

Chapter Ten

Footprints across the Americas (1924-1926)

Back in the late nineteenth century, when Chinese workers streamed to the west coast of America to build the railroad, their numbers reached several hundred thousand. By 1904, the United States Exclusion Act had led to episodes of violent anti-Chinese attacks in California. This caused the United States Immigration Bureau to stop distinguishing between merchants, students, and laborers entering the country. All were treated harshly. As for those Chinese who had settled in the United States, because their family members were separated and their opportunities for work were limited, some led dissolute lives, even engaging in the evil trend of conflicts among gangs known as Tongs. Therefore white people looked down on them. Thanks to the work of Ambassador Wu Ting-fang (Lingnan alumnus Tsin Shue-fan served as his secretary), who was able to intervene with timely guidance and restore good relations, the overseas Chinese gradually became unified, and made continual progress. They organized a general Chinese Association, and a General Chamber of

Commerce through the clan organizations and the ties of friendship in every city where they resided. From the clan level up through the village and district level, occupational guilds and clubs were established, along with different halls and branches of the Guomindang Party. This facilitated the arbitration of disputes and mutual assistance, and eventually raised the reputation and standing of the Chinese living in the United States, as they engaged in legitimate businesses and improved their lives, thus reflecting considerable glory on their motherland.

Dr Chung's advocacy of the return of sons and daughters of the overseas Chinese for education in China was in accordance with the deeply-felt wishes of older generation of Chinese abroad, and thus received their strong support. As parents sent their sons and daughters to China to enroll in the esteemed institution of Lingnan, the Overseas Chinese School and Lingnan itself would enroll students at the appropriate levels, and the enrolment of overseas Chinese students increased continuously. As brothers and cousins entered in groups and studied together, a lively atmosphere for the pursuit of learning was created. Among them, the former students Benson Fong, Tang Tso-yum and Tam Woo, extended their endeavours one after another. Because of their popularity, they became leaders among the overseas Chinese, supporting not only their *alma mater*, but also serving the nation as representatives at the National Congress. Among their lifelong voluntary activities, Benson Fong and Tang Tso-yum were unforgettable for the help they provided to Lingnan

alumni who went to the United States for further study. Without concern for whether students were at a senior or junior level, as long as they were in San Francisco these two gentlemen would be seen providing their personal assistance, effectively taking care of everything. When someone was departing from the United States, it would be the same. Truly one could not have found better Santa Claus figures for Lingnan.

To carry out the plan to expand the College of Agriculture, Dr Chung and Professor Chan Tsap-ng made a fund-raising trip to the Americas in the summer of 1924 as representatives of Lingnan University. Professor Chan assumed responsibility for visiting North America, while Dr Chung handled visits to Central and South America. Travelling separately, they furthered the endeavour together. In North America, Professor Chan Tsap-ng and Mr Lei Che-shau were the leaders, receiving extraordinary assistance from Benson Fong and Tang Tso-yum. Because of an important matter, Dr Chung hastened to San Francisco from Hawaii for discussions with Professor Chan and the Lingnan alumni. The alumni held a banquet to welcome Dr Chung when he arrived. At the reception, Dr Chung reminded alumnus Tang Tso-yum to meet him for breakfast at a certain café at seven o'clock the next morning to discuss some important business. When Mr Tang accordingly arrived at the appointment Dr Chung began to speak earnestly, telling him: "A day's important plans are carried out in the morning, and a year's important work is done in the early months. This is true in dealing with plans of any sort in this life, yet our meeting

early this morning, has another deeper intention. I wish to talk to you about Lingnan affairs, and about the responsibilities of alumni to the *alma mater*. In this refreshing early morning air, this ought to leave you with a deep and indelible impression. Please try to understand these points: 1) The various buildings constructed on the Lingnan campus during the first phase, including Martin Hall, Grant Hall, Swasey Hall and many dormitories, were all built with contributions from friends in the United States. For this we shall be forever grateful. 2) It is logical that buildings constructed during the second phase of construction at Lingnan should be built with funds from Chinese donors, as we have begun to promote fund-raising. The targets of our efforts have been persons devoted to education, especially the parents of Lingnan students. As for promotional announcements beforehand, we have already carried out this task, and we hope it proves to be fruitful. (He was referring to the later construction of Loke Yew Hall and Ten Friends' Hall.) 3) For assistance in construction at Lingnan during the third phase, we will rely on the fact that during the twenty years since Lingnan was established, quite a few alumni have already established themselves financially and are thus able to provide more support than others. 4). Lingnan University is in need of a permanent fund, and we are attempting to promote this among the alumni. The whole body of the alumni must assume responsibility for this fund-raising mission, to pave the way for our grand plan for one hundred years. Looking at the renowned private universities of the United States, such as Stanford University on the

