



# Rethinking the study abroad movement and its impact on modern China

1850-1950s

Thursday 12 October 2023

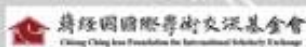
9 am - 6 pm

Aix-Marseille University

Campus Schuman

Maison de la Recherche / Multimédia

Salle de Colloques 1



**Rethinking the study abroad movement and its impact on modern China  
(1850-1950s), International Workshop  
Aix-en-Provence, 12 October 2023**

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**PRESENTATION**

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, over 200,000 young Chinese went to study abroad and subsequently returned to China to apply the knowledge they had acquired overseas in the service of their country. This vast migration of minds, which occurred during a pivotal juncture in China’s history and wielded a momentous influence on the country’s transformative trajectory, has elicited conflicting interpretations. Since its inception, the returned students have been alternatively celebrated as heroes of modernization or denigrated as agents of foreign imperialism. Furthermore, as the movement was shaped by contemporary political events, it underwent notable evolutions across the century. In the aftermath of the Opium wars (1839-42) and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, the initial waves were directed towards Europe and Japan, primarily to study military sciences and industrial know-how. However, following the conclusion of the First World War and amidst escalating tensions with Japan, the United States of America assumed prominence as the preeminent destination, leading to a considerable diversification of academic disciplines pursued. This momentous transpacific intellectual migration laid the bedrock for enduring and intricate exchanges between the two nations that persist to the present day.

This workshop aims to revisit this foundational brain migration from a long-term, comparative perspective. In the light of novel sources and methodologies, the eight participants from Europe, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, will reexamine its impact on modern China as well as the host countries.

*Detailed presentation (English):* <https://enepchina.hypotheses.org/5040>

*Detailed presentation (French):* <https://advertisinghistory.hypotheses.org/6585>

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## **PROGRAM**

### *Morning*

**James Z. Lee, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**

Local and International Education of Chinese Elite Scientific Researchers, 1920-2020

**Thorben Pelzer, Leipzig University**

Anglophone Cosmopolitanism and the Administration of the British Boxer Indemnity Fund, 1925–1950

**Christian Henriot, Aix-Marseille University**

Japan's Educational Legacy: A Study of China's Japan-Educated Officials in the Nationalist Central Administration (1937-1944)

**Peter E. Hamilton, Lingnan University**

“Efficiency is More Important than Force”: Chinese Management Interns in the United States during World War II”

### *Afternoon*

**Cécile Armand, Aix-Marseille University**

Reshaping the Chinese Ladder of Success in the Era of Globalization: A Study Based on the *Who's Who of American Returned Students* (1917)

**Lin-chun Wu, National Taiwan Normal University**

American Returned Economists, the American Foundation, and the Specialization of Chinese Social and Economic Investigations in the 1930s

**Chengji (Sally) Xing, Columbia University**

The American-trained in the China Foundation

**Ruobing Fang, University of Göttingen**

Lives and Choices of Western-Educated Chinese Returnees: Exploring Inner Emigration through the Case of Wu Mi

## ABSTRACTS

### **Local and International Education of Chinese Elite Scientific Researchers, 1920-2020**

*David Y. Zuo and James Z. Lee, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology  
With the help of Chen Liang*

This paper compares the local and international education, and educational funding of 4802 recognized elite Chinese scientific researchers, 3189 who went to university before 1952 and 1613 who went to university after 1952. Our data include 53 Academia Sinica ‘Fellows’ elected before 1949, 2545 Chinese Academy of Science CAS and Chinese Academy of Engineering CAE ‘academicians’, 36 of whom were also Academia Sinica Fellows, elected beginning from 1955 and 1994 respectively, and 3308 Chinese Association for Science and Technology CAST ‘experts’, 871 of whom were also CAS and CAE academicians (excluding a number of largely CAST experts whom so far as we can tell may never have attended or at least did not graduate from university).

Our paper is divided into three parts. In Part one, we focus on their tertiary education and social composition. In Part two, we focus on their post tertiary education and social composition. In Part three, we discuss their educational funding focusing in particular on the 1268 future academicians and experts who studied abroad for whom we know their source of funding.

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### **Anglophone Cosmopolitanism and the Administration of the British Boxer Indemnity Fund, 1925–1950**

*Thorben Pelzer, Leipzig University*

In 1901, the Boxer Protocol had stipulated the defeated Qing Empire to pay an annual sum of 400,000 British pounds to the United Kingdom. After the First World War had reconfigured international relations, in 1925, the British Parliament decided to funnel the reparation payments back to China as development aid. From March to June 1926, a bilateral commission made up of members of a young Anglophone technical elite from China on the one hand, and liberal China Hands, colonial administrators, and humanitarian activists from Great Britain on the other, decided on the future use of the indemnity fund. The post-1880 “Young China” generation of returned overseas students, in this case led by railroad administrator Wang Jingchun (1882–1956), pragmatist philosopher Hu Shi (1891–1962), and UK-trained geologist Ding Wenjiang (1887–1936), succeeded in securing a majority for administering the funds primarily for constructive nation-building endeavours, especially for the completion of the Guangzhou–Hankou Railway.

The article traces the footsteps of the bilateral commission through official reports and archival material such as diaries and meeting minutes. It identifies various groups that met with the commission and lobbied for different uses of the funds, and analyses the individual international biographies and sets of beliefs of the commissioners. The article discusses the strategies deployed

to convince a majority of the commission of the eventual use, highlighting the interplay between cosmopolitanism and nationalism that led to the decision.

The case underlines that cosmopolitan and nationalist agendas must not be thought of as contradictory. The article shows that, rather than a result of Nanjing-era nationalisation policies, the completion of the Guangzhou–Hankou Railway in 1936 was secured through international cooperation during the Beiyang Republic. Therefore, the article also serves as a reminder that, during a time often described as semi-colonial and racially charged, privileged actors from Europe and China, when sharing a common socialisation, at times closely cooperated on equal terms.

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### **Japan’s Educational Legacy: A Study of China’s Japan-Educated Officials in the Nationalist Central Administration (1937-1944)**

*Christian Henriot, Aix-Marseille University*

In March 1944, the Chinese central administration consisted of 7,374 civil and military servants. This group incorporated all individuals from the rank of *keyuan* up to the ministerial level, representing the upper echelons of the central administration. Notably, the listing we are using as our primary source does not account for regular administrative staff. Among this administrative group, a significant subset of 393 individuals had been educated in Japan. Most of these Japan-trained public servants had earned a university degree. In comparison to the total number of higher education degrees recorded in our source, which amounts to 932, the Japan-educated group accounted for a substantial proportion of the Nationalist central administration.

In this paper, we aim to delve deeper into their educational backgrounds, examining both their Chinese and Japanese educational experiences. We will then focus on their professional trajectories leading up to 1944. During the Sino-Japanese War, having a Japanese education served as both an advantage, offering experience, language skills, and contacts, and a potential disadvantage, raising questions about loyalty, decision-making, and the risk of treason. By March 1944, the war was nearing its conclusion, and it can be assumed that the Japan-trained public servants had successfully demonstrated their loyalty, dispelling any doubts that may have previously existed. Their positions within the administration, their respective ranks, specializations, and distributions, should furnish us with a solid foundation to analyze the influence of Japanese higher education on the structure and functioning of the Chinese central administration. This study not only enhances our understanding of the impact of foreign education on the development of the Chinese administrative system but also sheds light on the complexities and challenges faced by these Japan-educated individuals amidst the socio-political dynamics of the Sino-Japanese War.

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### **“Efficiency is More Important than Force’: Chinese Management Interns in the United States during World War II”**

*Peter E. Hamilton, Lingnan University*

Amid World War II, the U.S. and Nationalist governments coordinated joint efforts to boost the industrial and agricultural output of “Free China” and plan for the nation’s postwar industrialization. State-sponsored training programs were a crucial component of this agenda, and thousands of Chinese technocrats were dispatched to the United States to study technical subjects such as engineering, applied mathematics, and economics. Yet, previous scholars have overlooked the equally urgent priority assigned to the study of American ‘scientific’ management. Most of wartime China’s factories, mines, and power plants faced enormous challenges and desperately needed to improve their efficiency and productivity. As a result, from 1942 through 1948 the National Resources Commission (NRC) also dispatched hundreds of management interns to the United States. These curated individuals were embedded across American industry, from Detroit assembly lines to Appalachian coal mines and the Gulf’s oilfields. For Chongqing, these management interns carried enormous expectations as future leaders of state-led industrialization, while Washington viewed them as a cost-effective method to stimulate China’s wartime production and shape its post-war market. Yet, these interns themselves carried a complex mixture of thoughts and feelings: gratitude for this privileged opportunity mixed with the weight of enormous expectations, excitement to see the world mixed with guilt and isolation. Utilizing these interns’ detailed reports and relevant U.S. and Nationalist government papers, this article will analyze the history of the NRC Management Internship program. In addition to analyzing both states’ agendas and interns’ individual experiences, it will dig deeply into the ensuing circuits of knowledge production. These interns recorded lectures by Harvard Business School professors, conversations with U.S. Treasury officials, and reams of information about their experiences with advanced American machinery, organizational methods, and financial and accounting practices. Yet, these interns came to recognize a critical problem that would bedevil both states’ ambitions for a rapid transfer of cutting-edge management knowledge. Despite the engrained tenet of management’s supposedly ‘scientific’ and thus universal nature, these interns grasped that Chinese and American workplaces were vastly different. Their ensuing anxieties about their mission to implement this knowledge were not just personal concerns. They became a shared realization that the nature of global ‘scientific’ management knowledge was flawed and that Nationalist China in fact faced a very difficult road to efficient and productive industrialization.

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### **Reshaping the Chinese Ladder of Success in the Era of Globalization: A Study Based on the *Who's Who of American Returned Students* (1917)**

*Cécile Armand, Aix-Marseille University*

This paper expands upon Ho Ping-ti's influential study to examine the impact of education in the United States on reshaping the Chinese ladder of success in early twentieth-century China. Drawing on the *Who's Who of American Returned Students* (游美同學錄), the first directory of US-educated Chinese (liumei) published by Qinghua University in 1917, the paper adopts a data-rich, integrative approach to revisit conflicting interpretations of the *liumei* phenomenon (Wang 1966; Bieler, 1999) and engage with recent debates concerning their intricate position within Chinese society (Jiang, 2022). By employing advanced techniques of natural language processing, this research explores previously understudied aspects such as family strategies, mechanisms of

social reproduction, and women's trajectories. Notably, this research reveals that obtaining American degrees, particularly after 1905, emerged as an alternative to the centuries-old imperial examination system. For sons of merchants, American education provided a new pathway to high-level administrative careers, while families of former scholar-officials found it a means to diversify into new professions. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the influence of uncles on educational choices and highlights the significance of marriages between students, which reflected individual preferences as well as family strategies. Eventually, this study reveals that despite persistent gender biases, education abroad represented a unique opportunity for Chinese women from elite and less elite backgrounds to transcend traditional gender roles established during the imperial period. It enabled them to engage in public life through careers in teaching, health and philanthropy, and even high-level academic research.

This paper is divided into four main sections. The first section examines the social, geographical, and family background of the early *liumei*. The second and third sections rely on network and sequence analyses to reconstruct their educational curricula and subsequent professional careers and to assess the relative influence of education and associative life on the individuals' career paths. The last section investigates the "intergenerational effect of study abroad" (Wang, 1966) and the impact of American education on women's trajectories. Drawing on family archives and genealogical records, three specific cases—the Ouyang, Bian, and Fei families—are analyzed to illuminate three major patterns of social reproduction. These cases exemplify high officials who expanded their horizons through outward and horizontal mobility, local elites who moved to the center through inward mobility, and more modest families who utilized their American education for upward vertical mobility.

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### **American Returned Economists, the American Foundation, and the Specialization of Chinese Social and Economic Investigations in the 1930s**

*Wu Lin-chun, National Taiwan Normal University*

Abstract: Following World War I, a wave of Chinese students trained in modern economics returned to China, envisioning a "new China" founded on Western economic theories and the developmental experiences of industrialized countries. These American-educated economists emphasized the American model of economic governance, which focused on efficiency and management. Concurrently, the professional identity of economists in modern China took shape in the 1920s, culminating in the establishment of the Chinese Economic Society (Zhongguo xingjixue she 中國經濟學社) led by American-trained economist Liu Da-jun 劉大鈞 and J.B. Taylor of Yenching University. However, this society predominantly centered around solving the economic crises faced by the central government, with an emphasis on monetary, financial, and economic policy proposals.

It was not until the 1930s that a group of American-educated economists, supported by the American Foundation, commenced social and economic investigations in China. While not disregarding European and American economic theories, they recognized the necessity of comprehending China's current social and economic conditions. Employing modern analytical

tools and scientific survey methods, these economists focused particularly on understanding rural society through extensive fieldwork. Their findings served as a foundation for government policy-making. Notable contributors included Liu Da-jun, who participated in economic surveys sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, and Nankai University economists He Lian 何廉 and Fang Xianting 方顯廷, who conducted economic surveys with foundation support.

The 1930s witnessed the Rockefeller Foundation's visionary "China Project," which further bolstered Sino-American cooperation in the realm of rural economy. This marked a transformative period, as American-educated economists modernized the traditional concept of "industrial and commercial development for national salvation" (shiye jiuguo 實業救國) and integrated social science survey methods into the study of modern Chinese economics. The professionalization of Chinese socio-economic investigations was facilitated by the interplay between American economists, the American Foundation, and China, shaping the discipline of modern Chinese applied social sciences. These American returned economists served as translators, disseminators, and practitioners of knowledge production, actively engaging in social transformation through scientific investigations of China's socio-economic landscape.

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## **The American-trained in the China Foundation**

*Chengji (Sally) Xing, Columbia University*

The period when the notorious Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943) was enforced overlapped with an exciting series of intellectual exchanges and conversations across the Pacific, and the American intellectual connections with China at this time were much more frequent and sustained than was generally believed. In 1913 and 1921, the leading educational scholar at Teachers College, Paul Monroe, visited China, and his colleague John Dewey spent over two years lecturing in China between 1919 and 1921. The Science Society of China was founded at Cornell amongst a group of Chinese students in the United States, notably Ren Hongjun (H. C. Zen) in Ithaca. In the same period, Hu Shi, Jiang Menglin (Chiang Monlin) and other Chinese students in the US worked closely with John Dewey, Paul Monroe and William Kilpatrick at Columbia, and the Nankai president Zhang Boling came to study at the Teachers College as a visiting scholar (trip later accompanied by his Nankai colleagues, Yan Xiu and Fan Yuanlian).

These Chinese intellectuals who looked towards the progressive era United States for solutions of all sorts in China later communicated with the American intellectuals such as John Dewey and Paul Monroe, on the subject of educational reform, and ultimately collaborated in establishing the China Foundation for the Promotion of Culture and Education ("the China Foundation"), an organization that administered the second American remission of Boxer Indemnity funds to China and a key sponsor of science.

The China Foundation, drawn from the second American remission of the Boxer Indemnity Funds, served as a sponsor of the development of scientific research, teaching and training in modern China. This paper focuses on the experiences and trajectories of the cohort of American-trained Chinese intellectuals at Columbia and Teachers College, Hu Shi, Jiang Menglin, Ren Hongjun and



Zhang Boling and their active roles in the China Foundation. It also discusses the somehow neglected experiences of three female protagonists involved in the China Foundation story as prominent scholars and scientists, notably the American-trained Chen Hengzhe (Sophia H. C. Zen), Lin Huiyin (Phyllis Whei-yin Lin) and Wu Jianxiong (Chien-Shiung Wu).

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## **Lives and Choices of Western-Educated Chinese Returnees: Exploring Inner Emigration through the Case of Wu Mi**

*Fang Ruobing, University of Göttingen*

This paper delves into the lives and choices of Chinese intellectuals who were educated in the West, returned to China before 1949, and chose to stay in the country after the conclusion of the civil war (1945-1949). Focusing on the understudied group of “returnees,” the study seeks to understand how their identity as “returnees” influenced their lives in post-1949 China, particularly during the politically charged campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. By examining individual cases of returnees and utilizing surviving diaries, correspondence, poetry, and self-criticism materials, this research sheds light on their unique perspectives as outsiders within the newly formed society.

In this paper, the spotlight is on Wu Mi (1894-1978), a Chinese intellectual who received his education in the United States and made the decision to remain in mainland China in 1949, despite being critical of the Chinese Communist Party. The author argues that Wu Mi experienced a form of “inner emigration” in the subsequent decades—a concept derived from German academia, which describes the psychological and emotional detachment of individuals from the values and political systems of their society while physically staying within its borders. Utilizing Wu Mi’s extensive documentation, including candid journals covering the final three decades of his life (a rarity among his contemporaries), the paper demonstrates the potential of the concept of inner emigration in contextualizing post-1949 Chinese history. Wu Mi’s experiences serve as a microcosm of the intellectual community in China, exemplifying his deliberate withdrawal from interpersonal relationships, reduction of material needs, limitation of public speech, and immersion in recollections of what he perceived as the Western world.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

**Cécile Armand** is a postdoctoral researcher in history and a member of the ERC-funded project “Elites, Networks, and Power in modern China” (ENP-China) at Aix-Marseille University. She is the author of *Madmen in Shanghai: A social history of adverting in modern China* (Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023). She has published extensively on advertising, urban history, transnational elites, Sino-American relations, and computational methods in history. She is the principal investigator of a three-year research project titled “China’s Great Brain Gain: A data-rich history of American-educated Chinese (1850-1950)” in collaboration with Benoit Fabre (Computer Science and Systems Laboratory - LIS), funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (grant no. RG004-U-21). Her research has also received the support of the French National Research Agency (ANR) through its “Access ERC” program.

**Ruobing Fang** is a PhD candidate at the university of Göttingen under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Dominic Sachsenmaier. Her research project focuses on the “Lives and Choices of Western-Educated Chinese Intellectuals”. She is concurrently employed as a cultural consultant for the Human Resources department of Mercedes-Benz AG in Bremen, Germany. She obtained her Master degree in International Affairs from Peking University and in International history from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her thesis dealt with the territorial dispute over Hong Kong between the nationalist China, Britain and Japan. She also worked as a research assistant of the department sponsored by the Humboldt Foundation until 2018.

**Peter E. Hamilton** is Assistant Professor in World History (Pacific World) at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. He is the author of *Made in Hong Kong: Transpacific Networks and a New History of Globalization* (Columbia University Press, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, 2021), which was a finalist for the 2022 Hagley Prize in Business History. His second book project is investigating the history of 'scientific' management as both business practice and evolving socio-economic ideal across twentieth-century Chinese history. This project is under contract with Columbia University Press and has received generous support from Hong Kong's Research Grants Council, the Fudan Development Institute, and the Academia Sinica's Institute of Modern History. Hamilton's research has also appeared or will soon appear in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *Business History*, *Twentieth-Century China*, *The International History Review*, and other outlets.

**Christian Henriot** is Professor of modern Chinese history at Aix-Marseille University and a former Senior Research Fellow at the Institut Universitaire de France (2007-2012). He is the author and editor of several books on modern Chinese history, including *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai. A Social History, 1849-1949* (Cambridge UP, 2001), *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun. Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (Cambridge UP, 2004), *Visualizing China* (Brill, 2012) and *Scythe and the city. A social history of death in Shanghai (1865-1965)* (2016, Stanford UP). Henriot is also the creator of a digital research and resource platform on Shanghai history (<http://virtualshanghai.net>) and the P.I. of the ENP-China Project (ERC) (<https://www.enpchina.eu/>).

**Thorben Pelzer** is a postdoc researcher on modern Chinese history at the Research Centre Global Dynamics, Leipzig University. He graduated in Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, and East Asia Studies. He studied at Bochum University, Osaka University, Tongji University in Shanghai, and National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei. He has been a fellow of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. He has published monographs, articles, and datasets on China, including *Engineering Trouble: US–Chinese Experiences of Professional Discontent, 1905–1945* (Brill, 2023) and *100 Karten über China* (Katapult, 2022).

**Sally Chengji Xing** is a visiting fellow of the Max Planck Institute of History of Science in Berlin (Lise Meitner Research Group, “China in the Global System of Science,” MPIWG) and the Joint Center for Advanced Studies “Worldmaking from Global Perspectives: a Dialogue with China;” she is also an incoming associate professor of US history at Nankai University. She is interested in writing US history from transnational and global perspectives. Her book manuscript is in progress,

“Pacific Crossings”: The China Foundation and a Negotiated Translation of American Science to China, 1913-1949”, examines how and to what extent did the American intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century influence the development of Chinese science. Her multi-archival research in China and the United States has been funded by the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Rockefeller Archive Center, the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine and numerous other graduate research fellowships at Columbia University in the City of New York. Her long-term research explores Sino-American intellectual history in transnational approaches, from early 20th century all the way to the late 1960s.

**Wu Lin-chun** is currently a professor of history at Taiwan Normal University. Her primary interest is Sino–American relations from the nineteenth century to the Cold War era, especially multinational corporations, technology transfer, and the network of relations in Sino–American interactions, both political and economic. She has been a visiting scholar in Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University and a Fulbright Scholar at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University. Her newly published book *Meiguo Ren Weijing de Zhongguo Meng: Qi ye, Ji shu yu Guanxi Wang* (*America's Unfinished China Dream: Business, Technology and Networks*), Taipei: Lian Jing, 2020, won the 10th Academia Sinica Scholarly Monograph Award in Humanities and Social Sciences. She is also the author of *American Big Business and China's Internationalization* (Lian Jing, 2012); *Standard Oil Company in China, 1870-1933* (Dao Xiang, 2001, revised simplified version, 2017); *Theory and Practice of Teaching History* (Wu Nan, 2003) and *America and Chinese Politics: A Study Centered on the North-South Division, 1917–1928* (Dong Da, 1996); “China and United States: Business, Technology and Networks, 1914-1941”, *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 27(2020); “Promoting Standardisation in Modern China: British and American Engineer Organisations, Local Chinese Engineers, and Their Transnational Networks, 1901–1941”, *Bulletin of Historical Research, National Taiwan Normal University*, Dec. 2021.