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Ying Wa boys in early colonial Hong Kong

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Abstract

Previous studies of the Ying Wa College (英華書院) in early Hong Kong overlooked the role of the students. The scarcity of relevant sources could well justify such an oversight. This article aims at filling this gap through the careful use of London Missionary Society (LMS) materials. Not only does it aim to highlight significant aspects of the college, its unique history, its English education and its practice of Christian faith, it also discusses the careers of some graduates in Hong Kong, China and the world. This article argues that these Ying Wa boys formed a bridge that connected the Western and Chinese worlds. Their impact was felt through the spread of Christianity and global China business, on the one hand, and as a connection between the people and the government in colonial Hong Kong, Qing China and overseas Chinese communities in Singapore and Australia.

Keywords: James Legge; Ying Wa College (Anglo-Chinese College); Early colonial Hong Kong; Christian missions in China; Chinese students

Introduction

Ying Wa College (英華書院),¹ also known as the Anglo-Chinese College (ACC), was a prominent London Missionary Society (LMS) project that combined printing and schooling under the same roof in early colonial Hong Kong. This article aims to answer two seemingly straightforward but somewhat perplexing questions: who were the Ying Wa boys, and what was their impact? Although several studies trace and explain the college's early history in Hong Kong, a satisfactory analysis of its students is a yet understudied topic (Smith 1986, Smith 1995, Vikner 1987, Leung 1987, Su 1996, Sweeting 2005 and Gao 2022). The impact of its students is difficult to judge because the education delivered at the mission school during the nascent stage of early colonial Hong Kong's development was a combination of conflicting ideas. One might encounter many paradoxical pairs – Western versus Chinese, Christian versus Confucian, idealist versus pragmatic, religious versus secular and so on. In the first place, the literal meaning of 'Ying Wa' in Chinese has a clear Western-Chinese hybrid connotation. This gives rise to the question of whether Ying Wa boys were merely Anglicized in their language use. What about their ethos or values? The careers that they went on to establish gives us grounds to remark that the Ying Wa boys formed a bridge that connected the Western and Chinese worlds.

In the research literature, historians have overlooked the Ying Wa boys, who comprised significant stakeholders in the college's history. The scarcity of relevant sources could

¹ Eitel refers to Ying-wa Shü-ün in his book on Hong Kong history (Eitel 1895: 190–1).

well justify such an oversight. For example, compiling a complete student list is an impossible task, not to mention aiming for any serious discussion of their roles and contributions in modern Chinese history. This article uncovers some of the Ying Wa boys' stories, using archival sources, such as the LMS Archives held at the SOAS Library. It discusses some salient features of their education and their subsequent careers.²

Chinese young men as the college's focus in Hong Kong

After the Opium War, the LMS relocated its college from Malacca to Hong Kong. In Malacca, the college had recruited students from various cultural backgrounds, including Malacca-born Chinese and the children of merchants and missionaries from England, Ireland and the United States (Harrison 1979: 124–31). In Hong Kong, however, the college only admitted Chinese students. It taught them modern Western subjects and Chinese classics alike. The college began offering theological training in 1848. Its objective was “to educate Chinese Christian young men, to fit them to be preachers of the Gospel” (Legge 1850: 4). James Legge was a crucial figure in the college's transition from Malacca to Hong Kong. His years in Hong Kong have been well documented and examined (see Girardot 2002, Sweeting 2005 and Wong 2018).

Before answering the question of who the Ying Wa boys were, an interconnected, and even basic, question is: how many boys were enrolled at the ACC? According to Legge (1867), “From first to last the pupils amounted to about seventy boys.” The Appendix shows a total of 58 Ying Wa boys who were recorded in the missionary reports in 1850 and 1851. So how does one make sense of the figure of 70 boys? First, some of them dropped out for health or family reasons and some were simply not up to the studies. Second, student numbers at the ACC compared well with other schools in Hong Kong, and it was, in fact, the most popular school in Hong Kong at that time. Take the numbers in 1851 for comparison: the ACC had 50 students, while St Paul's College had 30 and the three government grant-in-aid schools (the Taiping-shan School, Stanley School and Aberdeen School) had 26, 14 and 25 students, respectively.³

The Appendix does not include the most representative trio, whose stories encompass some essential elements of the college's early history, namely Ng Mun-sow (吳文秀, also known as Woo Wan-sew), Lee Kim-leen (李劍麟, also known as Le Kin-lin) and Song Hoot-kiam (宋佛儉, also known as Sung Fuh-keen).⁴ It is helpful to recount briefly the trio's early years in the ACC. They had already shown their potential under Legge's instruction in Malacca and came along with him when he moved to Hong Kong. In 1845, the three boys joined Legge for his furlough back in Scotland. In the Scottish town of Huntly, they were baptized in the same church attended by William Milne, the founding principal of the ACC in Malacca.⁵ Their baptism symbolized the early fruits of the Christian missions in China. The boys attracted some attention from both local and national newspapers in Britain. Through John Morison, who was Legge's father-in-law and a leading figure in Victorian church circles, the boys and Legge were invited by Queen Victoria to visit Buckingham Palace on 9 February 1848. During the visit, their conversation “was all about China and the lads” (Legge 1905: 56–7). “Saw after luncheon, 3 young Chinese, who have been studying here, have become Christians & are now

² This article follows the version(s) of English transliteration of the Chinese young men's names as they appear in the historical and archival sources instead of the usual pinyin system.

