

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Wang/Transpacific Articulations

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# Introduction

This book explores the liminal and transnational presence of the foreign student in the cultural and political space of Asian America. It studies the writings and political activism that foreign students have engaged in across the Pacific to offer a historically grounded analysis of Asian American transnationality and its contemporary significance. Though often cast as a sojourning—and thus non-American—group different from labor immigrants in terms of class and national allegiance, the foreign student from Asia in fact shares similar experiences with working-class Asian immigrants and also participates in the Asian American formation. As the book demonstrates, because of their overseas experiences and elite status, foreign students develop a double identification with Asia and America, holding fast to both national identity and politics and a transnational vision of modernity. Their engagements in political and cultural activities on both sides of the Pacific characterize foreign students distinctly as transpacific subjects, partaking of yet also exceeding the traditional imagination of Asian America as U.S.-born and -based. Their temporary and transient status as “foreign students” thus makes them curious yet ambiguous Asian American subjects. Their transnational mode of being requires further analysis in the context of the global trafficking of knowledge, identity, and political ideals, and their cultural and political endeavors must be read within the tension of translingual and transcultural practices. By viewing foreign students as trans/national intellectual subjects with deep commitments to both place of ancestry and of residence, this book re-centers student migration in the history of U.S.-Asia relations in order to provide a different analytic framework for understanding Asian American history and culture as a transnational dynamic that brings Asia and America together in the shared pursuits of modernity and global linkages. It presents the foreign student as occupying an important but overlooked social position in Asian American criticism to foreground Asia as a meaningful site in the making and remaking of Asian America today.

## **The Foreign Student in America**

Foreign students began arriving on American shores as early as 1784, when Francisco de Miranda, who became one of the outstanding revolutionary leaders in

Latin America, came to study at Yale University.<sup>1</sup> Seventy years later, Asian students started appearing on different U.S. campuses: Yung Wing was one of the first to arrive from China and obtained a degree from Yale in 1854. He later led the Chinese education mission that sent a total of 120 students to study in New England. Soon thereafter, from Japan, came Joseph Neeshima, who graduated from Amherst College in 1870 and founded Doshisha English School, which later became a full-fledged university in Kyoto in 1875. The famous Iwakura mission occurred two years later, bringing sixty Japanese students, including five young women, to study in the United States, among whom was one named Umeko Tsuda, who would go on to found Tsuda College in Tokyo in 1900.<sup>2</sup> After Korea signed the Shufeldt Treaty in 1882 and opened itself to the West, Korean students also began arriving in America to pursue education and seek refuge from famine and political oppression. For example, Seo Jae-pil, also known as Philip Jaisohn, fled Korea after the political coup that he led failed in 1884 and came to study at the Hillman Academy; in 1890 he became the first Korean to gain U.S. citizenship and, in 1892, the first to receive a medical degree from Columbian Medical College (later George Washington University). Younghill Kang, author of *The Grass Roof* and *East Goes West*, fled Japanese rule in Korea and came to the United States as a foreign student in 1921. At first he studied science at Boston University but became unhappy with life in the laboratory, so he turned to English literature, received a graduate degree from Harvard in 1927, and became a writer of English. In 1903, when the first Korean labor immigrants reached Hawai'i, Filipino students also showed up in the United States under the auspices of the pensionado program sponsored by the Philippine colonial government, which nurtured generations of Filipino elites, including the well-known Carlos Romulo, who served as foreign minister under Ferdinand Marcos from 1968 to 1984. Though it was uncommon for Indian students to come to the United States in the early 1900s, due to their general preference to study law in England, they did come in small numbers, slowly increasing from 100 in 1906 to 235 in 1921.<sup>3</sup> Ardent revolutionary Taraknath Das was among the first Indian students: he came to study chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1907, joined Norwich University in 1908 to receive military training, and obtained a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Washington in 1914. With Lala Har Dayal, he founded the Ghadr Party in 1913, which aimed to overthrow British rule in India. These young men and women, as American missionary and army officer W. Reginald Wheeler commented in 1925, "were pioneers among the students who have come from South, East, and West to America, which today has the largest enrollment of foreign students of all countries in the world."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Education reported that in 1904 the United States hosted only 2,673 foreign students, whereas Germany received three times more than that.<sup>5</sup> However, that number quickly increased during the first half of the

twentieth century and steadily increased throughout the latter half. The statistics provided by the Institute of International Education—an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1919 to promote international educational exchange as a means to achieve peace and understanding between nations—show that while the United States hosted only 6,488 foreign students in 1921, the number more than tripled to 25,464 in 1949, despite the interruptions of the two World Wars.<sup>6</sup> The postwar years witnessed a steady increase in foreign students studying in the United States, and in the 1970s there occurred a great leap forward, owing to the 1965 Immigration Act, which paved the way for a massive wave of Asian immigrants, many of whom came initially with student visas—and the numbers reached a historic high in 1983, with more than 300,000 students. Despite a brief drop in the early 2000s, as of 2011 a total of 723,277 foreign students were studying all majors in American colleges and universities, and China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan are listed among the top five countries sending students, making up 49.7 percent of the total amount, with Japan and Vietnam taking the seventh and eighth positions on the list.<sup>7</sup>

The sketch above provides a general look at student migration to the United States since the late nineteenth century, which was shaped by the rise of Asian nationalism on the one hand and was connected to America's changing view on education on the other. Whereas Asian states viewed Western education as a necessary path to modernity, the United States regarded it alternately as a means of ecumenical evangelism, of achieving international peace, and of building Cold War alliance at different historical moments. When the foreign student came to study in America, he or she, knowingly or not, also entered these ideological strictures that regarded education more as a cultural component in the larger scheme of things. As Liping Bu indicates, international education in America was embedded in the idea of training the "future leaders of the world" with American values and ideals; it was not only an altruistic attempt to transmit knowledge, but also a cultural political project to "[make] the world like us."<sup>8</sup> Paul Kramer describes the pensionado program as the "condensation of the projects of tutelage and assimilation" that aimed to showcase well-educated Filipinos as "advertisement for the [colonial] regime's benevolence" and as "symbols of [their] successful assimilation."<sup>9</sup> Such condensation is a distinctive feature of study abroad, and the significance of cultural political transformation was an open secret shared by both teacher and student, although the direction of transformation can never be predetermined. Study abroad thus provides a valuable archive of transcultural history in which modern America was developed in constant negotiations with other cultures, languages, and subjects, as it incorporated them into its sphere of influence. Moreover, study abroad brings into view a process of bilateral transpacific engagement where not only does America make foreign students "more like us," but where foreign students also use the United States to achieve their aims.

