough to note the importance of Americans' subtle perceptions of Chinese students. Studies in this area could provide insight into a different dimension of their presence in the United States, enabling people to see if Americans applied different stereotypes to Chinese laborers and these potential elites that they hoped would promote American interests in China. Therefore, it is essential to review the related literature and encourage more researchers to explore the field.

<sup>20</sup>Lei Lejie, "Bali Hehui Qijian Liumei Xuesheng Tuanti de Aiguo 'Fasheng' [The Patriotic 'Voices' of Chinese Student Societies in America during the Paris Peace Conference]," *Anqing Shifan Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of Anqing Normal University] (Social Sciences Edition), no. 2 (2023): 121-27.

<sup>21</sup>Guo Jingping, "20 Shijichu Jialifuniya Liumei Xuesheng de Shetuan Huodong [The Activities of Chinese Student Societies in California in the Early Twentieth Century]," *Henan Jiaoyu Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Henan Educational Institute] (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), no. 4 (2020): 38-44.

<sup>22</sup>Stephanie Hinnershitz, *Race, Religion, and Civil Rights: Asian Students on the West Coast, 1900-1968* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

<sup>23</sup>Qian Yuanqiang, "Liumei yu Zhongguo Jindai Zhengzhixue [Study-in-America and Modern China's Political Science]," in *Beida Zhengzhixue Pinglun* [Peking University Political Review], vol. 5 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2019), 118-36.

<sup>24</sup>Du Changsheng, "Minguo Shiqi Zhongguo Liumei Xuesheng dui Kexue Chuanbo de Lishi Kaocha: Yi 'Zhongguo Kexueshe' Weili [A Historical Examination of American-Educated Chinese Students' Dissemination of Science in Nationalist China: A Case Study of the China Science Society]," *Hefei Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Hefei Normal Institute], no. 2 (2021): 64-70.

<sup>25</sup>Guo Zhengping, "Youmo yu Youxi de 'Changshi': Hushi Xinwenxue Qiyuan de Meiguo Xianchang Huanyuan [An 'Experiment' in Humor and Game: Recovering the American Origin of Hu Shi's New Literature]," *Hanyuyan Wenxue Yanjiu* [Research in Chinese-Language Literature], no. 3 (2016): 34-45.

Among scholars in this understudied area, Zhao Kexin is noteworthy. In her 2019 article, she analyzes the portrayal of Chinese students in American newspapers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By examining American journalists' responses, Zhao aims to dismantle the stereotypical perception of "students as elites or good immigrants" so that people could realize the complexity of student representations. On one hand, American newspapers doubted that all Chinese students were genuinely studying in the United States, suspecting that many were actually laborers posing as students. On the other hand, newspaper opinions varied based on individual students and backgrounds, revealing a significant level of uncertainty. Additionally, the American press anticipated Chinese students to assimilate American culture, pack their belongings, and prepare to return to China as advocates for American interests. These findings lead Zhao to conclude that the depiction of Chinese students in American newspapers was generally "friendly and positive," not obviously affected by the exclusion of Chinese laborers. However, considering the American expectation for them to go back to China, Zhao argues that they were still marginalized.<sup>26</sup>

There are other studies on the American perception of Chinese students. For instance, according to Wang Jing, Chinese students were welcomed by the U.S. government, higher institutions, and various NGOs. She argues that American society had a clear affinity for them. The care and goodwill shown toward Chinese students not only substantially improved their study and living environment but also attracted potential Chinese elites in the early twentieth century. In this manner, the United States managed to both disseminate American culture and values and promote the reform and transformation of Chinese society.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Zhang Muchu finds America's portrayal of Chinese students to be relatively negative. Unlike other researchers, Zhang examines the writings by Chinese students themselves to gain insight into how they were perceived by Americans. The students admitted that to the surrounding society, they were seen as merely blending Chinese and Western cultures. Americans accused them of pursuing pleasure and material gains and associating with many of the undesirable characteristics of Chinese laborers.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