west coast, and Columbia on the east coast, we see that all were established with full endowments, and thus have had no need to worry. Therefore their educational standards are maintained at the highest level. We can take them as a model for Lingnan.” Dr Chung continued, saying: “There is also a matter that concerns you personally; the footprints of Lingnan graduates have scattered across the globe. In principle, at the very least there must be a portion of these who are able to return to serve their *alma mater*. I wonder whether you will be able to return at this time? If your circumstances do not yet allow you to do so, nonetheless you ought to make a resolution now, in anticipation of your retirement, to return to Lingnan to take up a responsible position, in return for a token salary of one *yuan* a year. You may take responsibility for publicity, or for taking part in gathering funds or alumni affairs, choosing as you wish; any one of these duties would be appropriate.” When he had finished speaking, the two shook hands in warm accord. To this day, Tang Tso-yum has been constant in abiding by Dr Chung’s teachings.

For the General Chinese Association of San Francisco, Dr Chung was like their motherland’s chief of educational affairs, rich in experience of administering education. Therefore they organized a welcoming reception especially to greet Dr Chung’s arrival from afar for the purpose of fund-raising on behalf of the Agricultural University. Dr Chung delivered a speech on this occasion. In the speech, he discussed the problem that China’s ordinary people were lacking in

general knowledge, while the nation was in need of trained personnel. Therefore it was necessary to advance popular education and specialized training at the same time. As he explained further, according to a survey by the Chinese Educational Reform Association in 1922, that in all of China there were 1,375 schools at the post-secondary level (providing education of personnel), and 26,447 professors, along with 269,108 students. Including the missionary schools in these numbers, their expenses totaled 30,761,242 *yuan*. Because of the turmoil of a succession of civil wars, public revenues had dried up, seriously affecting schools founded by the government. As a result of the shortage of funds, instruction had been suspended in eight post-secondary schools in Beijing, along with seven in Guangdong. In their place, education became reliant on the schools founded by foreigners to help out. The schools run by foreigners in China, such as the Japanese schools of southern Manchuria, inevitably have their political significance. According to the survey, the British, American, German, and French mission schools are mainly based on Protestant Salvationist doctrine, transmitting Western culture while at the same time preserving Eastern culture. During the past several decades, China's diplomats and democratic leaders have all been the products of mission schools. Because of this, the senior persons in China's educational field are pleased to cooperate with the mission schools.

Following the welcoming reception, the Chinese and Western

newspapers of San Francisco also published the following excerpt of another speech by Dr Chung:

“This evening at this gathering, I give many thanks to our host (Benson Fong), and even more thanks to all my other fellow countrymen who are in attendance and making concerted efforts to raise funds for a College of Agriculture at Lingnan. This is truly fortuitous for the farming people of our ancestral homes in Guangdong. Today the turbulence in China has become extreme, but before we talk about national salvation, we should first discuss rescuing Guangdong: during the past ten years or so, as the cost of living has becoming higher by the day, incomes have remained limited, and the farming families in particular have suffered as a result. Lingnan University is based in the Honam area of Guangzhou; there are seventy-two villages on the entire island of Honam, and the neighbouring villages have been reduced to eating coarse rice and low-quality salted fish; their clothing is tattered, and their dwellings are dirty and cramped. With such poverty existing even so close to the provincial capital, conditions in the other districts can easily be imagined. The agricultural land administered by Lingnan in Chaozhou comprises many “deserted villages,” from which over one million people have emigrated to Siam. The majority of the ordinary people of Guangdong are poor. By what means can they be assisted? The only way is to improve agriculture. Among the people of Guangdong, over eighty percent are engaged in agriculture. Many of the old methods of tilling and cultivating can

