

The Report Transmitting the Register of Schools of Overseas Chinese in North America to the Ministry of Education, Second Year of the Xuantong Reign Era [1910]

Liang Qinggui

TRANSLATED BY HIM MARK LAI AND ELLEN YEUNG

*Translators' Note: This report by Liang Qinggui, imperial commissioner sent to promote Chinese education among Chinese in North America in the early twentieth century, reflects the attitude of the Qing government about Chinese education for Chinese abroad. Many of the points that Liang presented herein remained the guiding principles, with some modifications, for policies and actions of Chinese governments until after World War II. The document is also interesting in that it reflects some of the attitudes of the Chinese in North America toward education, the problems they faced in that sector, and the relation between the Chinese overseas and the imperial government.*¹

Assistant Reader of the Grand Secretariat and Consultant to the Committee for Revising and Compiling Civil and Criminal Codes Liang Qinggui respectfully submits this report with regard to the submission of the Register of Schools of Overseas Chinese in America. During the twelfth moon in the thirty-second year of the Guangxu Reign Era [January/February 1907], the Ministry [of Education] ordered me to proceed to [North] America to make arrangements for the education of overseas Chinese. Since I had to take leave to return to my native district to handle certain affairs, I arrived at Hong Kong on the first moon of the thirty-fourth year [February/March 1908]. The ship set sail on the fifth day of the second moon [March 7, 1907] and reached America on the second day of the third moon [April 2, 1907].² I completed my assignment in the second moon of the first year of the Xuantong reign era [February 1909] and returned to China, stopping by Guangdong along the way. I had reported all this to you in cabled reports on various occasions as a matter of record.

I found the Chinese dispersed throughout America, their recent population totaling somewhat more than a hundred thousand. The number in each community varied from as few as several hundreds to a thousand to as much as ten thousand. Their progeny who could enroll in primary schools ranged from several dozens to several hundreds. Most having been born and raised in America, their behavior naturally would be almost like the natives, and, for the sake of making a living in the nearby community, they all attended Western schools and gave scant attention to the learning of

Chinese. There was no lack of talented individuals among them. Those who could graduate from that country's colleges ended up in the service of the Westerners, just as in ancient China materials produced in the State of Chu ended up being made useful by the State of Jin. It was indeed regretful.

I traveled to different communities and met with their leaders;³ at public banquets and private meetings, I apprised them of the Imperial Court's intentions and the Ministry's plans. I expounded on the grand principles of loyalty and filial piety based on the Confucian teachings, in order to exhort them and to reinforce their feelings toward China. Thus mindful of the Imperial Beneficence bestowed on them and filled with cherished memories of their ancestral land, the Chinese spread the news near and far. There were none who was unmoved. Although there were a few perverse people who were obstructionists and spread lies and slanders, in the end they could not shake the conviction of the people, and each school was finally established. In brief, that was how the project was put into effect in America.

The steamship from Hong Kong first docked at Honolulu and then San Francisco. San Francisco, being in the western part of America, was settled the earliest and in the greatest numbers by the Chinese. The community had its share of honest and decent people, but most of them were not in any positions of responsibility. Other than these, there was a mix of people with good and bad intentions who could not differentiate between right and wrong. They aligned themselves along regional lines and formed rival groups. Ignorant and obstinate, these groups had the reputation of being difficult to govern. The three gentry-directors Messrs. Xie, Lin, and Zhou of the *huiguan* (native place associations) were not only ignorant but also troublemakers. In fact, many community philanthropic projects failed because of their meddling. Fortunately, this time two or three affluent persons came out in support, and planning for the school project could proceed. Still, because of the additional consultations and the repeated reversals of decisions, I found I had to tarry in San Francisco for five months.

Next we arrived in Sacramento, where the people were willing and sincere. They were the first to establish a school.⁴ However, the city did not have many businesses and

fundraising was difficult. Afterward we went to Los Angeles, where I assembled community leaders several times to try to establish a plan, but the community was not united in its support and the project stalled. Next I traveled to El Paso, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C. These three cities did not have many Chinese and there were not enough students to form schools. However, Washington was a hub where the Chinese envoy [Wu Tingfang] was stationed, and by coincidence Special Envoy Tang [Tang Shaoyi] just arrived in America.⁵ Hence we conferred and proposed to first establish one school in Washington, D.C., that would serve several communities. However, it was soon apparent that distances to be traveled were rather great and transportation costs high. There were many divergent opinions, and the community adopted a "wait and see" attitude. Next I came to New York City, where a school-opening ceremony took place after ten days of meeting and planning.⁶ Afterward I proceeded on to Chicago. The Chinese there had thriving businesses but were still very clannish. In this they were somewhat similar to San Francisco. I had to go back and forth several times among different clan groups before I could get them to reach a consensus. That was why the opening of that school was delayed.⁷ Next we were in Portland and Seattle. The people there were dedicated and caring and were especially enthusiastic about education; therefore the task was comparatively easy.⁸ I continued across the water to British Victoria, which was customarily referred to as "Salt Water Town."⁹ The people welcomed me affectionately, and we took time to plan and discuss the purchasing of land to build a grand and impressive school building. Next we reached Vancouver, where commerce had been flourishing since the completion of the railroad. Because there was an existing school, we undertook to improve and revise its bylaws and regulations so that they could be complied with without being pedantic.