It is safe to say that scholars have indeed paid considerable attention to Chinese students in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their significant amount of scholarship greatly enhances researches in this field, enabling people to have a deeper understanding of that special group of Chinese. The government-dispatched students have received the most attention. Scholars have sketched out a clear-cut historical evolution of China's plans to send students across the Pacific while offering high recognition to the contributions that students made to Chinese modernization. Another focus is on Chinese students' study and life experiences in the United States, with scholars being most concerned about the connection between the ideas and technologies students learned from Americans and the changes they brought to China. Chinese students' stay in America is considered one factor behind China's development and progress. In contrast, studies on American images of Chinese students are obviously insignificant in number. Their conclusions are polarized, either highlighting Americans' liking and care for these Chinese youngsters or stressing their contempt for the latter.

Given the current state of the field, there are several aspects in which related studies can be enhanced. On one hand, more attention should be directed toward the Chinese students who remained in the United States during the periods when Chinese official sponsorship was interrupted. While China did halt the dispatch of students to America on several occasions in history, these interruptions did not result in a complete absence of Chinese students. Provincial governments and affluent families continued to send young Chinese individuals to pursue education in America, and some former members of the Chinese Educational Mission managed to stay in the country and continue their studies. Legal Chinese residents may have had children studying at various levels of education in the United States. It is necessary to conduct thorough research on these people to gain a comprehensive understanding of American-educated Chinese and their experiences in the United States. On the other hand, while it is logical to link Chinese students' mastery of American ideologies and technologies with their impact on Chinese transformations, it is important not to overlook the complexity of their motivations for seeking an American education.

---

<sup>26</sup>Zhao Kexin, "19 Shijimo 20 Shijichu Meiguo Baozhi zhong de Zhangri Liuxuesheng [Chinese and Japanese Students in American Newspapers in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries]," in *Quanqiushi Pinglun* [Global History Review], vol. 17 (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2019), 79-104.

<sup>27</sup>Wang Jing, "20 Shijichu Meiguo Shehui dui Zhongguo Liuxuesheng de Jiena [American Reception of Chinese Students in the Early Twentieth Century]," *Jiangxi Shehui Kexue* [Jiangxi Social Sciences], no. 10 (2016): 153-59.

<sup>28</sup>Zhang Muchu, "Yibang de 'Xiangxiang': Gongzhong Shiye xia Jindai Liumei Zhongguo Xuesheng Xingxiang zhi Jiedu [Foreigners' 'Imagination': Decoding Ordinary Americans' Conception of Chinese Students in the Modern Era]," *Shandong Gaodeng Jiaoyu* [Shandong Higher Education], no. 5 (2018): 46-52.

One needs to investigate whether Chinese students had objectives beyond returning to China to contribute to Chinese modernization, such as a strong inclination to assimilate into American society. As for Americans' attitudes toward Chinese students, there are also gaps that need to be addressed. Existing literature either argues that America discriminated against students from China, treating them as laborers, or suggests that America was friendly toward them and sought to utilize them as representatives of its civilization. It cannot be denied that immigration officials often suspected them of being actually laborers and treated them accordingly. However, such deliberate obstacles typically arose when students were entering the United States. Once they successfully entered the country, they were seldom harassed as so-called coolies. Meanwhile, scholars who claim that America treated Chinese students well mistakenly view occasional acts of kindness as a common and widespread occurrence, overlooking the injustices that the students faced and resisted on a daily basis. While there are researches highlighting Chinese students' struggles for rights, these studies often consider them only as a part of the broader challenges faced by Asian Americans in combating racial discrimination. Consequently, they fail to fully acknowledge the extent and scope of Chinese students' anti-prejudice efforts.

Based on these analyses, it is imperative for scholars to study Chinese students who remained in or traveled to the United States during the years when the Chinese central government suspended its official study-in-America program. Such efforts would not only uncover previously overlooked phases of Chinese students' experiences in America but also shed light on their incessant struggles for equality and assimilation, as well as the nuances in their motivations for choosing to pursue studies in a country marked by pervasive racism.