



The American Presence in Macao

Some Chinese Perceptions of the U.S.

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As we all know, before the First Opium War and Hong Kong's takeover by the British, Macao served as the key bridge for economic and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world—especially the European countries, including Portugal, Netherlands, France, Great Britain, etc.—but also India, Japan, Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the United States. The topic of Macao's role in the history of Sino-European relations has attracted many Chinese and Western scholars, who have done extensive research on the subject. Yet, for the obvious reason that the United States was a latecomer among the imperialist powers in the 18th and 19th centuries and was a much less influential power in early Sino-Western relations, scholars have not paid enough attention to the impact of the United States on China through Macao and the perception of Americans among the Chinese of Macao during that period. This situation, however, has significantly changed since the handover of Macao from Portugal to China. As giant American enterprises such as Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas Sands and Venetian Macao have successfully joined the casino business and have established a strong foothold in Macao, we can no longer ignore the issue of the American impact on Macao's economy, possibly on Macao's social and political development as well, and the role of Macao

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in Sino-American relations. Nor can we ignore the image of the U.S. in Macao which has developed from the past. Focusing on this last point, the present paper addresses the above issues by describing some highlights of the perceptions of Americans among the Chinese in Macao, both past and present.

The earliest Chinese encounter with Americans occurred when John Green, captain of an American ship called *The Empress of China* that set out from New York on 22 February 1784, dropped anchor at Macao on 23 August 1784. 'The Chinese were intrigued by the strange combination of stars and red and white stripes' on 'the newly made American flag' flying on the ship.1 One of the passengers on board was Major Samuel Shaw, who carried a commission signed by President George Washington to serve as consul for the United States of America in Canton. In the spring of 1790, Major Shaw sold his own vessel, the Massachusetts, to the Danish Asiatic Company in Canton for \$65,000 dollars. This ship became a symbolic image of Americans in Macao, as it represented advanced ocean power and modern technology. Like most American ships, which were called 'The China Clippers,' it was not only small, handsome and handy, but also much faster than others.2

Indeed, the number of American ships coming to China via Macao to trade their large cargoes of cotton and ginseng for tea and Nankeen quickly increased to five in 1786, 15 in 1789, and 42 in 1821.³ In 1796, U.S. dollars were introduced into the U.S.-China trade. By the early 19th century, the United States became the number two trader with China and

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the most competitive business rival of the British.⁴ While exchanging their cargoes with Americans and counting American payments in U.S. dollars, Chinese businessmen could not help but study the American national coin, which was stamped with the head of General Washington and fifteen stars on the front, and the motto of 'liberty' and an eagle surrounded by laurels on the reverse. What these Chinese merchants were thinking upon seeing this American motto of 'liberty' we cannot say, but the image of Americans among the Chinese in Macao—at least among these Chinese merchants—was certainly associated with these American coins and the 'liberty' motto.

The increase of the Sino-American trade at Canton brought American people and missionaries to Macao as well. In 1802, there were only two American citizens residing at Macao, but the number of American residents in Macao increased to twenty in 1826. In addition, large numbers of American citizens at Canton often paid visits to Macao at the height of the trading season.5 On 7 September 1807, the American ship Trident brought Robert Morrison, the first Western Protestant missionary to China, who came to Macao in the spring of 1808. The first American Protestant missionary, Elijah Coleman Bridgman, however, did not come to China until 1830; the first American medical missionary, Peter Parker did not arrive until February 1834; and the first American Presbyterian missionary to Macao, Thomas McBryde did not appear there until December 1841. McBryde left Macao the following year due to health problems, but Walter M. Lowrie, who came to Macao in 1842, replaced McBryde, and seven more American Presbyterian missionaries joined Lowrie between 1843 and 1846.6 In February 1844, David B. McCartee and Richard Cole brought printing presses with matrices for both Chinese characters and English letters to Macao, and they began to print reading materials for missionaries. For instance, on 7 September 1844, they printed 13,000 copies of the Gospels in one single day. In May 1845, the Presbyterian missionaries at Macao established a boys' school with an enrollment of about 30 students, and the Chinese students were very interested in courses on religion and science.⁷ These American missionaries and their activities in Macao would impact significantly the society of Macao and influence the image of Americans in Macao. Yet this 'spiritual' image of Americans built up by the work of these missionaries may have been offset and tarnished

by the other, more materialistic, Americans who were involved in the opium trade. In 1816, the crew of the American ship *Wabash*, which was carrying a cargo of opium, was murdered by a boatload of Chinese men pretending to offer them services. All the opium on the ship was plundered.⁸

