



# A Study of American Cultural Export to China From 1910 --- 1949

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**Abstract:** Since the Opium War, China has gradually degenerated into a semi colonial and semi feudal society, and the major powers of the world have invaded China one after another to seize various privileges and interests. As an emerging capitalist country, the United States has different ways of aggression. This was related to the national strength and world situation of the United States at that time, but it was more based on the consideration of the national strategic interests of the United States. Based on the historical facts, this paper mainly studies the cultural export of ancient China from the perspective of American education and medical treatment, so as to further explore the purpose of this cultural export and its impact on Chinese society.

**Keywords:** Cultural output; Spiritual colonization; Aggressive achievements

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The United States is a big emerging capitalist country that has been established for less than 200 years. Since modern times, due to its own strength and other reasons, the United States was once in a disadvantageous position in the process of foreign powers competing to invade China. With the end of the Spanish American war, especially the rapid development of domestic capitalism, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the United States also focused on China. Different from other powers who plundered by war, the United States mainly adopted the way of cultural export to achieve its purpose of aggression in this period.

## 1 An analysis of the motivation of American cultural export to China

Since modern times, the United States has been exporting culture to China. The infiltration of China in education, medicine and living habits has brought profound influence to ancient China. From the perspective of historical research, we can find that the motives of American cultural export to China during this period are as follows.

### 1.1 Through cultural export, it has won the favor and trust of the Chinese people, and won the hearts of the United States in China

The main forms of American cultural export to China during this period were the construction of schools and hospitals in China and the dissemination of Western lifestyle. Just imagine that in the 1920s, when a Chinese who was desperate for his illness got effective treatment in a hospital established in the United States and recovered, he would be grateful to the Americans from his heart, thus creating a kind of favor and dependence on the United States. This kind of gratitude and dependence psychology comes from people's inner desire for life and health, which can go beyond class, nation and other external factors. This cannot be achieved through war, and this is exactly what the United States wants to pursue.

And when a young Chinese student receives new knowledge and new ideas that he has never heard of through a school founded by an American. To some extent, he will have the desire and worship for American culture. Objectively speaking, the culture that the United States introduced into China through its founding schools was advanced. A more telling point is that most of the outstanding figures who

have made great achievements in various fields since modern times have studied in the new schools run by foreigners in their early days, such as diplomat Huang Hua, anthropologist Wu Wenzao, philosopher Feng Youlan, litterateur Bing Xin, Xiao Qian, etc. It is worth pondering that if these people do not learn advanced cultural knowledge in American schools, can they achieve later achievements? Because of this, the United States has won people's support in China through this kind of cultural export, which has greatly affected the Chinese people's attitude towards the United States.

## **1.2 Through cultural export, Cultivate the spokesperson of American interests in China**

The United States has cultivated a group of loyal American spokesmen in China by taking advantage of the trust and goodwill of some Chinese to the United States. these people can be called "exquisite elements", which means spiritual Americans. Historically, such loyal spokesmen of the United States abounded in China in the first half of the 20th century. For example, Song Meiling once said, "only the face looks like a Chinese.". In fact, during the whole period of the Republic of China, especially after Chiang Kai Shek's regime came to power, such fine elements spread all over the political, military, business and academic circles at that time, which also determined the strategic basis for the United States to support Chiang Kai Shek and fight against the Communist Party in the future. At the same time, it was during this period that the United States gained more privileges in China than other old capitalist countries through cooperation with "exquisite elements". The representative was the conclusion of the Sino US Treaty of friendship, trade and navigation in 1946. The treaty gives the United States a lot of privileges in China. It was judged by the people at that time to surpass any previous unequal treaty. As pointed out in the comments issued by the Communist Party of China, "under this seemingly hypocritical and in fact absolutely unequal treaty, China is open to the United States, and American imperialism can do whatever it wants on Chinese territory as it does on its own territory. No wonder officials in New York boast that they have obtained the "privilege" of exploiting China" in a clear and legal form.