Indeed, Yung Wing, Joseph Neeshima, and Philip Jaisohn would not have traveled to the United States without the inspiration of active and open-minded missionaries in Asia. Their lifetime careers in promoting Western education and seeking modernity in their native lands would have been unthinkable without a colonial context that fostered nationalist aspirations and without the generous help, financial and spiritual, from their American benefactors. Both Korean and Indian students were engaged in revolutionary activities that sought to overthrow colonial rule at home, acting out what Benedict Anderson calls “long-distance nationalism,” which, according to Pheng Cheah, is a form of nationalism in which “a particularistic ethnicity-in-exile tries to remake the nation-state into an ethnic state.”<sup>10</sup> Likewise, as much as the pensionado program was part of the American colonial project in the Philippines that sought to build a class of comprador elites, it nurtured generations of enlightened intellectuals who, as Augusto Espiritu points out, upon “facing the reality of second-class citizenship at home and abroad . . . develop[ed] a sense of nationalism” and a critical voice against American racism.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, while Chinese scholars in the late 1940s were reluctantly stranded in the United States due to the outbreak of the Cold War, their capacity to be schooled in American values and ideals and to contribute to America’s growth in economy and technology made them “the hinge that enabled the once despised ‘Yellow Peril’ to become acceptable as allies and then as immigrants.”<sup>12</sup> As these foreign students set down roots in America, their nationalist sentiment would inevitably affect the American-born generations of Koreans, Indians, Chinese, and Filipinos, even as they joined forces in the pan-ethnic Asian American identity that emerged through the American civil rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Whether foreign students stayed or returned, with or without American citizenship, their varied forms of cultural and political engagement connected Asia and America in many significant and complex ways and enriched the meanings of America at home and abroad. These foreign students represent, among others, a transnational intellectual force that has shaped Asia as well as Asian America.

While the important role of U.S.-educated students in Asia has been noted in respective national histories, Asian American studies thus far has paid only scant attention to the figure of the foreign student and his or her activities in the United States. The foreign student lurks at the edges of Asian American history and representation, sometimes acknowledged but oftentimes unrecognized. When this figure does appear, as in Yuji Ichioka’s *The Issei* and Rose Hum Lee’s *The Chinese in the U.S.A.*, it is often presented as a contrast to the labor migrant, who is posited as the proper subject of Asian American history. In *The Issei*, Ichioka notes that Japanese students—whether funded by the Japanese state or themselves—were among the first immigrants to arrive in America beginning in the late nineteenth century. But he focuses more on indigent private students—known in Japanese as

*kugakusei* or *hinsei*, who had to work their way through school—rather than the government-sponsored students. It is this group of student-laborers that Ichioka considers the “real forerunners” of Japanese immigration.<sup>14</sup> In a similar way, Lee distinguishes Chinese students from resident Chinese. She contends that the latter deserve equal rights and better treatment because they are “Chinese-Americans,” whereas the former are merely temporary sojourners.<sup>15</sup> Such bias can also be observed in standard Asian American history textbooks, including Ronald Takaki’s *Strangers from a Different Shore*, Sucheng Chan’s *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*, and Gary Okihiro’s *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, all of which concentrate on the history of racial exclusion and labor migration and mention student migration only in passing. The foreign student also appears in Asian American representations, as in David Henry Hwang’s award-winning play, *F. O. B.*, Gish Jen’s *Typical American*, Susan Choi’s novel *The Foreign Student*, and, most recently, Ha Jin’s *A Free Life*, but he (usually male) is often cast in a negative light as a *displaced and foreign* subject—shy, awkward, reticent, mystic, and speaking English haltingly—signifying an embarrassing phase of assimilation that Asian Americans wish to outgrow, if not to forget and deny. In short, the foreign student, while also implicated in the process of American racial formation, is imagined as outside, living on the margins of Asian American socio-political experience. However, as the 1970s and 1980s witnessed, student migration from Asia gave rise to a new generation of foreign-born Asian Americans; foreign students, upon graduation, entered various professional fields such as medicine, law, engineering, academics, and business and became naturalized U.S. citizens. Their cultural and political engagements with Asia and America not only suggest the continuing impact of studying abroad as a special form of Asian American transnationality, but also point to alternative conceptualizations of Asian America based on diasporic connections and exchange. This book promises to fill in this lacuna of Asian American studies by providing historically grounded analyses of Chinese students’ experiences in America.

### **Study Abroad: A Brief History**

This book focuses on the political activism of Chinese students in the United States and their writings about America from the late nineteenth century to the present because they provide important insights into the transnational making of Asian America. Although I am conscious of the limitation of the single-ethnicity approach and the different histories that each Asian country has with America, I maintain that Chinese student migration remains a significant case in understanding how Asian American communities are connected to and shaped by political events in Asia, and how the Asian perception of America is mediated by student activism and publications. The Chinese case is important because the

intricate “Chinese” struggles within and beyond the United States disclose the asymmetrical relations of knowledge, identity, and power embedded in the passage to America. These struggles also reveal the fight over nations and identities that are rooted in and shaped by the inter-Asian dynamic and Cold War geopolitics. The Chinese case thus helps us understand, on the one hand, how student migration to the United States is built in the formation of modernity in Asia, and how, on the other, the Asian American formation is intimately articulated with this transpacific modernity. While my analysis of Chinese student migration is neither exclusive nor conclusive, it poses critical questions about Asian American transnationality, presents important materials for further study, and offers an analytical model for like-minded researchers to work with, revise, and update.