The Chinese view of Americans inevitably developed in comparison with their views of other foreigners, particularly prior to the First Opium War. In the case of Terranova, an Italian sailor on an American ship, the Emily, who accidentally killed a boatwoman in a sampan on the Whampoa River in October 1821, the American captain Copeland firmly refused to surrender his sailor to the Chinese authorities without their pledge that the man would be returned after the trial. But in the event, the Americans could do nothing, for the Chinese judge held the trial on board the ship and later Terranova surrendered himself, as 1,000 Chinese soldiers stayed aboard the ship and warships surrounded it for a few days. Eventually, Terranova was sentenced to death by strangulation. In a similar case, however, the British Superintendent Charles Elliott not only refused to meet the demand, issued by Lin Zexu 林则徐, to hand over to the Chinese authorities the British sailors who destroyed a temple near Kowloon in July 1839 and killed a Chinese man named Lin Weixi; he also seized Hong Kong island in August 1839, which was a step toward the outbreak of the First Opium War. The Qing Government realized that among foreign powers the British were the most dangerous and cunning, the French the next, and the Americans 'respectful and obedient.'9 Lin Zexu believed that the Americans were honest and trustworthy. 10 The report from the Grand Council for Military Affairs stated on 22 March 1844 that 'Americans have always traded quietly, and have never challenged China, nor caused any trouble...'11

The Chinese view of Americans could be influenced by other foreigners' views of Americans as well. In the trade competition of the early 19th century between the British, who were the fierce rival of the Portuguese, and the Americans, who were the newcomers, the Portuguese of Macao seemed to be on the American side. During the American War of 1812 and the Embargo Act of England, the Portuguese did not only allow at least one American ship to trade under the Portuguese national flag, but also vigorously protested against the British action of seizing the

American cargo ship Hunter in April 1814, which was flying its own national flag in Chinese waters near Macao.12 It seems that the local Portuguese at Macao considered the Americans to be the one power of the time that could resist Great Britain. Indeed, the Americans did attempt to fight the East India Company's monopoly on trade. In defiance of the Cohong and the East India Company, who were anxious to confine all foreign trade to themselves, American merchants managed to develop the practice of doing business with small Chinese merchants outside of the Co-hong.13 We may imagine that small Chinese merchants would welcome the opportunity to conduct business with American merchants, and viewed them as friendly, flexible and courageous people. At the same time, the Co-hong merchants, even though they resented the Americans for their violation of the exclusive privilege of the Co-hong, could be impressed as well by their shrewdness, persistence and willingness to take risks.

Historical records have not preserved an enormous amount of information on Chinese views of Americans from their early encounters, but there are a few records that may indirectly reflect some possible Chinese perceptions of America. For instance, similar to the positive Portuguese view of Americans, some Chinese officials concluded that in comparison with other foreign traders, the Americans 'had quietly conducted their trade...and had no conflict with or intention to challenge China.'14 The Canton Register (1827-44), the first publication in a foreign language edited in mainland China, was established by a young American, William W. Wood. Every week it published commercial and social information about foreigners in China, half of the year in Canton and the other half in Macao. Due to the paper's attacks on the East India Company and the fact that it was financed by Jardine and Matheson, the biggest private British company, Wood soon lost his job at *The Canton Register*. Later, working for Russell & Co., William Wood started his own publication, The Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette, on 28 July 1831 (the title was changed to The Chinese Courier in April 1832), but the publication was stopped in Macao on 23 September 1833.15 The above publications, along with two other important journals related to Macao-The Canton Press (called The Macau Press in Chinese 澳门新闻纸) and The Chinese Repository)—played a key role in importing