So far, after nearly half a century, the United States

used the means of cultivating interest spokesmen in China, and finally achieved a "complete victory" in its aggression against China. This "victory" is due to the growth of American national strength and changes in the world situation, but the role played by the fine elements cultivated by the United States cannot be ignored.

## **2 Main examples of American cultural export to China from 1910 to 1949**

Since the late Qing Dynasty, China has gradually become a "sick man of East Asia". Faced with such a huge market with a territory of more than 10 million square kilometers and a quarter of the world's population, major capitalist powers, including the United States, have extended their invasion to China. However, as far as the specific ways and targets of aggression are concerned, the United States is different from other powers. The United States even returned China's war reparations to China to send students to the United States. At the same time, hospitals and schools have been set up in China. These practices of the United States have aroused some Chinese people's favor towards the United States. So, what is the real intention of this kind of cultural export of the United States?

### **2.1 Boxer indemnity and Chinese students studying in the United States**

The Boxer Indemnity is the "war indemnity" that China paid to other countries according to the unequal treaty "Xin Chou treaty" signed with the Manchu Qing government after the invasion and occupation of Beijing by the Allied forces of eight countries in 1901. The principal and interest amount to 982.238152 million taels of silver guaranteed by customs duties, part of regular customs duties and salt taxes.

Judging from the existing historical data, in the negotiation process of the Treaty of Xin Chou, the United States opposed to demanding high reparations from China.

The United States worried that it would force China to disaster and affect the "sustainable" plunder of China. In the end, it was not realized because of the firm opposition of other powers.

However, the United States did not completely change its point of view. In 1908, the United States launched a new program to return the Boxer

Indemnity to China for education and to select Chinese students to study in the United States. That is the famous "Geng fund for studying abroad". On the surface, this seems to be a good thing that is extremely beneficial to China, but there are still several points to be noted.

First of all, the Boxer Indemnity returned by the United States and used to run the school is only the "remaining part" of the total amount of the indemnity, that is, the remaining part after the loss of the United States in the Boxer Movement and the military expenditure spent to suppress the resistance of the Chinese people, which is about 11 million US dollars. The total amount of Boxer Indemnity received by the United States is about 24 million US dollars, and less than half of it is returned to China. Moreover, some people in the United States have pointed out that "part of the loss of Boxer Indemnity is false, so it is immoral to ask for too much."

Secondly, China had hoped to set up the three eastern provinces bank with the US refund as the principal, issue bonds in the United States with the financial revenue of the three eastern provinces and the US boxer refund as collateral, and use the profits to send students to the United States at public expense, but this move was firmly opposed by the US government.

The most telling thing is the suggestion made by President James of the University of Illinois to President Theodore Roosevelt: "which country can successfully educate this generation of Chinese youth, which country will reap the greatest return in both spiritual and commercial aspects. If the United States can successfully attract and expand the trend of studying abroad in China 35 years ago, then we can control China's development in the most satisfactory and ingenious way, that is, the way of dominating Chinese leaders with knowledge and spirit"

Finally, on May 25, 1908, the U.S. Congress passed a bill to return the Boxer Indemnity to China, and authorized the president to make arrangements. Under the strong role of the U.S. government, China also agreed to use the refund entirely for running schools. The two countries agreed: from the year when the refund began, the Chinese government will send 100 students to study in the United States every year in the first four years, and from the fifth year, at least 50 Chinese students will be sent to study in the United States every year until the refund is used up.

On October 31 of that year, the two countries jointly drafted the draft articles of Association for sending students to the United States, reaching a basic agreement on the qualifications, selection, majors and management of students studying in the United States.

It can be seen that the basic purpose of the refund of the Boxer Indemnity by the United States for Chinese students to study in the United States is to cultivate a group of Chinese youth who can "repay" the United States in the future, so as to achieve the goal of controlling China's future. In fact, the United States finally achieved what it expected. Chinese students who study in the United States through the boxer fund will become spokesmen of American interests in China in the future. For example, Hu Shi and Fu Sinian believed in American democratic ideas all their lives. As well as Song Meiling and others who did not belong to the Geng class, but also went to the United States to study in this period.