³ For figures for St Paul's College and the ACC, see *Hong Kong Blue Book for the Year of 1851*, 170–1. For information on the three grant-in-aid schools, see Lobscheid 1859.

⁴ Leung Yuen Sang has written a vivid account of the lives and times of these three Ying Wa boys (Leung 1983).

⁵ For the life and times of William Milne, see Bohr 2001.

returning to their country as Missionaries; they were very Chinese looking”, jotted Queen Victoria in her diary.⁶ To the Queen, the three boys represented the future of Christian missions in China. To the ACC, the Buckingham Palace visit was a highlight in its early history. After their return, the excitement continued in Hong Kong and the college made noticeable progress. Ng, Lee and Song began their theological studies, sparking a religious atmosphere in the attached preparatory school. In the same year, five students at the preparatory school were baptized, namely Ho King-mun (何景文), O Soey-cheong (柯瑞璋), Ho Ch'eong-k'ow (何昌球), Ho Sing-yuk (何星玉) and Chan Wing-kwong (陳永廣). According to Legge, one of their reasons for baptism was “probably influenced by association with and advice of their companions who returned with me, after having been baptized in Scotland”.⁷ Furthermore, more Chinese young men were applying for admission to the ACC. The report states:

At the beginning of last year the number of boys amounted to Twenty-four . . . In the month of March, seven boys were admitted who had been for different periods pupils in the Morrison Education Society's School, whose action was then suspended, and not long after another pupil of the same Institute was received. In the month of July, a boy was admitted from Malacca, a nephew of the Student Le Kin-lin [Lee Kim-leen]. During the last two months, we have taken in seven additional boys . . . Our number therefore of pupils at the close of the year was Forty-three, and we propose immediately after the Chinese New Year, which occurs next month, to take in six or eight more (Legge 1850: 5–6).

In the following year, O Soey-cheong, Chan Wing-kwong and Ho Sing-yuk started their theological training (Legge 1851: 11). Reflecting on his missionary career in Hong Kong before he left Hong Kong for Scotland in 1867, Legge remarked that there were altogether 17 Ying Wa boys who had studied at the seminary (Legge 1867). However, he did not specify their names, which means that 11 theological students' names remain unknown to historians.

A word about Legge's decision to shut down the ACC in 1856 is necessary. According to E.J. Eitel, an LMS missionary-turned-education officer for the Hong Kong government,⁸ Legge had “unflagging zeal” to run the ACC (Eitel 1876: 24). He raised funds in Britain and Hong Kong to train young Chinese men to become church ministers. It took him several years to see that “it was a mistake to take heathen boys, pay them, feed them, clothe them and give them a liberal English education, and then expect them to go forth as humble self-denying preachers, or become faithful pastors of native churches” (Eitel 1876: 24–5). Rev. A.B. Hutchinson, an Anglican missionary, considered that the ACC had mixed results – “as a school[,] success had rewarded his efforts; as a training institution for preachers, it had failed” (Hutchinson 1877: 34). Specifically, students with a competent command of the English language were often able to secure higher-paying jobs in the Hong Kong government or private businesses: as a “a native Christian minister” they could bring in “\$20 or \$25 a month”, while “there was a continuous demand for Chinese clerks in mercantile offices with salaries ranging from \$25 to \$100 a month and unlimited prospects of pickings” (Eitel 1891: 335).

However, this did not mean that Legge gave up on the educational needs of the community. Instead, he worked hard on the creation of the Central School, a large-scale

⁶ RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ [W] 9 February 1848 (Princess Beatrice's copies) (Bodleian Libraries, 2012).

⁷ Letter by Legge to the LMS, dated 24 November 1848, South China, Incoming Letters, London Missionary Society Archives.

⁸ For the life and times of E.J. Eitel in Hong Kong, see Wong 2000.

government school (Wong 2018). However, he also considered that the mission had to continue its commitment to offering education. Legge's successors in the LMS mission participated in the grant-in-aid scheme to build and manage grant schools from 1873 onwards (Ng 1984: 54–63).

English and Chinese education

If we find Eitel's materialistic explanation for the closure of the college to be adequate, then it is important to discuss the quality of English education offered there. The British colonial administration and Hong Kong's business environment naturally favoured the expansion of the teaching of English in schools (Evans 2008). Legge was aware of the secular value of an English education that might lead his students away from serving the church. But he stressed that a good English education contributed to the religious cause. He writes, "nothing will take a Chinese so thoroughly out of the old ruts in which his forefathers have been travelling for millenniums as a thorough English education. His intellect is thereby quickened, treasures of science and literature are brought within his reach, [and becomes] an instrument prepared to accomplish great things in the name of Jesus Christ" (Legge 1850: 9–10). He acknowledged that the socio-economic value of an English education might lead his students astray. On balance, he thought that the advantages of an English education outweighed the disadvantages that it might have. He reasoned that the knowledge that his students acquired would keep them from practising "superstition and idolatry". After all, he stressed that missionaries and their supporters had to be patient. It took time to see changes in students' lives. His students would become Christians in the future because he considered that a "good seed" was "deeply lodged" in their hearts (Legge 1850: 10).