Western and American ideas into China. The Haiguo Tuzhi 海国图志 (Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms) by Wei Yuan 魏源 included much content from The Chinese Repository (1832-52), which was mainly edited by the American missionary Elijah Coleman Bridgman. The Canton Press was established by Edmund Moller in 1835, and was printed in Macao beginning in July 1839. Lin Zexu paid great attention to this journal and ordered his assistants to collect and translate all the information from The Canton Press on current affairs related to foreign countries, such as opium production, the international response to China's ban on opium trade and smoking, and the activities of Westerners in China's neighboring states. The effort to collect information from The Canton Press, which continued from July 1838 to November 1840 when Lin was removed from his official position, resulted in six handwritten volumes. Lin's keen interest in the information on the West, especially America, was attested by his decision to order Liang Jinde 梁进德 to translate Hugh Murray's Cyclopedia of Geography, which dedicated one-fifth of its total space to America. Learning from all these publications, Lin found out that 'Among foreign countries England is the strongest; only America and France can still compete against it....It seems that the way to deal with the situation is to use foreigners to balance against foreigners.'16

Lin's positive view of Americans might also come from the fact that he was, through his own personal experience, much impressed by the medical achievements of the American missionary Peter Parker. Parker came to Macao in 1834 and opened his clinic in the 'Thirteen Factories' in Canton the following year and in 1835, Parker treated more than 2,000 patients, including Lin himself. From July to October 1838, Parker opened his clinic in Macao, where he treated 700 patients. Lin had been troubled by hernias and secretly sought Parker's help. In response, Parker not only successfully cured Lin's hernia, but also provided him with a piece of good advice on how to ease opium smokers' withdrawal from opium addiction. As a result, Lin praised Parker on many public occasions.¹⁷ During the First Opium War, Lin's trust in Americans was further tested. On 26 April 1840, the Americans at the 'Thirteen Factories' sent Lin a warning message that a large British fleet would come to China in June to blockade Canton port. Upon reviewing this message, Lin and his assistants had a discussion about whether



Kun Iam Temple in Macao.

the Americans' word could be trusted; they concluded that the Americans were honest, for they had shed their blood fighting England for their independence just 75 years previously.¹⁸

Peter Parker's medical activities in Canton and Macao also resulted in the development of a positive view of Americans among the Chinese officials who stayed in Macao to negotiate the Treaty of Wanghsia. These included Chi Ying 耆英, Chief Negotiator of the Treaty of Wanghsia and High Commissioner and Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi; Huang Entong 黄恩彤, assistant to Chi Ying for negotiation; and Pan Shicheng 潘仕成, China's representative to the negotiation, all of whom were in charge of

negotiating the Treaty of Wanghsia, which was signed at Kun Iam Temple in Macao on 3 July 1844. The parents of both Chi Ying and Pan Shicheng had been treated successfully by Parker. Grateful to Parker, Chi Ying gave him two wooden tablets inscribed with his own calligraphy: 'Miraculous Hands Bring the Dying Back to Life' and 'Longevity and Relief for Patients.' Huang Entong had also come to know Parker well due to Parker's medical successes. He was so impressed by the American missionary that during the negotiations he suggested a clause (item 17) stating that Americans shall have the right to build churches in China's treaty ports, which was eventually included in the final version of the Treaty of Wanghsia.¹⁹