It is worth pointing out that student migration, like other forms of migration, should not be reduced to the act of movement, but rather must be understood as a continuous bilateral dynamic that begins with the formation of migration culture. Cultural anthropologist Karen Kelsky, in *Women on the Verge*, studies the “internationalist writings” of Japanese women as contributing to an Occidentalist imagination of America as a land that promises liberation and selfhood, neither of which is easily accessible to women in traditional Japanese culture. She contends that such an Occidentalist fantasy is historically articulated within Japanese women’s study-abroad experiences since 1872, pioneered by Sutematsu Yamakawa and Umeko Tsuda. Through Yamakawa and Tsuda, who were among the earliest Japanese students in the United States and who returned to Japan for lifelong careers in international education, study abroad is imagined by Japanese women readers as a “unilinear tale of progress” that frames and inflames their desire to travel abroad. Kelsky argues that “the *direction*, if not the degree, of women’s outward trajectories are to a large extent determined before they ever leave home” (original emphasis).<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Catherine Choy—in *Empire of Care*, her seminal study on nursing and migration in Filipino American history—also indicates that “culture” is the mover and shaker of migration; she contends that “rendered invisible is the culture of migration, the ways in which narratives about the promise of immigration to the United States—narratives circulated by the media as well as Filipino nurse migrants already in the United States—shape Filipino nurses’ desire to migrate abroad.”<sup>17</sup> Both Kelsky and Choy show that foreign students, male and female, are at once the products and creators of the culture of migration. Their overseas stories and presence put in motion the transpacific dynamic that informs the meaning of modernity in Asia, on the one hand, and shapes Asian America as a transborder community, on the other.

While I agree with Kelsky and Choy and to a large extent follow their critical endeavors in the book by analyzing Chinese student publications in English and Chinese, I propose that it is also important to consider the political activities of foreign students because studying abroad is not just a personal pursuit for a better

education and life, but also a national project historically articulated within nationalism and against Western colonialism in Asia. The varied reception of foreign students at different times also reflects America's attitude toward Asia (from exclusion to inclusion) and the changes in America's foreign policy (from promoting international peace in the 1920s and 1930s to consolidating a Cold War alliance in the 1960s and 1970s). Paying attention to their political activities, as I attempt in this book, will not only provide insight into the political character of Asian American transnationality, which intersects with diasporic longings and nationalist sentiments, but will also foreground the context of colonial modernity within which studying abroad arose. It will also shed light on how Cold War ideology impacted the Chinese American community, as it struggled to defend and redefine itself in the changing dynamic of U.S.-China-Taiwan relations. Hence an understanding of how the culture of migration was created through missionary networks and national institutions since the late nineteenth century and how it influenced Chinese students' cultural and political activities is indispensable to any discussion of Asian America as a transpacific cultural political formation.

Missionary schools were instrumental in creating the culture of studying abroad because they provided the Chinese with a first taste of Western education. It was at the Morrison School in Macau where Reverend Samuel R. Brown came to know Yung Wing and brought him, along with two other young men, to study in New England. Yung's experience in the United States inspired him to pursue the Chinese education mission (1872–1881)—the first study-abroad program sponsored by the Chinese state—as a means to reform China. In attempting to transform China through studying abroad, Yung initiated the psycho-cultural process of “leaving Asia for America,” a topic that I explore in chapter 1 through a careful investigation of his translated life. Though the mission ended all too quickly due to political boycotts at home and the raging anti-Chinese sentiment on the American West Coast, its termination did not stop the tide of Chinese studying abroad because these missionary schools—for instance, St. John's University in Shanghai—which transformed into colleges and universities in the 1890s and 1900s, became hotbeds for inducing the desire for Western education.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the 1905 abolition of the “civil service exam” system (*keju zhidu*)—through which students who had been educated in the Chinese classics used to enter the civil service—decisively changed the educational landscape in China, where obtaining an education in Western countries and Japan became an important means to social upward mobility.<sup>19</sup> As Weili Ye points out, studying abroad “was endorsed by both state and society, and was marked with a self-conscious willingness on the part of the students to acquire broad learning from the West.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Japan's smashing victory over China in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War made the Chinese government realize that it was imperative for China to obtain Western knowledge and technology, and it initiated new policies to transform its educa-

tional system and encourage students to pursue education abroad. From that point on, Chinese students went to Europe, Japan, and the United States to obtain a Western education. Chinese historian Shu Xincheng has documented that more than seven thousand Chinese students were studying in Japan in 1906, whereas as Ye noted, only about three hundred Chinese students were in the United States that same year. However, as the number in Japan began dropping beginning in 1906, Chinese students entering the United States steadily increased.<sup>21</sup> By 1952 over 40,000 Chinese students had received an education from U.S. colleges and universities.<sup>22</sup>

The founding of Tsinghua School in 1909, based on the U.S. remission of the Boxer Indemnity Fund, was instrumental in creating the culture of studying abroad. Tsinghua was created as a preparatory school for students to study in America. It adopted American textbooks, recruited American teachers, and even imported sports equipment directly from the United States to provide a learning environment in which students would be well prepared to seek advanced degrees in the United States and other Western countries. The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program (Genkuan Liuxue), administered by Tsinghua School and offering subsidies for students studying abroad, nurtured a stellar group of modern Chinese intellectuals, including the famous May Fourth leader Hu Shi, who studied with John Dewey at Columbia University, and such prominent Chinese American scholars as linguist Zhao Yuanren and the 1957 Nobel Prize winner in physics, Yang Zhengning. The scholarship program continued for many years and later expanded to include other countries, such as Great Britain and France. Shu once noted in the 1920s that “after Tsinghua School was established, more state-sponsored students went to study in the United States. . . . [They] became a huge force in society after they returned to China, and that resulted in an ensuing increase of self-funded students to also study there.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, throughout the 1930s and 1940s many more students came to study in America with private funds and local government subsidies. Their high profile in various sectors in modern China made studying abroad a key element in Chinese modernity, and the term *liuxuesheng* (overseas student) became synonymous with the modern Chinese intellectual.