To Legge, English was more than a tool to be used in companies or government offices; it was an essential language that would prepare his students for a more able church ministry. He attached great importance to teaching both English language and grammar. In Malacca he had developed a "manual of grammar", but he gave it up in favour of using the best grammar books available in the book market, such as those by James Cornwell (Legge 1850: 7). Cornwell's grammar books were market leaders in Britain: his first book *A New English Grammar* (1841) ran to 23 editions in 15 years; his subsequent text *Grammar for Beginners* (1855) hit an extraordinary record of 90 editions in total (Lee 2004). In addition, Legge translated Charles Baker's *A Circle of Knowledge* into Chinese and used it as a textbook for modern knowledge and English-language teaching. Studies show that his Chinese translation became an influential textbook in China and Japan (Shen and Uchida 2002).

Apart from the English curriculum, Legge stressed two more essential features of the education he provided. First was the effectiveness of Chinese education at the ACC. He took great pride in some boys' achievements in Chinese studies. In his report, he writes, "I had occasion lately to discover, indeed, that some of those in the first class were more than equal in attainments to many Chinese of considerable pretensions to learning" (Legge 1850: 7). He made use of translation as a tool for language acquisition. He remarks, "one peculiarity of our courses is – that whatever English is committed to memory in the first place [is] translated into Chinese. This makes our progress slow, but all the more sure" (Legge 1850: 8). He intended to equip his students with sufficient grounding in Chinese studies. Secondly, education was transmitted by example. Legge entrusted some teaching duties to Ho Tsun-sheen (何進善) who had been ordained as a pastor and took charge of the church ministry when Legge was away from Hong Kong. Ho "became an image of the Chinese pastor-scholar to many Chinese Protestants in subsequent decades" (Pfister 2022: 39). As well as Ho, the three famous students Lee, Song

and Ng shared substantial teaching duties (Legge 1850: 5–6). Specific annual subscriptions partially funded the three Ying Wa boys' work at the ACC, in the amount of £25 each, which Legge had managed to solicit from Britain.⁹ It was expedient for Legge to delegate some teaching as the number of students exceeded 50.

Doing so helped create a role model for students, as these young men were well versed in Chinese and English as well as of religious piety. There were setbacks, however. Song and Lee left the college in the middle of 1849 for Malacca and then went on to Singapore. Song did not return, but Lee did. Ng was defamed by a local newspaper which alleged that he had stolen a parcel of "Bills of Exchange" that had been intended for a monetary transaction to Guangzhou. The Hong Kong police charged him and the Central Magistracy, under William Henry Mitchell, heard his case. The charge, at last, was not substantiated. Mitchell assures Legge in his letter, "A-sow answered every query put to him in the course and a long and searching examination, in the most satisfactory and straightforward manner, and left a very pleasing impression upon my mind that he spoke the truth for its own sake" (Legge 1851: 19). Legge gave Ng the benefit of the doubt and accepted him back to the mission. However, Ng proved himself to be untrustworthy when he subsequently mingled with some members of a crime syndicate. Legge dismissed him from the LMS in 1855. Ng went on to work with the Hong Kong government and then the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (Smith 1986: 169–74).

It was hard to measure the extent to which their example translated into others following them into Christianity. Indeed, conversion to Christianity was always a good reason for celebration in the reports and letters missionaries sent back to London. The LMS's annual report of 1854, for example, reported that a student had become a Christian and gained church membership, while another had told Dr Legge of his readiness to be baptized (LMS 1854: 60). The next year's report sounds a note of caution: "... seven pupils [...] have declared themselves on the Lord's side. May they have grace given them to hold fast their profession without wavering. Their temptations are very great, and hence also is their claim on our sympathy and prayers" (LMS 1855: 51). A fuller discussion of the practice of Christian faith is in the following section.

Christian faith among Ying Wa boys

Further investigation into the reports and archives shows the particulars of some of the Ying Wa boys' Christian faith. Legge upheld a high standard for the seminary students. He had prepared a declaration for some of them to sign, an act that required their promise to adhere to certain principles. Legge's translation of the declaration in English in his reports is as follows,

Thanks be to God who has been pleased, in His abundant mercy, to enlighten our minds with the knowledge of His truth, and to call us to believe in the gospel of His Son! We acknowledge our duty to live, not unto ourselves, but to the Saviour, and we wish to do the work of God, and proclaim the true doctrine to our countrymen.

As many believers in Britain have established here in Hong Kong, a Theological Seminary, where we can be instructed more fully in the Scriptures, and in other

⁹ Song was funded by the Rev. Caston of Stratford-on-Avon; Lee by the Juvenile Association of the Maberly Chapel, London, and Ng by three pious gentlemen: Seth Smith in London, F. N. Johnstone in London and J. Taylor in Yorkshire (Legge 1850: 19). The founding minister of the Marberly Chapel was Robert Philip, a leading Christian writer who had also published a wide range of Christian books, including sermons and biographies relating to the LMS in China.

knowledge that will serve to make us useful as preachers of the truth, we desire to enjoy its advantages. Thankful to God for having opened to us such an opportunity of learning, and depending on Him for help, we desire to be received into it for a period of four years. During that time, we will give diligence to all the studies to which our attention may be directed, and hope we shall conduct ourselves in a manner that will give joy to our teachers, and make them regard us as true disciples of Jesus, and earnestly desirous to be useful in the service of the Saviour (Legge 1851: 11–12).

Legge, in particular, recorded that O Soey-cheong and Ho Sing-yuk signed the declaration with “much trembling”. The former told Legge that “his settled purpose [is] to ‘do one thing’ among his countrymen – to make known to them the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Legge 1851: 12).

Legge was instinctively concerned with whether the boys in the preparatory school accepted the Christian faith. He noticed that T’ong A-kü (唐亞樞), who had been educated first at the Morrison School and then the ACC, for eight years altogether, had not become a Christian. Nevertheless, he regularly attended the English Sunday services at the LMS’s Union Chapel (Legge 1851: 2). Both T’ong A-kü and his brother Tong A-foo (唐亞扶) made donations to support education and medical initiatives by missionaries in the ensuing decades (Smith 1985: 41). It is important to note that Legge and the other missionaries did not lower their standards to increase the number of converts. The missionaries did not approve of Lye A-lun’s (黎亞倫) request for baptism, demanding ‘his changed behaviour before baptizing him’. Eventually, they discovered that he had wanted to cheat them and had become involved in a “very unworthy act” that resulted in his dismissal, the first and the only case of expulsion in the ACC’s history (Legge 1851: 3–4). Missionaries in Hong Kong were already aware of some people’s intention to take advantage of the church. According to Rev. Lobscheid, who was also the inspector of schools during the 1850s, “Hong Kong was at that time swarming with imposters and vagabonds, who were this day a cook, tomorrow a coolie, and after a few days a graduate from a distant province, who had left their home in search of a true religion” (Lobscheid 1859: 26). There were of course also cases of baptism. For example, Legge had carefully examined Ho Ts’ew-kow’s (何釗球) “conduct” and “sincerity” for months before he agreed to baptize him. In 1850, 13 out of 47 boys came from families where either their parents or guardians were Christians (Legge 1851: 7).

Ying Wa boys’ careers: some examples

The first type of career that Ying Wa boys followed was LMS mission-related. Some became apprentices for the LMS printing press, for example Le A-on (李亞安), under Richard Cole’s supervision. Le was of “an unusual hardness in his organs of speech”, according to Legge. He gave up his studies as he showed no hope of learning English. Legge was assured, however, that “in the printing office, he has given Mr. Cole the highest satisfaction. No English lad display[s] more aptness to learn the business” (Legge 1851: 4–5). In his reports, however, Cole did not name those who worked in the press. He only mentioned that a worker responsible for typesetting was a Ying Wa boy. This could have been Le A-on, reported to be a skilled and efficient worker with satisfactory job performance (Su 2014: 252). The other notable Ying Wa boy was Lee Kim-leen. In 1850, Legge appointed Lee as a junior teacher to share some teaching duties as the number of students had increased (Legge 1851: 5–6). But Lee’s “weak voice” and “nervous temperament” did not make him a “public speaker” (Legge 1851: 15). Instead, Lee too was apprenticed to Cole in the printing press in 1851. Legge hoped that Lee could succeed Cole who had indicated his desire to leave Hong Kong. Cole left Hong Kong in 1852 and Lee managed the printing press along with another

experienced Chinese printer who had joined the ACC when it was still in Malacca. LMS missionaries were pleased with Lee's work performance. But he became seriously ill and upon his doctor's advice left Hong Kong for Singapore in 1854 to restore his health. Sadly, however, Lee passed away in Singapore in 1855 (Su 1996: 356–7; Su 2014: 238–9).

Others became apprentices of medical missionaries. Both O Soey-cheong and Ho King-mun (何景文) were apprenticed to Dr Benjamin Hobson, an LMS medical missionary who had moved from Hong Kong to the Western suburbs of Canton, where he started a new mission hospital in 1848 and published medical books in Chinese. The former dropped out as he could not keep up with the standards required by Dr Hobson. The latter could. "Though not gifted with shining abilities, he [Ho King-mun] is diligent and anxious to learn. There is every reason to believe that he is a true, humble, Christian, and he is now being instructed in science, which will fit him hereafter to be very useful in the service of the Gospel," Legge remarks (Legge 1851: 1–2). Ho proved to be a valuable addition to Hobson's medical team. Furthermore, he was a comfort to Hobson, whose other Chinese apprentices, such as Chan Apoon and Chan Awing, had either failed or disappointed him (Su 2019: 355). According to Hobson's report, Ho handled wounds and performed the some surgical procedures by himself, for example "simple operations on the eye and ear, removal of small tumours, extraction of teeth, opening of abscesses". Ho also made use of equipment such as the stomach pump to save those who attempted suicide by swallowing opium. Between January 1853 and June 1854, there were 117 such cases. Of these, 75 would recover (Hobson 1854: 9). In another report for the year 1855–6, Hobson recorded that Ho continued to perform similar duties as his medical assistant. "The smaller ones, as those on the eye and ear, opening of abscesses, removing small encysted tumours, tapping for hydrocele and dropsy, extraction of teeth, & c., are chiefly performed by my medical assistant," he remarked (Hobson 1856: 7). Furthermore, Ho gained official recognition for his services to healing and curing wounded soldiers in Canton. Hobson recorded this in the same report as follows:

"Quickly announce to Mr. Ho of the name of Kingmun, of such an honourable house, that the Governor-General of the two provinces, and the Lieut.-Governor (their names and titles attached) have received the imperial will that the individual recommended above, be rewarded with a button (a white crystal) corresponding to the sixth rank of a mandarin. Made known by the high officers." It is simply a title of honour; but while it confers no emolument or office, it gives a certain status in society, allows the individual to wear an official costume on particular occasions, and exempt him from being seized or treated in a contumelious manner by the police (Hobson 1856: 8).

The outbreak of the Second Opium War in October 1856 caused problems for missionary work in Canton. When Hobson ceased providing hospital services in Canton, Dr Walter G. Dickson, a private medical practitioner and long-time hospital supporter, hired Ho King-mun. When the mission hospital in Canton resumed in 1858, Dr Dickson and Ho offered their assistance occasionally (Wong 1860: 584).

There were also examples of Ying Wa boys participating in church ministry overseas. Due to their competence in English, there were plenty of overseas opportunities for Ying Wa boys. The earliest was Song Hoot-kiam who left Hong Kong for Malacca in 1849 and subsequently moved to Singapore to take up a teaching job at an English school, the Singapore Institution. Between 1853 and 1895, he worked at the Peninsular and Oriental Company. He upheld his Christian faith and remained an active member of the Straits Chinese Church on Prinsep Street, where he preached regularly at the pulpit.

Because of his socio-economic standing, he was a natural community leader in Singapore (Song 1902).

LMS students are also to be found among those exploring the opportunities that arose from the gold rush in the United States and Australia during the 1850s. Ho Ch'eong-k'ow, for example, participated in ministry work among Chinese overseas. He went to San Francisco to take advantage of the business opportunities that the United States promised. He earned an income that was equivalent to that of a married missionary. His letter to Legge, which records his intention to help develop a church, is a powerful testimony to the spiritual fruits that Ying Wa boys could produce. The following is an extract from his letter to Legge dated 13 November 1853,

I am happy to say that we have formed a Chinese Church here [San Francisco], though the members are yet very few. We are only four – A-sam, A-ts'un, A-ts'en, and myself. I hope our heavenly Father will increase our number. A-sam received the office of elder, and A-ts'un is to teach Chinese to the Missionary, Mr. Speer. For the few weeks past, Mr Speer has held the meeting in my room, but a large chapel will soon be raised for the Chinese. Oh, dear sir, it is very hard to make a man stand in the truth. If God had not helped me, I should have fallen into the hand of Satan; but our Creator is able to keep his people from all the temptations of their enemies. The American ladies and brethren are very kind to me. I often think of my beloved teacher in China with great pleasure. Please accept my warm love (in Anonymous 1854: 50).

That church he refers to was a product of a “foreign mission” by the Presbyterian Church under the ministry of William Speer. Between 1848 and 1852, Speer was an American missionary working in Canton. After his return, the mission board deployed him to San Francisco, where a local church had identified the need to start a missionary field for the migrant workers in the area. He started a dispensary and a school, edited a bilingual periodical entitled *The Oriental* (which only lasted for 32 issues) and helped fight for the legal rights of the American Chinese (Stahler 1970). The church is now known as the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown and is one of the oldest Chinese churches in North America.

Similarly, there were Ying Wa boys who joined the workforce of Christian missions among the Chinese in Melbourne, Australia, of whom Legge spoke highly in his letters of recommendation. Working either as catechists or interpreters, they were O Soey-cheong, Chu A-luk (朱亞祿), Leong A Toe (梁亞叨), Wut A-che (屈亞始), Ho A-low (何亞流) (also known as Ho Low-yuk [何流玉]) and Fan A-wye (范亞為) (also known as Fan Jü-wing [范汝為]) (Welch 2003, p. 39). They arrived in Melbourne in 1855. They started their mission work targeting the Chinese diggers in Castlemaine. Their regular attendees were 40 to 45 diggers, most of whom were from Guangdong province. Apart from the dialect they could all speak, there was a close cultural affinity between them. Indeed, Chu claimed that some diggers were his relatives and acquaintances. William Young, the minister-in-charge, who had been an LMS missionary in Southeast Asia and South China,¹⁰ remarks in his letter to the LMS, “From these he has met with a warm reception, and he will, I am persuaded, use the influences he seems to possess over them for the purpose of bringing them into contact with the word of God and the

¹⁰ William Young's wife suffered from poor health in Amoy and they moved to Australia in 1854 in the hope of restoring it. Young thus started missionary work among Chinese emigrant workers there. His wife, however, did not recover and passed away in 1857. Young left for Southeast Asia afterwards (Sibree 1923: 29–30).

ordinances of religion.”¹¹ Young further reported that Chu and Leong had performed their ministry duties effectively: conducting evangelism, visiting hospital patients, refuting Confucian and Chinese religious beliefs, organizing regular evening services and raising funds to build a chapel.¹² In another letter to the LMS mission in Hong Kong, Young speaks highly of the missionary work of Ho and Chu who had become “the means of communicating to many [a total of 30,000 Chinese gold diggers in nearby fields] a good amount of scriptural knowledge” (LMS 1856: 64). These Ying Wa boys’ missionary attempts among the overseas Chinese became a source of encouragement to the LMS missionaries in Hong Kong where church ministry did not show any significant growth during the Second Opium War. In 1858, the LMS report reads: “There are not a few faithful men, who have gone out from us, and are now witnesses for the truth, not only in their country, but to multitudes of their people in California and Australia” (LMS 1858: 61).

However, not all of them continued their missionary work in California and Australia. Some returned China to chart out a new missionary field. Joining the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Leong A-toe, for example, left Australia in 1865 for Guangzhou (廣州) and then Foshan (佛山), where he started a Chinese Christian mission.¹³ Some Ying Wa boys in Australia did not continue their missionary work. O Soey-cheong went on to become an interpreter in Bendigo where a gold mining bloom took place during the 1850s (Smith 1986: 178). Ho A-low also became a Chinese interpreter in the Ovens Valley goldfields and developed his career in Australia (Welch 2003: 440). Against the backdrop of anti-Chinese sentiments in the goldfields and some parts of Australia in general, Ho played a key role in mediating between the Chinese and the Australians (Rule 2013). In 1859, Chu A-luk returned to Hong Kong and became an English teacher in the Taiping-shan School and the West Point School until 1860. He then took up a job as a clerk and interpreter at the solicitor’s firm of M. J. D. Stephens.¹⁴

Some graduates taught English in schools, and others became civil servants in Hong Kong. Fan Jü-k’ü (范汝駒) is an example of the former. He taught English in several schools that were part of the grant-in-aid scheme, such as Bowrington, Wongneichung and Tanglungchau, and he subsequently worked at the Central School as an assistant master. Eventually, he moved to Guangzhou, where he took up a clerkship at the Chinese Maritime Custom.¹⁵ Ho A-fuk (何亞福) was a student who became an English teacher at government schools in Sheung Wan and the Central between 1858 and 1860. He subsequently worked at the North China Insurance Company until his death in 1873.¹⁶ Fan Jü-wing (范汝為) was an example of those who served in the Hong Kong government. After returning from Melbourne, Fan worked in Colonial Secretary’s office (1862–1866) before being transferred to the Registrar-General’s office (1867–1873). He filled the post of Chinese clerk and interpreter. His role was to be a bridge between the Chinese and the British in conducting government business.¹⁷ Chan Koe-ts’oy

¹¹ ‘Report of the proceedings in connection with the Chinese Mission established at Castlemaine, commencing 10th and ending 31st July 1855, and presented to the local committee, August 16th’, *The Argus* (15 November 1855) cited in Welch 2003: 412–13.

¹² Anonymous 1857: 629–31.

¹³ For Leong’s departure from Australia, see *Wesleyan Chronicle* (20 December 1865), 183–5, cited in Welch 2003: 399. For Leong’s description of his work in Guangzhou, see “A letter from Leong A Toe in China to Mr J. Chapman of Vaughan (28 July 1870)”, *Wesleyan Chronicle* (20 September 1870), 151–2, cited in Welch 2003: 480–1.

¹⁴ Carl Smith Note Card No. 11155, Carl Smith Collection, Hong Kong Public Records Office.

¹⁵ Carl Smith Note Card No. 12079, Carl Smith Collection, Hong Kong Public Records Office.

¹⁶ Carl Smith Note Card No. 14421, Carl Smith Collection, Hong Kong Public Records Office.

¹⁷ Carl Smith Note Card No. 12081, Carl Smith Collection, Hong Kong Public Records Office. Fan’s appointment dates also appeared in the *Hong Kong Blue Books*.

(陳高才) was a Chinese interpreter for the harbour master, a crucial office in the Hong Kong government in developing the port of Hong Kong, which was to become a significant business hub for trans-regional trade.¹⁸ Fan A-wing (范亞榮) was the second interpreter at the Police Magistracy between 1857 and 1862.¹⁹

Some graduates became successful businessmen in Hong Kong and China. The earliest of these are the Tong brothers, namely Tong King-sing (唐景星) (also known as Tong Tingshu [唐廷樞] and Tong A Ku [唐亞樞]) and his brother Tong Ting-keng (唐廷庚) (also known as Tong A-foo [唐亞扶]). In 1851, the former left Ying Wa College for the Hong Kong government to work as an interpreter, while the latter was a clerk for George C. Turner, a solicitor in Hong Kong. Tong King-sing joined the comprador's office of the Jardine and Matheson Company in 1863 and became the general manager of the China Merchant's Steam Navigation Company in 1873, and he worked in the Kaiping Mines between 1884 and 1892. Tong Ting-keng was the manager of the Canton branch of the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company and started its Hong Kong office in 1882. He worked closely with Li Hongzhang (李鴻章) (Smith 1985: 34–51 and Liu 2009). Kwang-ching Liu considers Tong King-sing “perhaps the most notable personage with a comprador background in modern Chinese history”. According to Liu's research, Tong “was able to combine the resources of the Chinese merchants and the Chinese government on the one hand, and on the other the technical know-how of the Europeans and Americans. He was patriotic, yet cosmopolitan in outlook” (Liu 2009: 476–7).