## **2.2 American medical institutions in China: a case study of Peking Union Medical College**

Today's Union Medical College has become a top medical university in China that many students yearn for. The Affiliated Union Medical College Hospital has become a famous large-scale comprehensive hospital with excellent medical skills and complete medical facilities. However, in terms of birth and development, Peking Union Medical College And affiliated hospital could not avoid the presence of missionaries and American consortia.

In 1906, missionaries from six churches of Britain and America jointly opened the Peking Union Medical College in the north of Dongdan pailou (today's Union Medical College).

Since its birth, after nearly ten years, the Union Medical College has made some progress. But the real large-scale development was after 1915. In that year, the Union Medical College was acquired by the famous Rockefeller consortium of the United States. Before and after that, Rockefeller sent three expert groups to China, including Welch, then president of Johns Hopkins School of medicine, fullnessner, director of Roche Institute of medicine, and other top American scholars. Through the investigation, Rockefeller believed that "the great gift that the west can give China is scientific medicine and surgery."

The Rockefeller consortium invested a lot of

money into the Union Medical College to increase the facilities needed for teaching, and spared no expense to hire famous teachers to teach the Union Medical College. At the beginning of its establishment, the Union Medical College was a foreigner from President to department director. It was not until 1924 that the first Chinese president was born. In terms of teaching, Concorde adopted the most advanced teaching concepts and teaching materials in the west at that time. Concorde's students were able to obtain a doctor's degree from the State University of New York at the same time when they graduated.

From its establishment to 1949, the Union Medical College has trained a large number of medical talents for China, which has changed Chinese medical habits to a certain extent and promoted the development of Western medicine in China.

In addition to Concord, several other medical schools and affiliated hospitals founded during the same period were also related to Americans. For example, Xiangya Medical College and its affiliated Xiangya Hospital founded by Yale University Association; Qilu Medical College and Qilu Hospital founded by North American Presbyterian missionaries; West China Union Medical University (now West China Medical University) and Cunren hospital (now West China Hospital) founded by five church organizations in Chengdu.

It can be said that the spread of Western medical technology in the United States has a broad and far-reaching impact on China.

### **3 The impact of American cultural export to China**

First of all, it should be recognized that the educational concept and medical technology introduced into China by the United States were very advanced at that time. To a certain extent, this kind of cultural export has brought changes to China, changed the backward face of China. This should not be denied.

But that was not the intention of the aggressors. Through the investigation of historical facts, we can find that the greatest impact of the "cultural export" of the United States to China is the successful "spiritual colonization" in China.

Compared with the traditional way of colonization, the so-called spiritual colonization is more harmful,

because it can weaken or even suppress the resistance of the colonized people to a certain extent.

As early as in the struggle for the West with the Indians, the United States has begun to use the means of assimilation to conquer Indian. At that time, white Americans thought that Indians lived in darkness and ignorance and lacked "civilized" education. To let them enjoy the "blessing" of civilization on human beings, they had to rely on white education, because "the reason for their barbarism and uncivilization was not human nature, but human education.

At that time, the American government regarded education as a breakthrough for "civilized" Indians. They forced Indian children to leave the traditional tribal society and let them receive white education in the schools run by white people, thus becoming followers of white life. Then they let these Indian children bring the seeds of "civilization" back to the tribe. In this way, once all of them received white education, the tribal tradition would be broken.

Once the aggressors reduced the people's sense of resistance to the greatest extent and succeeded in spiritual colonization through this mild way of aggression, the harm would be no less than that of national subjugation and national annihilation. Today's American Indians have proved that.

Thus, it can be seen that the "cultural export" of the United States to China since modern times is actually the extension of the spiritual colonial means. Through spiritual colonization, the United States has successfully won the favor of some Chinese people.

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