While studying in the United States, Chinese students formed associations, organized conferences, and published journals, diaries, and personal accounts to communicate with one another and to report on their American experiences to readers at home. By the 1930s Chinese students in America had inaugurated several publications, most notably *The Chinese Student's Quarterly* and *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, and the stories and commentaries about studying abroad were well received and much debated, a subject I discuss in chapter 2. These publications in English and Chinese formed a transnational cultural-political-scape that connected China and the United States. Through them, *liuxuesheng* fashioned themselves into transnational elites in the Chinese imagination, inspiring more

students to pursue education overseas. The Chinese civil war, which began immediately after World War II and ended with the communist victory in 1949, stalled Chinese student migration to America and created a generation of “stranded scholars” who wanted, but were forbidden, to return to China due to U.S. Cold War policy.<sup>24</sup> However, a new wave came in the 1960s, with students from Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>25</sup> Dissatisfied with the stifling political atmosphere at home, these students came to the United States with diverse ideologies and national imaginings. The revolutionary energy of the 1960s struck a chord with these students; many of them, in addition to studying and writing about their American experience, threw themselves into political movements in the 1970s: the Baodiao (protecting the Diaoyutai Islands) movement and Taidu (Taiwan Independence) campaign<sup>26</sup>—the foci of chapters 3 and 4—were two diasporic student movements that had significant influence in Taiwan, China, and their respective overseas communities. Some of the students also participated in the Asian American movement, as I detail in chapter 5. Through political activism and literary activities, Chinese students since the 1970s, like their predecessors sixty years ago, have brought Asia and America together to pursue the ideal of national independence and explore the possibilities of a critical internationalism, albeit while holding on to different and alternating national imaginaries and identifications as Chinese, Taiwanese, and (Asian) American. As they stayed on and raised families on American soil, their youthful struggles and idealism were also passed on to the next generation, thus providing new sources for ethnic and national identifications and challenging the coalition principle of Asian American identity and politics. In the meantime, their writings in Chinese and English constitute a transpacific archive whose significance is yet to be fully revealed.<sup>27</sup> Together, they provide us with a useful perspective to remap Asian American studies on transnational terrain and attend to the mutual penetration of Asia and America.

### Overseas Student Writing

In Asian American literary studies, scholars have made a recuperative attempt to include foreign student writers as transnational pioneers. The autobiographies of Yan Phou Lee, Yung Wing, and Etsu Sugimoto; the novels written by H. T. Hsiang, Younghill Kang, and N. V. M. Gonzalez; and recently Jenichiro Oyabe’s travel account are all part of this “recovered legacy.” In *Recovered Legacies*, editors Keith Lawrence and Floyd Cheung strive to bring to light previously obscure authors and texts to dismantle the “resistance-versus-accommodation” model of Asian American experience and to proclaim America as an “eccentric culture.”<sup>28</sup> They point out that such a recuperative attempt does not merely aim to rewrite Asian American literary history against the grain of the post-1960s’ presentist model, but also to point us toward “a richer appreciation of Asian American history.”<sup>29</sup>

A similar attempt can be observed in *Re/Collecting Early Asian America*, in which the authors try to rewrite Asian American history by re-centering such transnational elements as Yan Phou Lee's autobiography, Yone Noguchi's novel, and memories of the *Komagata Maru*, the Japanese steamship that was blocked from entering Vancouver because of the Indian passengers it carried. In fact, as early as 1990 the late literary critic Amy Ling studied the works of Helena Kuo, Adet Lin, Anor Lin, Mai-mai Sze, and Han Suyin, who are traditionally not deemed Asian American writers, and she asserted that their works open up the Asian American experience to transnational terrain.<sup>30</sup> However, the texts Ling analyzes, like the ones regained in *Recovered Legacies* and *Re/Collecting Early Asian America*, are written in English, affirming the dominance of an Anglophone and U.S.-centered imagination in the studies of Asian America. Despite these attempts to reclaim the past and rewrite the present, the foreign student remains marginal to Asian American history and culture.

Transnational studies requires translingual literacy. It was not until the 1980s that Asian American scholars began to recognize the importance of Asian-language materials.<sup>31</sup> Marlon Hom and Sau-ling Wong—both came to the United States initially as foreign students—were the first Asian American scholars to incorporate Chinese-language texts into their study. Hom's "A Case of Mutual Exclusion: Portrayals by Immigrant and American-born Chinese of Each Other in Literature," an essay published in the *Amerasia Journal* in 1984, is one of the earliest academic essays to bring together Chinese-language and English-language materials to suggest a bilingual and intercultural approach. Wong's essay, "Chinese American Literature," appearing in *An Inter-Ethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, recognizes overseas student writing as part of the transnational genealogy of Chinese American literature. Furthermore, her research on Nieh Hualing's *Sanqing yu taohong* [Mulberry and Peach], an immigrant text that weaves together memories of China, Taiwan, and America, urges us to think about how an immigrant story travels in multiple critical contexts.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, both Hom's and Wong's essays were also published in Chinese, which creates another rich layer of linguistic and critical crossings.<sup>33</sup> Following Hom's and Wong's efforts, Xiao-huang Yin, in *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, takes Chinese-language literature to be a multilingual articulation of Asian America.<sup>34</sup> He emphasizes that the portrayal of Chinese immigrant life in Chinese-language texts seems "closer to reality" because immigrant writers are "often more straightforward" when writing in their native language.<sup>35</sup> While Yin's work helps to recognize the importance of Chinese-language materials in Asian American literary studies, his emphasis on "immigrant experience" reduces the complex formation of Asian American transnationality in which being an overseas student is also a possible mode.

Sheng-mei Ma is one of the few Asian American scholars who takes the over-

seas student seriously. In *Immigrant Subjectivities*, which puts Asian American and Asian diaspora literatures in comparative contexts, Ma is attentive to the peculiar positionality of overseas student writers and proposes that their works should be studied in the intersecting contexts of postcolonialism, minority discourse, and modern Chinese literary tradition. Ma argues that with their subjectivities being formed in these opposing forces, overseas student writers appear to be “nostalgic for China while eagerly Westernizing themselves, busily putting down roots on American soil yet apathetic to their own marginalized status.”<sup>36</sup> His theoretically engaged analysis presents a challenge to the assumptions of these discourses: “the Chinese roots may be a historical fact *and* a fabricated obsession; postcolonialism may occur to diverse regions not previously under Euro-American imperialism; and Asian immigrant literature may require as much care from Asian Americanists as do English-language texts by U.S.-born authors.”<sup>37</sup> Ma’s challenge is provocative because it recasts the monolingual and nation-bound imaginations of both Chinese and Asian American literatures by suggesting the possibility of a critical conjuncture in spite of the cultural and linguistic differences between them on the surface. It also complicates their postcolonial and minority positions by projecting them onto transnational terrains where such differences can be rearticulated for critical comparisons, hence suggesting a more open model of Asian American criticism susceptible to diasporic sensibility and transnational differences.

Shu-mei Shih’s recent book on the transpacific “Sinophone articulations” further extends this critical strategy by breaking down geopolitical and linguistic boundaries between Chinese and Asian American cultures. Her notion of the Sinophone is fully engaged with the forces of state and global capitalism, which produced accented transnationality as a mechanism of identity formation. Shih contends through an analysis of Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*:

In this film, Sinophonic dissonance can be positioned against uniform Chineseness; but in [Lee’s] struggle against uniform Americanness, his alternative appears constricted by stereotypical Chineseness, rather than challenging it, as shown in his other films such as *The Wedding Banquet*. Herein lies the transnational political economy of representation that often reduces complexity and multiplicity that appear only through multilayered differentiation by projecting a particular logic of power, subjecting a national subject (Taiwanese) to minoritization (becoming Taiwanese American).<sup>38</sup>

Shih’s perceptive reading suggests a distinct transpacific articulation in which what is deemed “national” is always mediated through the “minoritarian,” and in turn the “minoritarian” can stand in for the “national” in a different context. The Sinophone thus names a transnational network of cultural production “outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness” in which heterogeneous

identities—like Taiwanese, Chinese, and Asian American—are at once distinct and mutually implicated.<sup>39</sup> The recuperation of immigrant subjectivities hence must also account for the transnationality of overseas student writing, for it both invites and resists the readings of immigrant modality, nationalist reification, and diasporic imaginings.

Instead of following previous scholars' attempts at retrieving immigrant subjectivities in Chinese-language materials, I find it more fruitful to think about the overseas student writings in both English and Chinese and activism as distinct transnational practices by which Chinese students abroad establish a symbolic presence at home and imagine themselves not so much as immigrants, but as overseas correspondents who write from and about the diaspora. What is fascinating about overseas student writing and activism is the gesture and politics of "writing diaspora"—which Rey Chow takes to mean "tactics of intervention"<sup>40</sup>—as a means to affirm national longings and transnational belongings. Overseas student writing not only documents immigrant lives and mirrors Chinese American experience, as Yin assumes, but more crucially also creates a bridge of words to articulate a Sinophone community—retaining all differences to a China-centered imagination—across the Pacific and beyond. This book argues that overseas student writing and activism represent a transpacific articulation in which national belonging intersects with ethnic formation, and the intellectuals' commitments are always striated by both struggles abroad and strivings at home. If writing in English represents for foreign students a translingual passage toward acculturation, writing in their mother tongue signals a reluctance to let go of Asia, a promise to keep Asia "in the heart." As my discussion in chapter 2 shows, the overseas student's choice of language is both personal and contextual and is at once a means of communication and a gesture of distinction: English is employed to contest injustice and racism, to present a Chinese voice in the West, and Chinese is reserved for self-expression and affective communication to signal symbolic loyalty and initiate change at home. Thus to consider foreign students as translated subjects and to take their careers across the Pacific seriously is to affirm that Asia is a no less a significant locus in the making of Asian America. My attempt to examine overseas student writing and activism at the nexus of Asia and America not only joins the recuperative endeavor advanced by previous scholars, but also hopes to expand the linguistic and discursive repertoire of Asian American criticism to make room for Asia-based perspectives.

### **Remaking Asian America**

In this book I employ an awkward term, "Asian/American," to hold together the multiple desires and contrapuntal positions that the foreign student embodies in the transpacific flows of knowledge, capital, identity, and politics. Taking into

account yet registering a difference from “Asian American” as a positive and collective identity that claims the United States as home and the sole object of political allegiance, the term “Asian/American,” as used by David Palumbo-Liu, Laura Kang, and Celine Parreñas Shimizu, allows us to grasp the nuances of Asian American transnationality in more critical ways, at a time when “the lines between Asian and Asian American . . . are increasingly being blurred.”<sup>41</sup> In his seminal work *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*, Palumbo-Liu explains why it is important to reconfigure Asian American with a solidus:

In this study, I argue that the proximity of Asian Americans to that ideal [of becoming American] should be read as a history of persistent reconfigurations and transgressions of the Asian/American “split,” designated here by a solidus that signals those instances in which a liaison between “Asian” and “American,” a *sliding over* between two seemingly separate terms, is constituted. As in the construction “and/or,” where the solidus at once instantiates a choice between two terms, their simultaneous and equal status, and an element of indecidability, that is, as it at once implies both exclusion and inclusion, “Asian/American” marks *both* the distinction installed between “Asian” and “American” *and* a dynamic, unsettled, and inclusive movement.<sup>42</sup>

Central to his argument is the instability, interconnectedness, and crossovers that a *slashed* “Asian/American” represents as it is read against the immutable ideal of becoming American. The slash identifies both the historical mechanism of racial management that excludes Asians while the United States demands Asia as its market and labor pool, and the constant shuffle of identifications that names one as either “Asian,” “American,” or “Asian American.” Yet at the same time these identities are often conflated in representation, and the intervening slash in Asian/American, as Shimizu contends, can help us identify “the tensions within the unwieldy reference.”<sup>43</sup> Kang also argues for the usefulness of the slash in designating the shifting identifications of Asian/American women as “compositional subjects,” because it instructs us much about the “instability and inadequacy of those generic delineations of individuality and collectivity.”<sup>44</sup> She contends that “the intervening slash in Asian/American women is a diacritically awkward shorthand for the cultural, economic, and geopolitical pressures of the continental (Asian), the national (American), and the racial-ethnic (Asian American) as they come to bear on an implicitly more solid gendered ontology (women).”<sup>45</sup> Rather than regarding Asian/American women as fixed identities, Kang views them as specific objects of knowledge and disciplinarity, “enfigured” by both disciplinary protocols and the politics of representation. Asian/American women thus are “an overlapping but also distinct *racial-gender formation* at the nexus of higher education, cultural politics, grassroots and institutional activism, and both national and international state policies” (original emphasis).<sup>46</sup>

These scholars exemplify an understanding of Asian American transnationality as defined by bilateral movements and mutual implication, a continuous interaction between state policies, racial formation, and disciplinary knowledge that simultaneously coalesce and break down on Asian bodies. The foreign student embodies this complex transnational transaction. It is at once implicated in the shifting designation of Asian/American, subjected to varied disciplinary practices, state regulations, and national imaginations and embodying the “unsettled, inclusive, dynamic movement” across the Pacific that emerged with the advent of colonial modernity in Asia. In leaving Asia for America, the foreign student articulates the personal experience of exile and displacement with the national passage toward enlightenment and modernity, and explores possibilities for cosmopolitanism and international affinity. The foreign student as a translated subject possesses a curious “Asian/American” subjectivity—measured against the ideal of becoming an American and that of remaining a loyal Asian subject. The slash hence connotes a sense of traumatic separation in mutual penetration that constitutes Asian America as a transnational cultural political space that I call “Asia/America.” In tipping Asia toward America, Asia/America represents the transpacific passage as an asymmetrical relation of knowledge, movement, and power within which the foreign student emerges contradictorily as at once the vanguard of national consciousness, the victim of transcultural forces and racializing policies, and a transnational identity that signals elitism and mobility. As the book demonstrates, foreign students have partaken in Asian America with a deliberate Asian orientation; however, at the same time they also rely on America as a transnational platform on which to operate their political activities and perform a sense of alterity to their homeland culture. In this way, a careful investigation of the foreign student can wrest Asian American studies from the paradigm of labor immigration and racial formation to that of diasporic culture and transnational politics to reconsider the character of Asian America’s connectedness to Asia.

As early as 1971 Franklin Odo, in the preface to *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, asked, “How closely, if at all, and in what ways should Asian Americans relate to Asia?”<sup>47</sup> His question was raised in the heat of the antiwar movements that unveiled the racist and imperialist logic that connected Asians in America to those in Asia. Such cognitive linkages represent the internationalist inception of Asian American studies in the 1960s and 1970s. However, with the belief in the importance of claiming America and honoring native-born sensibility as the foundation for Asian American citizenship and difference (to both continental Asian and mainstream American culture), pioneering scholars from the 1970s and the early 1990s carefully guarded the boundaries of Asian American identity and culture. Frank Chin’s outright rejection of foreign-born Asian writers and criticism of David Henry Hwang, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan are cases in

point.<sup>48</sup> Even Sau-ling Wong, an immigrant scholar herself, was cautious of and defensive about the transnational turn when she published her seminal piece to this debate in 1995. In “Denationalization Reconsidered,” published in the *Amerasia Journal’s* special issue on “Thinking Theory in Asian American Studies,” Wong cautions against the “denationalization trend” in Asian American cultural criticism because the trend has three aspects that may jeopardize the foundation of Asian American studies built on the claims of America: the gradual easing of cultural nationalism; the porosity of the boundary between Asians and Asian Americans, and thus between Asian studies and Asian American studies; and the acceptance of a diasporic position that considers Asian Americans as but one component in the global scattering of Asian peoples.<sup>49</sup> Acutely, Wong perceives a celebratory tendency in denationalization that risks the mnemonic eclipse of exclusion, discrimination, and interethnic conflicts, as well as its effect in uncritically endorsing a class bias to privilege transnational mobility and bilingual literacy. In addition, she is concerned with the forces of capitalism and the state that, by conflating Asian American and Asian, may again relegate Asian American to the status of foreigner, as Vincent Chin’s murder in 1982 and John Huang’s scandal in 1996 clearly show.<sup>50</sup> Hence she recommends that one looks at denationalization and cultural nationalism as two different modes of Asian American cultural criticism rather than considers the former as the more advanced “phase” than the latter in a developmental narrative.

