

Gender and Internationalization in China: The Case of *Nüxue bao* (1898)

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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Abstract

This project is about the initial phase of China's positioning in the modern world order. It is about the Wuxu reforms (1898), a historical juncture when neo/Confucian elite tried to position the Chinese Empire more favorably within the symbolic and political hierarchies of the modern world. Differing from earlier reforming efforts, 1898 intellectuals opted for social change that would entail a wider embrace of foreign ideas and ideals; differing from iconoclastic modernizing ideologies and political visions of republican revolutionaries and the adherents of New Culture and May Fourth movements, the reformers active in the final years of the nineteenth century tried to enhance China's international standing by reinterpreting and reinvigorating cultural and socio-political canons and practices of China's present and past. In their calling for gradual but systematic change of Chinese society, intellectual elites leading the Wuxu reforms considered the change of women's position as necessary step towards China's strengthening, thus providing the space for the entrance of Chinese women as both objects and subjects of the public debates and activities.

My dissertation investigates the Wuxu reform movement through the prism of women's direct participation in the debates and actions pointed to the improvement of China's and Chinese women's socio-political conditions. I analyze historically unprecedented emergence and operation of three women-oriented reformist projects – the association *The Society for Women's Learning* (*Nüxue hui*), the journal *Chinese Girls' Progress* (*Nüxue bao*) and the *Girls' School* (*Nüxue tang*) – as a key for understanding the crucial role that gender has played within the processes of social changes in China in general, and within the reform movement of late-Qing period in particular. Despite the inherent historical uncertainties related to the authorship, I use *Nüxue bao* as the central source for an investigation of the ways in which women used the agendas of the Wuxu reforms to conceptualize and actualize historically unprecedented opportunities to organize and act as recognized legitimate socio-political actors.

In the dissertation, I read the texts and actions ascribed to reform-oriented women within (neo)Confucian interpretative framework which informed socio-cultural and political discourses and practices of late-Qing elites. I argue that the process of formation of collective political identity of women and the discursive struggles over its past, present and future defining

boundaries, content and meanings reveal the focal role that multiple destabilizations of the relationships between *nei* (inner) and *wai* (outer) spheres played in proposed and/or practiced social changes in late-Qing China. Focusing on *Nüxue bao*, my thesis will show that a redefinition of the relationships between *nei* and *wai* spheres, spatio-symbolic notions crucial for both gender roles and for cultural and socio-political ordering of the world defined by Imperial China, facilitated and got facilitated by women's organizing, theorizing and acting for social change.

Keywords: gender, late-Qing China, social change, internationalization, women's press, *nei-wai*

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Chapter 1: Introducing the project

The turn of the twentieth century is considered to be the beginning of China's transformation from the Empire to the Republic that was to a large extent influenced by newly emerged position and perception by the educated elite that China is only one of many marginalized actors at the modern world stage.¹ The British victory in the Opium War (1839-42), the Anglo-French invasion of 1856-60, the Sino-French fighting over Vietnam in the 1880s, and, most agonizing of all, the capitulation of the Qing army in the war with Japan in 1895 and immediate danger of China's dismemberment had forced the intellectual elite to rethink the assumed central position of the Empire and to propose what China must become in order to revive what China used to be in their pre-modern world view.²

The immediate impact of the defeat in the Opium War in 1842 on the Chinese intellectual climate was peripheral, but after the occupation of Beijing in 1860 and the increased European influence on the Qing court, it became inevitable to confront the crisis. In their efforts to empower Qing Empire to communicate with Western powers as an equal, a generation of literati recognized the technological and military superiority of the West and had introduced the mastering of Western technology, industry and language as a way to safeguard the indigenous

¹ Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002). William Bloom warns that the statements in which people, government and state are fused in one image can be made, but that these statements do not carry academic integrity and intellectual credibility. I am trying to be very precise about what I'm addressing, but when the literature I am consulting is using a discursive style that discuss the international politics and its participating actors as communication of coherent, unified, rational subjects, I have no other choice than to reproduce it. See William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.

² Kauko Laitinen, *Chinese Nationalism in the late Qing Dynasty: Zhang Binglin as an Anti-Manchu Propagandist*, (London: Curzon, 1990); Chang Hao. "Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement, 1890-8," in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 11, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 2*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

socio-cultural and political practices.³ Nonetheless, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) empowered a group of male intellectuals to argue for a wider scope of reforms than the ones self-strengtheners proposed and practiced. In their propositions of the changes needed to ensure China's better future, the advocates of the Reform Movement of 1898 initiated the discussions about the role of women in the Chinese society, and paved the way for Chinese women themselves to become actively involved in historically unprecedented activities and debates as socio-political actors.

My dissertation focuses on the initial stage in the formation of a political collectivity of Chinese women. I investigate the ways in which women used the opportunity created by the Wuxu reformers' call for a gradual but systematic socio-political change to organize, theorize and act for the improvement of China's and Chinese women's socio-political conditions. The analysis of the emergence and operation of three women-oriented reformist projects – the association *The Society for Women's Learning* (*Nüxue hui*), the journal *Chinese Girls' Progress* (*Nüxue bao*) and the *Girls' School* (*Nüxue tang*) - offers a key for understanding the crucial role that gender has played within the processes of modernizing social changes in China in general, and within the reform movement of late-Qing period in particular.⁴

My study examines the beginning of women's direct participation in public/political life and the gradual proliferation of Chinese women's voices in the debates about China's and Chinese women's socio-political conditions. However, by highlighting the significance of the direct participation of women in the public/political sphere, I do so with an appreciation for the way that “public” and “private” are not mutually excluding and hierarchically positioned entities.

³ Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in the Modern China* (New York: The Free Press, 1981).

⁴ Nanxiu Qian, “Revitalizing the Xianyuan (Worthy Ladies) Tradition: Women in the 1898 Reforms,” *Modern China* 29, no. 4 (2003).

Rather, in the light of socio-political and cultural changes in China that would follow in the course of the twentieth century, Chinese women's investment in those processes, and actual changes in Chinese women's lives that emerged as a result of their own engagement in the public/directly political sphere, I want to acknowledge Chinese women's endeavors for the inclusion into the historically male-occupied sphere that they themselves were fighting for.

One of my foundational assumptions for this project is that *Nüxue bao*, historically the first journal that claimed the involvement of women as editors, contributors, and as imagined audience, allows us to observe and analyze the actions and discussions of women who participated in these three reform-oriented projects from a unique perspective. The journal was introduced to the broader public as the result of the joint efforts of female editors and contributors, thus promising the reader access to the dynamics of women's autonomous space in the previously exclusively-male sphere of political debates and decision- and policy-making. Even though further analysis is needed for theorizing the implications of men's engagement as editors, pen-named authors and the readers of women's journals,⁵ *Nüxue bao* was self-represented as being exclusively female-led, female-oriented media, thus revealing what should have been assumed to be of concern to female editors, contributors and readers. In other words, notwithstanding the issues evolving around certifying the gender of persons involved in its production and consumption, *Nüxue bao* has a fascinating story to tell: the readers - male or female - *assumed* that they are reading the texts written *by* progressive women and *for* women who were meant to become involved in the improvements of China's and Chinese women's positions. This makes *Nüxue bao* the exclusive site for investigating what was at least *supposed*

⁵ Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

to be understood as the enterprise of reform-oriented women who, as the presumed authors, had advised female readers on the direction of change they should support and undertake.

Hence, I see *Nüxue bao* as an unmatched historical source for an investigation of the ways in which the efforts of the Wuxu reforms created socio-politically empowering space for a group of reform-oriented women, and for understanding how women used it to organize, theorize and act for higher status for China *through* and *with* a higher status for its women. However, I do not consider *Nüxue bao* to be a mere source of information necessary for an investigation of women's actions and discussions during the Wuxu reform period. Rather, I position it as a printed media site that offers an analysis of its politics of representation, that, in turn, allows me to address not only the discursive struggles over the content and meanings of the collective identity of women as recognized and legitimate socio-political actors in late-Qing China, but also to emphasize the role that print media played in gender-related changes.

As I will argue, attentive reading of *Nüxue bao* and of other primary and secondary sources that it led me to, support the findings of scholars who argue for the critical importance of negotiations between spatial, ritual and symbolic *nei* (inner) and *wai* (outer) realms for the definition and performance of gender roles in China.⁶ My reading of ideas and actions publicized in *Nüxue bao* will interrelate *nei* and *wai* in a way that Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee does in her explorations of Confucian philosophy.⁷ As Rosenlee summarizes:

⁶ Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1997); Bryna Goodman and Wendi Larson, ed. *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005); Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

⁷ Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, "Neiwai, Civility, and Gender Distinctions," *Asian Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2004); *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

The spatial bipolar of *nei-wai*, that marks proper gender distinctions in the Chinese world, is often assumed to be congruous with the Western dualistic concept of private/public. However, the *nei-wai* binary in the Chinese imaginary is rather a shifting boundary between what is perceived as central and peripheral, or civil and barbaric.⁸

Hence, I will analyze the ways in which women organized, theorized and acted as a part of the Wuxu reform movement by conceptualizing *nei* as both the demarcation for proper, ritualized, within-kinship operation of female gender roles, *and* as the spatial term marking the interior of culturally and civilizational superior China's ruling domain; and *wai* as both socio-politically empowering sphere of propriety of male governance and literacy, *and* the broader modern/izing world that China faced in this period.

In this reading of *nei* and *wai*, China's forced internationalization in the second half of the nineteenth century would be read as a destabilization of conceptualization of *nei-wai* relationship that had informed China's treatment of geo-political entities according to the proximity to the Chinese Imperial domain and its acceptance of neo/Confucian norms of civility. In other words, I read the challenge that the power and presence of the "Western foreigners" to use R. Bin Wong's expression, as well as its interrelated dismantling of the tribute system and the East Asian International Society as destabilization of *nei-wai* relationships where *nei* and *wai* are understood in spatial and civilizational terms.⁹ When communication of China with the modern/izing world is conceived as constituted by China's understanding of *nei-wai* relationship, and when it is joined with more often addressed reading of *nei-wai* in terms of gendered labor divisions and symbolic norms of propriety in Imperial China, we not only see the interrelation of

⁸ Rosenlee, 2004, 41.

⁹ R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 154. The term East Asian International Society is from Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

gender, national and international politics, but we also get closer to keeping the Chinese historical developments and Chinese women's history out of the conceptual categories used in contemporary thinking that are immersed in meanings and expectations based on European historical experience.¹⁰

My analysis will thus be framed by neo/Confucian interpretations of *nei* [inner] and *wai* [outer] and will be guided by the following questions: How did the destabilization of geo-civilizational *nei* and *wai* influenced the *nei-wai* relation in gendered spatio-symbolic terms, and how did women treated and facilitated further redefinition of the relations between *nei* and *wai* of the Chinese Empire? What are the relations between women's organizing under the auspices of the Reform movement and familial and artistic networks women formed and maintained throughout the Chinese past? What are the results of this new kind of women's bonding in terms of the emergence of a political collectivity of "Chinese women"?

My project aims to contribute to several scholarly fields. By looking at Chinese women's writings and activities from the turn of the twentieth century I hope to contribute to the body of academic literature that intervenes in the critique and assessment of the extended historical importance and political implications of the pre-New Culture/May Fourth period of modern Chinese history in general, and of the Wuxu Reform movement in particular.¹¹ In this sense, I

¹⁰ Wang Hui, "How to Explain 'China' and its 'Modernity': Rethinking 'The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought'," trans. Wang Yang, in Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia*, ed. Theodore Hutters (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); R. Bin Wong, Theodore Hutters, and Pauline Yu, "Introduction: Shifting Paradigms of Political and Social Order," in *Culture and State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques*, ed. Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); R. Bin Wong, "Beyond Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism," *Science and Society* 65, no. 2 (2003).

¹¹ Kai-wing Chow, Tze-ki Hon, Hung-yok Ip, and Don C. Price, ed. *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: In Search of Chinese Modernity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); Grace S. Fong, Nanxiu Qian, and Harriet T. Zurndorfer, ed. *Beyond Tradition and Modernity: Gender, Genre and Cosmopolitanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow, ed. *Rethinking the 1898 Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Incomplete Modernity: Rethinking the May Fourth Intellectual Project," in *The Appropriation of the Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřih Král (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Tanya McIntyre, "Images of Women in

will engage with the literature concerned with the change of ideas and social ideals in late-Qing China that focuses on the role that China's communication with the modern/izing world played in these processes. What my project elucidates are the visions of social change authored and enacted in 1897 and 1898, and looks at *Nüxue bao* to see the ways in which women treated and used simultaneously threatening and promising destabilizations of geo-civilizational *nei-wai* domains in and through textual and actual encounters with their foreign counterparts.

Furthermore, by engaging with *Nüxue bao*, a publication to this day not systematically studied by scholars, I contribute to the historiography of Chinese print media in general, and to socio-cultural historical investigations of Chinese women's journals in particular. There is a growing body of literature that deals with the print media in late-Qing China, but these academic works are either concerned with "general" new-style press;¹² they discuss women's journal of later epochs;¹³ or treat *Nüxue bao* as a part of linear chronology of the development of Chinese women's press.¹⁴

Popular Prints of the Early Modern Period," in *Dress, Sex and Text in Chinese Culture*, ed. Antonia Finnane and Anne McLaren (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1999); David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late-Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹² Andrea Janku, "The Uses of Genre in the Chinese Press From the Late Qing to the Early Republican Period," in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Printing, Publishing, and Literary fields in Transition, Circa 1800 to 2008: Introduction*, ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010); Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China?: Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's News Media, 1872-1912* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rudolf G. Wagner, ed. *Joining the Global Public: World, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

¹³ Charlotte Beahan, "Feminism and Nationalism in the Chinese Women's Press, 1902-1922," *Modern China* 1, no. 4 (1975); Haiyan Lee "All the Feelings That Are Fit to Print: The Community of Sentiment and the Literary Public Sphere in China, 1900-1918," *Modern China* 27, no. 3 (2001); Ma Yuxin, "Women Journalists in the Chinese Enlightenment," *Gender Issues* 22, no. 1 (2005), "Surviving the National Revolution: Chinese Women's Press 1924-32," *Studies on Asia* 3, no. 1 (2006); There is also an ongoing research project entitled "A New Approach to the Popular Press in China: Gender and Cultural Production, 1904-1937" conducted by Joan Judge, Barbara Mittler and Grace Fong. The description of the project is available at http://www.yorku.ca/ycar/Programs_Projects/summary_popular_press.pdf (accessed December 20, 2012).

¹⁴ Chen Xiaohua, "Zhongguo jindai baokanshi shang de yi zuo lichengbei: Lun Xinhai gemin sheqi de funü baokan" (A milestone of early modern history of Chinese press: Women's press in the Xinhai period) *Shehuo kexue yanjiu* 6 (2003); Hu Wenhua and Liu Shubo, "Lüelun Zhongguo zaoqi funü baokan" (A brief discussion of early Chinese

I will read the journal in a “Chinese readers’ way,” that is, “from the beginning to end, without missing a single word.”¹⁵ I expect that comprehensive close reading of the entire issues of the journal will enable me to emphasize the potential of print media to reveal the complexities and contradictions steaming from the multivocality embedded in the process of formation of emerging political collectivities. Thus, I will highlight the ways in which *Nüxue bao* facilitated and reflected the formatting of political collectivity of “Chinese women,” serving as a platform for voicing different and often contradicting visions of the direction in which China and its women should evolve.

Lastly, I will attempt to contribute to the flourishing academic analysis of gender in China. I align my work with literature on Chinese women’s history, but, in a contrast to a number of historians who discuss Chinese women’s engagements in the Wuxu reform movement,¹⁶ I thoroughly engage with the ways in which internationalization of China got translated into and by women-oriented reformist projects and how it related its participants. In other words, late-Qing women in China, their ideas and actions were not isolated from China’s communication with the modern/izing world, or, as I approach it in my study, China’s attending to the destabilization of the relationship between geo-civilizational *nei* and *wai* of the Chinese

women’s press) *Anhui Shifan Daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexue ban)* 31, no. 3 (2003); Ma Yuxin, *Women Journalism and Feminism in China, 1898-1937* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010); Song Suhong, *Nüxing meijie: Lishi yu chuantong* (Women’s media: History and tradition) (Beijing: Zhongguo Meijie Daxue chubanshe, 2006); Yin Meiyang, “Lüelun jindai Zhongguo de funü baokan” (A brief discussion of early modern Chinese women’s press) *Qingdao Daxue Shifan Xueyuan xuebao* 15, no. 4 (1998); Zhou Zhaoyi, “Zhongguo jindai funü baokan de xingqi ji yiyi (The emergence and significance of early modern Chinese women’s press) *Hebei Shifan Daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 20, no. 1 (1997)

¹⁵Janku, 153, 154; Mittler, 5, referring to Ge Gongzhen, *Zhongguo baoxueshi* (A history of newspapers in China) (Shanghai: Minguo congshu ser. 2, no. 49, 1990 [1928]), 221.

¹⁶ Han Lian, “Wuxu shiqi funü yundong cezhong minzu gemin de wenhua fenxi (Cultural analysis of the women’s movement in the Wuxu period and its emphasis on national revolution) *Qingshi yanjiu* 1 (2002); Kazuko Ono, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution*, trans. and ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Wang Fei, *Kongqian zhi ji: Zhongguo funü sixiang yu wenxue fazhan shilun, 1851—1930* (Unprecedented act: A historical review of the development of Chinese women’s thought and literature, 1851-1930) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004).

Empire. Destabilization of this kind of *nei-wai* relationship created the space for organizing and retheorizing of women's proper social positions, minds and bodies in which Chinese and foreign ideas, Chinese and foreign men and women communicated and cooperated within a complex web of contextually-bound power relations. To belittle or to augment the role played by the foreign ideas and foreign participants involved in the establishment of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* is, in my view, disabling us to interpret this significant moment of modern Chinese history in general and of Chinese women's history in particular in all its complexity.

The discursive encounters between Western and Chinese women have been studied by scholars such as Hu Ying and Joan Judge.¹⁷ Their respective studies make a major step by highlighting the role of opposing the image of "traditional" Chinese women on the one hand, and blending the Western and Chinese women's images on the other in the production of New Women of China at the turn of the nineteenth century. My dissertation will differ from these works not only in that I deal with slightly earlier discursive events than those addressed in the scholarship of Hu and Judge, and women's own textual investments and strategies approachable solely through the pages of *Nüxue bao*, but also because I will discuss both textual and actual encounters of late-Qing Chinese women with the Western women involved in the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist enterprises.¹⁸ In doing so, I hope that my

¹⁷ Joan Judge, "Blended Wish Images: Chinese and Western Exemplary Women at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Nan Nü* 6, no. 1 (2004), "Citizens or Mothers of Citizens? Gender and the Meaning of Modern Chinese Citizenship," in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), "Expanding the Feminine/National Imaginary: Social and Martial Heroines in Late Qing Women's Journals," *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* 15 (2007), "Meng Mu Meets the Modern: Female Exemplars in Early-Twentieth Century Textbooks for Girls and Women," *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* 8 (2000), *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Hu Ying, "Lishi shuxie yu xin nüxing xingxiang de chuli: Cong Liang Qichao 'Ji Jiangxi Kang nüshi' yi wen tan qi" (The new woman and writing of history: The Case of Kang Aide) *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* 9 (2001), *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Hu Ying's major focus is post-1899 texts, while Joan Judge looks at the early years of the twentieth century. Nanxiu Qian has already made a very important point about drastic difference between the discourses employed by

re/construction and contextualized analysis of these encounters will simultaneously problematize abridged perspectives of previously mentioned “nationalized” writing on Chinese women’s history as being free (or significantly freer) from the foreign influences and involvements, but also the scholarly literature that, in my view, approach the involvement of Western men and women in changing China and Chinese women in a rather uncritical way.¹⁹

Furthermore, the way in which I will address women’s organizing and theorizing of social change in the Wuxu reform period will significantly differ from the two scholars to whose writing my dissertation is heavily indebted: the work of Xia Xiaohong, a historian based at the Beijing University, and Nanxiu Qian, an US based literary scholar who was, until now, the exclusive Anglophone author of the academic pieces on *Nüxue bao* and women’s involvement in the Wuxu reform movement.

In the course of her fruitful career, Xia Xiaohong has been providing invaluable historical findings about the dynamic late-Qing women’s lives, lived or depicted, to both anglophone and sinophone academic audiences.²⁰ A notable difference between Xia’s opus and my dissertation is

women involved in the Wuxu reforms and female reformers active after 1900. See Nanxiu Qian, “The Mother *Nü xuebao* versus the Daughter *Nü xuebao*: Generational Differences between 1898 and 1902 Women Reformers,” in *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformation of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, ed. Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008).

¹⁹ Xiaoping Cong, *Teachers’ Schools and the Making of the Modern Chinese Nation-State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Alison R. Drucker, “The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911,” in *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, ed. Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen (Youngstown: Philo Press, 1981); Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women’s Bodies in Modern China* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 1997); Chia-lin Pao Tao, “The Anti-footbinding Movement in Late Ch’ing China: Indigenous Development and Western Influence,” *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History* 2 (1994); Leonard Warren, *Adele Marion Fielde: Feminist, Social Activist, Scientist* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

²⁰ Xia Xiaohong, “Peng Jiyun nüshi xiaokao (Brief remarks on Lady Peng Jiyun), *Zhongguo xiandai wexue yanjiu congkan* 3 (2001); “Shanghai Nüxue tang kaoshi” (Investigation of Shanghai’s Girls’ School), *Zhongguo wenhua* 31 (2010); “‘Shijie gujin mingfu jian’ yu wan Qing waiguo nüjie zhuan” (“Encyclopedia of world’s famous women” and biographies of foreign women in late-Qing period), *Beijing Daxue xuebao* 46, no. 3 (2009); *Shi jie shi ji* (Sketches from the world of poetry) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 1991); “Wan Qing de nüzi tuanti” (Late-Qing women’s groups) *Hangzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1 (1996); “Wan Qing liang fen Nüxue bao de qianshi jinsheng” (Previous and present life of the two late-Qing *Nüxue bao*) *Jindai Zhongwen xuekan* 1, Sum. no.

that, in the way I read it, Xia Xiaohong's articles and books aim to reconstruct the past in a positivist way: assumingly without judgment, assessment, personal involvement, or meddling with "the facts" and "the sources."²¹ Instead, my dissertation align with the insights of scholars who argue that our access to "reality," past or present, is always mediated and influenced not only by availability and our selection of "data," but also by our invested interpretation of these always incomplete information.²² Hence, throughout my thesis I engage with the intrinsic inconclusiveness of my historico-analytical endeavor, address the issues of availability of sources, and point to different ways in which the events I am analyzing have been narrated both in the primary sources I had a chance to consult and in secondary literature.

Nanxiu Qian made a significant contribution to the literature on women in China by broadening the depth of revisionist interpretations of the 1898 Reform period. While several essays published in the 2002 volume edited by Rebecca Karl and Peter Zarrow, as Qian noticed, demonstrate that the issues of gender were systematically raised and debate prior to the New Culture and the May Fourth movement, and do testify that post-1898 period saw the centralization of the gender issues in the debates on China's salvation,²³ Qian has corrected the

16 (2012); *Wan Qing nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo* (Late-Qing women and early modern China) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshe, 2004); *Wan Qing wenren funüguan* (Late-Qing literati's view on women) (Beijing: Zuoia chubanshe, 1995); "Wuxu qianhou xinxing de funü jiaoyu: Yi Shanghai Zhongguo nüxue tang wei zhongxin"(Newly established education for women in the Wuxu period: The case of Chinese girls' school in Shanghai) *Wenhuaishi zhishi* 6 (1998); "Wu Mengban: A Pioneering Chinese Feminist", in *Paths Toward Modernity: Conference to Mark the Centenary of Jaroslav Prusek*, ed. Olga Lomová (Prague: The Karolinum Press, 2008).

²¹ For yet another, very daring style of writing Chinese women's history, see Susan Mann, *The Talented Women of the Zhang Family* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007).

²² Franklin Rudolf Ankersmith, *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (Harlow: Longman, 1984); James Vernon, "Who's Afraid of the Linguistic Turn? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents," *Social History* 19, no. 1 (1994).

²³ See Joan Judge, "Reforming the Feminine: Female Literacy and the Legacy of 1898"; Rebecca Karl, "'Slavery', Citizenship, and Gender in Late Qing China's Global Context"; and Hu Ying, "Naming the First 'New Woman'", in Karl and Zarrow, 2002.

date by introducing *Nüxue bao* and the actors involved in the women-oriented projects within the 1898 Reform movement for the first time to the English-speaking audience. However, Qian's research and publications are significantly different than the approach I am developing in my dissertation in at least one crucial way.

Qian does not conceptualize *Nüxue bao* as a unique platform that facilitated and reflected a discursive struggle over the meanings and boundaries of formatting political collectivity of "Chinese women," neither does she analyze it as a media site that reveals competing and sometimes contradicting visions of the ways in which China and Chinese women should be reformed.²⁴ As I see it, instead of putting the journal's rich content and multivocality to the forefront of her analysis,²⁵ Nanxiu Qian tends to choose one line of argumentation that brings together a limited number of texts of *Nüxue bao*, and to, following her argument, move to the other discursive venues, i.e. to the "general" press or the poetry collections.

In this way, Qian silences a myriad of voices approachable through this unique journal, and (over)emphasizes the importance of certain authors and their ideas at the expense of others. In all her publications, Qian promotes Xue Shaohui, an extraordinarily educated late-Qing writer who was actively involved in women-oriented enterprises, as *the* central figure of a female-group organized around the reformist agenda, without presenting convincing proof about the reasons to

²⁴ In her recent essay, however, Qian does explicate that the Wuxu reform period was the time when women started to use the media, to speak as a group and to practice what they advocated. See Qian Nanxiu, "Qingmo nüxing kongjian kaituo: Xue Shaohui bianyi 'Waiguo lienüzhuàn' de dongji yu mudi" (The expansion of women's space in Late Qing China: Xue Shaohui's motivation and aim in compiling the 'Biographies of Foreign Women') *Fanyi shi yanjiu* 1, no.1 (2011): 190.

²⁵ The articles written by Qian that deal with the journal in a more focused is her earliest essay about the female reformers, and her essay which is comparing "the mother" *Nüxue bao* of 1898 with "the daughter" journal of 1902. Some of Qian's foundational historiographical premises are challenged in the most recent article of Xia Xiaohong who reconstructs the developments around the journals in a different way. See Xia, 2012.

do so.²⁶ Qian's research is without any doubt of a great scholarly value because it shed light onto the intellectual life and endeavors of an outstanding woman who may be observed as a representative of female reformers. Nevertheless, a representative is not a group, and an analysis of a representative's intellectual world, no matter how insightful, may inadvertently obscure as much as it can reveal. For this reason, I focus on the analysis of *Nüxue bao* and aspire to represent a variety of voices and attitudes that its contributors shared with their known and unknown audience in this moment of great opportunities for women.

At the beginning of his book on a cultural history of modern science in China, Benjamin A. Elman states that there is another story that lies underneath the "cultural narrative of scientific, technological, and military failure" in Chinese history after 1895; beneath the story which is still reiterated by many Euro-Americans, Japanese, and Chinese alike; the one that "will never replace the triumphal recounting of the march of Western imperialism via science, technology, and empire-building."²⁷ Just like the "overshadowed" genealogy of modern science in China prior to 1895 treated in Elman's writings, the ideas and actions publicized in *Nüxue bao* are an illuminating part of this "quieter" story of China's modernization. My thesis will offer its analysis, focusing on the underanalyzed perspective of women who were active in the Wuxu reform period.

This project is an interdisciplinary study that combines the insights from several academic fields. My analysis and methodologies are informed primarily by the insights of

²⁶ See, for instance, Qian Nanxiu, "Xue Shaohui and her Poetic Chronicle of Late Qing Reforms," in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming through Qing*, ed. Grace S. Fong and Ellen Widmer (Leiden: Brill, 2010). As I will discuss in the fourth chapter, we still do not have enough evidence to speculate what were the functions assumed by women who were involved in the establishment and operation of the women's school, association and the journal, and how they organized in terms of power and authority.

²⁷ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Modern Science in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 14, 16.

scholars specialized in socio-cultural history of China, Chinese women's history and gender studies. I am also heavily relying on literature from International Relations and Chinese philosophy, most notably in terms of the literature on the conceptualizations of the world order from the perspective of late-Qing China, and with neo/Confucianism and its social implications.

My main methodology consists of the archival research which enabled me to collect the issues of *Nüxue bao* and a wide array of other primary and secondary anglophone and sinophone sources. Methods of analysis that inform my reading of the published texts, and in several instances, of the visual material reproduced in the journal, are content analysis and critical discourse analysis as proposed by Norman Fairclough.²⁸ I do not strictly follow all the research steps and questions suggested by the CDA, but I nevertheless acknowledge a deep influence that its understanding of a dialectic relationship between discourse and socio-cultural and political processes have played in defining my research focus and the way that I frame my findings.

My dissertation will consist of several parts. In the opening sections I introduce the methodology and sources I use in my project and map the socio-cultural and political context in which women-oriented reformist projects emerged and operated. Hence, in the second chapter I address historiographical literature that argues for “the shift of ‘China’ from a spatial location to China as a space from which general theories are developed,” to use Tani A. Barlow's wording;²⁹ previously indicated methods of analysis used in my work; and introduce the archival material on which my project is built. Acknowledging the influence of feminist methodology on my approach, I also reflect on my position as a researcher.

²⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003); *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).

²⁹ Tani E. Barlow, “The Direction of History and Women in China,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (2003).

The third chapter of my thesis grounds my later textual analysis by explicating particular features of the broader context of Chinese women's engagement in the Wuxu reform movement. First, I will discuss the meanings of the terms *nei* and *wai* when they connote China-designated civilizational position of geo-political spaces. I will also elaborate on the political and diplomatic institutionalization of Sino-centric world order and its destabilization after the relations of geo-political and civilization *nei* and *wai* were forcibly altered by the Western and Japanese military interventions in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Second, I will discuss socio-political situation in China in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War (1894 – 1895), and discuss the 1898 Reform movement through the three “social portraits,” to use Linda P. Shin's expression.³⁰ I will talk about Alicia Little, Mary Richard and Kang Youwei in an attempt to show different issues steaming from different positions, interests and investments of these representatives of partners and supporters of women-oriented enterprises.

My research emphasis, as in Maria Jaschok, Cecilia Milweritz and Ping-Chun Hsiung's work on women's organizing in post-1980s China, lays in “the content and process of activities” of women involved in the Wuxu reforms.³¹ Hence, the fourth chapter addresses the ways in which the organizing, theorizing and acting of women for social change in late-Qing China extended women's relations, their proper aspirations and practices from the “inner” domain of their households to the *wai* sphere. This chapter will highlight the ways in which *Nüxue bao*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue hui* played the role of institutions that at the same time emerged as the

³⁰ Linda P. Shin, “Wu T'ing-fang: A Member of a colonial Elite as Coastal Reformer,” in *Reform in Nineteenth-Century China*, ed. Paul A. Cohen and John E. Schrecker (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 265.

³¹ Maria Jaschok, Cecilia Milweritz and Ping-Chun Hsiung, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers*, ed. Ping-Chun Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, and Cecilia Milweritz, with Red Chan (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 6.

result of reformist ideas about desirable socio-political engagements of women, and served as sites where women themselves performed this repositioning.

I first use *Nüxue bao* and a cohort of primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the “biographical” data about the women’s journal, school and educational association. I will do so in order to analyze the ways in which women bonded, that is, in order to speculate on the way in which they formed the groups responsible for the operation of these reformist projects. Throughout the chapters which deal with the analysis of primary data from *Nüxue bao*, I will be especially interested in the processes of emergence and resolution of the tensions between different explicitly and/or implicitly conveyed visions of Chinese women’s future, as well as about the discrepancies between the proclaimed and the practiced.

It is possible to argue that women’s presence in the *wai* sphere – conceived in a gender-specific ritualized spatial way - at this particular historical moment was signified by women’s activities in the school and through their attendance at the meetings of the association. Equally important to women’s entrance to the spatial *wai* is their invited and recognized engagement in the discursive *wai* domain of specific literary genres and preoccupations previously sanctioned as the exclusive domain of men. Women’s participation as legitimate speaking, writing, and acting subjects in the discussions and particular events related to the empowerment of China and its women - that itself entered the *wai* domain through the pages of *Nüxue bao* - entailed a process of contested formatting of an emerging collective identity of “Chinese women” as recognized socio-political interlocutor, the issue I discuss in the fifth chapter of my dissertation.

As a critical product and a source of an on-going redefinition of the relationships between *nei-wai* domains, the contested and multivocal process of defining the socio-political category of “Chinese women” involved two strategies. First, and in a contrast to the male reformers, the

contributors to *Nüxue bao* legitimized their demands by relating themselves to strategically selected examples of admired women from Chinese history.

As I accentuate, the discourses created by particular texts of *Nüxue bao* supported a variant of non-linear time that defies modern, Western-generated understanding of linear, progressive temporal movements, and had, instead, perceived the past as a temporal point where the progress is located.³² This construction of non-linear historical time was joined with the notion of *xixue zhongyuan* that interprets Western learning and institutions as descendants of the neglected Chinese practices, serving at least two significant purposes. On the one hand, it enabled the inclusion of carefully selected examples of the exalted women from the Chinese past into the forming collectivity of late-Qing reform-oriented women by creating continuity with their respectable aspirations, abilities and deeds. On the other hand, as I elaborate in the sixth chapter of my thesis, it allowed the introduction of the figure of “foreign woman” and the practices and aspirations ascribed to her in a most benign way, as well as its utilization as a legitimizing means for (sometimes) contradicting arguments and demands.

The second process in defining the collectivity of late-Qing Chinese women recognized as legitimate actor in the *wai* domain of certain types of literacy and government I discuss in this chapter is the creation of the figure of a late-Qing woman who needs to be reformed. Furthermore, at the end of this chapter I analyze reported women’s activities and agendas that may also disclose who was and who was not meant to be understood as a member of this newly-forming women’s group.

As I’ve already indicated, the sixth chapter discusses the creation and treatments of a figure of “foreign woman” in the texts publicized in *Nüxue bao*. I observe these images, or, in

³² See Joan Judge’s book for different “types” of temporality she identifies in post-1900 texts. Judge, 2008.

Joan Judge's words, "emblem of global engagement in the late Qing imaginary,"³³ as directly related to the changing relationships between geopolitical and civilizational *nei* and *wai* of the Chinese Empire, and show how the texts of *Nixue bao* used it to support various arguments and to convey various demands.

I first briefly attend to the possible sources of information that the authors possessed about foreign women in general and about Western women in particular, and commence an analysis of selected travel writings of late-Qing Chinese men that introduced "the facts" about the Western women to the elite Chinese readers, indicating the available discourses contributors *Nixue bao* could deal with. In the succeeding discussion I focus on the ways in which reformist narratives used the discursive trope of foreign woman to support arguments about women's education, marriage, religiosity, as well as about women's dispositions and abilities related to military affairs, and decision- and policy-making.

The concluding part of the dissertation recapitulates the steps of my analysis and resulting findings, and points to questions that my project raises for subsequent research.

³³ In forming her argument Judge writes about "the new cultural category of the public Western woman," but I find this formulation appropriate to explain the textual engagements with the figure of more broadly defined "foreign woman" as well. Judge, 2008, 60.

Chapter 2: Methodology, sources, and my position as a researcher

Before I establish the socio-cultural and political context of late Qing China, in this chapter I address methodological issues important for my project. I will first map an on-going discussion of the ways in which modern Chinese history has been, should be, and could be approached and written. More specifically, I outline the arguments articulated by the scholars concerned with the influence the West is obtaining and exercising when China is observed through social theory and conceptual frameworks based on Western historical experience. After I explicate how this critical scholarship has influenced my historiographical approach to the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist projects in the Wuxu reform period, and after I depict my own academic background that, among other influences, delineates my position as a researcher, I discuss the printed material I use in my study. A final section will introduce a method that informs my analysis of printed media production, namely Critical Discourse Analysis and content analysis.

2.1. Overall methodological frames: China-centered approach and problematization of Western-centric conceptualizations in analyzing Chinese history

By soundly embedding my analysis of the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist projects into a socio-cultural and historical context of late-Qing, Wuxu reform period China, and by relying on a developing body of scholarly work that articulates its

resistance to “adding” China into epistemological, conceptual and theoretical Western-centric framework of academic inquiry, I wish to situate my research in a stream of critical historiography in the field of anglophone Chinese studies initiated in the 1980s by the views of Charlotte Furth, and, in a more elaborated form, of Paul Cohen.

In a short section of her article on the dynamics of intellectual change in China between 1890s and 1910s, Charlotte Furth writes a brief, but significant comment on the historiographical paradigm of China’s “response to the West”. Furth acknowledges that this notion alerts us to the role that imperialism played in directing and accelerating the change in modern/izing China, calling our attention to the “critical importance of Western imperialism as an external force motivating the desire to change, and to the enormous stimulus, both positive and negative, generated by this first serious Chinese exploration of dominant nineteenth-century Western traditions of science and socio-political thought.”³⁴ However, as Furth rightly warns, this historiographical approach to modern China suggests the intellectual passivity of the Chinese; progressive linearity of the Western ideas substituting for native ones; and the view that, once Westernization was underway, it was impossible for the Chinese “to maintain any authentic commitment to traditional values.”³⁵

A year after Furth’s text was published, Paul Cohen published his *Discovering History in China*, in which he identified and criticized three dominant paradigms in American historiography that deals with modern China, all of which “in one way or another, introduce

³⁴ Charlotte Furth, “Intellectual Change: From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895 – 1920,” in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 12, Republican China 1912 – 1949, Part 1*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 324.

³⁵ Idem. For an insightful discussion about Western passivization and feminization of China see Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

Western-centric distortions into our understanding of nineteenth and twentieth-century China.”³⁶

The first paradigm – the impact-response theory – emphasizes China’s response to the West and often leads to reducing the importance of all aspects of modern Chinese history which are unconnected with the response to a Western presence. Adding to Cohen’s views, Hershatter and Wang have emphasized that the perspective “Western impact, Chinese response” is problematic not because the imperial expansion didn’t have an impact on recent Chinese history or because China was inert, but because “the West” was not a coherent entity, “Chinese” responses were multiple, and the scale of the mutual constitution of the “West” and “China” throughout often violent and unequal contacts bears examination.³⁷

The second conceptual paradigm in the American historiography, as Cohen maintains, is the tradition-modernity model which has been deeply rooted in nineteenth-century ethnocentrism with its external definitions of what modernizing change is and what is to be identified and defined as important, meaningful change. As a result, Cohen writes, China becomes represented as a static traditional entity unable to “modernize” without the intervention of the “modern” West, with historiography of China becoming an exploration of the Chinese past aiming at finding the

³⁶ Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 3.

³⁷ Gail Hershatter and Wang Zheng, “Chinese History: Useful Category of Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008):1408. I have to add a note about another kind of appropriation of the “western impact – Chinese response” conceptualization of Sino-western encounters. Some scholars in China also adopt this perspective, but not for the purpose of reaffirming the historical importance of the West. Instead, the paradigm that explains various changes and developments in modern China as resulting from the western presence is used in the field of nationalism studies in China, explaining and eulogizing Chinese nationalism, sense of cultural superiority, and rejection of the “foreign cultural influences” as being a reaction to the threatening presence of the West. The reactions of Chinese intellectuals in the past and present on the paradigm of “Western impact-Chinese response” is certainly too complex to be analyzed here, but for a glance on this particular treatment of the response theory, see, for instance, Yang Sixin’s article “Jindai wenhua minzuzhuyi lunlüe”(A brief discussion of modern cultural nationalism), *Qinghai shifan daxue xuebao (Zhaxue shehui kexue ban)* 2 (gen. no. 93) (2002) and Ji Aimin’s “Jindai Zhongguo de wenhua minzuzhuyi ji qi xiandai quxiang” (Modern Chinese cultural nationalism and its trends), *Guangxi shehui kexue* 6 (gen. no. 96) (2003).

change “leading toward modernity, as defined by the Western historical experience.”³⁸ To bring in the insight of Gregory Blue and Timothy Brook, it is precisely the operation of “cultural and ideological trends that took Western capitalist relations to be the norm of the world” that has heavily influenced the understanding of China.³⁹

The third paradigm assumes for Chinese history a “natural” or “normal” course of development with which imperialism interfered.⁴⁰ Cohen criticizes scholarship’s focus on the influence that imperialism had on China, but doesn’t call for ignoring imperialism altogether. He rather invites the exploration of the ways in which Chinese themselves perceived and negotiated the influence of imperialism, as well as rigorous scholarly engagement with the ways in which a very real and critically important impact of imperialism got shaped by the internal dynamics of Chinese socio-cultural, economical and political life.⁴¹

What Cohen suggests is a China-centered approach which avoids imported criteria by beginning with Chinese problems set in a Chinese context, whether these problems are generated by the West or have no connection with the West at all. The approach has several key features, some of which are significant for the conceptualization of my own project. As Cohen writes:

In addition to starting with the Chinese problems set in the Chinese context, the China-centered approach attempts to cope with the size and complexity of the Chinese world by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable units, it sees Chinese society as being arranged hierarchically in a number of different levels, and it welcomes with enthusiasm theories, methodologies, and techniques developed in disciplines other than history

³⁸ Cohen, 1984, 77 and Paul Cohen, “Preface to the Second Paperback Edition,” *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010 [1996]): xvii.

³⁹ Gregory Blue and Timothy Brook, “Introduction,” in *China and Historical Capitalism: Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge*, ed. Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 5.

⁴⁰ Cohen, 1984, 4.

⁴¹ Cohen, 2010, xiii-xiv.

(mostly, but not exclusively, the social sciences) and strives to integrate these into historical analysis .⁴²

Writing in 2003, Cohen acknowledges that China-centered research is inadequate when approaching the histories of non-Han Chinese ethnicities as well as histories of Han Chinese diasporas.⁴³ By doing so, he implies that China-centered research is Han China-centered research, and does not elaborate further the implications of the approach's inadequacy nor the influence of multilayered hierarchies within Chinese society (otherwise acknowledged in Cohen's proposition for China-centered research) on the very process of history writing.

Even with this shortcoming of Cohen's engagement with the historiographical issues, his work is important for my discussion and thinking about how to write Chinese (women's) history. Cohen's remarks effectively diverted scholarly attention to the problematic tradition of historiography, and have opened the discussion about its approach to China through the concepts and concerns pertinent to Western geopolitical, ideological and economic interests.

The concern about an over-emphasis of Western influence in the historiography of China was taken up by R. Bin Wong, Theodore Hutters and Pauline Yu, who insist that indigenous categories, practices and socio-cultural configurations, even if reshaped and redeployed, are still identifiable in turn-of-the-twenty-century China, and invite further research that would acknowledge "the importance of conceptualizing political and cultural authority in ways that are not modeled exclusively on modern Western experience."⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., x.

⁴³ Ibid, 9-13.

⁴⁴Wong, Hutters, and Yu, 23. The authors contain that we may identify the persistent durability of practices and possibilities created during "pre-Western-involvement" history of China in late twentieth predicament of the Chinese state and its subjects. Ibid., 26.

R. Bin Wong in his article published in the same volume points to the crucial importance of dynamics of social change that relied on the creation of strategies and choices of social actors in late-imperial China that could not (and was not) shaped merely by Western understandings of social change. This dynamics, as Wong further explicates and warns, cannot be interpreted by categories transported from Western thought, and what might easily be labeled “modern” is simply so because it resembles patterns existing in Europe and North America.⁴⁵

Wong in his *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* refuses to accept a clear boundary in China’s history that duplicates Western presence in China. He demonstrates that what mattered politically before the intense contact of China and the West continued to be important in the 19th and 20th century, even if obscured by two influences: by “modern Western inclination to see only distorted images of Europe in countries with separate pasts; and by new Chinese vocabularies that assign newness to concerns that in fact stretch back centuries.”⁴⁶ In his protest against the research strategies that assume that European developments are the norm and the paradigm of history and socio-historical change, and against the expectations that Chinese historical experience will either reproduce this Euro-centric template or will reveal “a-typical” historical processes, Bin Wong proposes to decipher China’s own historical trajectories and historical formations without imposing Euro-centric expectations.⁴⁷ Hence, he asks for a historiographical approach that is at the same time aware of the problematic outcomes of using the current social theory in historical inquiries of China, and

⁴⁵ R. Bin Wong, “Confucian Agendas for Material and Ideological Control in Modern China,” in Hutters, Wong, and Yu, 321-322.

⁴⁶ Wong, 1997a, 283.

⁴⁷ Wong, 1997b, 323.

that contributes to the creation of a “broader and richer menu of empirically informed theoretical options than either extreme [i.e. Europocentrism and sinocentrism] makes available.”⁴⁸

What Bin Wong argues for is not a methatheoretical position, but rather a symmetric perspective that will use the same set of criteria when looking at China from the perspective of Europe, and at Europe from the perspective of Chinese historical experience. These new research symmetries would, in Wong’s view, significantly enrich our understanding of socio-historical change and developments which are, at present, the results of looking at China (and other geopolitical spaces) from the perspective of patterns and concepts based on Europe’s socio-historical experience.⁴⁹

Wang Hui joins the discussion on the issues that emerge when the categories of social analysis based on European philosophy are used for interpreting the socio-historical experiences of other cultural and ideological contexts. Wang contains that “the fundamental categories used to analyze social history are derived from modern social science, with politics, economics, society, culture, and their taxonomies having grown out of the knowledge and social divisions of modernity.”⁵⁰ This interpretative framework that place particular historical phenomena in these Western-generated categories, in Wang’s opinion, contributes to the loss of the “internal historical perspective” and of the opportunity “to rethink our own knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews from this perspective.”⁵¹ Wang is, nonetheless quick to explain that “the critique of

⁴⁸Wong, 2003, 183.

⁴⁹Wong, 1997a, 282.

⁵⁰Wang Hui, 2011a, 67.

⁵¹ Idem.

Eurocentrism is not an affirmation of Asiacentrism, but rather an attempt to eradicate a logic dominated by egocentrism, exclusivity, and expansionism.”⁵²

Robert Marks in his reactive essay to Cohen’s *Discovering History in China* writes that “China-centeredness is such a spongy concept,” and that “it could mean explaining Chinese history by adopting Confucian concepts.”⁵³ Wang Hui acknowledges that scholars do attempt to balance the created antagonisms between “the Western versus local” and “universal versus particular” by activating traditional Chinese categories to address and explain historical phenomena, but, since the traditional concepts and paradigms obtain their meanings in the light of modern thought and theories, sheer reliance on traditional ideas will not guarantee (more) effective interpretation.⁵⁴ In arguing that “although we need to maintain a careful and historicized attitude when applying theoretical concepts and social scientific paradigms [generated by the Western experience], application per se is unavoidable,” Wang suggests to breach Western/local and universal/particular binaries and to rethink the complex relationship between history and theory.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, as Prasenjit Duara writes in his review of Wang’s essay, this will “take considerable creative investigation and thought” since the terms that we are dealing with when talking about state, people, inequality, to name only a few terms that Duara reminds us about, are all “external imposition.”⁵⁶

⁵² Wang Hui, “The Politics of Imagining Asia,” trans. Matthew A. Hale, in Wang Hui, *The Politics of Imagining Asia*, ed. Theodore Hutters (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011b), 61.

⁵³ Robert Marks, “The State of the China Field: Or, the China Field and the State,” *Modern China* 11, no. 4 (1985): 472.

⁵⁴ Wang Hui, 2011a, 64.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ Prasenjit Duara, “Book Review: *The Politics of Imagining Asia*,” *Pacific Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2012): 379.

All these concerns have been crucial for my thinking about the issues I am analyzing in my dissertation in a number of ways. I will not take a wide-sway perspective of the world history as proposed by Bin Wong - though I certainly hope to do so in the future - because, as I see it, such a comparative project would demand more knowledge, that is, more time, resources and wider collaborative network than has been possible for the present study.⁵⁷ Instead, I adopt some of Cohen's guidelines for a China-centered approach: focus on a discrete level of Chinese society; interdisciplinarity; as well as a cautious engagement with the role that foreign presence in China and the interests and engagements of the cooperating foreigners in the Wuxu reform period played in the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist enterprises.

A discrete layer of society in my study is a group of educated reform-oriented women involved in the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist projects in the Wuxu reform period. As my study demonstrates, following this specific group of women that operated during a specific moment of the Wuxu reform period significantly advances our understanding of the interrelated process of China's initial positioning in the modern world order and socio-cultural and political changes in China; and it further highlights the central role that gender played in these processes.

Moreover, my analysis is conducted in agreement with Cohen's previously mentioned reflection that a China-centered approach should strive to integrate into historical analysis theories, methodologies, and techniques developed in disciplines other than history. Thus, while the theoretical and methodological insights that underpin my study do come primarily from the

⁵⁷ In my view, the world history perspective would enable me to offer meaningful contributions to the debates about a number of pertinent issues that my study points to, notably the issues of Chinese modernity and Chinese feminism. For a judicious criticism of the "avoidance" of established Chinese studies scholars to unpack the meanings of gendered modernity in the context of late-Qing China see Rebecca E. Karl, "The State of Chinese Women's History," *Gender & History* 23, no. 2 (2011). For the initiation of the discussion about "translated feminisms – whatever they mean" see Dorothy Ko and Wang Zheng, ed. *Translating Feminism* (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell, 2007).

fields of Chinese socio-political history and Chinese women's history; they also include the findings and suggestions made in International Relations literature and Chinese philosophy.

Furthermore, previously discussed criticism directed at Western cultural and political self-importance and overconfidence created by and demonstrated in the scholarly works that magnify the role of the West in the changes China underwent since the second half of the nineteenth century has been crucial for my research approach. However, I do not want to participate in “national” writing of Chinese (women's) history that minimize the role that foreigners in general, and Westerners in particular did play in the events I am observing.

As I emphasize throughout my study, the Wuxu reform period and women-oriented reformist projects brought together Chinese and foreign ideas, Chinese and foreign women and men, and this dynamic communication that “internationalized” gender-related ideas and actions I examine in my study should be analyzed both in terms of opportunities and the limits it entailed. That is why I reemphasize the point made by Nanxiu Qian that Chinese women whose actions and ideas I examine did communicate with foreign ideas and supporters, and have done so with joy, dignity, pride, and confidence in their own value and abilities.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, after contextualizing the events of 1897 and 1898, and after bringing together different representations of these events by some participants in the establishment and operation of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue bao* and *Nüxue tang*, I do not share Qian's enthusiasm about Chinese and Western women's “warm bond.”⁵⁹ I find more plausible, but from the perspective of theorizing transnational and transcultural cooperation more troublesome interpretation that both groups of women (and men) had their own interests in mind when approaching each other.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Qian, 2003.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 411.

The terms “private”/“domestic” and “public” may seem plausible translations of the notions of *nei* and *wai*, the terms crucial for my analysis of the Wuxu reform period. However, acknowledging the key points from previously discussed literature, I am keeping the original terms in my study. Lisa Li-hsiang Rosenlee explains that *nei-wai* binary in Chinese thinking significantly differs from Western conceptions of the spheres of private-public or family-state, because not only that in China state and family were not treated as discrete spheres, but canonical Chinese thinkers had referred to the family as an initial ground for developing and maintaining the political and civil order.⁶⁰ That is, as Dorothy Ko, Haboush and Piggott write, “the boundaries between kinship and kingship in all Confucianized societies were blurred: the inner and the outer interpenetrated, and social bodies merged with the body politic.”⁶¹

Hence, in order to attend to the complexity of meanings that *nei-wai* relationships subsumed, I elaborate on three destabilized *nei-wai* domains at the period of my examination: the destabilization of properly ritualized gendered spatiality; the redefinition of gendered forms of literacy and participation in the creation of certain types of discourses; and the destabilization of the civilizational ordering of the *tianxia* domain. In other words, I am examining the ways in which decomposition of the tribute system and the East Asian International Society in the second half of the nineteenth century got translated into and by women’s preoccupations and activities observable in the issues of *Nüxue bao*.

⁶⁰Rosenlee, 2002, 85.

⁶¹ Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott, “Introduction,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea and Japan*, ed. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 7.

2.2. Gathering and analyzing historical records

Between 2007 and 2009 I conducted archival research in the libraries of Beijing, Oxford, London, Taipei, Nanjing and Wuxi. In writing my dissertation, I drew on a wide array of secondary anglophone and sinophone literature, as well as on several different bodies of primary textual material created by the participants in the intellectual life of late-Qing China. My main primary sources are the texts published in *Nüxue bao*. Twelve issues of the journal were published, with its first eight issues collected in two libraries in China. Nanjing Library printed the replicas of the second and the third issues to celebrate its centurion in 2007, while the most complete collection of the journal that comprises the first eight issues is located in the Wuxi Library. The ninth issue of the journal has been a part of personal collection of Professor Lü Meiyi, a doyenne of Chinese women's history, who generously shared this invaluable source with me.

Nüxue bao is treated as a treasure of the Jiangsu province, with harsh access restrictions, which transformed my four-week research trip to Wuxi into an extensive hand-copying of the texts from the journal. After presenting an introductory letter (a document not easy to obtain in the first place since I was neither enrolled student at the University in China nor had I a work-unit) a reader is allowed to see only the photocopies of the journals which, in turn, s/he is not allowed to reproduce it in any other way than in hand-writing.

When compared with the replicas of the second and the third issues of the journal from the Nanjing Library, the available photocopies in the Wuxi Library are considerably smaller. Because of the tiny size of the “un-simplified” *fanti* characters on these photocopies, there were instances where, even with the help of the library staff, I could not be certain that I've recognized

the characters correctly. I've put an enormous effort to ensuring that my reproduction of sources did not alter the meanings produced by the texts and their authors, but I need to acknowledge the important role that Ms Li Guochun played in my project. Ms Li not only helped me with literary *wenyan* to contemporary *putonghua* translation of the texts of *Nüxue bao*, but her help in deciphering my own Chinese handwriting and the indistinct characters from the copy of the ninth issue of the journal was invaluable as well. I deeply thank her for enabling my study's operation across Serbian-English-*wenyan-putonghua* translations.

In addition to *Nüxue bao*, library research conducted in Beijing University Library, Beijing Capital Library and Academia Sinica allowed me to access two types of primary material written by Chinese men that I use in my thesis. I collected selected travel diaries of the members of the earliest Chinese diplomatic missions sent to Europe and the US and Kang Youwei's *Datong shu*. The translations of these texts are mine, but in case of *Datong shu* I also used Laurence G. Thompson's English translation of the book.

The third body of primary literature I use in my dissertation are the writings of Western men and women who took part in the establishment and operation of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue bao* and *Nüxue tang*. This material is gathered in the libraries in Oxford and London. Some volumes have been recently digitalized and available via the Internet Archive (archive.org) and Yale Divinity School's The AdHoc Image and Text Database on the History of Christianity (<http://divdl.library.yale.edu/dl/index.aspx?qc=AdHoc>).

My analysis of the obtained textual material is informed by the conception of discourse and critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough. I found particularly important Fairclough's point that dialectic relationship between discourse and social structure allows us to explore particular social changes through discursive practices present in a particular socio-historical

context.⁶² This insight encouraged me to approach *Nüxue bao* and ask one of my main research questions about the ways in which multiple destabilizations of *nei-wai* relationships influenced, were influenced by and were treated in the discourses publicized in the pages of all its currently available issues. Equally important for my work is CDA's insistence on the importance that cracks and ruptures within the discourses through which the meanings are produced play in the struggle over the creation of particular meanings. This point has directed my attention not only to the underlying assumptions of the argumentation (especially, as I demonstrate, in the case where the figure of the "foreign woman" was used to express or support the author's argument), but also to think about the inconsistencies between the (argumentative) texts and (the texts that report or announced the planned) practices.

Additionally, I use content analysis as a method to approach the writings of Kang Youwei and late-Qing male travelers whose ideas and actions facilitated the positioning of late-Qing women as speaking, writing and acting political collectivity. As Don Slater explains, content analysis as a form of textual analysis focuses on the texts themselves and it aims to provide convincing readings and various conclusions.⁶³ Acknowledging the descriptive nature of conclusions that content analysis enables,⁶⁴ I use this to present some examples of available discursive repertoire about Western women in the broader discursive context in which the contributors of *Nüxue bao* and their texts operated in.

⁶²Fairclough, 1992, 2003.

⁶³ Don Slater, "Analyzing cultural objects: content analysis and semiotics," in *Researching Society and Culture*, ed. Clive Seale (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), 234.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 234, 235.

2.3. My position as a researcher

This thesis is, perhaps more than the references show, heavily influenced by feminist scholarship, especially in terms of the research questions I am asking, and persistent questioning and juxtaposing of the primary and secondary sources I use in my analysis. Sharon Sievers indicates that “women’s history asks different questions, often demonstrates significantly different priorities, and given the choice, would devise new chronologies that could more adequately describe women’s experience.”⁶⁵ By observing the extraordinarily dynamic years of 1897 and 1898 as a specific entirety, I do not claim to intervene in a “general” periodization of Chinese history. Instead, I position a group of gentry-women, or rather the earliest printed media source that claimed the involvement of female contributors aiming at the engagement of the female audience, at the center of my enquiry. I try to understand what was important for them, how they articulated and substantiated their arguments and demands, and how they used this historically unprecedented opportunity to position themselves in the *wai* sphere.

Feminist scholarship has been arguing against a positivist notion of disinterested knowing subject and knowledge producer who is separated from her context and negotiation of interests and investments.⁶⁶ Feminist critique of what Donna Haraway calls “god-trick,” that is, of an illusionist representation of a knower as epistemologically decontextualized, disinterested and

⁶⁵ Sharon Sievers, “Women in China, Japan, and Korea,” in *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History*, ed. Barbara N. Ramusack and Sharon Sievers (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999): 158.

⁶⁶ Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Helen Longino, *Science as Social Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Dorothy Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1990).

“objective,” as well as the insistence on sensitivity to the various forms of situated knowledge and its production is what influenced the process of creation of this thesis.⁶⁷

I do not want to, and I do not believe that I can, “get inside China, to reconstruct Chinese history as far as possible as the Chinese themselves experienced it rather than in terms of what people in the West thought was important, natural, or normal,” as Cohen suggests.⁶⁸ Instead, I accept and acknowledge my position of the “outsider” to Chinese (women’s) history, with no claims to privileged epistemological position.

Mechthild Leutner in her article “Women’s, Gender and Mainstream Studies on Republican China: Problems in Theory and Research” proposes that, as a way of overcoming marginalization of women’s and gender studies in Western sinology, PhD students should be encouraged to “achieve a threefold qualification: a qualification in the basic discipline, that is, history; a qualification in the area of China research; and an additional qualification in gender studies.”⁶⁹ Leutner’s suggestions for improving the quality of research on women and gender in Chinese studies may be a good starting point to explain my own academic background that had decisive impact on my work on this dissertation.

I do not have a disciplinary degree in history. Instead, I received my BA in Chinese language and literature from Belgrade University, an “old-style” degree similar to the present-day Bologna-style MA degree, which accentuated not only a study of Chinese language and literature, but also of Chinese philosophy and socio-cultural and political history. After pursuing

⁶⁷ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁶⁸ Paul A. Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 1.

⁶⁹ Mechthild Leutner, “Woman’s, Gender and mainstream Studies on Republican China: Problems in Theory and Research,” in *Women in China: The Republican Period in Historical Perspective*, ed. Mechthild Leutner and Nicola Spakowski (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), 70.

one year of MPhil degree in Socio-cultural anthropology at Belgrade University, and realizing that one cannot beat the influence that the lack of resources have on academic production, I commenced my MA and PhD studies at the Gender Studies Department at the CEU. The interdisciplinary Gender Studies program allowed me to expand my scholarly interests, to hear different questions and criticisms, to see the advantages and feel disadvantages of interdisciplinary research, and, perhaps most importantly, to become a reflexive learner sensitive to my own and others' situational positionalities in material and symbolic webs of privileges, disadvantages and marginalization.

In addition to acquiring the US-style academic training that I have received at the CEU, one of the main influences that did change my academic (and other) ways is closely related to the unfailingly supportive scholars gathered in Women and Gender in Chinese studies network. I benefited from one year spent at Oxford University in a number of ways: I gained immediate access to Chinese Studies literature, I refocused my inquiry in a way that proved to be very gratifying, and my way to the research at Academia Sinica was opened.

Another major influence pertinent to my work on this thesis are two research visits to the Beijing University's International Women's Studies Center. These research visits allowed me not only to share the results of my research, exchange research experiences with the professors and students, and to obtain *Nüxue bao*, but have also made me aware of an issue too complex for my dissertation to overcome: the existence, and smooth, fairly independent functioning of (at least) two self-contained academic worlds: those of sinophone and anglophone scholarly literature, methodologies, and research preoccupations.

Hence, I must agree with Michael Hockx who recognizes that English-language sinology is a field of academic enquiry in itself.⁷⁰ Even though I use Chinese language secondary literature I cannot claim a full proficiency in sinophone academic production because my exposure to this material was limited to my never-long-enough research visits to China, Taiwan and the UK. Thus, I am acknowledging my own functioning within and from a space of a specific access to the anglophone sinology. I do so not because I wish to maintain this very problematic and politically indicative demarcation of the academic domains, but because I want to ensure that my dissertation is understood as a product of the opportunities and limitations of my personal institutional and educational background.

⁷⁰Michael Hockx, “What’s in a Date? May Fourth in Modern Chinese Literary History,” in Lomová, 291.

Chapter 3: Destabilization of the Sinocentric order: China, the world, and the Wuxu reform period

A purpose of this chapter is to establish the socio-cultural and political context in which *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* emerged and operated. In the first part of the chapter I will discuss the notions of *nei* [inner] and *wai* [outer] when *nei* and *wai* are understood as geo-political domains that signify proper placement in the Sino-centric world order based on civilizational attainments.

In alignment with Wang Hui's insistence on a contextualized approach to the discussion of the Chinese "state" and "international relations" I will elaborate on the political and diplomatic institutionalization of previously introduced *nei-wai* relationships in East Asia, that is, on the tribute system. I will close this section with a brief account of the dismantling of what Shogo Suzuki calls "East Asian International Society." Put differently, I will discuss destabilization of the China-acknowledged world order when the understandings of geo-political and civilization *nei* and *wai* were forcibly altered by the Western and Japanese military interventions.

I am drawing on Suzuki's work because his insights are important for understanding the social and political institutionalization of the Chinese-acknowledged world order based on geo-civilizational understanding of *nei* and *wai* and its destabilization and dismantling in the nineteenth century. However, I must caution that it is problematic to name this system international, because, as John Fairbank argues, in order to refer to the international system one must be able to identify the concept of a nation as a sovereign territorial and cultural unit, and this was not the case with China and East Asia. Furthermore, the Chinese world order, to use

Fairbank's wording for normative, idealized and generalized structure of tribute relations, included the countries with which China did not build formally egalitarian relations – as is [nominally] the case with nation-states – and these relations and the world hardly may be called “international.”⁷¹ Instead, as I will discuss, this was an East Asian system, geographically separated from the Southern and Western Asia, named *tianxia* – All under Heaven – with China at its central position, and *tian zi* – the Son of Heaven presiding over it.

In the final part of this chapter I will talk about the Wuxu reform period. I will first briefly introduce the political situation in the period between 1895 and 1898, and proceed to the discussion about three persons whom I position as show-cases of distinct groups of supporters of late-Qing women's educational and publishing enterprises. I will talk about Alicia Little, Mary Richard, and Kang Youwei.

Alicia Little was among most thoughtful foreigners who used the benefits that Westerners gained in the Unfair Treaties to change the lives of Chinese women and girls. Yet, in an attempt to assess her social activism in China, her marriage with Archibald Little, British industrialist and merchant who benefitted greatly from and pleaded for the further increase of the British influence on the Qing Court, brings us back to the Western imperialist project as an inevitable shadow of her encounters with China and the Chinese.

Mary Richard was a wife of famous British missionary Timothy Richard. She will be presented as an example of female missionaries, a group of Western women on whose selected educational practices and expertise Chinese women involved in the work of *Nüxue tang* had to rely on. Since Mrs. Richard provided pretty detailed first-hand account of the events surrounding

⁷¹ John King Fairbank, “A Preliminary Framework,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-2, 5.

the establishment and operation of *Nüxue hui* and *Nüxue tang*, I will analyze her vision of the events in the fourth chapter of my dissertation. For this chapter I've chosen one historical event – the presentation of the New Testament to the Empress Dowager Cixi for her sixtieth birthday – to disclose the way in which Mary Richard and other missionary women appropriated the voices of poor Christian Chinese women for their own strategic aims.

Kang Youwei is a regularly discussed figure of the 1898 Reform period. Guo Wu warns that a scholarly emphasis on the contribution of Kang Youwei to the 1898 reform movement does the injustice to the complexity of the ideas that were circulating at that moment.⁷² Still, I decided to discuss Kang's *Datong shu* and the racist treatment of women in his visions of the ideal future, as well as the reformist suggestions for a new treatment of Confucianism. I do so not only to show a part of the discursive repertoire which was available to women, but also to pinpoint a relation between the discourses created by reform-oriented men and their female kin. In this sense, Kang Youwei's positions are a kind of contextualization important for our understanding of the ideas and actions of Kang Tongwei, his eldest daughter who was very close to her father and actively involved in the reformist projects I analyze in the later chapters.⁷³

The following discussions of ideo-political context in which women's school, association and the journal operated that I will present in this and in the opening sections of the fourth chapter attempt to ground my analysis of women-oriented reformist enterprises. My treatment of a number of important issues is an effort to map the important referents that facilitated and

⁷² In pointing to the overemphasis that historiography puts to Kang and Liang, Wu is also criticizing the construction of the vision of unilinear and progressive evolution from the bureaucratic reformism of the 1870s to the republican revolution via the 1898 reform movement. This oversimplified and reductive historical analysis, in Wu's view, disguises the weakness of Kang and Liang's characters, as well as the limited scope of the reform itself. Guo Wu, *Zheng Guanying: Merchant Reformer of Late Qing China and his Influence on Economics, Politics, and Society* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010), 79.

⁷³ For Kang Tongwei's relation with her father see Wang Tiangen, "Qingmo Minchu baokan yu geming yulun de meijie jiegou" (Late Qing and early Republican press and the construction of revolutionary public opinion) (Hefei: Hefei Gongye Daxue chubanshe, 2010), 150-153.

limited women's discussions and actions in 1897 and 1899, and should not be understood as an exhaustive elaboration of these significant topics.

3.1. *Nei* and *wai*: Political geography of civilization

As Cheng Chung-ying articulated, there are three “strains of thinking” which create the fundamental direction of Chinese philosophy and structure the earliest core of Chinese intellectual and cultural life. These views, interconnected in a way that one gives birth to another without being cancelled out, continue to inspire Chinese philosophy and subsume:

an intrinsic reverence for heaven and ancestral spirits, which provide the source of meaning for the ethical, social and political life of the Chinese people; a dialectical bipolar onto-cosmological reflection which provides the backbone of a methodology implicitly guiding and conditioning the way of perception and thinking in Chinese philosophy; and a timely awakening to the potentiality and creativity of the human subject, which provides the basis for a cosmic naturalism and an intrinsic humanism, whether collective or individual, political or moral, in the formation of the early schools of Chinese philosophy.⁷⁴

These ideas inform and are supported by all three main teachings appreciated in China: by (what has been subsumed under) Daoism, Buddhism and neo/Confucianism.⁷⁵ Even though

⁷⁴ Cheng Chung-ying, “The Origins of Chinese Philosophy,” in *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*, ed. in Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 447-448.

⁷⁵ When discussing the place of Confucian tradition in Chinese culture, Mou adapts Robert Redfield's distinction between the “great tradition,” that is, a tradition that is cultivated by the elite intellectuals in a society, and the “little tradition,” which is created and maintained by the unlettered. Mou explain that Confucian tradition did utilize political and intellectual persuasion to shape and impose the ideology on the vernacular tradition, all of which eventually influenced the lives of common people. However, as Mou argues, the influence was never unidirectional

Daoism and Buddhism have also significantly influenced the way of life and thinking, Confucianism profoundly influenced the thoughts and actions of people in China for more than two thousand years, with, as Tu Wei-ming concludes, “Confucian values and norms [never ceasing] to be defining characteristics of the Chinese way of life.”⁷⁶

Ru or as it has been known in the West since the eighteenth century – Confucianism, is, as Li-hsiang Lisa Rosenlee’s conveys, not only “the fundamental Chinese cultural symbol, but more importantly it underpins the coherence as well as the civility of the identity of the Chinese people.”⁷⁷ The origins of the concept of *Ru* precede the life of Confucius, hence the term is neither derivative from, nor dependent on Confucius. The word Confucianism, Jesuit’s translation of *Ru*, makes, as Rosenlee conveys, “the concept of *Ru* simplified and secularized for much easier consumption in the West.”⁷⁸

The meaning of the *Ru* is enigmatic and not unified, as Rosenlee further observes, and there are three meanings of the term: *Ru* as a common name of all learned men; *Ru* as an

and, “while practicing what is imposed on it, with apparent obedience and faithfulness, the vernacular tradition manages to subvert the message channeled down from the Confucian tradition.” Sherry J. Mou, *Gentlemen’s Prescriptions for Women’s Lives: A Thousand Years of Biographies of Chinese Women* (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 6. This vision of dynamic historical coexistence of different and sometimes seemingly contradicting streams of thoughts and practices may be a good way to think about the richness, instability and endurance of ideas and practices throughout the Chinese history.

⁷⁶Tu Wei-ming, “Confucius and Confucianism,” in *Confucianism and the family*, ed. Walter H Slote and George A. De Vos (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 7-8. A main reason why I don’t discuss Daoism and Buddhism, or, for that matter, other pertinent thoughts/belief systems in China, is that the authors of the texts I am analyzing in my thesis, aspiring to fix their forming position of recognized participants in the debates on the *wai* affairs, opted to prove their cultural competency by engaging with neo/Confucian discourses and concerns. For the examples of fine scholarship in English that reveal the importance that Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Christianity and popular religious beliefs in Chinese women’s lives see Yü Chiün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001; Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun, *The History of Women’s Mosques in Chinese Islam* (Surrey: Curzon, 2000); Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun, *Women, Religion, and Space in China: Islamic Mosques & Daoist Temples, Catholic Convents & Christian Virgins* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

⁷⁷Rosenlee, 2006, 17. Tu also stresses that Chinese term *rujia*, inadequately rendered as Confucianism in English, literally means “the family of scholars,” and adds that neither the adjective “Confucian” nor the term “Confucianism” is a meaningful term in Chinese. Tu, 1998, 3-4, 8.

⁷⁸Rosenlee, 2006, 17.

expertise in burial and mourning rituals and in six arts; and *Ru* as a school of thought that admired the past sage-kings and canons, and urged for the efforts bringing to moral accomplishment and a virtuous existence.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, Confucianism, as a generic Western term, evokes much broader and vague definition. Hence, it is understood as “a worldview, a social ethic, a political ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life,”⁸⁰ as “a coherent view of the proper life of human beings with integrated aesthetic, ethical, spiritual, political and economic dimensions.”⁸¹ Or, in Berthrong and Berthrong’s more comprehensive understanding:

Confucianism has been and still is a vast, interconnected system of philosophies, ideas, rituals, practices, and habits of the heart...Although known in the West mostly as a philosophic movement, Confucianism is better understood as a compelling assemblage of interlocking forms of life for generations of men and women in East Asia that encompassed all the possible domains of human concern. Confucianism, at various times and places, was a primordial religious sensibility and praxis; a philosophic exploration of the cosmos; an ethical system; an educational program; a complex of family and community rituals; dedication to government service; aesthetic criticism; a philosophy of history; the debates of economic reformers; the intellectual background for poets and painters; and much more.⁸²

“What we call Confucianism,” as Mou opens her statement, originated in the system of rites, music, and ethics of the early Zhou dynasty (11th century-771 B.C.), and had become a dominant state ideology and cult when the Han dynasty (141 – 87 B.C.) officially announced

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24. For the discussion of the usage of *Ru* in historical texts see *ibid.*, 18 – 24.

⁸⁰ Tu, 1998, 3.

⁸¹ Henry Rosemont Jr, “Two Loci of Authority: Autonomous Individuals and Related Persons,” in *Confucian Cultures of Authority*, ed. Peter D Hershock and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 9-10.

⁸² John H. Berthrong and Evelyn Nagai Berthrong, *Confucianism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One World, 2000), 1.

Rujia to be the only state-sponsored doctrine.⁸³ Consequently, Confucian classics came to be the core educational material for all stages of learning; de facto imperial university whose male graduates were to become the members of the imperial bureaucracy was established; all government schools were required to make sacrifices to Confucius in A.D. 58; and in A.D. 175, after several decades of imperially sponsored work of the research team and scholarly conferences, the court finished the reconstruction of the classics. The classics were inscribed in large stone tablets which were erected in Xi'an, and this act of "eternalizing" the approved classics and the public display of their full content marks, in a symbolic way, the completion of the formation of the classical Confucian tradition.⁸⁴

Two major developments in *Ru* learning happened during the reign of the Tang dynasty (618 – 907): the Confucian text-based civil service examination started to be used as a large-scale recruitment device, and the imperial cult of Confucius, that is, of the "Supreme Sage and First Teacher" was established, with all state officials and the emperor being obliged to take part in the annual sacrifice at the state-constructed temple.⁸⁵ The proceeding Song dynasty (960-1279)

⁸³ In its long history, as Mou further conveys, Confucianism had two major setbacks and two major revivals. In the Later Han, Jin and Wei dynastic reigns, Buddhism and Daoism gained popularity and had seized the political and social power of Confucian thought; the Confucianist influence was regained during the Song period; and challenged again in the period between the ending years of the Qing dynasty and the end of Cultural Revolution. Mou, 2004, 5. We are witnessing a state-sponsored revival of Confucianism in a global soft-power competition, as well as differently motivated and argued suspicions, cautions and anxieties of its critics. On Confucius Institutes, see, for instance, Don Starr, "Chinese Language Education in Europe: the Confucius Institutes," *European Journal of Education* 44, no.1 (2009).

⁸⁴ Tu speculates that the compilation of the Five Classics came out of the ecumenical desire to define core curriculum for male Confucian education. The Five Classics comprise the texts which elaborate contemplative preoccupations and offer the authoritative elaborations in the fields of metaphysics, politics, poetics, history and society: *Yijing* (Book of Changes) is developing a metaphysical vision by presenting the ethical insights abstracted from divinatory art and numerological technique; *Shujing* (Book of Documents) is instructing into the politics by emphasizing the ethical foundation necessary for a humane government; *Shijing* (Book of History) is talking about the Confucian value of the common emotions, sentiments and feelings; *Li ji* (Book of Rites) elaborates on the society envisaged not as an adversary system based on contractual relations, but as a community founded and maintained on trust, mutual reliance and communication; while *Chunqiu* stresses the importance of history for communal self-identification. Tu, 1998, 19-21.

⁸⁵ Rosenlee, 2006, 26.

saw the reinvigoration of Confucian thought with the new philosophical stream which, as Song literati claimed, refreshed the classical Confucian thought and applied it to the contemporary situation⁸⁶ Zhu Xi is a most revered philosopher of this school of thought that came to be called neo-Confucianism in the West, and have first been denoted as *Dao xue* (The School of the Way) and later as *Li xue* (The School of the Heavenly/Universal Principle) in China.⁸⁷ Zhu was the one who put *Da xue* (The Great Learning), *Mengzi* (Mencious), *Lun yu* (the Analects) and *Zhong yong* (The Doctrine of the Mean) in a sequence, synthesized their commentaries, interpreted them as a coherent humanistic vision, and named them the Four Books. In addition, by making the Four Books the central scriptures for primary education and civil examinations from the fourteenth century onwards, Zhu Xi placed the Four Books above the Five Classics and had made them a most influential reference in the Chinese intellectual life in the following six hundred years.⁸⁸

Neo/Confucianism as a changing but an enduring socio-cultural and political corpus has been intimately related with Chinese self-perception, political system, and ordering of the world. Geography and the unique cultural continuity and consistency, never static but without genuine historical rapture for more than two thousand years, shaped the traditional Chinese view of the world - sinocentrism - in which the Chinese perceived themselves as the center of the universe,

⁸⁶ Tu, 1998, p. 25.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 27. Zhu Xi's work came under attack in the 1180s, and, after his *Dao xue* was labeled as "false learning" in 1196 he was prosecuted for ten crimes. With his official title and privileges removed in 1199, it was not until 1209 (nine years after he died) that Zhu Xi was honored with the posthumous title, and only in 1313 during the reign of the Yuan dynasty, Zhu Xi's commentaries on the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* became officially embraced interpretations of *Ru* learning and had become the basis of civil service examination. Rosenlee, 2006, 28.

taking pride in their own standards, values and habits, and claiming an unchallenged cultural superiority of the Chinese civilization.⁸⁹

Sinocentrism was a basic premise of culturalism, i.e. the belief, doctrine or set of ideas that defined China as a cultural community whose boundaries were determined by the knowledge and practice of principles expressed through neo/Confucian cultural tradition. Therefore, being defined in cultural terms, China and Chineseness as a pre-national category of group identity was not purely determined by ethnicity, and, in principle, non-Chinese could become Chinese through assimilation, which mainly involved mastering and accepting the Confucian moral and philosophical tradition and adopting the cultivated Confucian orders. As Myron L. Cohen explains, a firm consciousness of being a full participant in political, cultural, and social arrangements of the Chinese state and culture was what being Chinese was all about.⁹⁰

The elite was mastering (neo)Confucian moral and philosophical tradition, thus adopting the cultivated socio-political hierarchies; whereas, from the perspective of ordinary people, to be Chinese was to understand and perform *li* (etiquette, ritual), that is, to acknowledge the view of the state-Confucianism that there was a proper way of everyday behavior and a correct performance of key rituals associated with the life circle, namely, the rites of birth, marriage, death, and ancestorhood.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ On sinocentrism see, for instance, Kauko Laitinen’s *Chinese Nationalism in the late Qing Dynasty: Zhang Binglin as an Anti-Manchu Propagandist* (London: Curzon, 1990) and Joseph R. Levenson’s trilogy *Confucian China and its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). It is important to emphasize that sinocentrism was a discourse that sometimes did and sometimes did not reflect the political realities of China’s power and the lack of it.

⁹⁰ Myron L. Cohen, “Being Chinese: The Peripherization of Traditional Identity,” in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being a Chinese Today*, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 98, 100.

⁹¹ Ibid., 92; and James L. Watson, “Rites or Beliefs? The Construction of a Unified Culture in Late Imperial China,” in *China’s Quest for National Identity*, ed. Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 87. As Watson sums up, “following correct forms ensures that one is playing the game of culture by civilized rules and, in so doing, one becomes Chinese.” Ibid., 99.

Differing from modern nationalism that “centers loyalties on the state or an ethnicity or both, and implies nation-states or would-be nation-states that define themselves in contrast to other nation-states,”⁹² culturalism in imperial China was actually patriarchal loyalty to the ruling dynasty that governed China by the moral prescripts of Confucian culture - the priority of a loyal Chinese was to preserve the culture and the dynasty, whereas the cultural hierarchies maintained the dynasty which, in turn, was the guardian of the culture.⁹³

The world of culture and civilization that Chinese defined was *tianxia*, with the Chinese Emperor, the Son of Heaven, as its radiating center.⁹⁴ Mark Edward Lewis describes a five-zone or nine-zone vision of the world⁹⁵ in the following way:

⁹² Jonathan Unger, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), xii.

⁹³ Young-tsu Wong, *Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and Revolutionary China 1869-1936* (Hong Kong, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2. Suisheng Zhao adds that “as an ancient empire, China was not a nation inasmuch as the people’s loyalty was to their families at the microlevel and to the imperial throne at the macrolevel. Confucian culture worked as an ethical force that integrated loyalty to the family with loyalty to the throne.” Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 44.

⁹⁴ Reflecting the increase of China’s international influence, in the last decade the studies pre-modern China’s and East Asian foreign relations in general, and on *tianxia* in particular are multiplying. These debates, as well as the analysis of China-related academic production in the field of IR cannot be fully addressed in my study. In my approach to “tribute system” I combine the insights of a number of scholars, but, while doing so, I do not want to imply that tribute system was the only institution in East Asian relations. In my study I am not discussing the notion of *tianxia* in great detail. I hope that it will be sufficed to note here that *tianxia*, as Ren Xiao explains, has four basic meanings. The first meaning is geographical, and it may refer to “all under the Heaven” and to China “within the four seas.” The second meaning is political, and it may be understood as “the regime” and “the country”. The third meaning is “culturally advanced realm,” while the fourth, in Ren’s own words, “is moral *tianxia*, by and large referring to the common aspiration of the people.” Ren Xiao, “Traditional Chinese Theory and Practice of Foreign Relations: A Reassessment,” in *China and International Relations: The Chinese View and the Contribution of Wang Gungwu*, ed. Zheng Yongnian (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 111-112. For a criticism pointed to the literature on tribute system see, for instance, Zhang Feng, “Rethinking the ‘Tribute System’: Broadening the Conceptual Horizon of Historical East Asian Politics” in the same edited volume.

⁹⁵ The magic numbers five and nine were not selected for their correspondence with the “realistic accounts” but rather for their numerological value. Late Warring States political actors that Lewis discusses in his work articulated the accounts in which the world had been divided into the royal domain, the states of the feudal lords, and the territories of the barbarians. Mark Edward Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 271. It should be noted that the term “barbarian” is modern British translation of the Chinese character *yi*, and that a single term analogous to the English “barbarian” did not exist in Ancient China. Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7. For a stir that the word *yi*/barbarian created in the communication between British and Chinese in mid-nineteenth century China see Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of*

This model where the ruler was the central point of a hierarchized spatial structure ... divided the world into a series of zones of declining order and civility. These begin with the area under the ruler, that is, the capital region, then move through regions controlled by feudal lords, those occupied or pacified by the current dynasty, and finally those under barbarians.⁹⁶

The Chinese ordering the world is described in a slightly different (and dehistoricized) way by John Fairbank and David Mungello,⁹⁷ who claim that Chinese identified three geographical zone of their world: Sinitic zone, that included China's eastern and southern neighbors – Korea, Vietnam, the Liuqiu (Ryukyu) Islands and, occasionally, Japan; Inner Asian zone, inhabited by nomadic and semi-nomadic neighbors from the north and the west – Manchuria, Mongolia, the Uigur territory and Tibet; and the Outer zone inhabited by the “outer foreigners” (*waiyi*) from Southeast Asia, South Asia and Portugal, Holland and England.⁹⁸ The space was not ordered in a static way: internally, as Chinese proper grew, the former frontier came to be perceived as moving “inward” while the new frontier had overtaken the position of the “outer”.⁹⁹ In all cases of zoning, the ordering of the world clearly distinguished center and periphery, with “a progressive decline as one moves away from the center through a series of

Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁹⁶Ibid., 271.

⁹⁷ Eulogizing the sweeping academic gesture of discussing the Chinese world order, Benjamin I. Schwartz writes that, even though all general statements about long periods of time, vast territories, and millions of people, cannot but be crude and statistical accounts which describes predominant tendencies and do not preclude the existence of the contrary phenomena, when it comes to the notion of a Chinese perception of the world order, even after all the corrections have been made, it will “still prove generally valid in the sense in which all general propositions about entities such as Chinese society or Chinese culture are valid.” Benjamin I. Schwartz, “The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present,” in Fairbank, 1968, 277.

⁹⁸ Fairbank translates *waiyi* as “outer barbarians”. Fairbank, 1968, 2, 13; David Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 4.

⁹⁹ Fairbank, 1968, 8-9.

concentric squares,” ordering the geo-civilizational space of political power “in terms of the authority of *nei*, the inner over the *wai*, the outer.”¹⁰⁰

When appearing in *Shujing* for the first time as a binary term, *nei-wai* is principally a spatial marker of the border between the inner and the outer, where the inner represents the ordered, civil sphere of the imperial court and the outer stands for chaotic, military sphere of the opponents. These boundaries that will demarcate the difference between the Han civility placed within the *nei* sphere, and the uncivilized unruliness of the *wai* sphere were drawn not only in a physical sense (hence the Great Wall of China), but also through the proper ritualization which was primarily defined and practiced through the mastering of *li*, proper etiquette and practicing of *bie*, gender differentiation.¹⁰¹ However, the relation between *nei* and *wai*, both in a sense of political geography of civilization that I am discussing in this chapter, and in terms of gendered divisions of space, labor, and genre that will be elaborated in the following chapter, should be understood through the ways in which hierarchy and (non)duality were conceived in neo/Confucian thinking and ordering of the social world.

Cheng Chung-ying explains that an order of the higher and the lower, the senior and the junior which has been a constituent of the Chinese culture from its earliest periods, do not entail a mere domination of the higher and the senior over the lower and the junior.¹⁰² As Lisa Li-Hsiang Rosenlee formulates:

¹⁰⁰Lewis, 114, 287.

¹⁰¹Rosenlee, 2006, 71, 72.

¹⁰² Mou describes neo/Confucian social hierarchy of high/low and close/apart in the following way: ruler-subject relationship supersedes all others, with father-son, brother-brother, and husband-wife preceding the relationship between friends. Gender relations depend on generation and age. Mou, 2004, 194.

Unlike the Hobbesian model, the power structure of each particular relation is not that of domination and submission in which the superior has an absolute power over the inferior. In the Confucian world, although it is true that social relations are hierarchical in nature, they are also reciprocal and complementary through and through.¹⁰³

Therefore, as Cheng adds, what is important in this order is the protection that the higher should provide to the lower and the respect of the lower toward the higher, both of which ensure the maintenance of a “holistic totality” of an order that allocates the higher and the lower to their respective roles and positions. In this holistic totality of an order, “all individual parties are mutually dependent and complementary to one another.”¹⁰⁴

I now turn to a discussion of the ordering of China-acknowledged Imperial world. I look specifically at the ordering of the *nei* and *wai* domains in geo-civilizational terms, and to its resulting political embodiment and enactment in the East Asian “international” relations: the tribute system.

3.2. Tribute system and the beginning of its decomposition

Arguing against the binary of nation-states and empires, where the empire “constitutes all the features that are the opposite of modernity,” Wang Hui asks for different theoretizations of the state, that is, for clarifications of “different notions and types of political structure and various notions of state” otherwise precluded by the assumptions extracted from the European

¹⁰³ Li-hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, “A Feminist Appropriation of Confucianism,” in *Confucianism in Context: Classic Philosophy and Contemporary Issues, East Asia and Beyond*, ed. Chang Wonsuk and Leah Kalmanson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 184.

¹⁰⁴ Cheng, 448, 449.

experiences and developments.¹⁰⁵ “So as to prevent the notion of state being completely enveloped within the history of modern European capitalism and its associated nation-states,”¹⁰⁶ Wang affirms a tribute system as “a unique political culture” that intersect ritual, politics, culture and economies, and challenges the Western-centric thinking by posing a set of unasked questions: “Were Great Britain’s nineteenth century trade relations with India and North America defined by a treaty or tribute relationship? Were the United States (or the USSR’s) twentieth-century relationships with its “allied nations” or “strategic partners” scattered throughout Asia, Europe, And Africa – particularly in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods – relationships among sovereign states or characteristic of a tribute systems?”¹⁰⁷

In challenging the made-to-be-intrinsic link between nation-state and modernity in Asia Wang builds Hamashita Takeshi’s understanding of regional and world history.¹⁰⁸ Hamashita, as Wang affirmingly summarizes his ideas, reconstructs the “East Asian world order centered on China and woven together through the tribute system,” and advocates the notion of internal integration of Asia on a tribute network derived from three basic premises. These include the following: culturally, economically and politically Asia forms a totality; Chinese civilization has been at the core of this totality which is linked together by a network of trans-state tribute

¹⁰⁵ Wang criticizes the European discourse on Asia for making the “state” versus “empire” binary in a way that assumes an internal link between “East-Asian modernity” and nation-state. Wang Hui, 2011b, 44-45.

¹⁰⁶ Wang Hui, 2011a, 79.

¹⁰⁷ Wang Hui, 2011b, 56. What Wang does not comment, though, is the fact that there was no Chinese term to mark “tribute system” at the time when it functioned, and that contemporary term that Wang uses – *chaogong tixi* – is a translation of Western-generated name for the political and social relations exercised in East Asian world before the nineteenth century. For the Chinese “translating-back” this term invented by the West see Zhang Feng, 96. For a groundbreaking study about the roles that neologisms and the process of translation (have) played in modern/izing China see Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Modernity, China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ Wang refers to Chinese translation of Hamashita Takeshi’s book *Jindai Zhongguo de guoji qiji: Chaogong maoyi tixi yu jindai Yazhou jinji guan* translated by Zhu Yingui and Ou Yangfei, and published by Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe in 1999.

relations; this tribute networked is joined with a set of “core-periphery” ties and its assumed practices of tribute and bestowal (*ce feng*).¹⁰⁹

The Tribute System was the institutional expression of a China-regulated world order.¹¹⁰ Shogo Suzuki explains that even though its origins are contested, there is a level of scholarly agreement that it emerged during the Ming and the Qing dynasties.¹¹¹ China imagined this system, set the rules of conduct with foreign polities, and, “as a regional hegemon...assumed normative supremacy within the order.”¹¹² Explaining why the rulers of other peoples tolerated the Sinocentric world order projected by the Chinese Empire, Bin Wong lists three reasons. Wong identifies the military weakness of these states to confront China; material and symbolic benefits of the tribute system; and the little effect that Chinese empire’s pretensions to world order had on these peoples and their rulers.¹¹³ As Ren Xiao explains, “China mostly sought a more symbolic ‘reigning’ rather than a genuine ‘ruling’,” and adds that, “of much significance, if we are to grasp the essence of the relationship, are the Chinese expressions of ‘subordinating but not governing’ (*chen er bu zhi*) and ‘neither subordinating nor governing’ (*bu chen bu zhi*), much in the sense of famous *ji mi* or ‘Loose Rein’ policy.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Wang Hui, 2011b, 45.

¹¹⁰ There are many names that scholars tend to use for this word: Joshua Fogel calls it “sinosphere” while John K. Fairbank uses the term “Chinese world order.” Shogo Suzuki’s recent publication that shed additional light on the diplomatic relations among the polities of East Asia before and at the initial stage of their socialization in the European International Society names it East Asian International Society. Suzuki criticizes Fairbank’s naming that, in his opinion, overemphasizes China’s influence, because the situation was much more complex than one-sided and permanent China’s dominance over the other participants in the political, cultural, economical exchanges during the imperial period. Suzuki, 35. See also Joshua Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹¹¹ Suzuki, 35.

¹¹² Suzuki, 36.

¹¹³ Wong, 1997, 281.

¹¹⁴ Ren, 105.

The politics of the East Asian international system did not always have clearly demarcated territorial boundaries, nor did they need to possess sovereign autonomy in order to become legitimate members of the order. Rather, the statuses of non-Chinese states often relied on Chinese judgment about the level of their assimilation into Chinese culture and (to a lesser extent) their geographical proximity to China: “The more ‘sinified’ China’s neighbors were, the more likely they were to be seen to be responsive to the virtue of the Chinese emperor, and enjoy greater prestige.”¹¹⁵

The East Asian International Society, as Suzuki conceptualizes the world of foreign affairs in East Asia prior to the nineteenth century, was constitutionally structured on the extension of universalist Confucian philosophy, aiming at stability and order as the highest values. Two important teachings played a pertinent role in holding the system together: “respect for and maintenance of the (hierarchical) social order, and ethical rule.”¹¹⁶ In order to gain special privileges, envoys of newly incorporated and neighboring areas presented tribute to the Qing court. By the means of highly elaborated protocol of audience and the exchange of gifts, the envoys to the Qing court symbolically confirmed China’s supremacy. Ritually, as Suzuki concludes, “these regions were an extension of China proper beyond the immediately effective control of the emperor,” and China’s secure “buffer zones.”¹¹⁷ In return for their recognition of China’s power, the rulers of the tributary states or their envoys were granted trade privileges

¹¹⁵ Suzuki, 37-38.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 38. Ren Xiao reminds us about a particular security conception of “defense through the barbarians” (*si yi*). Ren, 107.

(which were not a crucial reward),¹¹⁸ and received highly prestigious gifts from the emperor: investiture from the Chinese emperor.¹¹⁹

Japan started to contest Sinocentric (but not East Asian) world order already in the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868).¹²⁰ The rule of the non-Han Qing dynasty helped Japanese intellectuals to shift the logic of the Tribute System, to posit Japan at the civilizational center, and to organize diplomatic relations in the same way that China did from her position of self-perceived superiority.¹²¹ China did not recognize Japan's centrality, but there was no conflict between these two polities because there were no official bilateral relations.¹²² As Suzuki writes:

On the eve of the expansion of European International Society, the diplomatic interaction between China, Japan and its neighbors had settled into a pattern of "competing Tribute Systems". Both states' behavior was thoroughly informed by the fundamental norms of the East Asian International Society: both states identified themselves as "Middle Kingdoms" or the "Centers of Civilization", and their interests were framed in terms of

¹¹⁸ As Mark Mancall argues, it was possible that the trade was conducted immediately after the tribute was presented; that the trade was conducted in Beijing without the tribute presented (Russians did it in this way); or, to do a trade at the frontier without (regular) presented tribute to the Emperor (like the British in Canton). Mark Mancall, "The Ch'ing Tribute System: An Interpretive Essay," in Fairbank, 1968, 75-76. Qing court's treatment of Russia is, actually, an example of another type of foreign relations practiced by the Qing court. As Henrietta Harrison summarizes, the Manchus dealt with the powers of north and Central Asia in a pragmatic way: according to their customs and needs. "Embassies were sent between the two states for major negotiations and there was a permanent Russian mission in Beijing." Henrietta Harrison, *China* (London: Arnold, 2001), 56.

¹¹⁹ Suzuki, 38, 39. Describing early nineteenth-century tributary practice, Fairbank claims that the foreign rulers received a patent of appointment and official seal from to use in correspondence with the Emperor; they received a noble rank in the Qing hierarchy; calculated time according to the Qing calendar and dated their communication by the Da Qing dynastic reign-title; presented tribute memorials on appropriate occasions, as well as a symbolic tribute of local products. The foreign rulers or their envoys were escorted to court by the imperial post, where they would perform the appropriate ceremonies, notably kowtow and prostrations. Fairbank, 1968, 10-11.

¹²⁰ Japan paid tribute to China only from the beginning of the fifteenth until the middle of the sixteenth century, and it did it only 19 times. For an informative address of Sino-Chinese relations from the third century B.C. until the nineteenth century see Caroline Rose, *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations: A Case Study in Political Decision Making* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 5-9.

¹²¹ Suzuki, 49.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 50.

seeking to enhance and maintain this social standing within the order by attracting ‘foreigners’ to submit tribute.¹²³

The First Opium War (1839 – 1842) was the first of an unbroken series of setbacks for the Great Qing. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century China lost all the wars fought with foreign powers. The resulting pattern of treaties imposed upon China is usually referred as to the Unequal Treaty System, which implies the establishment of foreign settlements, foreigners’ extraterritoriality, the most favored nation clause and specific tariff arrangements.¹²⁴

“The replacement of the tributary system by the treaty system in 1840s already marked the beginning of the end of the traditional Sinocentric world order,” claims Yü Ying-shih.¹²⁵ Fairbank, nonetheless, offers a different reading of the situation in the mid-nineteenth century, and assumes that the treaty system in its early stages was the outgrowth of the tribute system.¹²⁶

¹²³ Suzuki, 54-55. Suzuki states that when he addresses European International Society he also includes the United States. By drawing on Adam Watson’s writing, Suzuki acknowledges that the United States “did not fully participate in European politics in the late nineteenth century in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823,” but have played an “active part in the expansion of ‘European’ or ‘Western’ dominance, and was also regarded ‘as a quasi-equal partner in formulating agreed policies towards Eastern Asia’ by the European powers.” Ibid. 184 n4.

¹²⁴ Beginning with five treaty ports obtained at the closure of the Opium War, the number of China’s ocean and riverside ports opened to foreign commerce and residence came in time to number approximately one hundred. The conditions ranged from formal over-taking of territory (British Hong Kong); concessions governed by foreign consuls (French Tianjin Concession); semiautonomous settlements (the Shanghai International Settlement); to areas reserved for foreign residents but subject to Chinese administration. Extraterritoriality meant that the foreigners in China remained under the jurisdiction of foreign laws, which were applicable to foreigners’ employees and protégés as well. The most favored nation clause meant that China could negotiate only wide-ranging settlements with all the treaty powers, and thus functioned as a means for the extraction and expansion of privileges. Tariff arrangements meant that China was unable to control its trade or protect industries. The Shimonoseki Treaty (1895) signed by the Japanese added the right for foreigners to develop manufactures in treaty ports areas, thereby making it possible to use cheap Chinese labor and avoid even the law tariffs that were imposed on outside products. Gilbert Rozman, ed. *The Modernization of China* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 34. Imperialistic prerogatives not secured by treaties, such as the opening of the foreign banks, the issue of foreign currencies, direct purchase of the agricultural products and the development of the farms were also in operation. Luo Rongqu, “A New Approach to China’s Century of Great Transformation, 1840s – 1940s,” in *China’s Quest for Modernization: A Historical Perspective*, ed. Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Wang Xi (Berkeley : Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1997), 139.

¹²⁵ Yü Ying-shih, “The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century,” *Daedalus* 122, no. 2 (1993):135.

¹²⁶ John K. Fairbank, “The Early Treaty System in the Chinese World Order,” in Fairbank, 1968, 257.

Hence, he claims that the treaty system in this period “was not merely a Western device for bringing China into the Western world; it may equally well be viewed as a Ch’ing device for accommodating the West and giving it a place within the Chinese world.”¹²⁷

Nevertheless, as R. Keith Schoppa explains, in the period between 1874 and 1895 China lost the control over “its three most important tributary states,” when France began to control Vietnam and Japan took over the control over the Ryukyu Islands (Liuqiu in Chinese) and Korea.”¹²⁸ As Suzuki concludes:

The 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki not only symbolized China’s utter military defeat, but also put an end to China’s last remaining tributary relations with Korea, signaling the final collapse of the East Asian international order. After this, China had few options but to engage more fully with European International Society.¹²⁹

With and through the communication with Western powers and Japan in the sphere of politics, diplomacy and military power that China could not contain or control, a new world-view started to emerge. What Charlotte Furth claims is that the intellectuals of the reform period primarily had to cope with continuities and discontinuities in “significantly altered structures of meaning” brought about by the new evolutionary cosmology. Furth defines this newly-formed evolutionary cosmology in late-Qing China as having internal and external sources. The external sources were what Chinese understood as Western science and history. As Furth describes, they

¹²⁷ Fairbank elaborates his claim in the following way: “The residential and trading areas to which Westerners, like other foreigners in earlier times, had been restricted at Macao and outside the walls of Canton were simply extended to four more ports. The consuls merely represented the ancient principle that a community of foreign merchants in China should be superintended by a head man who would take responsibility for his countrymen. The Ch’ing tariff, taxing imports as well as exports, had never aimed to be protective. The most-favored-nation clause originated in the imperial desire to show impartiality to all non-Chinese, the better to play off one barbarian against another while treating them all with the same condescending benevolence.” Ibid., 258, 260.

¹²⁸ R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern History* (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 93.

¹²⁹ Suzuki, 10.

were the “discovery of a world history encompassing a plurality of high civilizations in dynamic interaction with one another as well as with a ‘barbarian’ perimeter [and] the exploration of the implications of Western scientific law - particularly the laws of evolution based upon Darwinian biology, but also those of Newtonian physics.”¹³⁰ The internal sources of new cosmology of the nineteenth century continued to be Confucian-Daoist understandings of the interdependent causation that links socio-political phenomena and cosmic patterns. As a result of new cosmology, a new world-view emerged which destabilize China’s self-image of the only source of civilization, and replaced it with an understanding of China as one of many cultures in the world.¹³¹

European International Society had different modes of interaction which informed European states’ relations with other European states and with non-European polities. While inter-European relations aimed to “the tolerance and coexistence” of the Society’s members, non-European polities were scaled according to the “standards of civilization”, particularly International Law and European-style diplomatic institutions.¹³² Suzuki follows Edward Keene and reminds us of the dualistic nature of International Society. He writes that:

...in the context of the late nineteenth century when China and Japan encountered and were incorporated into the Society, there existed a firm belief in the superiority of European ‘civilization’ and a concomitant belief that the European states had a moral duty to spread the blessings of European civilization, by force and outright colonization if necessary. This gave the mode of interaction which applied to ‘barbarous’ non-European polities a decidedly coercive, expansionist character.¹³³

¹³⁰ Furth, 325.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Suzuki, 1. The thesis on the “standard of civilization” in international society was elaborated by Gerrit W. Gong in his *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

¹³³ Suzuki, 1-2. See also Edward Keene, *Beyond Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Thus, the direct intervention into China's economic and political life by foreign powers reduced China to the status of semi-colony. As Jürgen Osterhammel theorizes, the quasi-colonial control exercised by the Imperialists converted China into a part of informal empire. In this form of domination, as Osterhammel clarifies, political system, foreign policy and the regulation of routine domestic affairs remain in the hands of the weaker state. There is no colonial administration, but the weaker state is sovereign only to a limited extent – there are privileges for the quasi-colonizers guaranteed by “unequal treaties” and obtained through “selectively applied pressure (‘gunboat diplomacy’).”¹³⁴ Informal empires are rarely motivated by strategy or prestige, as Osterhammel explains, but are mostly instruments for securing significant economic interests which were often not politically supported. In this sense, informal empire, unlike colonialism (formal empire) presupposes apparent economic superiority of the quasi-colonizer and the potential to make a way into an overseas economy. Furthermore, differing from formal empire where colonial rule over a territory is indivisible and exclusive, there can be several quasi-colonizers mutually harmonized on the “Open Door” principle, that is, equal opportunity for all, or on the demarcation of national “spheres of influence.”¹³⁵ Yet, Chinese sovereignty was never displaced during its semi-colonial period, and, neither foreigners nor treaty port Chinese ever had free hands to operate in the various spheres of Chinese socio-political and economic life as did the Westerners and their partners in the colonial environment.¹³⁶ With this important point in mind, I now turn to a discussion of the Wuxu Reform period.

¹³⁴ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: a theoretical overview*, trans. Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton: M. Wiener; Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997), 20.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 20, 21.

¹³⁶ Rhoads Murphey, *The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization: What Went Wrong?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies, 1970), 67.

As the essays published in a volume edited by Rebecca Karl and Peter Zarrow demonstrate, during the Reform movement (which the authors define as an extended moment from the One Hundred Days Reform to the Revolution of 1911) “a series of historical questions that have since powerfully informed China’s modernity were first posed in a systematic and systemic fashion.”¹³⁷ One of these issues is the close relation between women’s bodies, minds, and behaviors, China’s national strength, and China’s position in the modern international community. The following part of this chapter will first discuss the main political events that influenced the emergence of the unprecedented possibility for Chinese women to enter the spatial and discursive *wai* sphere of late-Qing China as recognized collectivity of legitimate socio-political actors. I will also represent some of the actions and ideas of those social actors who were present in the socio-political life of late-Qing China when Chinese women themselves took the stage of organizing and theorizing the directions of social change that would empower China and China’s women. Thus, after discussing the political events that led to the One Hundred Days reforms, I will talk about Alicia Little, Mary Richard and Kang Youwei.

3.3. Three faces of reforms: Alicia Little, Mary Richard and Kang Youwei

The immediate impact of the defeat in the Opium War on Chinese intellectuals was peripheral, and it was only in the 1860s when a generation of new scholars-administrators, known as Self-strengtheners, undertook a reform program to empower the Qing dynasty.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow, “Introduction,” in Karl and Zarrow, 2002, 1, 2.

¹³⁸ Luke S.K. Kwong protests against naming the initiatives before 1895 self-strengthening movement and claims that these actions were not actually a movement or the commitment of the Qing court, but rather individual effort of a number of officials who, in the author’s opinion, “operated more or less independently of one another” with their attempts lacking the general plan and coordination that a movement should have in order to be called movement.

These engaged literati admitted the technological and military superiority of the West, but the sense of Chinese cultural superiority remained intact.¹³⁹ As I've already indicated, it was the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 that "shamed and disheartened" the Chinese educated elite, prompting them to argue that wider changes were needed if China was to be rescued and strengthened.¹⁴⁰

After they learned about the proposed terms of the Shimonoseki treaty, 1200 young scholars from the sixteen provinces who gathered in Beijing for the spring *jinshi* examinations in 1895 were coordinated by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao to compile and present a "Ten Thousand Words Memorial" to the throne.¹⁴¹ These men, as Philip A. Kuhn notes, were not in any sense "students", but were rather established members of the office-eligible elite who had qualified to become legitimate participants in governmental affairs.¹⁴² They urged for the modernization of the army, closer ties with Chinese in Southeast Asia who could contribute technical skills, and for the improved quality of agriculture through training schools aimed at motivating industrial innovation. They also argued for increased taxes, for the development of a

Kwong suggests that self-strengthening be observed as "a leading idea of those concerned with China's fate in a period of recurrent crises." Luke S.K. Kwong, *A Mosaic of the Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and Ideas of 1898* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 152.

¹³⁹ These literati adopted the terminology from the neo/Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi - *ti/yong* dichotomy – and promoted Chinese learning for *ti* (substance, essence) and western learning for *yong* (function, utility). *Ti* was the goal, *yong* the method which served *ti*. See Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its modern fate: a trilogy, Volume one: The problem of Intellectual Continuity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 60; and Wang Xi, "Approaches to the Study of Modern Chinese History: External versus Internal Causations," in Wakeman and Wang, 1997, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China, Second edition* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 225.

¹⁴¹ The Shimonoseki treaty involved a heavy indemnity that included cession of Taiwan and Liaodong, but the terms of the treaty would have been much worse if Li Hongzhang, the negotiator for the Chinese side, had not had been shot by a Japanese assassin during the negotiations. Japanese were ashamed because of Li's injury (the gunman shot him in the face and had wounded him just below his left eye) which somewhat improved the Chinese negotiating position. *Ibid.*, 223, 226.

¹⁴² Philip A. Kuhn, "Ideas Behind China's Modern State," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 2 (1995).

banking and modern postal system, for a railway network, and for a resettlement programs that would stop increased emigration and instead enable emigrants to return to China.¹⁴³ The young Guangxu Emperor was “moved” with the memorial of the young scholars, but the petition did reach the Court only after the Treaty was signed.¹⁴⁴

The period between 1895 and 1898 was marked by accelerated problems of China to contain military and economic power of the foreign forces. After the Sino-Japanese war, Russia convinced Germany and France to support her in forcing Japan to withdraw its forces from the Liaodong Peninsula where Russia coveted the port of Dalian. This so-called Triple Intervention removed Japan from the Chinese mainland but as compensation in 1898, Germany obtained a naval base, mining and railroad rights on the Shandong Peninsula. Then Russia, after heavily bribing Chinese negotiators, signed a military agreement with the Emperor and obtained twenty five year lease of the southern part of the Liaodong Peninsula, including the port of Dalian and the naval base the Port Arthur. Russia also gained permission to build a railway, after which Britain forced a territorial lease of Weihaiwei and Kowloon as well as a sphere of influence in the Yangzi valley. Additionally, France leased Guangzhou Bay and gained a sphere of influence in three provinces in the South. Only the demands made by Italy were successfully rejected, forcing Italy to settle for part of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁵

Alarmed by these shattering developments, the Emperor Guangxu issued a series of edicts between June and September 1898, launching what came to be known as the Hundred

¹⁴³ Spence, 227.

¹⁴⁴ Yü, 138.

¹⁴⁵ Chang Hao, “Intellectual Change and the Reform Movement, 1890 – 8,” in Fairbank and Liu, 274. Most leases in China were made for 99 years, but they were perceived as leading to the annexation of the Chinese territory. June Grasso, Jay Corrin and Michael Kort, *Modernization and Revolution in China: From the Opium Wars to World Power, Third edition* (Armonk and London: M.E.Sharpe, 2004), 57-58.

Days' Reforms. The edicts that the Emperor promulgated addressed issues raised in 1895 by the *jinshi* appealers, about which Jonathan Spence argues, “there had never before been such a coherent body of reform ideas presented on imperial initiative and backed by imperial prestige.”¹⁴⁶

Even though the implementation of the promulgated policies was not ensured because of lack of mechanisms for control and enforcement,¹⁴⁷ the Emperor’s emphasis on the need and importance of “opening the ‘avenue of opinion’ to all” was of great significance for the contributors to *Nüxue bao*.¹⁴⁸ Luke C.K. Kwong, not taking into consideration the possibilities that this initiative might have had for politically unrepresented social groups, such as women, dismisses this Emperor’s idea, and writes that “what was badly needed then was not any increase in reform proposals but rather better organization of available ideas, by no means in short supply.”¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, as my later discussion shows, the Emperor’s call for the involvement of a wider population in the reforms, even if he did not specify women, did not explicitly discourage them to do so. Thus, in fact, women did respond.

¹⁴⁶ Guangxu’s edicts interfered in four areas of Qing life and government: education, economics, military, and bureaucracy. Educational reforms included the order to abolish “eight-legged essay,” not to grade the candidates according to their fine calligraphy and knowledge of poetry but, instead, to use the solutions for practical governmental problems as a major grading criteria. He also ordered that the Peking College be upgraded and to add a medical school to it, to converse the old academies and rural shrines to modern schools which were to offer a synergy of Western and Chinese learning, and the establishing of vocational institutes that would specialize in mining, industry and railways. The economic reforms entailed the emperor’s orders to the local officials to coordinate commercial, industrial and agricultural reforms and to increase the production of silk and tea that would be used for export. The military reforms envisaged the assembly of thirty-four modern warships, standardization of the army drill according to the Western practices, the improving of the training and discipline of local militias. The bureaucracy was to be strengthened by reorganization and aimed at simplifying its procedures, with abolishing sinecure appointments. Spence, 229. For a list of edicts see Immanuel C.Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China, Third edition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 375-376.

¹⁴⁷ Kwong, 176.

¹⁴⁸ Idem. Hsü words this initiative as “encouragement of suggestions from private citizens.” Hsü, 375.

¹⁴⁹ Kwong, 178.

However, the Empress Dowager Cixi suddenly returned to the Central Palace from her summer retreat on September 19th after being informed that reformers were seeking the support from the generals for a coup. Two days later, the Reform period was officially closed when the Empress Dowager issued an edict in the name of the Emperor delegating to her his power in governmental matters.¹⁵⁰ An additional edict was issued the same day, which accused Kang Youwei for “ganging” and “influencing Court decisions with devious views,”¹⁵¹ and Emperor Guangxu was put in the Palace detention where he remained until his death in 1908.

In order to at least partly explain the motivation of the participants in women-oriented reformist projects to appeal for the support of the Empress Dowager, an important issue I will discuss in the fifth chapter of my dissertation, it is important to note that the end of the reforms had little to do with her antagonism to the reforms. Similarly to Sue Fawn Chung, who already in 1976 identified the “radical reformers and their supporters” of the turn of the twentieth century as the creators of the image of the Empress Dowager Cixi as “a conservative, ultraconservative, or reactionary,” Kwong discredits the “myth”, as he puts it, about Cixi being against the reforms of any kind. As he characterized the Empress Dowager, she was not phobic or superstitious about the imported technical devices, and had been familiar with various new projects since the Tongzhi Restoration.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ This edict was publicized in the eight issue of *Nüxue bao* as well. See “Gonglu shangyu” (Respectfully copied imperial edict), *Nüxue bao*, no. 8, September 1898. From now on I will use “NXB” as the abbreviation for *Nüxue bao*.

¹⁵¹ Kwong, 178. Kang Youwei left Beijing just before the coup, and after being smuggled on the British ship to Hong Kong, he exiled first to Japan and then to Canada. His famous and influential disciple Liang Qichao also fled China and escaped to Japan. Kang’s younger brother Kang Guangren and Tan Sitong were among “the six martyrs” of the Reforms, notable young reformers who were caught and executed. Spence, 230.

¹⁵² Kwong, 153; Sue Fawn Chung, “The Image of the Empress Dowager Tz’u-hsi,” in *Reform in Nineteenth-Century China*, ed. Paul A. Cohen and John E. Schrecker (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 101. See also Chung’s article “The Much Maligned Empress Dowager: A Revisionist Study of the Empress Dowager Tz’u-Hsi (1835-1908),” *Modern Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (1979). Similar understanding of Cixi as “not as conservative as

In Chung's opinion, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Wang Chao, Yun Yuting and Lo Tun-jung, as well as John Otway Percy Bland and Sir Edmund Backhouse are the historical figures whose accounts created the common negative perceptions of the Empress Dowager in order to gain political support for their ideas. As a counterweight to the bias of these "radical reformers", as Chung calls them, the author suggests close examination of the court documents, as well as the writings of contemporaries Li Hongzhang and Liu Kunyi.¹⁵³ Chung argues instead that Cixi was a reform-oriented ruler, quoting her statement that "a moment does not pass that I do not think about planning for self-strengthening." She argues that the problem was that the reforms promulgated in the summer of 1898 were "too extreme," identifying the fall of 1898 as the end of the extreme and the beginning of the moderate reforms undertaken "to bring wealth and power to the country and to provide a livelihood for the people."¹⁵⁴

As I've already indicated by drawing on Guo Wu's criticism of the Reform movement's historiography, the reforms of 1898 were not a unified movement, but rather a period which involved various different actors with their different priorities, motives, interests and visions of proper actions. In the following section I will present three short narratives, or, in Linda P. Shin's wording, three "social portraits" of distinct, but, as I will show in the following chapter, interrelated contributors to the reforms: Alicia Little, Mary Richard and Kang Youwei.¹⁵⁵

Kang Youwei will be included as an example of the Chinese male reformers whose ideas and actions facilitated the involvement of Chinese women in the matters of the school,

people think" and the Reform movement as radical way in which Kang Youwei directed it has been argued for in Wu, 77 and 99, n106.

¹⁵³ Chung, 1976a, 102-103, 109-110.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 104, 102-103.

¹⁵⁵ Shin employs this expression in her attempt to use the reconstruction of one person's life-narrative to shed additional light on particular social milieu in which the person operated. Shin, 265.

association and the journal. I've chosen to discuss Kang Youwei and not, for instance, Liang Qichao, another influential male reformer of the period whose ideas about women had a decisive impact on the later imaginations of "Chinese woman". I do so because I want to highlight a relation between the discourses created by reform-oriented men and their female kin. I see Kang Youwei's opinions about women, and, especially his attempts to promote Confucianism as a Chinese religion as necessary context for the writing and involvement of his daughter Kang Tongwei in women-oriented reformist projects I will analyze in the later chapters.

Alicia Little and Mary Richard are examples of two groups of women who were directly involved in the establishment and operation of *Nüxue tang*: lay-Christian Western women and Protestant missionary women. Both Alicia Little and Mary Richard would not be able to be in China in the first place if European powers did not exercise military strength and political influence on the Qing court. As I've already indicated, the treaty signed with the Qing court in 1842 made sure that Westerners were granted the right to reside in the Treaty ports. Since prior to 1842 a small group of foreigners who lived in the southwestern edge of the Empire was forbidden to include any women, this was a significant turning point for the history of Western women's engagement with China. It marked the beginning of their "work," as they called it, with Chinese women and girls.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in the Western Mind* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 102-104. As early as the mid-fourteenth century there was a small Italian community living and trading in Yangzhou in central China, and among them was a young Christian woman, Katerina Vilionis. As is known from the Latin inscriptions from her gravestone, she was the daughter of an Italian trader from Genoa who died in 1342. However, no writings of hers have been found yet. Before 1842 Western protestant women founded schools for Chinese girls in Malacca, the East Indian Islands and Singapore. The first school for girls in China was opened in Ningbo in 1844 by the Englishwomen Mary Ann Aldersay, a member of the Church of England who opened her school without the resources or influence of any Missionary Society and without supporting colleagues. In the following decades, a system of missionary schools for girls in China was gradually established. For Miss Aldersay's character and work, see Aldersay White, ed. *A Woman Pioneer in China: The Life of Mary Ann Aldersay* (London: The Livingstone Press, 1932) and J. Reason, *The Witch of Ningpo, Mary Aldersay of China* (London: Edinburgh Home Press, 1956). For a discussion of the ways in which presence of western women was regulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Guo Weidong, "Yapian zhanzheng qian hou waiguo

The vignettes about Alicia Little and Mary Richard offer a glance into the dynamics of Western-women's activities related to Chinese girls and women.¹⁵⁷ My discussion of Mary Richard will tell a (part of the) story about Protestant women's and men's endeavors to Christianize China through education. While Alicia Little and her anti-footbinding activities will, among other things, tell a story about what was perhaps a most successfully organized foreign social movement in late-Qing China.¹⁵⁸ The following accounts should also be read with attention to the fact that Western women not only launched works aimed at "emancipating" Chinese girls and women; but also, by the virtue of Western women's "access" to Chinese women denied to Western men, they came to be given the status of being reliable source of "knowledge" on the subject of "Chinese women" for the audience in their home countries.¹⁵⁹

3.3.1. Alicia Ellen Neva Bewicke (1845–1926): Mrs. Archibald Little

Alicia Ellen Neva Bewicke was born in Madeira. In the 1870s and 1880s she was active in feminist initiatives in the UK, lecturing, writing pamphlets and organizing campaigns for the repeal of Contagious Diseases Act, passage of Women's Property Act and women's

funü jinru Zhongguo tongshang kouan wenti" (Foreign women in China's trading ports in the Opium War period) *Jindai shi yanjiu* 1 (1999).

¹⁵⁷ A part of my discussion about Alicia Little appeared in my MA Thesis. What I will present here is significantly reworked version of analysis. See Dušica Ristivojević, "On Behalf of Chinese Women: Struggles for Women's Emancipation in China and their Contradictions (master's thesis, Central European University, 2004), 36-44.

¹⁵⁸ On diverse activities of Western women in nineteenth-century China see, for instance, Elisabeth Croll, *Wise Daughters from Foreign Lands: European Women Writers in China* (London, Winchester, Sydney and Wellington: Pandora, 1989); and Susanna Hoe, *Chinese Footprints: Exploring Women's History in China, Hong Kong and Macau* (Hong Kong: Roundhouse Publications, 1996).

¹⁵⁹ I've elaborated more on the ways in which missionary women represented Chinese women and girls to the Western audience in Dušica Ristivojević, "'They are Just Like the Generations Past': Images of Chinese Women in Women's Missionary Periodical Women's Work in China (1885-1885)," *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2008).

suffrage.¹⁶⁰ In this period she published nine novels, *Miss Standish* (1883) and *Mother Darling!* (1885) being the most popular.¹⁶¹ In 1886 she married Archibald John Little, with whom she left for China in 1887.

Gertrude Bell, a famous traveler to the East, after meeting Alicia and Archibald Little in Shanghai in 1903 wrote:

Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Little were there – she is a truly awful lady. She wore a mustard yellow dress which has exactly the same color as her skin. So that for some time I did not notice she had a low gown on...! She has a very vivacious manner and a heavy black moustache. Her husband doesn't count. Dr Morrison says her books are pretty feeble, but as they are popular he hopes she will write a great many more, for he rejoices to see any interest roused about China."¹⁶²

Footbinding and its multilayered meanings will be discussed in the following chapter. As Dorothy Ko implies, the modern history of footbinding is antfootbinding history, and *Tianzu hui* (Natural feet society), the anti-footbinding society organized by Alicia Little has played an important role in the creation of dominant images and meanings ascribed to footbinding.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Carol M. Martel, "Little, Alicia E. Neva Bewicke," in *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*, ed. James Stuart Olson and Robert Shadle (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 673.

¹⁶¹ Some of her other "pre-China" novels include *Flirts and Flirts, or, A Season at Ryde* (1868); *Lonely Carlotta: "A Crimson Bud of a Rose"* (1874) and *Onwards! But Whither? A Life Study* (1875). Her literary opus also includes three novels about Westerners in China, five books in which she describes China and her travels, as well as a book about Li Hongzhang, all written after 1887. *Marriage in China*, one of her novels was considered to describe some characters and events "too closely" to the real Westerners working and living in China, and have "earned her a level of notoriety." Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, "Travel Writing and the Humanitarian Impulse: Alicia Little in China," in *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s*, ed. Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 93.

¹⁶² Ibid., 92. Elisabeth Croll adds one interesting detail about Alicia Little's masculine outlook. During her trips, as Croll described, "when she sat in her long fur coat, and her husband rode the pony, alongside, bystanders had no doubt at all that she was a man, and a mandarin or official at that, and he her outrider." One of the reasons of this impression was that the fur coat Alicia wore was "generally only worn by mandarins." Croll, 31.

¹⁶³ For a groundbreaking study about footbinding see Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005). Alicia Little's choice of the name of the society is an effective play with different meanings that the word *tian* has in Chinese: it refers to both nature, natural, and Heaven, Heavenly, and it did not disturb the Confucian elite.

Scholars treat *Tianzu hui* as the first influential foreign anti-footbinding society in China.¹⁶⁴ The society was founded in Shanghai in 1895, with the wives of foreign consuls and merchants as its first members and organizers.¹⁶⁵ Little gave her anti-footbinding speeches during her travels around China, as well as on her return trips to England where she was engaged in fundraising for *Tianzu hui* and rallied crucial media support for her cause. Alicia Little's engagements with British and international audience were effective in an indirect way as well: the more publicity the opposition to footbinding received in England, the more it influenced Chinese diplomats and scholars, and in that way stimulated the indigenous movement back in China.¹⁶⁶

Writing about the establishment of the society, Little gave the following details:

In April, 1895, I was happy enough to start the T'ien Tsu Hui, or Natural Feet Society. Up till then, foreigners who were not missionaries had done but little, if anything, to prevent footbinding. It was, therefore, quite a joyful surprise to find that pretty well all the Shanghai ladies whom I asked were willing and eager to serve upon the committee. We began very timidly by republishing a poem written by a Chinese lady of Hangchow, sent down by Bishop Moule, and happily for us translated into English verse by Dr.

¹⁶⁴ Before the anti-footbinding initiatives in the nineteenth century, which were directly or indirectly influenced by the interaction between China and the West, there were two forms of opposition to anti-footbinding. The first one included works of scholars and poets who advocated the abolition of footbinding; the other one were edicts issued by Manchu emperors. On premodern opposition to footbinding see, for instance, Virginia Chui-tin Chau, "The Anti-footbinding Movement in China (1850-1912)," (master's thesis, Columbia University, 1966); Paul S. Ropp, "The Seeds of Change: Reflections on the Condition of Women in the Early and Mid Ch'ing," *Sings* 2, no.1 (1976); Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (New York: Anchor Book, 2002).

Some of the studies that address *Tianzu hui* are Charlotte L. Beahan, *The Women's movement and nationalism in late Ch'ing China* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1976); Beverley Jackson, *Splendid Slippers: A Thousand Years Of An Erotic Tradition* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1997).

¹⁶⁵ The Index to the Chinese Recorder lists the following persons as the leading members of the *Tianzu hui*: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Allen, Mrs. N.P. Anderson, Mary E. Barchet, Margaret Susan Cowen Bondfield, M. Baker Cornaby, Earl Cranston, Mrs. Joseph L. Edkins, Elizabeth May Harris Gillison, Alicia Little, L.A. Bovey MacGillivrey, Francis Lister Hawks Pott, Mrs. Seaman, Shen Tun-ho, Mrs. Wang, Pelham Warren and Edward Thomas Williams. Kathleen L. Lodwick, ed. *The Chinese Recorder Index: A Guide to Christian Missions in Asia, 1867-1941, Volume one* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1986), 879.

¹⁶⁶ On her campaign in England see Jackson, 144.

Edkins, for one of our initial difficulties was that not one of us could read Chinese. We then ventured on another poem by another Chinese lady. After that we published a tract written in English by Pastor Kranz, sat upon and somewhat remodeled by the whole committee, than translated into Chinese for us by the Rev. Timothy Richard's Chinese writer. It is difficult for English people to understand what anguish of mind had been suffered by all the ladies on the committee, before we could decide [on a question whether] were we appealing to the men or the women.¹⁶⁷

The first tract of *Tianzu hui*, "Foot-binding; Two Sides of the Question", was published in the *Chinese Recorder* in December 1895, and it reveals that the society decided to address Chinese men and their concerns. The first part of the text discredits the main arguments raised in support of footbinding, i.e. that "it is an old custom," that "it looks nice," that "all the high class ladies bind their feet," that "it preserves the chastity and modesty of the women," as well as the concerns that women would be ridiculed if they stop binding their feet. The second part of a tract, entitled "Why Foot-binding is a bad custom," brings in arguments that might address the anxieties of the Chinese men.¹⁶⁸ The tract refers to the wives of all the sages and old ancestors who did not bind their feet and claims that it "often causes sterility," alluding to the men's duty to respect the ancestors and their obligation to continue the patriline.¹⁶⁹ What follows is the address of the deaths of a great number of bound-feet women who were not able to escape from the Taipings, playing on the traumatizing experience of Chinese men themselves. The

¹⁶⁷ When explaining the motif for translating the tract into the elegant literary Chinese language, Alicia writes that it was hoped that "anti-footbinding would be brought with as great decorum as possible before the Chinese public, and that at least the literati must marvel at the beautiful style and learning of the foreign ladies, who, alas! Could not read one character of the little booklet, whose type and red label we all examined so wistfully." Alicia Little [Mrs. Archibald Little], *Intimate China. The Chinese as I have seen them* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1899), 149, 150.

¹⁶⁸ "Foot-binding; Two Sides of the Question," *Chinese Recorder* 26, no.12, 1895, 551, 552.

¹⁶⁹ In China the death was not seen as a total end to one's connection to the world of living family members. The spirits of ancestors remained active and had an influence on the life of the present generation, entitling the eldest father of the family to offer sacrifices to ancestors that would serve to reunite the past and the present in their mutual support. Hence, present generation was perceived as connecting present, past and future, and one should never fail to provide the family with the son who would, by receiving the duty and honor of ancestral sacrifice, assures the harmony between alive family members and the venerated predecessors. Yao Xinzong, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 200-202.

subsequent arguments that bound feet make Chinese women unproductive, and that “the wives and daughters of all the other nations in the world have unbound feet, and are happy” will also, as we will see, be employed by the male and some female reformers, and will point to the abolishment of footbinding as to a certain road to China’s salvation.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the part of the tract that created a most negative image of Chinese women characterized footbinding as having “very bad consequences in the social relations,” and noted that:

Women with bound feet are always dependent on the help of others. GIRLS cannot run quickly to carry out the orders of their father and mother. WIVES cannot fulfill their household duties as they would be able to do with unbound feet. MOTHERS cannot watch and look after their children properly when they are playing in the open air. WOMEN cannot clean their houses, thus the houses remain dirty and become unhealthy. The houses of the Hakkas in Canton province, whose women do not bound their feet, are far cleaner.

Husbands often engage slave girls and concubines, the cause often of great misery, simply because their wives cannot move about freely.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, the attack on footbinding as “a cruel custom that inflicts a great deal of pain and suffering among young girls” and the urge that “parents loving their daughters should protect

¹⁷⁰“Foot-binding”, 552-553.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 553. The capital letters are in the original article. In order to get and use Chinese and Western men’s support for her cause, during her famous “anti-footbinding tour” in 1900 Alicia Little visited Hangzhou, Wuchang, Hanyang, Canton, Hong Kong, Macao, Shantou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Hangzhou and Suzhou. As was announced in the *Chinese Recorder*, Little wished “to address a meeting of the foreign community in each place; also, wherever it is possible, to address a public Chinese meeting to which Chinese officials and the leading gentry may have been invited by some leading European official...But she is also most desirous to address gatherings of Chinese ladies... [and] to address college students and boys’ schools.” “Editorial Comment,” *Chinese Recorder*, 31, no.2 (1900), 104. Moreover, her Western male connections arranged her meeting with Li Hongzhang, former closest advisor of the Empress Dowager Cixi and one of the highest regarded Chinese of that time. She described this meeting and very interesting conversation with Li in her book *The Land of the Blue Gown*.

them against this bad fashion of later centuries” became a loudest argument in the actions undertaken by the ladies of *Tianzu hui*.¹⁷²

The society also needed to ensure the support of Western and Chinese Christians, and a different argument had to be employed. This audience was, hence, pleased with explanations that:

Our aim is obviously a Christian one; at the same time we invite the help and sympathy of all those who are moved by considerations ethical, medical, or economic, or simply by pity for millions of little girls now forced to suffer, and helpless to resist; quite as much as of those who feel themselves called to combat this monstrous evil by that watchword of Christian Socialism: “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.”¹⁷³

Nevertheless, the fact that *Tianzu hui* skillfully addressed the sentiments, influence and funds of Chinese men, didn’t mean that the Society didn’t try to include Chinese women in their work. The meetings organized by Western women were represented as open to participation of Chinese women, and the audience was informed that they took the form of dialogues and discussions more than of lectures. Alicia Little describes one meeting in the following way:

There was a drawing-room meeting held at Chung-king, in the far west of Szechuan; and it was a most brilliant affair. The wealth of embroideries on the occasion was a thing to remember... [and] all the Chinese ladies laughed so gaily, and were so brilliant in their attire that the few missionary ladies among them looked like sober moths caught in a flight of brodered butterflies.

...The hostess actually stood up and addressed them [Chinese ladies] through an interpreter. Then there was such eager desire to corroborate the statements: “On the north bank of the river near Nanking...” “Yes, yes!” exclaimed a lady from Nanking; “they don’t bind there! And they are strong – very.” Then, when the speaker went on to say that on the road to Chengtu there was a city where a large part of the population all intermarried, and did not bind their women’s feet, being of Cantonese descent, Cantonese

¹⁷² “Foot-binding,” 553.

¹⁷³ Mrs. M.S. Bondfield, “Report of the Tian Zu Hui for 1898,” *Chinese Recorder* 30, no.3 (1899), 149.

ladies nodded and smiled, and moved dainty little hands with impetuous movements, as if eager for interpreters in their turn to make themselves understood by the great, jolly Szechuan dames around them. And when the speaker further spoke of parts of Hunan where rich and poor alike did not bind, the two solitary representatives of Hupeh, the boastful, could bear it no more, but with quiet dignity rose, and said, in their soft Hupeh voices, "In Hupeh, too, there are parts where no woman binds – none." Next a missionary lady in fluent Chinese explained the circulation of the blood, and with an india rubber pipe showed the effect of binding some part of it...This speech was afterwards a good deal commented on. A Chinese lady then related how she had been led to unbind, ceasing any longer to feel delight in the little feet that had once been such a pride to her.

...The meeting was then thrown open, and at once the very smartest of the Chinese ladies present came forward to make a speech in her turn...Then, as at an English meeting, a number of ladies went on to a dinner party. But the others stayed and talked.¹⁷⁴

Tianzu hui tried to reach women from all social classes, and it proudly reported on the 1898 Shanghai's Ewo Silk Filature meeting, the first in a series of announced meetings in the mills and factories of Shanghai's area in the following way:

...all work was stopped, and the women and girls, to the number of 1000, flocked in this large room... [where] small platform had been arranged for the speakers... Mrs. Alford, in a few words, translated by Dr. Reifsnyder, told the women why they had been gathered together; Dr. Reifsnyder followed with a vigorous speech, then Mrs. De, a Chinese Christian lady, held the attention of the audience while she delivered a graphic address. The meeting closed with a few words from Miss Burdick, and as the women dispersed, illustrated papers were distributed.¹⁷⁵

The way the Society tried to reach to the peasant women was through the help of the missionaries who, with the invaluable help of Chinese Christian women, operated both in big cities and in more remote areas of China. Right from the beginning of its work, the society

¹⁷⁴ Little, 1899, 151-153.

¹⁷⁵ "Notes on the Work of the T'ien-tsu Hui," *Chinese Recorder* 29, no. 3 (1898), 149.

provided free pamphlets to be given to missionaries and it organized meetings with female teachers of missionary schools and with the wives of Church officers.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, even though the reports published in the *Chinese Recorder* did emphasize that “the cooperation of Chinese ladies will be still more gladly welcomed,” and that, at a meeting with the Chinese women “several of the ladies, many of whom had tiny feet, expressed their desire to prevent the suffering caused to little girls, and their willingness to co-operate with the foreign ladies in the efforts they are making to abolish this custom,” further research needs to be done before estimating Chinese women’s reactions to *Tianzu hui*.

After Alicia Little’s return to England in 1907, the Society was formally turned over to Chinese members,¹⁷⁷ and, unfortunately, the primary and secondary sources I had a chance to consult do not discuss *Tianzu hui* after 1907.

Scholarly analyses focused on Alicia Little’s writings and her reforming activities in England and China do not problematize her speaking and acting position, and do not probe into the intrinsic link between the opportunities she gained and used in China and the ways in which her husband benefited from the British influence on the Chinese court.¹⁷⁸

Archibald John Little (1838-1908) was born as a son of a doctor specialist in congenital disorders of the feet – the information that raised the speculation that his interest and support for

¹⁷⁶ See “Editorial Note,” *Chinese Recorder* 27, no.2 (1896), 100; and “Notes,” 204.

¹⁷⁷ Beahan, 1976, 65.

¹⁷⁸ The notable exception is a graduate paper written by Rachel M. Bright “‘Irregular Unions’: Alicia Bewicke Little’s *A Marriage in China* and British-Chinese Relations in the Late-Nineteenth Century,” published in *Schuykill*, 5, no. 1 (2002), available at <http://www.temple.edu/gradmag/volume5/bright.html> (accessed December 26, 2012). Secondary literature that I use in my thesis does not mention the benefits Littles gained because of the military and political powers of their country.

Alicia's anti-footbinding society had been the result of his family background.¹⁷⁹ After his schooling in England and Berlin, he arrived in China in 1859 as a tea-taster for a German company. Three years later he started his own firm in Jiujiang, an open Chinese port; soon after moved his business to Shanghai; and in 1887 to Chongqing, where he became the sole British merchant trading in the entire Western Chinese province of Sichuan. He traveled throughout, wrote about, and earned his fortune in China before he moved back to England in 1906.¹⁸⁰

Thurin claims that Archibald “had distinguished himself as a sinologist,” and that Alicia and Archibald “promoted modernization of China through their writings and their deeds.”¹⁸¹ Caroline Murray writes that he introduced steam boats in Sichuan in order to “open up western China to trade (and, hence, he firmly believed, to greater employment opportunities and greater prosperity for the Chinese).”¹⁸²

However, as Lu Yuanqian argues, when Archibald Little went to his famous trip through the Yangtze Gorges in February 1883 (later described in his book), he used his “pleasure trip” to probe the channel for transport of trading goods.¹⁸³ After his trip, as Lu reminds us, Archibald Little was honored by his country-fellows as “a British path breaker in Western China;” as being the one who enabled the trade with seventy million people; and the reason why the British merchandize could travel directly and deeply to the interior of Asia.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Caroline Murray, “Cambridge Library Collection Blog: Archibald and Alicia,” (2011) <http://cambridgelibrarycollection.wordpress.com/2011/10/31/archibald-and-alicia/> (accessed December 26, 2012).

¹⁸⁰ Carol M. Martel, “Little, Archibald John,” in Olson and Shadle, 675.

¹⁸¹ Thurin, 93.

¹⁸² Murray, 2011.

¹⁸³ Lu Yuanqian, *Chongqing kaibu yu Sichuan shehuo bianqian (1891-1911 nian)* (Opening of Chongqing and social changes in Sichuan, 1891-1911) (PhD Diss., Huadong shifan daxue, 2003), 8.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.

In 1887, as Lu continues, with the support of the British government, Little established Chuanjiang Steamer Company which used the motorized steamers to cover a shipping route for trading goods. This move provoked the strong protest of a great number of workers whose livelihood relied on the operation of the sailing ships/junks on the line between Hebei and Sichuan provinces. Observing these events, Judith Wyman writes about the arrival of Archibald Little's steam-powered boat in Chongqing in March 1898 as the example of "the increasingly aggressive activities of Westerners in the area."¹⁸⁵ Wyman argues that Little's boat, exemplifying mechanization that would replace manual labor, disturbed the locals because it fed rumors about Westerners' plans to mechanize the mines, jeopardizing further the livelihood of Chinese workers.¹⁸⁶ The open conflict between Little's company and the local people was not resolved for years, until in 1890 Qing government had to sign the treaty which made Chongqing a treaty port and which allowed the transport of merchandise with the steamers.¹⁸⁷

Carol M. Martel adds to this portrait of the exploits of Alicia's husband when she writes:

Not only in his writings but also in speeches to chambers of commerce in Manchester and Liverpool, Little urged the British government to assert its predominance in China, to protect its trade in this greatest of potential markets against vested Russian and German interests, to occupy the Yangtze, and to force commercial and industrial reforms of the Chinese. Because of the weakness of the central Manchu government, Little would promote British trade with China "by the old gunboat policy of seeking redress on the spot."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Judith Wyman, "The Ambiguities of Chinese Antiforeignism: Chongqing, 1870-1900," *Late Imperial China* 18, no. 2 (1998): 107.

¹⁸⁶ At the time boats were pulled manually with thousands of trackers. *Ibid.*, 107, 108.

¹⁸⁷ In addition to the steamer business, Little invested in a coal mine, hog bristles, and export-import trade. When Chongqing was to be "opened" in 1899, Little had great profits. See Lu's dissertation for the chronology of the events pertinent to the semi-colonial history of Chongqing and Archibald Little's significant role in it. Lu, 8, 184-185.

¹⁸⁸ Martel, b, 676.

The Littles left China for Cornwall, England in 1906 because of Archibald's failing health. After he died two years later, Alicia moved to London, frequently wrote letters about China to newspapers, followed the international affairs, travelled to Eastern Europe, and continued her activism for women's suffrage.¹⁸⁹ Alicia Little died in 1926.

3.3.2. *Mary Martin (1843-1903): Mrs. Timothy Richard*

Mary Martin was born in 1843 in Edinburgh as the daughter of a missionary in the United Presbyterian Mission. Reverend B. Reeve, a contemporary of the Richards informs us that:

Miss Martin, from her early childhood, displayed great intellectual capacity, so much so that at fourteen years of age she was appointed assistant teacher in the Normal School of which she had been a pupil. After some years of experience in teaching, private and public, she became attached to the staff of the Merchant Company's College School, Edinburgh, and there remained for six years, until, in 1876, she went to China.¹⁹⁰

She took charge of the Christian school at Chefoo and started with evangelical work in nearby villages with the help of a Biblewoman.¹⁹¹ After the great famine (1876 – 78), only three foreigners from North China survived the fever. Timothy Richard, a famous missionary whose

¹⁸⁹ Martel, 674.

¹⁹⁰ Rev. B. Reeve, *Timothy Richard, D.D.: China Missionary, Statesman and Reformer* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co. Ltd, 1911), 62.

¹⁹¹ Biblewomen were instrumental for the success of Protestant women's evangelizing success. When confronted with the language barrier, missionary women of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Woman's Foreign Missionary Society searched for Chinese women - almost exclusively from the lower classes - who were willing to learn to read, taught them to read the Bible and sing hymns. After obtaining Western women's approval, Biblewomen were sent to spread the Christian teachings to the areas that missionaries could not reach. For more on the reports on Biblewomen that reached the anglophone audience see Ristivojević, 2008, *passim*.

involvement in the Wuxu reform movement would be discussed in more details in the following chapter, sent a letter to Mary to congratulate her recovery, and their correspondence ended in marriage.¹⁹²

Three months after the couple moved to Taiyuanfu Timothy left for Shanxi, and Mary operated the boy's school for famine orphans, reading Chinese with a tutor, and doing translation. She was also superintendant of the school attended by the Chinese scholars for monthly examinations. Reeve praises the high level of education Mrs. Richard possessed, informing the reader that "for three years Mrs. Richard gave monthly lectures to the hundreds of expectant mandarins who resided for a time in T'ai-yuan-fu, upon the religion, the history, the education, and the science of Christendom. These were also delivered to many of the professors and students in the colleges in the city."¹⁹³

She continued with teaching during the couple's stay in Beijing in 1887 and 1888. In this period she was in charge of education of not only her two daughters,¹⁹⁴ but also of some high-profile male students. As Reeve conveys, she was teaching "two mandarins of high rank - the son of the Marquis Tseng, and a grandson of a Viceroy of Canton - in English, these being the first of their class to acquire the language. Other pupils were the son of the Japanese Minister and some members of the Japanese Legation."¹⁹⁵ Her husband explained her teaching methodology: she was teaching English to her students from the influential families, and when the students began to read English books they found many religious words they could not understand. Mary then

¹⁹² Ibid., 62-63.

¹⁹³ Reeve, 64. Her husband also saluted her for her theological and rhetorical knowledge and skill. Timothy Richard, *Forty-five years in China* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1916), 141.

¹⁹⁴ Richards had four daughters, all born in Taiyuanfu. Timothy witnessed the birth of only one daughter, leaving Mary alone when delivering three of their babies. The elder two daughters stayed in England upon the couple's stay between 1884 and 1886. Reeve, 66-7.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 68-69.

“recommended them to read the New Testament with her, so as to become familiar with the religious phraseology.”¹⁹⁶ In addition to her teaching that involved upper-class male students, Mary Richard’s work involved her visits to the wives of influential men and her work with Biblwomen. She was visiting the wives of mandarins and “several Mohamedans”, teaching Bible classes, training and supervising the work of Biblewomen.¹⁹⁷

When sketching her life, Reeve reports that:

Up to her last illness she was teaching English in some of the families of the high mandarins... In her husband's literary work she took an active interest and an important share. During the furlough in England of his colleague Dr. Edkins, near the beginning of Dr. Richard's connection with the Christian Literature Society, Mrs. Richard edited *the Messenger*. Afterwards, for some years, she was co-editor of *Woman's Work in the Far East* [with Mrs. Finch], and towards the end became editor of the first numbers of the English edition of the *East of Asia*. One or two of her published papers, read before the Shanghai Missionary Association, exhibit great merits. Notice has already been taken of some of Mrs. Richard's translations. To them must be added part of Jeremy Taylor's “Holy Living”; Lord Northbrook's “Sayings of Jesus”; Professor Goodspeed's “Messianic Hopes of the Jew”; the words of Handel's “Messiah”; and the Anthems in the Congregational Hymn-Book[...]. Mrs. