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# **The Autobiography of Yung Wing: An Attempt at U.S.-China Political Stability During the Era of Legal Exclusion, 1854-1909**

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## **Introduction**

*“The writing of history reflects the interests, predilections, and even prejudices of a given generation.” – John Hope Franklin*

Reflecting back on his early life and major accomplishments, Yung Wing published his autobiography *My Life in China and America* in 1909. He wrote about his times at Yale University, his introduction to the complex world of international business, and his hopes for his home country of China. Wing discussed many events in

his life as well as the important historical milestones during his lifetime, but he purposefully omitted multiple significant historical developments. Yung Wing also had his United States citizenship revoked and established a wonderful family in America. Although these events seem unrelated, these are just a few that Wing failed to mention in his autobiography. Yung Wing's life encompassed many themes from a significant period in history for Asians in America. His life illustrated a period of extreme anti-Asian racism, U.S.-China political turbulence, and the potential for U.S-China stability.

In the larger historiography of U.S.-China relations during the era of exclusion, Yung Wing embodied one man's attempt at a larger international change. In the literature on this exclusionary time period, historians usually focus on legislation or larger cultural changes. Even in the literature on Yung Wing, historians concentrate on American influence and education. Edmund Worthy chronicled the Western influence on various aspects of Yung Wing's life from education to family.<sup>1</sup> Other historians like Edward Rhoads focused on Wing's

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund H. Worthy, "Yung Wing in America," *Pacific Historical Review* 34, no. 3 (1965): 265.

contributions to strengthening U.S.-China relations through the creation of the Chinese Educational Mission.<sup>2</sup> The current analysis of Yung Wing's life evaluates how his autobiography illuminates the nature of U.S.-China relations around the year 1909, when Wing wrote his autobiography. This analysis concentrates on one life and one story and how one man attempts to create a larger change in the world.

Relations between China and the United States were undoubtedly tumultuous heading into the twentieth century, with anti-Asian sentiment at an all-time high and American legislation matching the feelings of the public.<sup>3</sup> Around 1905, America and China shifted towards more amicable relations.<sup>4</sup> Yung Wing recognized this shift and saw the potential for stability between the two countries that he loved. Through the writing and framing of his autobiography, Yung Wing omitted events and details to improve the image of the United States and overall promote a more non-racist portrayal of the United

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<sup>2</sup> Edward J.M. Rhoads, "In the Shadow of Yung Wing," *Pacific Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (2005): 19.

<sup>3</sup> Paul A. Kramer, "Imperial Openings: Civilization, exemption, and the geopolitics of mobility in the history of Chinese exclusion, 1868-1910," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 14, no. 3 (2015): 325-326.

<sup>4</sup> Emma J. Teng, "Chinese Elites and U.S. Gatekeeping: Racial Discrimination and Class Privilege in Boston's 1905 King Incident," *Modern American History* 4, no. 1 (2021): 12.

States. Wing's omissions were his attempt at stabilizing the relations between the U.S. and China in a time when the potential for change had increased.

### **Yung Wing's Early Life and Career**

Born in the Qing Dynasty (former Republic of China) in 1828, Yung Wing was the first Asian student to graduate from an American university. Wing graduated from Yale University in 1854.

In the chapter recounting his days at Yale University, Yung Wing discussed the many struggles he faced during his college years. Wing could not pay for college himself and through many connections, members of the Ladies' Association in Savannah, Georgia decided to help fund Wing's college career. A young Yung Wing certainly felt the burden of his finances throughout college and was always looking for opportunities to win or earn money. Not only did Wing struggle with finances, but he also experienced typical university student plights like struggling to keep up with the rigorous curriculum of Yale University.<sup>5</sup> During these formative years in the United States, Wing came to

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<sup>5</sup> Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (Portland: Mint Editions, 2021), 24-27. Originally published, 1909.

discover the large discrepancy between actually getting an education and the “kind of romance in [education] that captivates the imagination.”<sup>6</sup>

In making his decision to attend college, Yung Wing described his disillusionment with missionary work as a fairly ineffective strategy of enacting real change in China. When he realized that he could not finance college on his own, Wing sought advice from close friends and mentors in America. Many people told Wing to apply for funding for missionary work, but Wing thought that to be “utterly useless.”<sup>7</sup> Wing, with great certainty, rejected any idea of entering into this line of religious work abroad. He argued that going to China to spread Christianity “would handicap and circumscribe [his] usefulness.”<sup>8</sup> Wing never clarified where the strong aversion to missionary work came from, but his negative attitude towards the field could not have been more evident. He saw spreading Christianity as one small avenue of creating real change in China, unlike in the stories

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<sup>6</sup> Wing, 24.

