

Foreign Puppets, Christian Mothers or Revolutionary

Martyrs? The Multiple Identities of Missionary School

Students in Zhejiang, 1923-1949

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摘要：本文以 1923 至 1949 年浙江基督教教会学校的女学生为切入点，重点探讨基督教，国家主义和女权主义三者在女学生身份过程中的相互作用和影响。文章以英国女传教士 Mary Ann Aldersey 于 1844 年创办的中国近代第一所女子基督教教会学校——宁波甬江女子中学为例，并借助宁波档案馆有关甬江女子中学的馆藏资料和甬江女子中学校刊《甬江声》中体现的女学生们对于世界的看法进而来探讨两个方面的问题。一方面，本文通过细致分析《甬江声》杂志中的学生戏剧、诗歌和短篇作品，深入了解了甬江女中的学生们是如何在她们的多重身份即女性、基督徒以及女国民之间进行互相协调和妥协。另一方面，本文通过查阅民国时期的报纸如《时事公报》等，探究了从探索宁波地方以及更广泛的社会层面对教会学生的看法。据研究所得作者认为，虽然 20 年代存在反基督教的活动，如 1922 年的非基督教运动和 1925 年的收回教育权运动，但甬江女中的学生们并不觉得她们是“外国帝国主义的走狗”，且她们的基督徒身份和女国民身份也未产生冲突。相反的，学生们借助基督教强化了她们的爱国精神，超越了保守的性别规定，从而成为在宁波地方层面进行的国家建构中的核心一环。通过参加学校的基督教女青年会组织和学生自治会，甬江女中的女学生们在实现基督教服务社会的同时，表现出了她们的爱国主义情怀。虽然基督教老师和民国政府教育家们想培养女学生们成为“贤妻良母”，但这些女生通常并没有达到这一期望，而是创新地接受着不同思想如女权主义，成为医生、教授或革命活动家。通过承担领导职责，提倡革命和拒绝婚姻等做法，甬江女中的学生展示了她们在未来中国社会的不同以往的角色，而这些角色将远远超出国民政府和教会学校老师们的最初期望。

‘If we look at the last few years, China’s national situation is extremely chaotic...the burden of responsibility for building an enduring foundation for our national people is carried on our shoulders. How can we carry it? Jesus Christ is a good model:

throughout his life his actions left a mark, we can say completely that he worked for ordinary people. We study Christ's spirit and implement the revolutionary plan.'¹

Yu Zhanghua, 1933, written at Yongjiang

The words of Yu Zhanghua (俞彰華) published in the 1933 edition of the Yongjiang School magazine, *The Riverside Echo* (*Yongjiang Sheng*, *Yongjiang nüzi zhongxue xiaokan*, 甬江聲, 甬江女子中學校刊) reveal both the intimate association between Nationalism and Christianity and a sense of profound responsibility to save China that Yongjiang school pupils felt in 1930's Zhejiang province.² Yongjiang School (Riverside Academy, *Yongjiang nüzi zhongxue*, 甬江女子中學) was an American Presbyterian and Baptist Mission school for girls, whose history can be traced back to the first mission school for girls founded in 1844 by British missionary Mary Ann Aldersey. The essays, short stories, plays and poetry of Yongjiang students published in the annual school magazines (1931, 1933, 1948), touch upon a fascinating variety of topics ranging from school daily life, personal friendships and family relations, to the status of women's education and the urgent need for young people to become strong future leaders who could save China from national crisis. The poignant, urgent, humorous and sometimes sad voices that come to us through these magazines offer the historian a unique insight into a crucial moment in modern Chinese history.

From the fascinating range of topics touched upon by the girls writing in these magazines, this paper will focus on two core questions: how did missionary school girls writing in 1920-1940 Zhejiang Province combine notions of Christianity and nationalism in their writings and what gender values did they take away from their education? Through a close reading of the students' writings in the Yongjiang school magazine this paper explores the complex relationship between Christianity, nationalism and feminism in this period. Contrary to the findings of Ryan Dunch for Fuzhou Protestants, I argue that there was generally no tension between Christianity and nationalism in the worldview of students and staff at Yongjiang. Indeed Yongjiang girls drew upon Christianity to strengthen their nationalism and justify their ambitions to move beyond the domestic realm. Their writings reveal the extent to which girls at Yongjiang aspired to move beyond the roles of 'wives and

¹Yu Zhanghua 俞彰華, "Dao min jian qu" 到民間去 [To Go Amongst the People]. *Yongjiang sheng* 甬江聲, (1931). NCA, x1.1 – 1. pp. 38-40.

²Yongjiang School Magazine is referred to in the headmistress reports of 1929 as *The Riverside Echo*, for the purposes of this dissertation the school is referred to as Yongjiang and the annual magazine as 'Yongjiang school magazine' Yongjiang School Magazines of 1931, 1933, and 1948 and the administrative documents from 1923-1948 are held at Ningbo City Archives (NCA) (*Ningbo Shi Dang'anguan* 宁波市档案馆), 旧 10- 1-227, x1.1 – 1, 旧 10- 1-401. 旧 10- 1- 307/308.

mothers' that both conservative missionary and nationalist gender discourses prescribed, to embrace more radical roles as revolutionary participants and future leaders in Chinese society. Probing the disjuncture between what missionary educators were aiming to teach and what gender values students actually took away from their education, can help us to reassess current studies which place missionary education at the forefront of changing the position of women in China. Acknowledging the extent to which mission school pupils went beyond the conservative ideals of their teachers prompts us to challenge strict outmoded binaries between 'Tradition' and 'Modernity', 'East' and 'West' and appreciate the truly global circulation of educational ideas taking place in the early twentieth century.

In order to understand the formation of Yongjiang girls' gender values and the unique ways in which they conceptualised their role in nation building, this chapter will briefly consider the history of the school and its place in the rapidly shifting educational environment of Ningbo during the 1920-40's. Faced by increasing pressures from both the mission boards and the provincial education authorities, Yongjiang School had to negotiate its place with difficulty within an increasingly hostile environment. This chapter will also use the administrative documents covering the years 1923-1948 to briefly sketch the religious and academic atmosphere of the school and the socio-economic background of the pupils and staff. Through an analysis of the school Student Union and YWCA it will explore the ways in which Yongjiang pupils aspired to take on leadership roles and the mutually reinforcing nature of the Christian and patriotic education at Yongjiang. It will then focus on two articles from the 1931 magazine to explore the ways in which girls at Yongjiang combined notions of Christianity and nationalism in their world view.

'Our school overlooking the River': A brief history of Yongjiang School

Due to the limited amount of surviving documents for Yongjiang, it is very difficult to glean a full picture of the school's many changes over the course of its history. The few surviving sources we do have often present a conflicting narrative of dates and names, especially for the earlier period of the school's history. This is hardly surprising, as over its history Yongjiang School changed site nine times. In order to gain a fragmentary view we can use the administrative records of the school from 1923-1948 and the school magazines themselves. There are also Chinese language publications on the educational history of Ningbo which refer to Yongjiang and give a brief outline of the school's history.¹

¹ Ningbo shi jiaoyu weiyuanhui bian, 宁波市教员委员会编, (eds.), *Ningbo shi xiaoliji* 宁波市效史集[A History of Ningbo Schools]. Ningbo, 1989.

According to the school anniversary magazine of 1948, Yongjiang Female Middle School (*yongjiang nüzi zhongxue*, 甬江女子中学) was established in 1923 from the union of three different missionary schools for girls.¹ The oldest of these schools was Mary Ann Aldersey's School founded in 1844 (see fig. 3).² Aldersey was the first female missionary to China, and the school which she established in Ningbo in 1844 is often regarded by both Chinese and Western scholars as the start of modern education for women in China.³ In 1848, the American Presbyterian mission established a school for girls in Ningbo, under the charge of Mrs Cole.⁴ Upon Aldersey's retirement to Australia on account of her health in 1852, the two schools were merged and became known as *Richongde* 日崇德.⁵ In 1857, American Baptist missionary Mrs McGowan, also opened a school for girls beside the north city wall and the river which was called *Xingchongde* 兴崇德.⁶ In 1919 the American Presbyterians and Baptists decided to merge the schools into two: a primary school department and a middle school which was named Yongjiang School for girls.⁷ Under the joint administration of the American Presbyterians and Baptists, Miss Dora Zimmerman was chosen as the first Headmistress when the school opened in the spring of 1923.⁸ During the Japanese bombing and occupation of Ningbo from 1941-1945 the school was closed and temporarily relocated to the countryside of Yin County.⁹ The school was reopened in Ningbo after extensive rebuilding works in 1949.¹⁰ In 1952 the school was renamed Zhejiang Province Ningbo Female Middle School (*Zhejiangsheng Ningbo nüzi zhongxue* 浙江省宁波女子中学).¹¹ The school which survives in Ningbo today, Yongjiang Vocational High School (*Ningbo shi yongjiang zhiye gaoji zhongxue* 宁波市甬江职业高级中学), still associates with its prestigious past; the gates of the modern school are proudly inscribed with the date of its predecessor's foundation as the earliest school for girls in China (figure 4).

¹Zhu Zhecheng 朱至誠. 'Xiaoshi' 校史, *Yinxian sili yongjiang nüzi zhongxue nianwu zhounian jinian kan*, 鄞縣私立甬江女子中學廿五周年紀念刊, p.1-2.

² Aldersey E. White, *A Woman pioneer in China: The Life of Mary Ann Aldersey*, (London, 1932), p. 9.

³Gu Xuemei. 'Jidujiao chuanjiaoshi yu jindai Zhejiang nüzi jiaoyu', in *Ningbo Daxue xuebao* 30.5 (2008), p. 33.

⁴ Zhu Zhecheng, 'xiaoshi', p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹¹ Ningbo shi jiaoyu weiyuanhui bian, *Ningbo shi xiaoshiji*, p. 228.

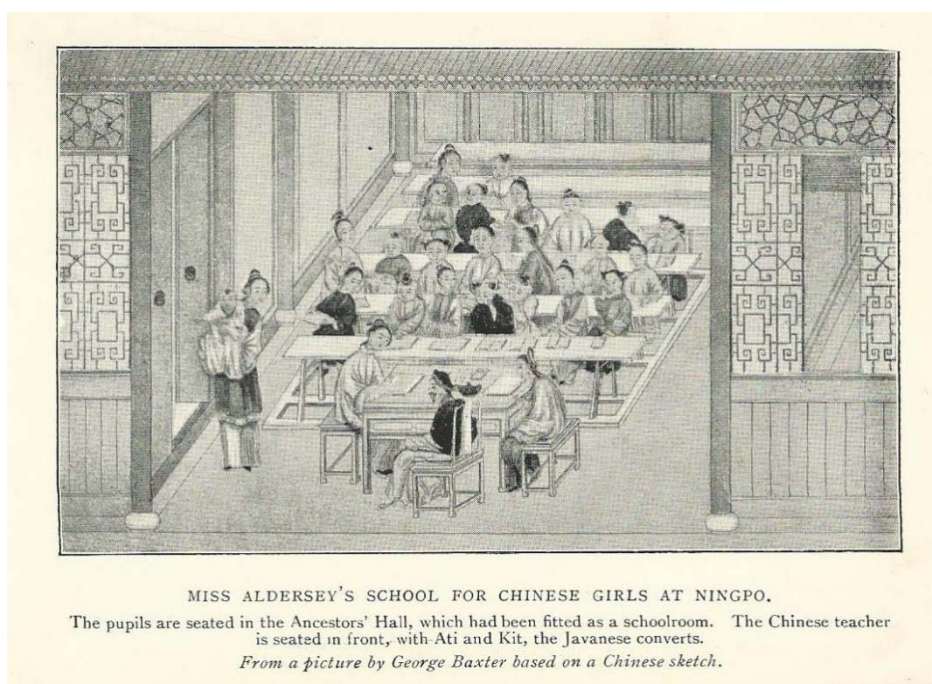


Fig. 3. 'Miss Aldersey's School for Chinese Girls at Ningpo' From a picture by George Baxter based on a Chinese text. in E. Aldersey White, *A Woman pioneer in China: The Life of Mary Ann Aldersey*, (London, 1932).



Fig. 4. The present day Yongjiang Vocational High School (*Ningbo shi yongjiang zhiyegaojizhongxue* 宁波市甬江职业高级中学) is located at 309,Cuibai Rd.,Haishu District, Ningbo. Photograph taken by Jennifer Bond on 7th December 2013.

In order to understand the unique blend of nationalism, Christianity and feminism in Yongjiang pupils' worldview it is necessary to briefly consider the position of Yongjiang within the changing national and regional educational environment at this time. As we shall see, the fact that Yongjiang was often lagging behind new government school regulations helps us to challenge the image of missionary education at the forefront of driving educational change in early twentieth century China. Jessie Gregory Lutz has asserted that missionary schools represented a complete break from the past: 'The manner in which Christian schools originated in China shaped their early history and contributed to their isolation from traditional Chinese education.'¹ In contrast, Evelyn Rawski has stressed the continuity of missionary and Chinese education systems, and in fact mission schools often bowed to Chinese demands in the form and content of the school curriculum.² Evidence from Yongjiang seems to support Rawski's findings, as the school had to continually fall into line with government educational directives and struggled to meet the rising academic standards expected.

The period of 1900- 1937 was one of profound fluidity and uncertainty in the educational and political environment in Zhejiang and China more widely.³ It is within the context of rapid change and reform of the educational system that we must examine the activities of Yongjiang School. A close reading of the headmistresses' reports from 1927-1937 reveal that Yongjiang was under increasing pressure to conform to new government regulations and was often lagging behind the expected requirements.⁴ The school was registered with the provincial education authority in September 1931.⁵ As a note included in the 1936 board meeting revealed: 'The government, since schools are registered, has assumed a certain absolute authority. This even reaches down to the question of dress and hair cutting etc. It has the power. It makes certain demands. It puts on the pressure. It orders all schools to compete and prepare to compete.'⁶

The records of the school from the period 1931-1937 reveal that chronic problems of limited finances meant that Yongjiang was struggling to keep up with rising national standards in terms of facilities and resources. For example, the 1935 headmistress reports that after a government inspection of the school, it was deemed as deficient in library books,

¹ Jessie Gregory Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges: 1850 -1950*, (New York, 1971), p. 22.

² Evelyn Rawski, 'Elementary education in the mission enterprise' in Susan Barnett and John King Fairbank (eds.), *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings*, (Harvard, 1985), p. 135.

³ Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages : Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism*, (London, 1996). Stig Thøgersen, *A County of Culture: twentieth-century China seen from the village schools of Zouping, Shandong* (London, 2002).

⁴ Principals report, May 9 1928, NCA, 10- 1-307

⁵ Principals report, April 16 1932, NCA, 10- 1-307

⁶ BMS H.R. J Benjamin to School Board, 'Notes re Sunday Games', Nov 27, 1936, NCA, 10- 1-307, p 129.

laboratory and PE equipment and teachers' salaries were too low.¹ In 1935 the senior high school was threatened with closure if this situation was not improved. Principal Shen reported with concern:

You can see that we have tried our best to further the progress of the school, but we realise the difficulty of meeting different conditions through the deficit of finance... seeing this hindrance to the school's efficiency, the government has warned that such conditions cannot be continued. The government orders that unless board members plan to increase the salary of teachers, the school must close the senior high school. Therefore the prospect does not look promising under the present conditions to cope with government schools unless there are some ways out.²

More worryingly, the academic success of the school was called into question in 1933 when the senior class of Yongjiang girls failed in the provincial examinations.³ Despite the flurry of activity to prepare the students for the examination, Yongjiang did very poorly in the first round of examinations after the school's registration. As Principal Shen reports:

The senior middle school was not passed by the government. The failures for the most part were in history, geography, arithmetic and science. No one failed in English or Chinese. Two factors entered into their failure. Up until the time of registration of the school, all four of these subjects had been electives. The majority of those in last year's class had not elected those subjects. Though they made an effort to make up these studies it was impossible for them to do in such a short time all that other students had done who had studied the subjects as regular courses.⁴

Moreover there was a problem in the textbooks used at the school compared to the government texts: 'Second, the textbooks we used are those which emphasised material useful for living and were quite different in some instances from those used in government schools. The examination questions were based on the texts used in the public schools.'⁵ Principal Shen goes on to assure the board of directors: 'This year the staff are making every effort to teach the same texts as are used in public schools. The equipment has also been brought up to standard for teaching these texts, so we hope our pupils will not fail this year.'⁶

Despite the damage done to the school's reputation, the career prospects of Yongjiang girls remained as bright as ever. Principal Shen reassured the board in 1934: 'Though the

¹ Principals Report May 9, 1935, NCA, 10- 1-307.

² *Ibid.*,

³ Principals Report 1933-34, NCA, 10- 1-307

⁴ Principals Report 1933-34, NCA, 10- 1-307

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ *Ibid.*,

failure of last year's seniors in the provincial examinations was a severe blow to our pride and enrolment and therefore our budget...The demand for the girls in this year's graduating class is as great as ever.'¹ Indeed we know that Yongjiang girls often went on to successful careers in such prestigious establishments as Ginling College.² The fact that Yongjiang was often trying to respond to and catch up with government standards can help us to challenge the picture of mission education at the forefront of modernising trends in China's educational system in the early twentieth century.³

Students and Staff: Religious, Academic and Socio-Economic Background

In order to better understand the environment in which Yongjiang girls were forming their identities and combining notions of Christianity, nationalism and feminism in their writings it is useful to explore the socio-economic and religious background of Yongjiang students and staff. Although Yongjiang was primarily a boarding school, the school also accepted a small number of day pupils between 1923-1949. In the spring of 1932 the number of boarding students was 141 and the number of day girls was seventeen.⁴ The school was divided into a junior and senior section with three classes in each: Junior I, II and III and Senior I, II and III. Statistics on the age structure of the pupils in 1932 also reveal that the age of pupils in the school ranged from eleven to twenty-three years, with the majority of girls (eighty-three per cent) aged fourteen to sixteen years old (see fig. 5).⁵

¹ *Ibid.*,

² Principals Report, May 9, 1931, NCA, 10- 1-307.

³ Jessie Gregory Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges: 1850 -1950*, (New York, 1971).

⁴ Principal's Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, 10- 1-307.

⁵ 'Distribution of Students Age', Principal's Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, 10- 1-307.

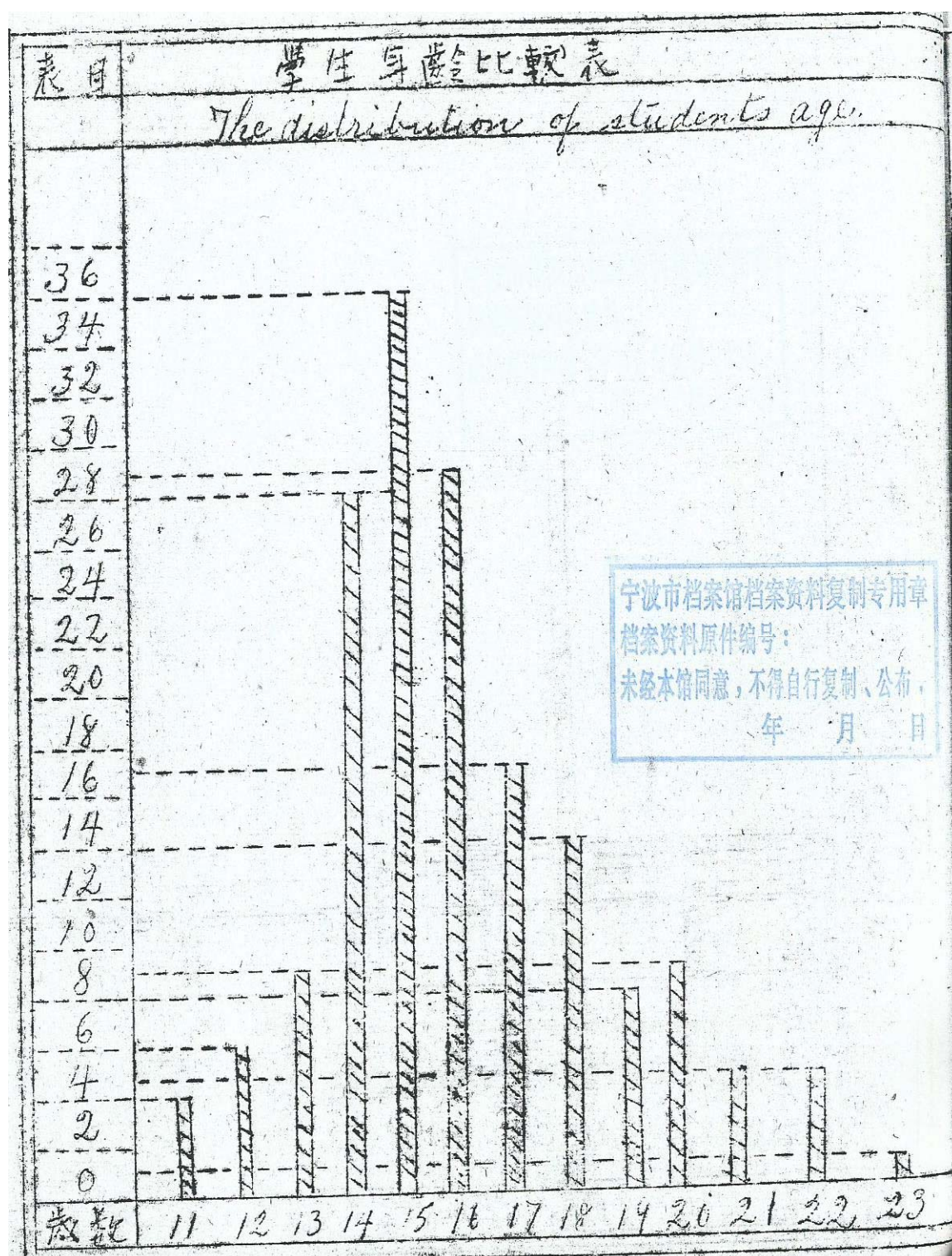


Fig. 5. 'The distribution of students age' Principal's Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, 10- 1-307. Reproduced with permission.

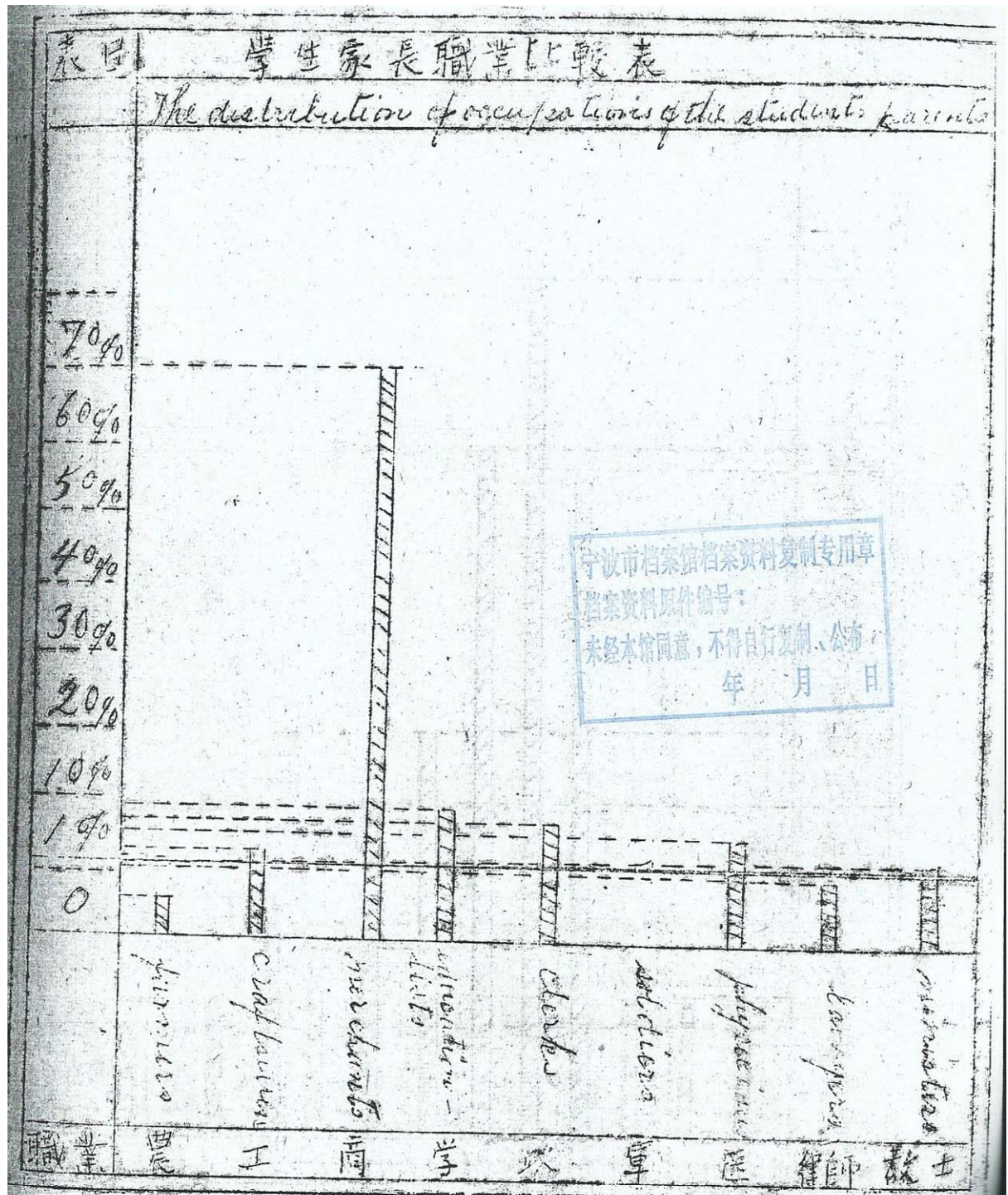


Fig. 6. 'The distribution of the occupation of students parents' Principal's Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, 旧 10- 1-307. Reproduced with permission.

From the administrative records of the school we can glean a picture of the socio-economic background of the students who attended Yongjiang in the 1920-1940's. The charts included in the Headmistresses' reports for this period suggest in 1883: 'The simple fact is this: the Chinese not yet in the least care for the education for their girls, and they are only willing to let them go to day schools if we give them some compensation for the time taken from spinning and devoted to learning. One half penny a day is quite enough.'¹ By the 1920's however, in the wake of the New Culture Movement, a modern western-style education was regarded as a desirable attribute in the urban marriage market. Yongjiang girls would be regarded as a desirable match for the modern educated man who required a western educated 'New Woman' to be his wife. The fact that several of the Yongjiang graduates went on to famous and expensive colleges for women such as Ginling College in Nanjing, again points to their wealthy socio-economic background.²

From the headmistresses' annual reports we can understand the changing religious make-up of the school. Over time the number of students from Christian homes declined from forty-two per cent in 1929 to only fourteen per cent in 1937.³ Moreover, with the registration of the school with the government in 1931, religion became an elective course and chapel attendance was made non-compulsory.⁴ Despite increasing pressures to secularise the school curriculum, the religious environment of the school remained a primary concern throughout the 1930's. As Principal Shen's 1931 report reveals. 'We prayed earnestly that the sudden increase of new students would not thin-out our religious atmosphere. Thank God almost all of the new students are interested in Christianity.'⁵ Indeed the records suggest that the school did maintain its religious character successfully. Many students elected voluntary bible study and chapel services continued to be well attended. In 1930 Principal Shen reports: 'Our students are rather interested in religion. Seventy per cent of the students go to church on Sundays. The attendance at chapel in the morning is 80%, the evening prayers led by the students who are Christian has perfect attendance.'⁶

Although by 1930-1931 many of the girls who attended Yongjiang did not come from a Christian home, the high percentage of chapel attendance alongside pupils' level of activities in organizations such as the YWCA, suggests that the environment of the school remained a primarily Christian one. Indeed we know that some students who did not come from Christian homes converted as a result of their education at Yongjiang. In 1936 the Principal reports:

¹ The letters of Matilda Laurence are held at the Church Missionary Society Archives, at Birmingham university's Special collection library, CMS G1 CH/O 1883/ 164, Laurence to Mr. Fenn, 30 May 1883.

² 'Minutes of the Board of Directors', April 17, 1923, NCA, ID 10- 1-307

³ Principals Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, ID 10- 1-307

⁴ Principals Report, April 16, 1932, NCA, ID 10- 1-307

⁵ Principals Report, May 9, 1931, NCA, ID 10- 1-307

⁶ Principals Report, June 7, 1930, NCA, ID 10- 1-307

‘We had evangelistic meetings during six days in February... The effort was quite successful in the junior middle school. There are more than thirty girls who acknowledged Jesus Christ as their saviour for the first time. We notice a continued effect.’¹ Appreciating the extent to which girls at Yongjiang were exposed to these Christian influences at the school can help us better understand the unique ways in which they combined Christian beliefs with feelings of nationalism in their writing.

Staff

The educational and religious background of the staff at Yongjiang also reveals much about the intellectual and religious environment of the school at the time. With the establishment of the nationalist government and increasing pressures to conform to government education standards, the teaching faculty became increasingly Chinese in the period 1928-1949. Indeed by 1936 there remained only three foreign teachers, a Mrs Benjamin, Mrs Thomas, and Miss Coombs, who were English language teachers.²

After the establishment of the Nationalist Government in Nanjing in 1928, the school was transferred to primarily Chinese administration and Shen Yixiang, 沈貽薌 (Esther. Y. Sing) was chosen as headmistress.³ A graduate of Shanghai University, Principal Shen was regarded as a conscientious headmistress who went to great pains to develop the school during her headship.⁴ In particular, she greatly improved the physical education facilities, establishing a new gymnasium and coaching the school’s first basketball team.⁵ Principal

¹ Principals Report, March 27, 1936, NCA, 10- 1-307

² See list of Faculty 1936 spring, Principals Report, March 27 1936, NCA, 10- 1-307

³ See principals reports 1923 – 1949, NCA, 10- 1-307/308.

⁴ Wang Wei 王玮制片人(Producer). ‘Nü xue xiansheng’女学先声 [Female Students first Voice] Ningbo daishitaiwenyibu 宁波电视台文艺部[Ningbo TV Station, literature and culture department] (2003).

⁵ *Ibid.*,



沈校長
年刊社顧問

Fig. 7. The first Chinese Principal of Yongjiang 'Principal Shen' or Esther Y. Sing, *Shen xiaozhang*, 沈校長. in Yongjiang Echo, *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. Reproduced with permission.



全體教職員

Fig. 8. 'Teaching Faculty 1931': *Quanti jiao zhiyuan* 全體教職員 Yongjiang Echo, *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. Reproduced with permission.

Shen was remembered by students and staff alike as ‘an excellent teacher.’¹ Principal Shen’s strong Christian sentiments undoubtedly inspired her pupils and we can assume that her presence at Yongjiang would have had a profound influence on the school’s religious atmosphere. However in 1952, due to her close connection with a missionary establishment, she was denounced as an American imperialist sympathiser.² Principal Shen’s label as an ‘American imperialist educationalist’ was perhaps cemented in 1934-1936 when she took a two year leave of absence to study abroad in the United States.³ During her absence, Ida L. Y. Chang (Zhang Lianying, 張蓮英), a Ginling college graduate was appointed as acting Principal, followed by Marion H.Y. Bih, (Bi Gaoying 畢鎬英) a former pupil of Yongjiang.⁴

From the headmistresses’ reports from this era, we know that the majority of the teaching staff graduated from well-known missionary establishments, with impressive teaching credentials. In 1931, Principal Shen reported happily that Yongjiang had the ‘best group of teachers it can ever expect to have’.⁵ She goes on to detail the qualifications of her staff: ‘Miss Zee, a Ginling College graduate teaches general science and music, Mrs. New, formally Miss Jane Jing, a Shanghai College graduate, teaches social science, Miss Pao, Nan Kai Undergraduate, teaches mathematics... I feel honoured to report to you that they have all proved to be very good teachers.’⁶ The fact that Yongjiang could attract such an impressive group of teachers indicates the growing popularity and reputation of the school, as well as its consequent rising academic standards within the educational landscape of Zhejiang.

In 1929 all of the staff was Christian, except the drawing teacher and the director of physical education.⁷ As a result of being exposed to this overwhelmingly Christian environment, students at Yongjiang were undoubtedly influenced by the worldviews and religious opinions of their teachers. Indeed students writing about their daily lives at Yongjiang reveal the close relationships between students and staff that developed in the school. As Zhou Yuyin (周裕蔭) reports in 1948: ‘It seems as if the teachers here cherish us

¹ *Ibid.*,

² Yongjiang School Magazine (*Yongjiang xiaokan*, 甬江校刊), 1937, NCA 旧 10- 1-401, p.16 and *Yongjiang nuzhong guanyu Chen Yixiang, jiaoyu sixiang de pipan daimei aiguo dahui jilu deng wenjian* 甬江女中关于沈贻蓼教育思想的批判歹美爱国大会记录等文件 [National Assembly records and documents regarding the criticism of the Pro-American educational thinking of Yongjiang Female Middle School’s Shen Yixiang]. 27 May 1952. NCA, 旧 10-1-50.

³ Zhu Zhecheng, ‘xiaoshi’, p. 1

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁵ Principals Report, May 9, 1931, NCA, 旧 10- 1-307

⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷ Principals Report, May 25, 1929, NCA, 旧 10- 1-307

like their own children.’¹ It is with these influences in mind that we must consider the writings of the girls in the magazine, understanding that their views and opinions were inevitably shaped by the specific educational environment at Yongjiang School. As we shall see however, Yongjiang girls often aspired to transcend the roles of becoming the respectable ‘good wives and wise mothers’ (*Liangqi xianmu*), developing their own unique blend of Christianity, revolutionary nationalism and feminism in their writings.

Christianity and National Salvation: Yongjiang YWCA

In the post-May Fourth period many Chinese nationalists denounced Christianity in China as a form of cultural imperialism, intimately connected with western aggression towards China. Several articles which appeared in the Ningbo local newspaper, *Shishi Gongbao* (時事公報) in the wake of the May thirtieth incident in 1925 discussed at length the cultural invasion and brainwashing of Chinese youth by western educational establishments.² Yongjiang Students were aware of these hostile attitudes to their school in wider society. For example, in the 1931 magazine Chen Aizhen (陳愛貞) reveals ‘Lately the outside world’s opposition to mission schools for girls has been extremely thick. Their attack of us is truly very harmful, we know that they want to blot out in one stroke our mission schools for girls, to sweep them away.’³ As we have seen Yongjiang, as an American Christian school did face anti-foreign sentiment within Ningbo society when in 1927 the school was occupied by a group called: ‘the committee for the quick taking back of educational rights.’⁴ The local government were sympathetic to the intruders and the school was sealed three times before it was finally allowed to reopen just in time for the start of the 1927-1928 school year.⁵ The incident demonstrates the increasing hostility to foreign education establishments in China and highlights the extent to which Yongjiang had to carefully negotiate its place between pressures from both provincial education authorities and the foreign mission boards. Indeed the school board was not entirely unsympathetic to this predicament and in 1936 acknowledged the difficult situation the school was faced with: ‘we happen to know our

¹ Zhou Yuyin 周裕蔭. “Shenghuo zai Yongjiang” 生活在甬江 [Life at Yongjiang]. *Yinxian sili yongjiang nüzi zhongxue nianwu zhounian jinian kan*, 鄞縣私立甬江女子中學廿五周年紀念刊, [Yongjiang private middle school for girls in Yin county twenty five year anniversary magazine] (1948) NCA, 10-1-104. pp.15-16.

² *Shishi gongbao* 時事公報. ‘Women wei shenme yao fandui jidujiao’ 我們為什麼要反對基督教, [Why should we should oppose Christianity] 1925 年 8 月 10 日 (三: 2), Ningbo City Archives.

³ Chen Aizhen 陳愛貞, ‘The smallest contribution of mission schools for girls towards Modern China’, *jiaohui nuxiao duiyu xiandai zhongguo zui shao xian du de gong xian*, 教會女校對於現代中國最少限度的貢獻, in *Yongjiang Echo, Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. P. 42.

⁴ Principals Report, May 9, 1928, NCA, 10- 1-307.

⁵ *Ibid.*,

principals are pressed on one side by the fear of the foreigner's attitude and on the other by the government's.'¹

More recently, historians have re-assessed this negative view of Christianity in the nation building process in early twentieth century China. For example, Ryan Dunch shows that Fuzhou Protestants saw no conflict between their identities as Christians and Chinese citizens.² In fact, far from being brainwashed sympathisers of foreign powers, Chinese Protestants used their own uniquely Chinese version of Christianity to become the leading members of Republican era social and political organisations in Fuzhou.³ By the 1930's however, Dunch argues, tensions between Christianity and nationalism in China became more pronounced and Protestants were increasingly marginalised from the nation building process in Fuzhou.⁴

In contrast to Dunch's findings for Fuzhou Protestants, throughout the 1930's such a tension is not obvious in the writings of Yongjiang pupils. To the contrary, students and staff at Yongjiang generally saw no conflict between their identities as Christians and as patriotic citizens of the Chinese nation. In their writings pupils not only revealed their sense of intense despair and deep concern for China's current political situation, they also used Christian language and sentiments to bemoan its downtrodden status. In 1933 Yu Zhanghua writes: 'If we look at the last few years, China's national situation is extremely chaotic...the burden of responsibility for building an enduring foundation for our national people is carried on our shoulders. How can we carry it? Jesus Christ is a good model: throughout his life his actions left a mark, we can say completely that he worked for ordinary people. We study Christ's spirit and implement the revolutionary plan.'⁵ By expressing their concerns for China's national situation through Christian rhetoric we can see the extent to which Christianity reinforced the patriotism of Yongjiang girls in this period.

The mutually reinforcing nature of their Christian and patriotic education can most clearly be seen in students participation in the school Student Union and YWCA.⁶ As Yeh has explored, in the wake of the May Fourth Movement many autonomous student societies were

¹ 'Notes re Sunday Games', Nov 27, 1936, NCA, 旧 10- 1-307, p 129.

² Dunch, Ryan, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of Modern China, 1857-1927*, (London, 2001), p. xvii.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ Yu Zhanghua 俞彰華, "Dao min jian qu"到民間去 [To Go Amongst the People]. *Yongjiang sheng* 甬江聲, (1931). NCA, x1.1 – 1. pp. 38-40.

⁶ Li Rongmei 李榮美. 'Qingnian hui' 青年會, [YWCA]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. pp. 184 – 188 and Tu Fengyun 屠鳳韻. 'ben xiao de xuesheng hui' 本校的學生會 [Our School's Student Union]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. , pp. 179- 183.

founded in university campuses across China.¹ The Yongjiang Magazine of 1931 includes photographs of the organising members of these societies (see fig. 9 and 10).²

¹ Yeh, *Provincial Passages*, p. 171.

² Yongjiang Echo, *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1.



Fig. 9. The 1931 Student Union Committee, *Xuesheng zizhihui zhiyuan*, 學生自治會職員. *Yongjiang Echo*, *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. Reproduced with permission.



Fig. 10. The 1931 Yongjiang YWCA Committee, *Qingnian hui zhiyuan*, 青年會職員. *Yongjiang Echo*, *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. Reproduced with permission.

Although both societies clearly had a Christian focus, membership was open to all students regardless of their religious beliefs. As Li Rongmei (李榮美), a member of the YWCA explained: 'Because the society's foundation is Christian, therefore in all our work we act according to the principals of the Christian spirit. However, people who join the society do not have to be Christian, they respectfully ask to join the society and then they will be society members.' ¹ We know that YWCA membership remained very popular throughout the 1930's. In 1937 Principal Marian H. Y. Bih reports that seventy-four per cent of boarding school girls were members of the YWCA.² The external activities of both the Yongjiang YWCA and the Student Union reveal the extent to which Yongjiang girls conceptualised their nation building efforts in Christian terms. Both the Student Union and the YWCA's external activities were focused on organising a variety of local and national charitable relief organisations, including establishing a Sunday school for local children in the school gymnasium, collecting donations for flood and famine relief and sewing warm clothes to send to soldiers fighting against the Japanese. ³ Through their active participation in such charitable works Yongjiang girls could simultaneously fulfil both their national and Christian social responsibilities.

The YWCA proudly details not only the social contribution of its activities for the benefit of the country, but also its vital role in mobilising and organising China's youth. As Li explains: 'The goal of the YWCA is complete perfection. By means of morality and wisdom it helps young people. Moreover it has a mechanism for people to autonomously and mutually help each other...Perhaps, it can also assist in every kind of special public enterprise and public mechanism.... it can effectively promote social development. From this it looks as if the position of the YWCA in society is truly very significant.'⁴ Christian women, as moral exemplars and organised leaders could help China build a strong nation through their public activities and institutions.

Yongjiang girls' active participation in local charitable relief projects and wider national movements reveals the extent to which they were connected to both local society and the national political situation. Yongjiang's high level of integration with wider society challenges the image of mission schools as being self-contained entities that Yeh presents us with: 'it was missionary colleges like Hujiang and St. Johns that actively sought to erect barriers between the city and the campus that created an inward-directed student culture in the

¹ Li Rongmei 李榮美. 'Qingnian hui' 青年會, [YWCA]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. p. 187.

² Principals Report, 1936-1937, NCA, 旧 10-1-308.

³ See Principals report, 1931, NCA, 旧 10-1-307.

⁴ Li, *qingnian hui*, p. 185.

midst of urban distraction.’¹ In troubled times teachers and students at Yongjiang were concerned not to present the school as cut off from, but as intimately connected to local Ningbo society. By highlighting their local contribution to nation building efforts, students and staff at Yongjiang sought to defend themselves from attack as an American missionary establishment in the increasingly hostile environment of the 1930-40’s.

Women as Leaders: Yongjiang Student Union

Another organization which enabled girls to display their patriotism in a Christian way was the Yongjiang Student Union. As Dunch has explored for male Protestants in Fuzhou, Christian young women in Zhejiang also were keen to take on leadership roles and envisioned the future organization of Chinese society in Christian terms. Not content to simply fulfil the traditional roles expected of them, Yongjiang pupils found an outlet for their ambitions to become the future leaders of Chinese society in their organization of the school Student Union. For example, Tu Fengyun explains that the Student Union was modelled on the national government administration itself: ‘Our countries highest mechanism is the central government, they have to deal with diplomacy and govern internal affairs, to have a powerful country and peaceful citizens. Schools are the basis for organising society, and are also a small society in themselves, if this is the case, how does their small government work? This is the so called student self-governing society! Today’s student societies are based on the spirit of reform and support for the national party.’²In their organisational and leadership activities such as the YWCA and Student Union they demonstrated their ability to serve the nation not only as ‘wives and mothers’ of citizens, but as active citizens and future leaders of the nation in their own right. Indeed in the 1931 magazine, Xu Yunying expressed her belief that women would become: ‘our country’s future leaders, the future social transformers.’³

While many students across China were similarly undertaking such projects, Yongjiang girls were distinguished by their Christian rhetoric. This distinctive combination of Chinese nationalist and Christian sentiments is revealed by Tu Fengyan in her explanation of the Yongjiang Students Union’s collection and donations movement: ‘Mencius said: ‘everyman possesses a sympathetic heart’, my schoolmates have a charitable project for everything, such as disaster relief, helping at orphanages, all have the spirit of self-sacrifice, fearlessly go out to collect contributions, these in short, are carrying the foundation of Jesus Christ’s spirit,

¹ Yeh, Wen-hsin, *The Alienated Academy : Culture and politics in Republican China, 1919-1937*, (London, 1990). p. 211.

²Tu, *ben xiao de xuesheng hui*, p. 175.

³Xu Yunying 徐雲英. “Xiandai qingnian sixiang shang de cuowu” 現代青年思想上的錯誤 [The Error of Young Peoples Thinking Today]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲(1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1. , p. 48.

ah!’¹ This emphasis on the rhetoric of female pupils’ ‘self-sacrifice’ ‘service’ and ‘duty’ was not only a reflection of their Christian sentiments, but also intimately connected with both Christian and nationalist prevailing gender ideology.

The New Life Movement at Yongjiang

In this period there was a convenient convergence between Christian and Nationalist gender ideology: both aimed to create ‘good wives and mothers’, through the professionalization of domesticity and the elevation of the roles of wife and mother as the highest ideal to which women should aspire. This intersection between nationalist and Christian gender values can be seen most prominently during the New Life Movement (*xin shenghuo yundong* 新生活运动), which was launched by Chiang Kai-shek’s government in 1934.² The movement reinforced women’s roles as household managers who were responsible for improving the moral fibre of the family (and nation) through her modern domestic training in hygiene, cleanliness and citizenship.³ Yongjiang School adopted the tenants of the New Life Movement. Principal Shen reports in 1934: ‘We are now in the midst of stressing Gen. Chiang Kai-shek’s New Life Movement and are trying to make it practical enough for the students to follow naturally.’⁴

The principles of the New Life Movement were put into effect at Yongjiang in several practical ways. Students were expected to keep their dormitories and classrooms spotless and their personal appearance neat and tidy and prizes were awarded for keeping their belongings in good order. In 1933 Principal Shen reports: ‘Miss Chiao, our matron, is helping students to take care of their dormitories and classrooms. She is using different ways to encourage them to keep themselves and their belongings clean and orderly. The classroom which ranks the first for cleanliness and neatness is given a banner to hang on the wall for a week.’⁵

In line with both Christian principles and ideas of the New Life Movement, domestic education remained a key focus of the curriculum at Yongjiang throughout the 1920-1940’s. From the staff list in 1935 we can see that students were instructed in classes including; hygiene, sewing, nursing and cooking.⁶ Helen Schneider has explored how the professionalization of Chinese domesticity was reflected in the development of the Home

¹ Tu, *ben xiao de Xuesheng hui*, p. 178.

² Frederica Ferlanti, *The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938*, *Modern Asian Studies* 44.5 (2010). See also, Wennan Liu, ‘Redefining the Moral and Legal roles of the State in Everyday Life: The New Life Movement in China in the Mid – 1930’s.’, *Cross Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (June, 2013).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 978.

⁴ Principals Report, 1933-1934, NCA 10-1-307.

⁵ Principals Report, 1932-1933, NCA 10-1-307.

⁶ ‘Faculty 1935 Fall’ in Principals report, March 27 1936. NCA 10-1-307.

Economics curriculum in higher education for women.¹ Yongjiang also invested a significant amount of money in its domestic education facilities. In 1923 the school spent \$2000 dollars on a 'Model Chinese Home' and in 1931 a new domestic science hall was built.² Yongjiang girls, as Principal Shen reported in 1933 were able to use their superior sewing skills directly for the nations benefit, in sewing cotton padded clothing to send to soldiers on the northern front line.³ Thus the long term goal of preparing girls to become active and efficient managers of the household (and by extension the nation) was reinforced by the New Life Movement as it was implemented at Yongjiang.

Discipline, another aspect of the New Life Movement was also stressed at Yongjiang. Students were expected to line up in perfect silence at meal times and conduct themselves with decorum, walking slowly in the corridors in between classes. In 1948 Zhou Yuyin describes the perfect orderliness of the students lining up for breakfast: 'The breakfast bell sounds, the girl's line up in orderly ranks, calmly and silently enter the dining room, listen! They are all silent ah! ... They are a much disciplined group.'⁴ There was also an annual prize for students for their deportment.⁵ The emphasis on health, hygiene, deportment and discipline at Yongjiang simultaneously reinforced both Christian principles of homemaking and the goals of the New Life Movement, which placed women as professional housewives and exemplars of family morality at the forefront of Chinese national rejuvenation.

It is unclear to what extent Yongjiang had autonomy in the implementation of the New Life Movement. In the period 1927-1937 the school had little choice but to come into line with Nationalist educational directives in order to ensure its independent survival. As Frederica Ferranti has explored some Christian leaders in China expressed their distaste for the NLM, wanting to distance themselves from the underlying fascist tenants implicit in the movement.⁶ However, other evidence suggests the school may have been very willing to implement the New Life Movement. When Chiang Kai-shek called upon Christian organisations to implement the New Life Movement at the grassroots level several Christian organizations in China such as the YMCA, keen to gain a larger role in government, responded enthusiastically.⁷ Moreover, the strong emphasis on domestic education that had formed an essential part of the missionary curriculum from its earliest foundation, was being expounded by American educationalists in China during 1930's and neatly coincided with the

¹ Helen Schneider, 'The Professionalization of Chinese Domesticity: Ava B. Milan and Home Economics at Yenching University' in Bays Daniel H. and Widmer, Ellen (eds.), *China's Christian Colleges: Cross Cultural Connections* (California, 2009).

² Minutes of the Board of Directors April 17, 1923, and Principals reports May 9, 1931, NCA 10-1-307.

³ Principals reports May 1932-1933, NCA 10-1-307.

⁴ Zhou Yuyin, 'Shenghuo zai Yongjiang', p. 15.

⁵ Principals report, April 16, 1932, NCA 10-1-307.

⁶ Ferlanti, 'The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938', p. 975.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.974.

tenants of the NLM.¹ At Yongjiang, Principal Shen tried to make the movement more democratic by consulting students on what aspects of the NLM would be stressed: ‘our present plan is to have each class, in consultation with its advisor, decide what special phase of the New Life Movement they will stress in each two week period.’² Although girls were given a voice in the implementation of the New Life Movement we must now consider how they responded to the conservative gender values implicit in it.

Students Views: Beyond good wives and wise mothers?

To what extent did girls at Yongjiang accept these roles and imbibe this dominant discourse of female service to the nation through the professionalization of their domestic roles? As young women growing up in the post-May Fourth era, how did they conceive of their roles in nation building? Through a close examination of students’ writings we can see that they often went beyond the conservative ideals of serving the nation as ‘good wives and mothers’ that both Christian and nationalist government educators prescribed. In their elevation of women’s leadership roles and radical left-wing writings students often expressed their desires to transcend these conservative ideals.

Indeed in some students writing we find a rejection of the *Liangqi xianmu* role altogether. In her fictional short story simply entitled ‘Go?’ Chen Yaoyin (陳遙音) tells the story of a bright young girl oppressed by her conservative family who want her to get married rather than enter middle school.³ The story ends in tragedy as the heroine, Fang (芳), wastes away while longing to go to school and eventually commits suicide resisting her parent’s plans for her marriage.⁴ This moving tale reveals to the reader Yongjiang school girls’ conceptions of their place within the family and nation in the post-May Fourth era. Through the impassioned petition of Fang to her parents, we can see that the author was influenced by the iconoclastic rhetoric of the New Culture Movement, attacking the norms of the Confucian family structure and advocating women’s rights of equal education with men:

‘Why is it not necessary for girls to go to school? Do not tell me that women are not people? Father! Do you believe this is showing love for your daughter? Why can her older brother go to university, even if he wastes money, you still will not reprimand him, moreover, very willingly send him money, believe he is industrious, certainly he will be able to repay your fatherly care, for his father’s ancestors strive to be outstanding. You believe that a girl cannot do this. This has inevitably led to great

¹ Schneider, ‘The Professionalization of Chinese Domesticity’, p. 145.

² Principals report, 1933-1934, NCA 旧 10-1-307

³ Chen Yaoyin 陳遙音. “Qu yi” 去矣 [Go!]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1933), NCA, 旧 10-1-207.pp. 71-74

⁴ Chen, *Qu yi*, p. 74.

contempt for women. Father! I cannot in this kind of environment continue to live my life. Please, don't say that your daughter is too heartless, is un-filial; please do not blame your daughter!’¹

However, while admonishing her parents in the iconoclastic language of the New Culture Movement, Fang resorts to a more traditional expression of female agency to escape her family's control; she commits suicide.² As Bryan Goodman has highlighted, the suicide of the 'New Woman' in China raised uncomfortable questions for Chinese male reformers about the success of their imagined new roles for women during this period.³ Indeed many historians have suggested that the 'New Woman' as imagined by Chinese male reformers was more of a reflection and projection of male reformers' desires and anxieties about their own personal situation than for the benefit of women themselves.⁴ In her story of Fang's suicide, Chen Yaoyin is perhaps highlighting the extent to which these new ideas of female equality had yet to be realised by 1931. A twist at the end of story also reveals the influence of the author's Christian education. Rather than returning as a ghost to seek revenge on her family, as in traditional female suicide stories of this genre, her spirit, carefree, soars up to the sky: 'Mournful night drew in and the desolate north wind already covered the earth, the mother's weeping became even louder, pitiful Fang was unaware, floating on the current to some other place.'⁵

Some students at Yongjiang took this rhetoric of independent female participation even further, advocating that women could become active military and revolutionary participants with the same status as men. In her story 'Spiritual Companion' Meng Kuizhu (孟奎珠) combined notions of revolutionary feminism with Christianity in a unique and radical way.⁶ She advocates women not only serving their country in times of crisis as teachers, doctors and nurses (although these are roles she also elevates) but as active military participants as well.⁷ In the story, the heroine Ling (玲), a 'rich and revolutionary woman' is a middle school professor of Chinese literature. She leads and advises the students in their protests and rallies during the 'great social transformation.'⁸ During the war she becomes a nurse behind the front lines, acting as a kind of Florence Nightingale strengthening soldiers' bodies and minds

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³ Bryna Goodman, 'The new woman commits suicide: the press, cultural memory, and the new Republic,' *Journal of Asian Studies* 64.1 (2005) pp. 67-101.

⁴ Chan, Ching-kiu Stephen 'The Language of Despair: Ideological Representations of the 'New Woman' by May Fourth Writers', in Tani E. Barlow (ed.), *Gender politics in Modern China: Writing and Feminism*, (London, 1993).

⁵ Chen, *Qu yi*, p. 74.

⁶ Meng Kuizhu 孟奎珠. 'Jingshen shang de Banlü'精神上的伴侣 [Spiritual Companion]. *Yongjiang Sheng*, 甬江聲 (1931), NCA, x.1.1 -1, pp. 81-84.

⁷ Meng, *Jingshen shang de Banlü*, pp. 81-84.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

through her courageous words. So far the heroine had acted in line with traditional notions of female virtue. The break comes when: 'One windy and rainy night, suddenly the announcement of utter defeat came urgently from the front line, they changed into martial uniforms, decided to band together and prepare the team to go and help, however who would allow a weak woman to go and carry out such a dangerous and important mission?'¹ The heroine reassures her male comrades that she, although a weak woman has the strength to fight because of her 'spiritual companion': 'I don't know if I will return alive, therefore I will take my beloved spiritual companion and introduce him to you. I hope you will also agree with him and let him get close to you....Who is this friend? It is only the four words 'save the nation through revolution.' In my thinking and action throughout my life, I have never departed from these four words'²

In this passage, Meng Kuaizhu combines a radical revolutionary feminism with Christian language and imagery. In this way we can see that some pupils at Yongjiang effectively envisioned a new type of Chinese woman, one who not only had the caring attributes of Christian wife and mother, but could also take up arms to defend her country. In doing so Yongjiang girls uniquely combined liberal and conservative, Christian and Nationalist gender discourses effectively transcending the limitations of both. This use of Christianity to strengthen women's revolutionary participation was a radically new departure from the genteel and virtuous Christian motherhood and femininity that an early generation of Christian educators had prescribed. During the 1911 Revolution, missionary educators were shocked by the 'unfeminine' revolutionary activities with which girls became involved.³ Ida Khan's *An Amazon in Cathay* (1912) warns of the dire consequences that could occur if women dared to step out of the domestic realm into the front line world of men.⁴ In her story the heroine Pearl dons men's clothes and cuts her hair in order to join the army, but 'unprotected and un-chaperoned' is raped by Chinese soldiers.⁵ In contrast, Meng Kaizhu's heroine uses her Christian faith and patriotism, simultaneously embodied in her 'spiritual companion' to inspire her male comrades and strengthen her resolve to go into battle. As Joan Judge has explored, stories of virtuous women who took on men's roles at times of national crisis were longstanding in Chinese literature and still used in didactic textbooks for women in this period.⁶ In these stories, women were justified in stepping outside of the domestic

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

² *Ibid.*, p.84.

³ Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture and Christianity: American Protestant Mission Schools in China*, (New York, 1995), p. 102

⁴ Ida Kahn, *An Amazon in Cathay*, (1912), cited in Hu Ying, 'Naming the First New Woman', *Nan Nu: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Imperial China*, 3. 2 (2001). p. 217.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶ Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p.151.

realm for national and family salvation. For example, Hua Mulan takes her father's place when he is unable to fight for the emperor, showing both her patriotism and filial loyalty to her father.¹ At the end of story the traditional gender balance is restored and Mulan assumes the role of virtuous wife and mother. Indeed it is only through a temporary gender inversion by assuming the characteristics and appearance of men, which allowed women to participate in such unfeminine activities.²

In Meng's story, it is the heroine's Christianity that allows her to enter the world of men while retaining her feminine virtue. It is through her faith that she can strengthen and reassure her male comrades and face the idea of her own death undaunted. This remarkable story demonstrates the extent to which Yongjiang girls were no longer confined by the Christian doctrine of femininity but actually created their own unique version of feminism and Christianity to strengthen their patriotism and justify their roles as active revolutionary participants.

In conclusion, from a close analysis of students writing in the Yongjiang student magazines of 1931 and 1933 we can see that for Yongjiang girls there did not have to be a conflict between Christianity and nation building. Indeed in an increasingly hostile environment, Yongjiang pupils were able to use self-governing organisations such as YWCA and student union to express their nationalism in a Christian way. Just as their teachers used the rhetoric, signs and symbols of nationalism to ensure the survival of their western missionary establishment, Yongjiang girls also used the rhetoric of Christianity to strengthen their nationalism at times of mounting anti-foreign hostility when missionary schools were under attack.

In their willingness to organise themselves and take on leadership roles, elevation of radical revolutionary participation and outright rejection of marriage, Yongjiang girls showed that their envisioned roles in China's future society transcended the traditionally prescribed boundaries of the domestic sphere. Moreover, while they were undoubtedly influenced by Christian, nationalist and radical feminist discourses, they were not defined by or limited to any one of these. Indeed, students at Yongjiang were able to blend all of these ideas and influences into their own unique formulation, to create new and unique conceptions of their roles in China's future. Indeed it was the international rhetoric of Christianity and feminism expressed through organisations such as the YWCA which provided girls with the opportunities to demonstrate their nationalism in a wider sphere, as leading social reformers in Chinese society. This international language of Christian womanhood and female

¹ Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, p. 151.

² *Ibid.*,

empowerment can clearly be seen in the words of Ke Hailun who expressed her desire to ‘build a happy world for future generations of our sisterhood.’¹

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