Wong’s essay generated a series of debates around the issue of transnationality and Asian American subjectivity. Trying to weave an Asia-Pacific point of view into Asian American history, Arif Dirlik joined the debate by adding that “the Asian-American presence is not merely an expression of an Asia-Pacific regional formation, but a fundamental constituent of such a formation because Asian American’s relationship to their society of origin provide, to use a commonly encountered metaphor, ‘bridges’ across the Pacific.”<sup>51</sup> While Dirlik is also aware of the detrimental effects an overemphasis on transnationality and diaspora may have on the principles of coalition building in Asian America, he encourages Asian American studies to take these issues head-on. Dirlik writes in another article, “Asian America is no longer just a location in the United States, but is at the same time a location on a metaphorical rim constituted by diasporas and motions of individuals. To understand Asian Americans it is no longer sufficient to comprehend their roots in U.S. history or, for that matter, in countries of origin, but a multiplicity of historical trajectories that converge in the locations we call Asian America.”<sup>52</sup> Dirlik’s comment echoes Susan Koshy’s argument that ethnicity “metamorphoses at multiple sites of transit, return, and arrival between and within nations; it can no longer be solely defined through the negotiation between origin and destination.”<sup>53</sup> Koshy criticizes Sau-ling Wong for the “conservative tendency” in her conclusions, because the reality of Asian America in the 1990s

was far too complex and heterogeneous to be determined and prejudged by the originary claims of America and commitment to places of residence. The transnational turn in fact usefully brings to light the fictionality of Asian America, which is constructed with “the practice of a strategic deferral—an invocation of the work of culture-building that the debates themselves perform, and through which Asian American identity and its concomitant literature would come into being.”<sup>54</sup> Koshy argues that unlike other ethnic literatures, “Asian American literature inhabits the highly unstable temporality of the ‘about-to-be,’ its meanings continuously reinvented after the arrival of new groups of immigrants and the enactment of legislative changes.”<sup>55</sup> This logic of deferral lays bare the inadequacy of multiculturalism in including and confronting the contradictions and heterogeneities of Asian America. It also exposes the constitutive tension of Asian American studies between a unified political identity and a diasporic reality, leading to Kandice Chuh’s argument years later that Asian American is a “subjectless discourse” to question the very political and cultural framings through which Asian American emerges as an epistemological object.<sup>56</sup> Such deconstructivist moves reveal the limitation of cultural nationalism in comprehending the ever-complex formations of Asian American transnationality as well as the gate-keeping tendencies in traditional Asian American criticism. Kandice Chuh, with Karen Shimakawa, hence introduces the concept of the Asian diaspora as “an alternative epistemological object” to this discussion, hoping to enable a critical comparison that “focuses on movement itself, on the literal circulation of peoples and cultures, and on the figurative meanings of those movements.”<sup>57</sup> Apparently the transnational turn suggests a move away from a U.S.-centered paradigm toward a critical focus on the crossovers and transactions across the Pacific, a move that even destabilizes the notion of Asian American criticism itself.<sup>58</sup>

The critical implication of this debate is that Asian American studies today can no longer afford to ignore the presence of Asia as a site of significance, nor can it neglect the significant presence of Asian Americans in Asia. As Elaine Kim points out in her foreword to *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* in 1992, “As the world has changed, so have our conceptions of Asian American identity. . . . Within one family, there may be some siblings whose first language is an Asian one and others whose native language is English. . . . As material and cultural distances diminish, middle-class Asian American youths can spend the summer in Seoul or Taipei almost the way middle-class American youths of yore went to summer camp.”<sup>59</sup> Kim’s ethnographic sketch resonates with the description of the transnational Asian family in the 1990s as composed of an “astronaut” father traveling constantly across the Pacific, with kids and wife living in the United States and other Western countries, in Aihwa Ong’s *Flexible Citizenship*. Haiming Liu’s book also shows how Chinese, even during the exclusionary period (1882–1943), had already created and managed a “transnational family” through family letters,

agro-medical businesses, and reverse migration.<sup>60</sup> Such transpacific shuttling of family, education, and business, thanks to the advancement in communications and transportation technologies, not only has fashioned a tighter and more expansive network between Asia and Asian America, but is also recasting the geography of kinship, culture, and identity. Ong's idea of "flexible citizenship" brings us closer to the complexity of transnationality.

In the era of globalization, individuals as well as governments develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies to accumulate capital and power. "Flexible citizenship" refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes. These logics and practices are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, migration is never simply a physical movement from one location to another; "structures of meaning" and feeling are crucial to understanding migration as an element in transnational logistics. The strange makeup of a transnational family is a product of larger historical forces and cultural imagination that helped one to envision a better life elsewhere. The transnational turn thus not only must lead us to a more complex understanding of Asian America as a transpacific and multiethnic formation, but must also bring to light the cultural logics of the movements across the Pacific as well as the mechanisms and institutions through which such movements were made possible in the first place. In all its complexity, it compels us to understand that Asian American identity is one of the results of transpacific encounter and exchange, all embedded in the formation of Asia/America as an intertwined yet uneven dynamic.

Ong's theorization also provides insight into how student migration is emphasized and regulated by the regimes of state and capitalism and how it may rearticulate the meanings of movement and education in the triangulations of Asia/America. As Ong emphasizes, in addition to migratory movement, transnationality "alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination."<sup>62</sup> Transnationality cannot be properly understood without taking into account the meanings and sentiments attached to migration and what it represents in the multiple sites of passage. As chapters 1 and 2 will demonstrate, although the very first foreign students, like Yung Wing himself, were viewed with suspicion upon their return to Asia, their efforts have made studying abroad a means for both the individual and the state to accumulate capital and power. Their stature, ability, and de-

meanor evidenced the value of Western education, and moreover erected America as the model of modernity through which the Asian American model minority image is connected to the foreign student's transpacific pursuit of modernity, fame, and prosperity. This allows us also to consider "Asia/America" as a dynamic interactive process through which Asian Americans, via popular imagination and actual contact, can have an impact on Asian societies.<sup>63</sup> These encounters, as documented in overseas student writings and their political activities, provide a contemplative moment to reconsider how Asian America is related to Asia and what that connection means.