Among the above eight communities, only San Francisco built a facility that could hold 240 students. In the future, when more funds become available and more instructors can be hired to teach classes at different times, the capacity can be doubled. The building in Victoria is similar to that in San Francisco. As for the other six communities—New York City, Sacramento, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver—they are all renting temporary space for classrooms. In brief, that was how the school project was put into effect in the various communities.

When establishing a school, it is of utmost importance to enlist the help of capable people. That was why, when I arrived in a community, I would seek out fair-minded gentry-directors and socialize with them. Fortunately, they all were willing to lend their support. In San Francisco there were Lu Buying, Liu Xing [Lew Hing], Lu Yuping, Deng Tingdong, Huang Jin [Wong Kin], and others; in New York City there were Guan Qinglin, secretary of the consulate, Li Yiqia, and others; in Sacramento there were Zhou Fengwen, Kuang Zanzun, Chen Ranzhi, Zheng Tian'en, and others; in Chicago

there were Mei Zongzhou, Tang Xin, Mei Linyao, Tan Chang, and others; in Portland there were Mei Boxian [Moy Back Hin], Xue Bai [Seid Back], Mei Yueyun, and others; in Seattle there were Ruan Qia [Goon Dip], Chen Wenzhou, Hu Yetang, and others; in Victoria there were Li Zhuoming, Li Jiantao, Lu Zhuangnian, Lin Libin, and others. These were all zealous individuals with dedication and integrity who did not shy away from hostility and ill will, and who met the challenge of these difficult tasks. These dozen or more men should really receive the most credit for the successful establishment of the schools. The rest of those involved in the planning and implementation also worked together diligently and harmoniously and should be commended for their outstanding service. As to the merchant-directors in each community, they had traveled far to be in business and worked hard all year for scant profits, yet they were able to raise the large sums needed [for education]. Theirs were sincere acts of patriotism. Existing regulations should be invoked to honor them for their meritorious service, an action that will surely encourage the Chinese overseas. This, then, is a brief record of the people whose contributions of money and effort should be recognized.

It was originally intended that the schools emphasize both Chinese and Western subjects, and the bylaws were so drawn up, published, and distributed. However, at meetings the merchant-directors all stated that it would be difficult to raise the funds to hire the large number of instructors required and that we should weigh the circumstances and make modifications accordingly. That is why the present school curriculum as established focuses principally on the Chinese language. During the first six hours of each day, students still attend American schools to study English, Science, and Mathematics. Four of the next six hours will be devoted to Chinese studies, in approximately eight areas, as follows: Confucian Classics, Ethics, National Language, History, Geography, Calligraphy, Physical Education, and Singing. Since the level of each student is different and the number of students varies, it was necessary for each community to set up its own rules and teaching methods, and to determine its own policies on staffing and budget control. Each school will submit an annual report of its achievements to the Ministry, the Legation, and the Consulate for their review. I have instructed each school to follow this procedure. In brief, that was the general procedure followed in establishing the curriculum and class schedules.

However, these were only initial moves. There is still a need for long-term plans, and I respectfully submit the following proposals together with full explanations:

- Consider granting annual subsidies: When projects are initiated and then resources fall short in nations in the West, the governments appropriate funds to enable their completion. We should do no less in this instance since establishing the schools is an important step toward mak-

ing China prosperous. Now that the schools are in operation, the Chinese communities overseas, one after another, have been asking for funding support. I request that the Ministry give an annual subsidy of \$500 to the school in San Francisco, \$300 to New York City, \$200 to Sacramento, \$250 to Portland, \$200 to Seattle, \$200 to Chicago, \$200 to Vancouver, and \$300 to Victoria. I believe that granting this beneficence will facilitate our monitoring their operations. The outlay is small but the benefits are numerous.

- Establish strict guidelines for school principals to evaluate school operations: The attitude of the Chinese overseas is lax and their initial enthusiasm for the schools will fade with time. I intend to request the Ministry to designate the consul in each community to be the school's principal. He shall supervise all schools in communities under the Consulate's jurisdiction and shall establish means of evaluation. This would forestall any shifting of responsibilities onto others.
- Send a commissioner annually to inspect the schools: Classroom management and teacher performance need to be monitored so that problems can be rectified. I intend to request that the Ministry consider sending a school teacher or an attaché of the Legation as education inspector, with travel expenses and salary, to visit each community and report all findings to the Ministry. This information should ensure the improvement of school performance.
- Provide incentives to teachers and pupils: Although each school was classified as a primary school, there were occasionally a few students who qualified for upper primary school or middle school. I intend to request the Ministry to send a Legation attaché, a consul, or a school teacher to jointly give examinations to students who have completed four years. Whoever meets upper primary school and middle school levels should be encouraged and rewarded in accordance with the prescribed standards of China. I would also request that the teacher, regardless of the number of graduating students, be given liberal awards by way of encouragement, as his counterpart in China would have been.
- Order the release of Association funds to help finance education: The Legation appropriated funds to rebuild the old Association building owned by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of San Francisco. At that time it was clearly specified that any future rent and interest collected for that building would be used in perpetuity for education. The agreement was written down for posterity as a matter of public record. However, three gentry-directors, Messrs. Xie, Lin, and Zhou, refused to release the funds. Moreover, they fabricated and circulated rumors to confuse the people. To ensure respect for [agreements] regarding such funds, I intend to request the Ministry to advise the Legation to order the Consulate to have the funds released in accordance with the agreement

without further delay or obstruction. In addition, the consul at each city shall advise merchant-directors that consideration be made to grant financial support from Association funds. Precedents have already been established in New York City and Victoria that can be followed and put into effect elsewhere.

The above five points are all proposed as arrangements for the future. I respectfully await your determination as to their feasibility.

In brief, the objective for encouraging education in China is to advance the people's knowledge and shape their character, and [the objective for] encouraging education abroad is to attract the people's support and preserve their ties to the nation. The methods are different and the degree of difficulty in implementation is also different. There is no reason to believe that Chinese raised in a foreign land will fail to be versed in Western learning, but the fact that they neglect Chinese learning is a cause for concern. Language is an important factor in establishing a nation. If nationals [abroad] do not know their own country's language, in time they will be assimilated and in all probability become citizens of another land. What Russia did in Poland and England in India should serve as warnings. Although under today's trends Chinese and Western learning seem to be converging, a careful study of the end result and a close examination of the original intent show that the two are still far apart. Because of constant exposure to Western learning, the children of Chinese overseas will come to accept and practice it as their own. If this continues, the problem will grow. Moreover, in recent years, fallacious teachings had been spread unchecked overseas, seducing with flowery words that easily sway the minds and hearts of the people. Only by establishing more schools and enriching the minds of the young with the Classics can we give direction to their development. Public sentiment and the state of the nation are now at a turning point. There is not a moment to lose to effect this long-term plan to save the situation.

There is a San Francisco businessman, Huang Jin [Wong Kin], who works in the post office of the American federal government. He is a most loyal supporter of China and enjoys working on projects for the common good of the community. Before my return to China, I asked him to try to push for more schools in addition to the existing one, a responsibility which he readily accepted. Another businessman, Tang Qiu [Tong Kau]¹⁰ of Honolulu, is also public-spirited. Both times when I passed by that city, I asked him to push the establishing of a school. I now have received communications from both of them concerning their results, together with the school registers from the two communities. I intend to request that submittal and registration of the school registers be allowed in accordance with current regulations, and that, following precedent, the individuals be given awards so as to assist and encourage the expansion of

such efforts. This surely will have a significant impact on the future of our country's push to promote education.

I am submitting herewith the faculty and staff rosters, student rosters, names of gentry-directors on the education planning committees, and class schedules from eight communities: San Francisco, Sacramento, New York City, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, Victoria, and Vancouver. Enclosed with the schedules from Sacramento, New York City, and Victoria are the school administrative board rosters, building plans, duty rosters of the staff, and procurement records of equipment and supplies, making a total of twelve pages. Beside this, there are six sheets of building plans of the San Francisco school; four photographs taken at the opening of the schools in San Francisco, New York City, Chicago, and Portland; and one copy of a brochure encouraging education. I have also drafted a copy of the regulations for a school with combined Western and Chinese subjects and submitted it to the Ministry as a matter of public record. There is also a book of receipts for over US\$30,000 in donations solicited from gentry-directors, and over US\$20,000 of Association funds appropriated after consultation, which sums still have to be converted into Chinese currency. I request that awards be given to them together with the people who have contributed to the project planning and implementation.

To complete my report I need to record and account for all receipts and expenditures. As for a log of my trip, I have already organized my experiences and findings into categories and have begun putting them together; however, I have not completed the manuscript yet. I will submit them shortly, together with a statement. But first I just wanted to submit to you an account of the establishing of the schools in America with all the attendant details. I beg that the Ministry review the report and do whatever is necessary for the public benefit.

*Respectfully submitted,
sixth moon in the second year of the Xuantong Reign Era*

NOTES

In the Chinese Glossary, a comma is used after the surname only in those cases where the name is used in the United States. No commas are used after names transliterated from Mandarin. Early Chinese in America often signed their names in English with the surname first, in accordance with Chinese custom. This caused much confusion because American soci-

ety at large sometimes took the given name to be the surname, with the result that in some cases the given name ended up being used as the surname. Thus Hing Lew's children came to use his given name, Hing, as their surname, whereas Dip Goon's descendants continued to use Goon as their surname.

1. The Chinese text can be found in Pei Chi Liu, *A History of the Chinese in the United States of America* (Taipei: Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission of the Legislative Yuan, 1976), 361-366.
2. According to *Chung Sai Yat Po*, April 4, 1908, Liang arrived on April 3, 1908 on the SS *Mongolia*. This date corresponds to the third day of the third moon; however, before the founding of the Republic, Chinese in the United States customarily reckoned time to correspond with that in China (i.e., the next day). Thus San Francisco Chinese newspapers dated his arrival on April 3, or the fourth day of the third moon.
3. Liang's report referred to leaders in each community as "gentry-directors" (*shendong*). In San Francisco, the term was originally used to refer to titled scholars invited from China to head the *huiguan*, or native place associations, in San Francisco. They also served on the Board of Directors of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. Merchants who served on the Board were known as "merchant-directors" (*shangdong*). It is doubtful whether all leaders in various communities who were referred to as gentry-directors were actually titled scholars. Liang probably used the term as a sign of respect.
4. Pei Chi Liu, *An Anecdotal History of the Chinese in the United States of America* (Taipei: Liming wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1984), 409, gives the seventeenth day of the seventh moon in the thirty-fourth year of the Guangxu reign era (August 12, 1908) as the opening date of the school.
5. Tang Shaoyi was sent as a special envoy to thank the United States for returning part of the Boxer indemnity and also to discuss other issues with the American government. Tang reached the United States in November 1908, coming by way of Japan. In January 1909 the Foreign Ministry ordered him to return to China via Europe.
6. Liu, *An Anecdotal History of the Chinese in the United States*, 411, gives the fifth day of the tenth moon in the thirty-fourth year of the Guangxu reign era (October 28, 1908) as the opening date of the school.
7. Liu, *An Anecdotal History of the Chinese in the United States*, 412, gives the twenty-third day of the intercalary second moon in the first year of the Xuantong reign era (April 12, 1909) as the opening date of the school.
8. *Chung Sai Yat Po*, February 16, 1909, stated that the school in Portland officially opened on February 11, 1909, and Liu, *An Anecdotal History of the Chinese in the United States*, 413, gives December 9, 1909 as the opening date for the school in Seattle.
9. Liang was apparently mistaken. Chinese customarily referred to Vancouver, on the mainland, as "Salt Water Town," due to the fact that it was located at the mouth of the Fraser River where there was a tidal flow and brackish water.
10. Tong Kau was one of the founders of Mun Lun School in Honolulu.

Chinese Glossary

Assistant Reader of the Grand Secretariat 內閣侍讀	Li Jiantao 李鑑濤	Seid, Back 薛柏
Chen Ranzhi 陳苒芝	Li Yiqia 李奕洽	<i>shangdong</i> 商董
Chen Wenzhou 陳文周	Li Zhuoming 李卓明	<i>shendong</i> 紳董
Committee for Revising and Compiling Civil and Criminal Codes 法律館	Liang Qinggui 梁慶桂	Tan Chang 譚昌
Deng Tingdong 鄧廷棟	Lin Libin 林禮斌	Tang Shaoyi 唐紹儀
education inspector 視學員	Lu Buying 陸步瀛	Tang Xin 湯信
Goon, Dip 阮洽	Lu Yuping 陸玉屏	Tong, Kau 唐球
Guan Qinglin 關慶麟	Lu Zhuangnian 盧椿年	Wong, Kin 黃金
Hu Yetang 胡業棠	Mei Linyao 梅麟耀	Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳
Kuang Zanxun 鄺贊勳	Mei Yueyun 梅躍雲	Zheng Tian'en 鄭天恩
Lew, Hing 劉興	Mei Zongzhou 梅宗周	Zhou Fengwen 周鳳文
	Moy, Back Hin 梅伯顯	
	Salt Water Town 鹹水埠	