In tracing the image of Americans in Macao, one cannot ignore the views of some students who had studied in the U.S., among whom the most influential were Yung Wing (Rong Hong 容闳) and Wong Shing (Huang Sheng 黄胜). Yung Wing was born on 17 November 1828 at Nam Ping (South Screen) on Pedro Island, about four miles to the west of Macao. At age seven, Yung Wing began attending the school established by a British woman, Mrs. Gutzlaff, wife of Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, in Macao. On 23 February 1839, Rev. Samuel Robbins Brown, a self-styled 'Maker of the New Orient' and an 1838 graduate of Yale University, came to Macao, and in November of that year established the Morrison School. He took Yung Wing, Wong Shing and Wong Foon (Huang Kuang 黄宽) to America to further their education. They boarded Captain Gillespie's Huntress, which departed from Whampoa Port in Canton on 4 January 1847, and arrived in New York on 12 April.²⁰ These Chinese boys first stayed at the home of Samuel Robbins Brown's wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Brown, and later were well treated by Rev. Shubael Bartlett and his wife Mrs. Bartlett, the parents of Mrs. Brown. At Monson Academy, Miss Rebekah Brown taught Yung Wing courses on physiology and psychological philosophy. Ms. Brown was a kind, peaceful and gentle lady with a great heart. She and her husband, Dr. A. S. McClean of Springfield, Massachusetts, were a great help to Yung Wing during his studies at Yale. Mrs. Phoebe H. Brown, Rebekah Brown's mother, took good care of the Chinese boys. She was an optimistic woman who possessed great moral strength and merit, even though she had encountered many difficult days in her life. For that, she won great respect from Yung Wing. That is also why Yung Wing made Springfield the headquarters for the first group of 120 Chinese students studying in America under his supervision.²¹

Yung Wing thought highly of the Americans. He appreciated the goodness of some Americans and was so grateful to the Brown family that he named his first son Morrison Brown Yung and his second son Bartlett G. Yung in honor of Robert Morrison, Samuel Brown and the Bartlett family. During the Civil War, Yung Wing demonstrated his love for his second homeland, America, by volunteering his services to Brigadier-General Barnes of Springfield, the father of his Yale schoolmate.²² In 1875, Yung Wing married Mary Kellogg (1851-86) from Avon, Massachusetts, which

was one of the two dreams that, he wrote, 'I wished to become true.'23 The young Yung Wing considered the American missionaries he met to be 'open-minded,' and relied heavily upon some Americans in his pursuit of a college education in America. On 15 April 1849, he wrote to Samuel Wells Williams, an American missionary, asking him to find a job for his brother Yung Asum and to persuade his father, Yung Ming Cheong, to let him stay in America in order to finish his Liberal Education there. 'They could not observe things as you and other open-minded people do,' Yung Wing said.²⁴ On 25 December 1850, he wrote Williams another long letter, saying that 'the old Yale campus is surrounded by an atmosphere of inspiration... My mind has never been so shocked and I am really enjoying being influenced.'25

Inspired and influenced by his own educational experience in America, Yung Wing was determined to put his understanding of America's success to use in reforming China by sending more Chinese students to America. Due to his efforts, 120 Chinese students went

Rong Hong 1828-1912.





to the U.S. in the summer of 1872 to pursue higher education, many of whom later became important statesmen, industrial leaders, top economic managers, military officers, etc. Moreover, Yung Wing advocated studying the U.S. banking system, and using the capital and talent of American businessmen to build China's railroads.²⁶ In the 1870s, Yung Wing played a critical role in investigating the exploitation and torture of Chinese coolies in Peru and negotiating with Spain and Peru to stop the coolie trade. Beginning in the 1840s, Macao became a notorious place for exporting Chinese coolies to Latin American countries. Living in Macao, Zheng Guanying 郑观应 wrote many articles criticizing the coolie trade centered in Macao.²⁷ Interestingly enough, although the United States was one of the countries that had imported Chinese coolies, the U.S. government was viewed by many Chinese as a reliable international force against the abuse of Chinese coolies and for human rights. From 1859 to 1868, Chinese coolies repeatedly wrote to American officials in charge of commerce or U.S. ministers to Peru to complain about their suffering and ask for help.²⁸ The U.S. government did respond to the Chinese call to stop torturing coolies and Frederick Low, U.S. Minister to China, sent the Qing government a memorandum outlining some ideas on how to stop the coolie trade on 15 June 1872.²⁹ In the ensuing 1873 negotiations with the representative of the Peru government on resolving the coolie issue, Li Hongzhang 李鸿章, the Chinese chief negotiator, called on Yung Wing to participate. Familiar with both American and international law, Yung Wing used American cases as precedents to turn down the Peruvian request to continue the coolie trade and keep the contracts signed by Chinese coolies.³⁰ The American actions against the coolie trade at Macao and Yung Wing's reliance on American laws to fight the coolie trade doubtlessly cast a profoundly positive image of the United States among the people of Macao.

Another student from Macao who went to America with Samuel Robbins Brown was Wong Shing (1827-1902). Wong Shing returned to China in 1848 because of illness. However, his short stay in America had already influenced Wong Shing's view of America and the world. In 1871, he and Wang Tao bought the printing office of the London Missionary Association,

with which they established the Zhonghua Yinwu Zongju 中华印务总局 (Chinese General Printing Office) thus initiating China's modern publishing industry. In 1873, Wong Shing took the second group of Chinese students to study in America. In 1874, he supported Wang Tao's bid to transform the Chinese General Printing Office into the Xunhuan Ribao 循环目报 (Daily Circulation), which became the first newspaper advocating reform in modern China, the first Chinese newspaper to include political commentary, and the most successful of all Chinese published newspapers. He translated many Western books and wrote several articles together with Wang Tao on military technology for reformers.³¹ Obviously, Wong Shing shared much of Yung Wing's view of America.

If Yung Wing's and Wong Shing's views of America only represented two Macao individuals' perceptions of the United States, and their actions influenced by American values were mostly taken outside Macao, Zhi Xin Bao 知新报 (Learning the New), established by Kang Youwei 康有爲 and Liang Qichao 梁启超 was an indigenous product and a very popular newspaper both locally and nationally. Zhi Xin Bao was financially supported by a Macao businessman and Kang's student He Huitian 何惠田, also He Tingguang 何廷光. Under Xu Qin's 徐勤 editorship, the newspaper published its first issue on 22 February 1897, producing one issue every five days at first, then every ten days starting with the twentieth issue; it stopped publication on 20 January 1901.³² From the first several issues of Zhi Xin Bao, readers can see the image of the U.S. in Macao as well as in the minds of the reformers. 'In just over one hundred years since its independence,' an editorial pointed out, 'America has become such a prosperous and powerful nation.' 'A dozen small countries in South America,' the article continued, 'have had no wars because of American leadership... The United States rules with no admonitions.... In about one hundred years, good knowledge developed competitively. From various and remote nations emerged Washington, who established democracy. Napoleon arose but monarchism declined.... From the era of monarchism to the time of democracy is the third change.' 'Thus,' the article concluded, 'Asia contains the old habits of the world; Europe opened up the new path of the earth, and America has achieved the great law of the universe.'33 Clearly, in the view of the editor and the

reformers of Macao, the U.S. was a powerful democratic nation and represented the great path that the rest of the world should follow.

Among all the reformers in Macao the most important was Sun Yat-sen. Sun was not born in Macao, but he was once a Macao resident. Sun's father was a shoemaker who lived in Macao during his early years and it was from Macao that Sun departed for America at age 12. In his five years of studying and living in Honolulu, Sun was enormously influenced by American and European cultures, education and democratic ideas. In 1883, it was again from Macao that Sun departed for Hong Kong to continue his education. During his college years, Sun frequently traveled between Hong Kong and Macao. In 1892, Sun graduated from the College of Medicine for Chinese in Hong Kong, headed by the famous American Dr. John Kerr, and moved to Macao, where he stayed for several years until 1897. Initially, Sun worked at the Kiang Wu hospital, and later he opened his own private clinic and pharmacy. He cooperated with a Macanese, Francisco Hermenegildo Fernandes, to publish the first bilingual weekly newspaper in Macao, the Echo Macanese (Chinese section entitled Ching-Hai Ts'ung Bao or Shing-hai Tsung Pao, 1893-5), which published several articles introducing Sun's ideas and political actions.³⁴ It is believed that it was during this period in Macao that Sun developed his republican ideals and goals, which were undoubtedly influenced by his education and life in America, his supporters from the United States, and his stay in the house of an American Protestant minister in Canton after his political failure in 1895. Thus, as a Macao resident, Sun's political ideals reflected the most notable image of the U.S. in Macao in the late 19th century: that of a democratic, prosperous, progressive and powerful nation.