still be used, such as excavation work for irrigation and drainage, and the cutting and grafting of mulberry boughs. If the old experience is to be preserved while new knowledge is added, then we must have an Agricultural University. For example, the value of Guangdong's exports of silk to the west was formerly over 90 million *yuan* annually, but since the adoption of weaving, has totaled less than 900,000 *yuan*. Moreover, a survey of silkworm hatching stations has shown that the number of paper sheets used for the eggs reached a peak of 6 million sheets, but with the collapse of silkworm breeding, people have been reduced to selling their daughters and mortgaging their homes. Lingnan's College of Agriculture consequently produced improved egg-hatching sheets, and the farmers of Nanhai and Shunde were delighted to adopt them. Regarding the employment of students, after they have graduated, those whose fathers and older brothers have capital may be able to cultivate ten thousand *mu*, and keep herds of a thousand head of cattle. Those with less capital to invest will also be able to cultivate vegetables and raise chickens to make their living. All this should be brought to the attention of those engaged in education. (The text of the speech included points about the organization of agricultural education, financing and government support; as this part has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, it has been omitted here). At the time of my departure from Guangdong, the Board of the Agricultural University had already raised 780,000 *yuan* of the estimated budget for the establishment of the Agricultural University, leaving a further 1,750,000 *yuan* in funds remaining to be raised. On this

occasion, Chan Tsap-ng and I have been sent to the United States by the Board of Directors, along with Mr Lei Che-shau to assist with the fund-raising. The goal is to raise US\$ 500,000 dedicated for the establishment of an autonomous and self-reliant Agricultural University at Lingnan. The accounts of income and expenditures will be handled by the Treasurer of the Board of Directors, namely Mr Lei Yuk-tong of the Bank of Canton in Hong Kong. Accompanied by Koo Kwai-fan, a graduate of the College of Agriculture at Lingnan, within a few days I will leave to investigate agricultural conditions in South America, while continuing to raise funds. Mr Chan and Mr Lei have also sought the assistance of our countrymen residing in the United States and Canada. We hope that the venture will be introduced widely by you honourable gentlemen.”

On May 27, 1925, Dr Chung wrote a letter to the Chinese faculty and students of Lingnan University from Havana, Cuba, in which he stated:

“In August last year, I travelled along the coast of the Pacific Ocean southward from Panama, and in January this year, I have travelled along the Atlantic coast northward to South America, including Brazil, and to the West Indies to carry out fund-raising. Having completed this leg of my trip, I am now in the capital of Cuba. As my plans for work in Central America, Mexico, and North America have not yet been completed, at present I cannot yet return to China. Provost James Henry (newly appointed, see next chapter) recently came here to meet me for a few days, and will now

be on his way back to the campus by way of the United States. When this letter reaches you, I think you and he will already have gathered together. Before Dr Henry's departure, our university realized a great opportunity, which both western and Chinese faculty and students alike should take in close cooperation, so as to develop our *alma mater*, setting it up as a full-fledged university in South China. This will make the two words "Ling" and "Da" meaningful, matching name and reality. Mr John D. Rockefeller Jr (John D. Rockefeller Senior was a petroleum magnate in the United States, and years earlier his son had toured Lingnan together with Henry Grant, General Secretary of the Board of Trustees of Lingnan College in New York), and the Board of Trustees of New York had agreed to commit the amount of US \$2,316,000 to Lingnan. Mr Rockefeller contributed US \$579,000, and the Board of Trustees committed \$1,250,000. Chinese donors contributed a further sum of about \$600,000. This sum of \$600,000, had been directed since 1922 into the independent operating expenses of the Agriculture program, and various building costs and contingency costs were also included in this amount. I have decided that from today onward, I will continue to carry out these overseas endeavours, hoping that the Agricultural University will continue to be provided for without interruption. The year before last, we began to raise funds for construction of a new women's residence building, and we very much hope that we can persevere in construction of the school, by making all-out efforts in this venture, aiming at success in raising the large sums needed to achieve the goal we have set. Although the sum of \$600,000 has

been set aside from the funds raised among Chinese donors, which total \$2,316,000, nonetheless, within our targeted period of time (until January 1, 1927), we must be able to declare success. On behalf of our country and our school, we cannot refuse to do the right thing, and we must seize the moment. We must encourage one another's hopes of success!"