Another example was Ho Mei-yuk (何美玉), who used different names, for example Ho A-mei (何亞美), Ho Kwan-shan (何崑山) and Ho Hin-chi (何獻之), and was Ho A-low's younger brother. He spent ten years in Melbourne as an interpreter before returning to South China looking for opportunities. He worked in many places, such as the Chinese Maritime Custom in Guangzhou, the Registrar General's office of the Hong Kong government and the Provincial Tax Bureau in Guangdong. Thus, he had built networks with merchants and officials in China and Hong Kong, and it was on this foundation that he started his businesses in different fields, such as mining, shipping, insurance and the telegraph. He became a successful businessman and a community leader who made significant contributions to various organizations, ranging from chambers of commerce to charities. He became the first Chinese member of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. Of the many honours he had in Hong Kong, the most important one was that he became the chairman of the Tung Wah Hospital. He was able to take advantage of his social connections to push the Hong Kong government to make changes in its policies regarding the Chinese residents, including the abolition of the curfew system that applied to the Chinese in Hong Kong. Regarding politics in China, Ho strongly supported Zhang Zhidong (張之洞), the viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, during the crisis of the Sino-French War between 1884 and 1885. Ho was also well-known for his sympathy for the Chinese reform thinkers, such as Kang Youwei (康有為) (Sinn 1989, 2012, 2022; Tsai 1993, Smith 1995, Rule 2013).

Likewise, Ho A-loy (何亞來) (also known as Ho Shan-chee [何神芝]) was a similar figure, but who identified more strongly with Chinese patriotic sentiments in politics. His career began with job opportunities in Hong Kong. Between 1855 and 1856, he was in charge of the Victoria School, where he taught English (Eitel 1891: 324, 336). Between 1857 and 1865, he was the first Chinese interpreter at the Hong Kong Magistracy.²⁰ He then moved to Guangzhou and Fuzhou to work for the viceroys of the Qing court. He was also known for his support for the anti-missionary riots in Fuzhou. He was an

¹⁸ Carl Smith Note Card No. 2261, Carl Smith Collection, Hong Kong Public Records Office.

¹⁹ “Civil Establishment of Hong Kong for the year of 1862”, *Hong Kong Blue Book for the Year of 1862*, 164–5.

²⁰ “Civil Establishment of Hong Kong for the year of 1865”, *Hong Kong Blue Book for the Year of 1865*, 190–1.

interpreter at the Chinese legation in Washington between 1879 and 1882. Afterwards, he returned to Hong Kong and worked closely with Ho A-mei for the Canton and Hongkong Telegraph Company before moving to the China Merchants Insurance Company (Tsai 1993, Hamilton 2012).

Conclusion

Were the Ying Wa boys part of a failed project? The answer might be revealed by looking at a similar enterprise, that of St Paul's College, which "became an ordinary English school, the theological training class being given up as unsuccessful" in 1866; and "ceased its school work, owing to there being no funds or endowment" (Hutchinson 1877: 36–7). Eitel intended to convey his points through the comparable case of Bishop Smith's failure at St Paul's College – "none of its many pupils became preachers of the gospel; though very few of them became Christians except in name" (Eitel 1876: 25). St Paul's College had a positive impact on its graduates in two ways. First, they did not follow "idolatry and superstition". Second, they went on to become "men of mark and influence among their countrymen, in responsible official or commercial positions". Being "on the right side", these graduates, Eitel remarks, "are doing good in their own way" (Eitel 1876: 25).

Ying Wa boys were also doing good in their own ways. First and foremost, the Anglo-Chinese College sought to train and prepare Chinese Christians to minister among the Chinese and to take up pastoral duties. In so doing, they would foster the strength of Christian missions in Hong Kong, China and among overseas Chinese. Although not a single Ying Wa boy spent his entire life as a missionary, some of them took up church ministry for considerable periods of time, such as Song Hoot-kiam in Singapore, Ho Ch'eong-k'ow in the United States and Chu A-luk and Leong A Toe in Australia. Leong later returned to South China, where he had a significant role in developing Christian missions in Foshan. Moreover, some donated money to support the missionaries' projects even though they were not Christians, Tong King-sing being a clear example.

Moreover, the college educated some of the English-speaking Chinese elite in Hong Kong and China. Some used their language skills to become bridges between the Chinese and the Western worlds in business, education and culture, and in administrative or government duties. They became functionaries in society, such as Ho King-mun becoming a surgeon, Fan Jü-wing and Ho A-mei interpreters, and Fan Jü-k'ü and Ho A-loy teachers. Many of them became businessmen in global China trade. Using Tong King-sing's bilingualism and networks as an example, Peter Hamilton remarks that the Cantonese compradors "brought new connections to global markets" (Hamilton 2021: 41). Like Tong, Ho A-mei and Ho A-loy developed similar careers in the global markets. With the considerable wealth and influence that they accumulated, some Ying Wa boys naturally became community leaders, whose impact was strongly felt in Hong Kong and modern Chinese history.

Furthermore, some Ying Wa boys expressed their cultural and political orientations in defining their Chinese identity. Song Hoot-kiam enjoyed an active social life in Singapore, where he exhibited the socio-cultural character of being Chinese in its best possible connotations within and outside of the church circle (Lee 2001: 58). Tong King Sing was well-known for his patriotic spirit in his work with Li Hongzhang to chart economic reforms in late Qing China, such as his contribution to the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company. Ho A-low, Ho A-mei and Ho A-loy were examples of active participants in the struggle for Chinese workers' rights in Australia. Ho A-mei fought for the well-deserved recognition of Chinese residents' interests in Hong Kong through the Tung Wah Hospital and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. Ho A-mei and Ho A-loy were Qing officials' collaborators in Chinese politics.

It was hard to predict Ying Wa boys' future career trajectories when they started their education under Legge during the 1840s and 1850s. His original intention was to equip them to take up the religious call to spread Christianity among the Chinese. Yet, their education offered them unique opportunities in the changing business and political environments of Hong Kong and modern China. Individually, some Ying Wa boys developed careers that paved the way for wealth and social mobility. Collectively, their stories form a socio-economic-cum-political kaleidoscope that reveals Hong Kong and modern Chinese history.

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Appendix: A partial list of Ying Wa boys (1849–50)

English name	Chinese name	Attending class and year
Chan A-kow	陳亞狗	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
Chan A-ying	陳亞應	Fourth Class, 1850
Chan Jü-kong	陳如江	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Chan Koe-ts'oy	陳高才	First Class, 1849
Chan Sze-nam	陳仕南	First Class, 1849
Chan Wing-kwong	陳永廣	First Class, 1849
Cheong A-jeep	張亞業	Fourth Class, 1850
Chü A-luk	朱亞祿	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Chü Je-lung	朱義隆	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
Chung A-ch'ü	鍾亞柱	Fourth Class, 1850
Fan A-seong	范亞相	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Fan A-wing	范亞榮	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Fan Jü-k'ü	范汝駒	Fourth Class, 1850
Fan Jü-wye	范汝為	Fourth Class, 1850
Ho A-chan	何亞振	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Ho A-fuk	何亞福	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Ho A-kow	何亞九	Third Class, 1849
Ho A-loy	何亞來	First Class, 1849; First Class, 1850*
Ho A-ping	何亞炳	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
Ho Ch'eong-k'ow	何昌球	Second Class, 1849; First Class, 1850
Ho Chan-kwong	何鎮光	Fourth Class, 1850
Ho Cheong-shang	何長生	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Ho Hung-kwong	何洪光	Second Class, 1849; First Class, 1850
Ho King-mun	何景文	First Class, 1849
Ho Low-yuk	何流玉	Second Class, 1849; First Class, 1850
Ho Mei-yuk	何美玉	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Ho Sing-yuk	何星玉	First Class, 1849
Ho Ts'ew-k'ow	何釗球	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Le A-on	李亞安	Third Class, 1849
Le A-pun	李亞杉	Fourth Class, 1850
Le Wa-king	利華京	Fourth Class, 1850
Le Wa-sing	利華星	Fourth Class, 1850

(Continued)

Appendix: (Continued.)

English name	Chinese name	Attending class and year
Leong A-heen	梁亞賢	Third Class, 1849; Second Class 1850
Leong A-t'oe	梁亞叨	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Leong Chung-kwort	梁仲适	Fourth Class, 1850
Leong Ping-ts'ow	梁炳秋	Fourth Class, 1850
Leong Ying-t'eem	梁應添	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850
Lo Keet-p'oon	羅結盤	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Lum A-leet	林亞列	Fourth Class, 1850
Lum K'woon-fuk	林觀福	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
Lye A-lun	黎亞倫	Second Class, 1849
Lye A-üt	黎亞乙	Fourth Class, 1850
Lye Yow-jün	黎祐元	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
Moe A-shing	毛亞勝	Fourth Class, 1850
'ng A-cheem	吳亞沾	Fifth Class, 1849
O Soey-chëong	柯瑞璋	First Class, 1849
P'oon A-k'ing	潘亞琮	Fourth Class, 1849; Third Class, 1850
P'oon Yun-fat	潘潤發	Fourth Class, 1850
T'ong A-kü	唐亞樞	First Class, 1849
T'ong A-foo	唐亞扶	Second Class, 1849; First Class, 1850
Tsëa A-foon	謝亞寬	Fourth Class, 1850
Ts'ooey Che-fat	催枝發	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Ts'oy Foo-lüm	蔡富林	Third Class, 1849
Ü A-man	余亞萬	Fourth Class, 1850
Wong Lum-muk	黃林木	Second Class, 1849; First Class, 1850
Wong Yeen-yàn	黃燕仁	Fifth Class, 1849; Fourth Class, 1850
Wùn A-wa	溫亞華	Fourth Class, 1850
Wüt A-ch'e	屈亞始	Third Class, 1849; Second Class, 1850

Notes:

- The English names reflect "the sounds given according to the Canton dialect".
- The reports include the names of those whose attendance at the ACC was recorded at the end of that year.

*Ho A Loy attended the first class in both years. He was the only one who did that.

Source: Legge 1850: 22–5 and Legge 1851: 26–9.

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