<sup>7</sup> Wing, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Wing, 24.

of Yun Ch'i-ho and Yone Noguchi, where missionaries were often the main connection between Asia and America.

Although Yung Wing leaned away from missionary work, he still had a strong moral compass and felt an intense sense of duty to China. Wing thought that morals and duty were generated by a good education. For him, Wing's vocation in life, to advance China through education and smoothen the relationship between China and the U.S., came from his education at Yale. Interestingly, when Wing talked retrospectively of his education, he chose to say, "I often wished I had never been educated, as education had unmistakably enlarged my mental and moral horizon, and revealed to me responsibilities which the sealed eye of ignorance can never see, and sufferings and wrongs of humanity to which an uncultivated and callous nature can never be made sensitive."<sup>9</sup> He even went on to say that he thinks the more one knows, the less happy one will be. It is apparent that Wing was feeling considerable responsibilities to use his new education for the benefit of China. Arguably, he did benefit China with the Chinese Education Mission. Although Wing portrayed his experience at Yale as

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<sup>9</sup> Wing, 27.

overwhelming, depressing, and taxing, Wing still thought education was necessary to better the world, which is why he worked so passionately to establish the Chinese Educational Mission. Education was burdensome because it opened one's eyes to the unignorable injustices of the world while also providing one with the tools to heal these injustices. Even though Wing portrayed college and education as burdensome, he still deemed it necessary and wanted an American educational influence in China. To Wing, the burden is necessary to progress the world.

Yung Wing's chapter on college detailed the academic and financial struggles he faced during those years, but what stood out the most was certain omissions: Wing did not talk about any relationships with other students or professors, other than that nearly everyone knew that he was the first Chinese student to graduate from Yale. There is simply no information on how his classmates treated him or how leadership at Yale treated him. Given that Wing is the first Chinese student to graduate from an American university, there were likely some students who did not accept him there, but Wing never mentions

discrimination or racism. Wing attended college in 1850s America; no mention of anti-Asian racism was certainly surprising.<sup>10</sup>

In one of the few stories where Wing admits that race played a role, Yung Wing got into a physical altercation with a fellow businessman in Shanghai in 1855. Things got physical between Wing and another businessman, and Wing hit the other man and essentially won the fight. Some Chinese were proud of Wing for winning. Race came into play after Wing had won. Witnesses stated that the other man “did not care to show himself more on account of being whipped by a little Chinaman in a public manner.”<sup>11</sup> Wing’s words reveal his awareness of the stereotype of Asian men as inferior and physically weaker than white men. This story is one of the few where Wing openly talked about race playing a role. I think it is worth noting that he mentioned race here with a story where he won, and China benefited.

In another chapter, Yung Wing details his entrance into the job market. Like many students who graduate from a prestigious

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<sup>10</sup> Kramer, 325-326.

<sup>11</sup> Wing, 42.

university, Yung Wing held an elitist view of what was a worthy post-graduate career coming from Yale University. Wing was offered a job as a comprador in Japan but declined the offer because although lucrative, the job is menial, and “as a graduate of Yale, one of the leading colleges in America, [he] could not think of bringing discredit to [his] Alma Mater.”<sup>12</sup> In the previous chapter, Wing was looking for translator work and struggled to find a job that met his standards. There seems to be a paradox with Wing and his views on American education: he idolized American education and believed everyone should be educated—or at least influenced—by America while he struggled to find a job after graduating from an elite American school. This seems very American: everybody acting like things are better than they actually are. Even those who are not educated elites still felt pressure to uphold a certain image in America that it is the greatest and most superior country.

Wing began to embody some American ideals and themes, such as pride and poverty. During his largely unsuccessful job search, a friend said that “Yung Wing is poor but proud. Poverty and pride

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<sup>12</sup> Wing, 45.

usually go together, hand in hand.”<sup>13</sup> The connection between pride and poverty seems staunchly American. Americans would sooner die than admit that America might be doing them a disservice or is not the greatest country in the world. They will accept wherever they fall and perhaps even defend that position. That’s not to say that people should not be content with their situation, but it is to say that the connection between pride and poverty is arguably American, and Wing seemed to exhibit this theme. Wing was greatly influenced by his time in America, becoming quite popular and gaining a reputation in China as “the Chinese student educated in America.”<sup>14</sup> With this “title,” Wing gained trust, respect, and distinction.

Again, there are substantial things missing from the narrative that Wing painted for himself, and it raises the question as to why he made these choices. After reading Yung Wing’s autobiography, I realized that Wing barely mentioned his family in the United States. Wing had a wife and two sons in the United States, so I figured that the minimal inclusion of them in his life story was intentional. Family

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<sup>13</sup> Wing, 45.

<sup>14</sup> Wing, 44.

is important in both China and America; why would Wing omit them from his autobiography?

### **The Absence of a Family**

Though barely mentioned in his autobiography, Yung Wing had an American wife, Mary Kellogg, with whom he had two children, Morrison and Bartlett.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Wing married a white woman and had two biracial sons. Mary Kellogg was mentioned for the first time in the twentieth out of twenty-two chapters. She is only mentioned in this chapter so Wing can explain why he had to return to the United States: Mary was dying. Although Wing did not mention Mary until the end of the autobiography, he surprisingly said, “her death made a great void in [his] after-life, which was irreparable.”<sup>16</sup> Mary’s death in 1886 prompted Wing to assume the roles of both parents for his sons. Wing spoke highly of his sons, saying that they “are most faithful, thoughtful and affectionate sons, and [he] is proud of their manly and earnest Christian characters.”<sup>17</sup> Wing praised his son’s Christian religiosity to appeal to an American audience. A

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<sup>15</sup> Wing, 115-117.

<sup>16</sup> Wing, 115.

<sup>17</sup> Wing, 115.

Chinese man raising two Christian sons would certainly work to improve America's image of China. It is very telling that in the few words Wing used to discuss his sons, he chose to talk about their faith and good Christian character, a trait heavily revered by Americans. Wing's words reveal that he deeply valued his family, but their absence from the majority of Wing's story suggests an ulterior motive at work. Wing's minimization of his family revealed who he was and what he intended for his narrative.

For a man who idolized America, marrying an American woman was ideal. Wing did not discuss his motivation for marrying Mary, but his close friend had an interesting insight before the marriage. The friend, Joseph Twichell, said, "my wife and I often used (before this union was contemplated) to suggest the thought of marriage to Wing as we sat at our fireside, and to his reply that there was no Chinese woman whom he would marry and no American lady who would marry him."<sup>18</sup> Obviously, there was an American woman who did marry Wing, and his marriage to Mary was arguably one of his most serious attempts to fully immerse himself in America. A

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<sup>18</sup> Worthy, 277.

successful marriage between a Chinese man and an American woman would have certainly represented a microcosm of stable relations between the United States and China. Given that this stability was Wing's goal in writing his autobiography, why only briefly mention his family at the end of the narrative?

Wing's exclusion of his family from his life story further solidified the goal of his autobiography: to stabilize and pacify relations between the United States and China. Wing's family was his most significant claim to a true life in America. Stepping back, a stable, interracial relationship would have been an effective demonstration and symbol for peaceful relations between the U.S. and China, but he barely discussed it because he didn't see family relations as an agent for international change. Wing expected change to happen through education, exposure, or legislation. Education was the main reason that he left his two sons in America when he had to return to China.<sup>19</sup> Wing also might have recognized that interracial relationships were discouraged in America. His autobiography was intended for an American audience, and with that, comes prejudiced and racist

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<sup>19</sup> Wing, 117.

Americans who heavily despised interracial relationships. By keeping the mention of his wife to a minimum, Wing minimized potentially upsetting Americans who condemned interracial relationships.

Although Wing seemed to deeply value his wife and two sons, he did not think they fit in the pro-U.S.-China peace narrative that he crafted. Wing's marriage and family would have been central to his story if it was truly about himself, but his autobiography served a greater, international purpose.

### **Wing's Autobiography Attempts Stability in Turbulent U.S.-China Relations before 1909**

Yung Wing published his autobiography *My Life in China and America* in 1909, a turbulent time in U.S. and Chinese relations. With the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the United States was increasingly leaning towards a "closed gate" immigration policy where the gate restrictions are dependent upon race and nationality.<sup>20</sup> Anti-Asian policies were on the rise coming into the twentieth century, and China used diplomacy and economic sanctions to try to counteract America's racist policies. New potential for stability occurred around

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<sup>20</sup> Teng, 2-3.

1905 when China's economic pressure made America rethink its immigration policies. Wing recognized this new opening for stability, and he wrote his story to promote new stability. The way Wing wrote about his life when he was writing in 1909 reveals the turbulent nature of U.S.-China relations before 1909.

After Yung Wing graduated from Yale in 1854, he immediately returned to China in search of work, but returned to America again around 1864.<sup>21</sup> Wing went back and forth between the United States and China, but it is this time period in America after 1854 that saw increasing anti-Asian sentiments and anti-Asian legislation.

Beginning with the Naturalization Act of 1870, the United States entered an era filled with anti-Asian legislation and restrictive immigration policies. Between 1840 and 1860 there was a substantial increase in global migration, especially towards the United States. This global shift in populations and rise in expatriation triggered a reevaluation of U.S. immigration and citizenship laws. The Naturalization Act of 1870 lies in the greater context of Reconstruction policies where America was forced to come to terms with race,

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<sup>21</sup> Wing, 28, 83.

personhood, and citizenship.<sup>22</sup> The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to American-born African Americans, but the question of foreign-born persons was still up for debate. After global disputes, domestic debates on the racial boundaries of American citizenship, and a grapple with “the Chinese Question,” Congress came to a conclusion: the laws of naturalization were extended to persons of African nationality and African descent.<sup>23</sup> By specifically including Africans and African Americans, Congress excluded Asians or persons of Asian descent. This act of legislation—which attempted to increase federal control over immigration and citizenship—confirmed existing anti-Asian sentiment in America and led to restricted immigration for Asian people.

Anti-Asian sentiment could be felt in the American public. One of the most famous political cartoons of all time, “The Chinese Question,” created by Thomas Nast and published in Harper’s Weekly, captured America’s feelings toward Asian immigration in 1871. In this cartoon, Columbia (female symbol of America) stands defiantly

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<sup>22</sup> Lucy E. Salyer, “Reconstructing the Immigrant: The Naturalization Act of 1870 in Global Perspective,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 3 (2021): 382-384.

<sup>23</sup> Salyer, 398.

between an angry group of American men and a threatened Asian man.<sup>24</sup> “The Chinese Question” so accurately represents American public thought in 1871, which centered on a strong hate and aversion for the inclusion of Asians in American society. This question was answered one too many times following its publication, most notably with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which prohibited the immigration of all Chinese laborers.<sup>25</sup> Wing lost his citizenship after the implementation of the Naturalization Act of 1870.<sup>26</sup> He ended up having to deal with the state department and eventually lost his citizenship in 1898. Secretary of State John Sherman specifically cited the Naturalization Act of 1870 as well as other court precedents as rationale for revoking Wing’s citizenship<sup>27</sup>. America leaned into anti-Asian sentiment, but China also experienced a historic moment of anti-Western rebellion.

The Boxer Uprising (or Rebellion) was an anti-Western, anti-Christian rebellion in China from 1899 to 1901 that sought to

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Nast, “The Chinese Question,” Cartoon, *Library of Congress*, Harper’s Weekly, 1871.

<sup>25</sup> Teng, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Worthy, 283.

<sup>27</sup> Worthy, 283-284.

eradicate Christian imperialist influence in China by destroying anything and anyone touched by the West. Members of a religious group called the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists originally launched the rebellion in 1899. The ruling Qing supported the strong nationalist movement, but their support was not enough.<sup>28</sup> In alliance with other nations, the United States military brutally crushed the uprising in 1900. The U.S. then imposed an excessive indemnity on China for an arbitrary amount of \$25 million (not adjusted for inflation) for losses during the rebellion.<sup>29</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt felt some sense of remorse with how the U.S. treated China following the rebellion, prompting him to create a large scholarship program to fund Chinese students' education in the U.S.<sup>30</sup> While President Roosevelt might have been remorseful, the Boxer Indemnity Scholars Program had an ulterior motive. The president saw Chinese

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<sup>28</sup> Madeline Y. Hsu, "Chinese and American Collaborations through Educational Exchange during the Era of Exclusion, 1872-1955," *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (2014): 320.

<sup>29</sup> Delber L. McKee, "The Boxer Indemnity Remission: A Damage Control Device?" *Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* 23, no. 1 (1991): 1.

<sup>30</sup> Hsu, 320-321.

students' education in America "as a civilizing force among this backward race."<sup>31</sup>

Because Wing sought to portray a more positive image of America, Yung Wing omitted the Boxer Rebellion and the consequent Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program from his autobiography. The omission of the Boxer Rebellion was no surprise considering any mention of an anti-Western movement would contradict the very purpose of Wing's self-written narrative. More surprising was Wing's omission of the scholarship program. This program was established quite close to the publication date of Wing's autobiography in 1909, with the first class of Chinese students arriving the same year.<sup>32</sup> Wing's rationale for the omission could be as simple as him not wanting to mention the program without knowing the outcome of the program. A more likely explanation is that Wing was an intellectual and might have recognized the United States' inadequate attempt at reconciling with China. Wing did support American educational influence on China, but he could likely tell the difference between a performative

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<sup>31</sup> Hsu, 322.

<sup>32</sup> McKee, 17.

policy and a genuine one. The scholarship program was a ploy to reconcile its necessary relationship with China, but Wing always supported American educational influence on China for the betterment of China, not America.

Tensions were building with the recent end of the Boxer Rebellion, and anti-Western sentiment in China—along with its consequences—were now clear for America. In the Boston Chinatown Raid of 1903, immigration officers arrested over 200 Chinese immigrants. In 1905, the United States Supreme Court removed the right to judicial review on Chinese immigration cases in *United States v. Ju Toy*.<sup>33</sup> All of these events highlighted the incessant harassment of Asian immigrants in America after the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Despite these developments, a pivot away from a “wholesale Chinese ban” was on the horizon.<sup>34</sup>

The Gresham-Yang Treaty, the current document that was dictating immigration between the United States and China, was set to expire in 1904.<sup>35</sup> Chinese and American diplomats went to work

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<sup>33</sup> Teng, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Teng, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Kramer, 333.

drafting a treaty that both countries would agree on to replace the treaty. Multiple treaties were drafted by both sides without one ever being agreed upon. America wanted closed borders while China wanted open borders. In 1904, American diplomats and the Bureau of Immigration decided on legislation that heavily restricted Chinese access to the United States.<sup>36</sup> Naturally, Chinese diplomats did not agree with this treaty and proposed another to the United States which was again dismissed. China became disillusioned with the idea of settling immigration through diplomacy or treaties because finding common ground seemed impossible. They had tried, and hopes for diplomacy were crushed.<sup>37</sup> The failure of diplomacy with the United States pushed China to seek other means of pressuring Washington to adopt less exclusive immigration policies.

Two years after the 1903 Boston Chinatown Raid, immigration officials in Boston detained four Chinese students of the King family. Due to their upper-class status, the detainment and resultant outrage gave momentum to the Anti-American Boycott Movement in China

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<sup>36</sup> Kramer, 333.

<sup>37</sup> Kramer, 333.

from 1905 to 1906.<sup>38</sup> Given that the *Ju Toy* decision closed off judicial routes, Shanghai felt that economic coercion was their only option to sway American policy. Shanghai enforced a general boycott of all American goods.<sup>39</sup> Through economic pressure, the Chinese effectively forced the U.S. to reevaluate their immigration policies and pivot away from the potential “wholesale Chinese ban.”<sup>40</sup> In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt was urged to offer the Boxer Indemnity scholarships to smooth over the tensions resulting from the anti-Chinese legislation and mishandling of the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>41</sup>

It was these events that represent U.S.-China relations up to 1909, and it was these events that Yung Wing witnessed before publishing his autobiography. Wing understood that the U.S. and China had much potential to mend relations, and wanted to build momentum towards bridging his two countries. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were filled with anti-Asian immigration policies. With the shift in U.S.-China relations around 1905 and increasing potential for stability, Wing framed his narrative

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<sup>38</sup> Teng, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Teng, 12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Teng, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Hsu, 322.

in a way that promoted this stability. Wing undoubtedly experienced racism and discrimination in America, but he chose not to discuss it. He also chose not to mention how the Secretary of State revoked his U.S. citizenship. When writing his book during a time where cooperation and peace between the U.S. and China seemed feasible, Wing used his autobiography as an attempt to stabilize the relations between his two countries.

### **An Author With a Greater Purpose**

Although Wing's autobiography was his attempt to stabilize U.S.-China relations, he intentionally geared the narrative towards an American audience, not a Chinese one. Wing wrote and published his autobiography in English. If his autobiography was an attempt to stabilize U.S.-China relations, the fact that he wrote to an American audience reveals that Wing believed America to be the agent of change. As much as Wing idolized the United States, his view of America as the agent of change suggested that—in Wing's eyes—America was the one which needed to address its own issues, namely the problem of anti-Asian legislation. Wing seemed to realize

that America was the problem, even if he wished China to further engage the United States.

The mere structure of the autobiography revealed that Wing's purpose in writing the narrative was never just to recount the story of his life but to serve a greater purpose in diplomacy between the United States and China. The book certainly centers around Wing's life and chronologically matches the events of his life, but a substantial amount of the book focuses on historical events of which Wing is not at the center. He chronicled his trip to the Tea Districts, reflects on the Taiping Rebellion, and discusses Coolie traffic in Peru.<sup>42</sup> Even the contents of the book point to the fact that Wing wanted to write about larger historical events and themes. He succeeded in taking some of the focus away from himself and redistributing it to history. It is for this reason that I use Yung Wing's autobiography to analyze the time period in which he wrote it.

Yung Wing cares about the relationship between China and America because he spent his whole life balancing his loyalty between the two countries. Wing's wife was American, and his children were

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<sup>42</sup> Wing, 62-103.

obviously Asian American, but his mother and siblings were all Chinese. He possessed important connections in both countries. He spent so much time in America, but in his eyes, it was to “prepare [himself] for [his] life work in China.”<sup>43</sup> That is to say, China was always in the back of Wing’s mind wherever he was. Wing wanted improved relations between China and America because that would mean improvement for China. If the Chinese had more general access to America, China could be more like the West, which was a good thing in Wing’s view. In some respects, Wing desired for China that which he had seen in America, such as a naval school and a national standard banking system.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, Wing hoped that his autobiography would contribute to the improvement of the two countries he cared for.

## **Conclusion**

When sitting down to write the story of his life, Yung Wing made some insightful decisions as to what was included in the narrative and what was not. Wing purposefully omitted events such as racist interactions with Americans, the revocation of his American

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<sup>43</sup> Wing, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Wing, 60.

citizenship, and the Boxer Rebellion. Wing even largely excluded his family from the story of his life. Through these omissions, Wing painted a more positive image of the United States in hopes of stabilizing the relations between the United States and China. With China's economic boycotts against the United States forcing America to draft less restrictive immigration legislation, Wing saw new potential for positively influencing the two countries he loved.

Yung Wing's story sits in a much larger history between the United States and China. This history usually focuses on public feeling and legislature rather than individual lives as agents of change. He represents a complicated time between these two countries. Wing experienced a time where animosity for the other side was at an all-time high, yet he still hoped for stability and reconciliation. Yung Wing represents one life and one story that fits into a narrative of two countries.

The clear omissions from Yung Wing's autobiography call into question autobiographies as a source of historical truth. At first glance, Wing's autobiography seems untrustworthy and unreliable because this entire analysis essentially centers around the events that Wing did not

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mention. Humans write their stories with their own personal biases, often making themselves more moral or more interesting in the process. People have complete control over how they tell their story and how they frame it. This sheer amount of control undeniably leaves room for exaggeration, misleading the audience, and intentionally framing stories to improve the image of the subject. I argue that the absence of truth can be just as significant as openly telling the truth. A lot can be said about Yung Wing and the period around 1909 when considering what he left out of his story. 1909 provided new opportunities for international stability, and Wing wanted to contribute to this stability. Autobiographies often do not inform us on the time they were written *about* as much as the time they were written *in*.

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