In a letter to the administrative staff at Lingnan around this time, Dr Chung directed them to print a university yearbook for publicity immediately. In a preface to the yearbook, Secretary Chan On-yan wrote: "Lingnan is a leading educational institute of South China; its mission is to use the most up-to-date knowledge, and the most correct ethics, in order to train young people to become complete persons in service to their country and to society. Its particular mission is to use the methods of science and lofty ideals to bring about convergence between the cultures of west and east, so as to raise the value of our country's ancient culture." He also wrote: "Dr Chung has left China and travelled thousands of miles, and has been doing his utmost to promote Lingnan. He has now sent a message from far away, reminding us to compile this yearbook."

It was not easy for Dr Chung to accomplish the fund-raising for construction and operating expenses of the Agricultural University. To begin with, the reaction in San Francisco was cool; the cause was that someone spread a rumour damaging the effort, so that not only did some refuse to donate, but also persuaded others not to do so.

According to Chan Tsap-ng's letter at the time, when he met a certain person he was treated coolly. The next time they met the man was critical of him, and this was just one of the cases. Fortunately, they received the warm-hearted appreciation and assistance from the Board of Foreign Missions, and especially from the women members of the association. They also received full support from the congregations in every town they visited. Overseas Chinese leaders Chan Lok-sang, Wong Hak-kan, Tang Sen-sek, Mo Lei-tong, Tsang Sze-chuen, Chan Tun-pok, Chan Man-po, Chan Mau-yuet, Chan Chak-man, Chan King-man, Lau Chung-hon, Yuen Hop, Lei Yuk-lan, Lei Sing-ting, Wong Bik-chuen, Lei Yau-foon, and Yue Tin-man all personally accompanied Dr Chung, making introductions and planning as they reached small and large towns throughout the western United States and Canada. Their publicity work included raising long red banners, making announcements in the newspapers, and reporting the itinerary of the fund-raising personnel. They pointed out that agriculture was an important enterprise affecting the national livelihood of the Chinese people. They also explained that the Lingnan Agricultural University would be entirely Chinese-managed. In addition, they employed the actors of the Renshou Nian opera company to perform, selling honorary tickets, and at the same time there were motion picture shows of the scenery of the Guangdong capital city and life on the Lingnan campus to arouse the fond sentiments of the overseas Chinese regarding their home villages. The donations of individual overseas Chinese ranged from fifty dollars

to one hundred and even five hundred dollars each. If anyone made a donation of a thousand dollars, he was awarded the opportunity to send a son or younger brother to the school to study tuition-free until he had finished either primary school or middle school.

As for the fund-raising in Central and South America, Dr Chung went south in August 1924, travelling along the Pacific Coast through Panama, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, and afterward travelling northward along the Atlantic coast, through Argentina and Brazil, and then through British, French and Dutch Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica and Cuba. He visited each capital city and the major towns where overseas Chinese were settled. The next year he returned by way of New York and visited seventeen cities in the eastern United States, receiving sincere support and utmost efforts. His fund-raising was supported by Leung Cho-cheung, Wong Chan-fong, Mui Chung-chau, and Chan Hung-fong, who were the leaders of the overseas Chinese of those places.

When Dr Chung passed through Hawaii during his travels, he promoted fund-raising for the Agricultural University, and afterwards received donations amounting to more than US \$14,000.

Toward the end of 1924, Mr Chan Chap-ng received a telegram from Dr Chung requesting that he hasten to complete the fund-raising work in eastern Canada. In January 1925, he went to New York to travel back

to China by ship together with Dr Chung. Mr Chan proposed that they should urgently complete collections of the donations pledged in North America, and then depart from New York. At this time Mr Benson Fong was acting just like a communications centre, and spared no efforts in encouraging collection of the pledges. Consequently, Mr Chan returned first in February 1925, while Dr Chung stayed on in New York. Because of the series of incidents taking place at the Lingnan campus in Guangzhou, Dr Chung received repeated urgent telegrams urging him to hurry back. He did not wish to break off his mission halfway, however, wishing to continue his work in Mexico and Central America. Later the situation compelled him to return, and at last he arrived back at Lingnan on June 25. As his boat docked at the campus, several hundred teachers and students crowded along the river bank to welcome Dr Chung's return from his arduous yet successful journey. Everyone was deeply respectful and moved by his successful travels totaling several tens of thousands of miles.

To summarize, the achievements in fund-raising of Dr Chung and Mr Chan were clearly very significant. They had raised funds amounting to US \$200,000 in all in the northern and southern halves of the Americas. The amount of pledged donations then totaled a further US \$140,000.