Taking the transnational turn, with a reorientation to Asia, this book seeks to understand what Asian American means *in Asia* and *to Asians*. How do we comprehend the significance of *Asia* in the Asian American formation and theorize the persistent diasporic imaginations within it? How do we make sense of the transpacific cultural politics as triangulated by Asia, Asian America, and America through Chinese students' writings and political activism? How do we understand Asian American criticism as a critical knowledge formation, as it crosses U.S. borders to reach Asia and beyond? These questions are central to my thesis of Asia/America as a transpacific articulation that epitomizes a complex configuration of national longings and transnational belongings, as well as critical intellectual formation, structured within and against U.S. imperialism from the late nineteenth century to the present. Across different historical moments, foreign students—through various types of cultural and political activism—have rearticulated Asian America into a transnational space for the pursuit of knowledge, liberty, and justice, as well as comfort, fame, and capital. As foreign students became Asian American intellectuals, and as Asian Americans crossed over to Asia, what Asian American has come to represent is no longer so much an ethnic identity as a transpacific interactive dynamic that has been actively engaged on both ends of the Pacific.

### Transpacific Articulations

An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? So the so-called "unity" of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness."

—STUART HALL<sup>64</sup>

The idea of articulation has been instrumental to this book for two major reasons. First, the foreign student is a figure of articulation in that he or she brings together Asia and America through multiple crossings and engagements. Second, what we

call “Asian American” today is also a project of articulation as it forges dissimilar national groups into a pan-ethnic identity with a distinct racial consciousness and cultural political agenda. Though the Asian American field, since its 1960s founding moment, has emphasized the second meaning to claim America as a collective base for Asian American identity, recent Asian American cultural criticism, such as Colleen Lye’s *America’s Asia*, Christine So’s *Economic Citizens*, and Jodi Kim’s *Ends of Empire*, has taken a critical reorientation to Asia’s experience of and response to American hegemony to advance the “transnational turn.” By foregrounding the foreign student as an instance of the Asian/American subject, I hope to identify a transpacific coming together that is based on discrepant relations structured upon Western domination over Asia. If we understand Asian American more as a discourse than a given identity, the idea of “transpacific articulation” can help us realize “how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects.”<sup>65</sup> To conceive of Asia/America as a transpacific articulation is to understand how the foreign student can be both Asian and Asian American, and to ask how and why historically Asia is at once inscribed and erased in the making of Asian America. It is not only a recuperative attempt, but also a project of reconfiguration that may contribute to what Augusto Espiritu calls “transnational Asian American intellectual studies.”

In *Five Faces of Exile*, Espiritu studies transnational Filipino American intellectuals as the beneficiaries, victims, and critics of this asymmetrical U.S.-Asia relationship. He argues that the failure to account for transnational intellectuals like Carlos Romulo, Carlos Bulosan, Jose Garcia Villa, N. V. M. Gonzalez, and Benvenido Santos “says much about the cleavages within the Filipino American community and the cultural biases in Asian American historiography toward the second generation and the farm laborer experience.”<sup>66</sup> That these intellectuals participated in the cultural and political scenes in both the United States and the Philippines suggests an important transnational intellectual force in the making of Asian America, and the aching limitations of cultural nationalism in understanding Asian American subjectivity. As Martin Ponce points out in his article about Bulosan’s letters, “Cast in the epistolary mode, ‘Letter to a Filipino Woman’ makes explicit what I will argue is implicit in *America Is in the Heart* that Bulosan addressed his narrative not only to the U.S. as an indictment of racial and class brutality, but also to the Philippines as an indictment of what he considered the under-politicized literature being produced in his homeland.”<sup>67</sup> It is this double articulation that makes the intellectual migrant “diasporic” to both his Asian homeland and Asian American social location. At the same time, the diasporic stance entails a trans/national desire to keep both Asia and America “in the heart.”

Hence what Espiritu calls “transnational Asian American intellectual studies” implies that it is a critical remodeling of Asian American studies by reconsidering intellectual migrants as doubly and transnationally articulated subjects. For transnational intellectuals, their lives and politics are never confined to the immediate environment of their residence, but are crucially informed by the transnational presence of Asia.<sup>68</sup> It is worth remembering that the postcolonial plight in Asia—be it in the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, or China—is never just a local agitation, but a transnational problem that is produced and remolded by the global geopolitics of imperialism. As Espiritu concludes, “Transnationalism is inconceivable without the national or colonial state or the desire for national belonging.”<sup>69</sup> It is against the imperial geopolitics that study abroad emerged as both a symptom of and a hopeful cure for colonial malaise. Studying abroad as a transborder, transformative endeavor articulates Asia/America into a discrepant, uneven nexus of desire, knowledge, power, longing, and belonging.

*Transpacific Articulations* envisions a border-crossing Asia/America that is created in the cultural political engagements of Asian/American subjects on both shores of the Pacific. It signifies not only a cultural political space of transborder movement, but also a structure of feeling shaped by colonial histories, imperialist domination, and the neoliberalist imaginations. As a transit and nexus between Asia and America, it also engenders a critical consciousness against the hegemony of a U.S.-centered, monolingual imagination and recasts Asian American studies as a critical internationalist project that partakes in both ethnic formation and national aspiration in the common pursuit, however discrepantly, of liberation, justice, and subjectivity. If the true meaning of America, as Rob Wilson suggests, is to be found “offshore and over the ocean, where identity flows and deforms and creativity takes place along a line of flight across the older world-system geographies of New England and Canton province,”<sup>70</sup> Asia/America is likewise to be rediscovered in the movement of Asian/Americans as they travel to shake, link, and reconfigure both places of ancestry and residence across the old and new spatialities and temporalities of family, nation-state, and empire. Imprinted in the footsteps of American-educated students are the critical stories of Asian America’s transpacific becoming.