One century later, one may find that this historical image of the U.S. in Macao has remained, and even strengthened, into the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, however, some negative perceptions of the U.S. have developed among the Chinese in Macao after the 2003 Iraq War. Before the war, the people of Macao in general had a favorable view of the United States. For instance, many Macao residents and scholars acclaimed the passage of the United States-Macao Policy Act of 2000, which they believed would elevate the international status of Macao and promote the U.S.-Macao trade, foreign investment in Macao, business opportunities

for Macao businessmen and educational opportunities for Macao students.³⁵ They believed that 'Americans pay great attention to the contractual spirit, trust and honor, and like to do everything through legal papers.'³⁶

After the Iraq War broke out, and especially with the opening of American casinos in Macao, however, local people's view of the U.S. changed and negative opinions began to increase. Most Macao people still welcomed or held a positive view of American people and American culture and products. They greatly appreciated American culture, as represented (for example) by the musical drama 'Chicago;' they were enormously touched and lightened by the American arts and theater, and they liked to promote the American model of 'general education' in Macao. Many Macao youth were eager to study in America and learn English, in the belief that they could find a better job at American casinos if they were proficient in English. Some scholars pointed out that Macao was not well known in the world before the American casino corporations arrived, and that many people thought Macao was a small area belonging to Hong Kong. However, it was the American casino corporations—all of which were world famous enterprises—that made Macao a truly global city known to most people in the world and that, in business circles, generated a lot of interest in investing in Macao.³⁷ Nevertheless, a negative view began to develop among the majority of Macao people. For instance, many people believed that the real purpose behind the U.S war in Iraq was not to transplant the American model of 'democratic freedom' to Iraq under the name of anti-terrorism, but actually to gain control of the natural resources in the Middle East.³⁸ Some Macao people even began to worry that the American anti-terrorist activities might result in the penetration of terrorists into Macao and terrorist attacks on American businesses in Macao, and that at the very least would bring to Macao the hegemonic and bossy style of the U.S. This apprehension was combined with the fear that once Macao conferred the rights to run casinos to American corporations and opened its doors to the inflow of American capital, the influence of the U.S. in Macao would significantly increase and the simple and laid-back life style of Macao people would be crushed by the alien but powerful American culture.³⁹ Thus, some opposed the idea of copying the Las Vegas model in Macao, and believed that the U.S. was attempting to use Christian culture and values to reform the rest

of the world and unify the world culturally. 40 Indeed, Macao people were greatly shocked when the decision was made to fire 160 Chinese employees of the Las Vegas Sands and when the U.S. government put Banco Delta Asia S.A.R.L. on its list of money launderers—actions which were seen by Macao people as evidence of a policy of American hegemonism that judged everything only from the perspective and interests of America. 41 They began to fear that the globalization of Macao would turn Macao into a dreamlike Macao Las Vegas or Macao Disney World, and that the Macao Venetian would become the new cultural symbol of the city. 42 Because the American-run casinos would hire more than 30,000 employees and pay the taxes that would provide a large proportion of Macao government revenue, some people worried that American capital would gain power over the political discourse and would influence Macao politics, turning Macao into a bridgehead for a 'color revolution' in mainland China.⁴³

Due to the constraints on time and available source materials, the author has only been able to analytically highlight here the Chinese people's images of the U.S. in Macao during certain points in history and at the present time—which, interestingly enough, happened to be at

both ends of the time spectrum. Although it is too soon to draw any conclusions from these observations, the analytical lines of this paper describe the development of Sino-American relations in general and Chinese views of Americans in Macao in particular. These two realms are different domains and cannot necessarily be equated with each other, but they are certainly closely related and do reflect upon each other. In the early days of China's encounter with Americans, when Americans had limited contact with mainland China and most people in mainland China had no idea who the Americans were, the Chinese perception of the U.S. in Macao was both significant and representative, and worthy of study. A closer comparative study of the image of Americans among the Chinese in Macao from the outset up to the present time will help provide a better understanding of the nature and evolution of Sino-American relations, and of Macao's role in the history of China's foreign relations. RC

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NOTES

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- José Maria Braga, With the Flowery Banner, pp. 14-15, 37; Tereza Sena, 'Historical Background of Macau with Particular Focus on the First Americans in China,' pp. 37-8.
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