

## **Life in Translation: Yung Wing, Study Abroad, and Transnational Subjectivity**

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### **Abstract**

Looking at Yung Wing's autobiography in both English and Chinese, this paper discusses the intricate relations between the study-abroad movement, translation, and transnational subjectivity. As an Asian/American pioneer, Yung Wing and his "translated life" demonstrate how, through the study-abroad movement, "leaving Asia for America" as a project of colonial modernity and a structure of feeling has come to shape the transnational subjectivity of Chinese overseas students. Moreover, the neglect of Yung's autobiography in both Asian American studies and the study of Chinese autobiography indicates the nation-state's ambivalence about transnational pursuits and the rigidity of the national paradigm in thinking about trans-border subjects. Yung's life in translation not only shows that life/text travels between languages and nations, but also the importance of an Asian orientation in the reshaping of Asian American studies. An Asian orientation, central to the transpacific engagements of overseas student, allows us to move away from discussions of citizenship and assimilation to those of diasporic crossings and mutations. It also enables a reconceptualization of Asian American, not merely as an ethnic group created by multiculturalist policies and civil rights movement, but also as a distinct location within the powers of translation and transnational geopolitics.

**Key Words:** Yung Wing, study abroad, transnational subjectivity, translation, Asian/American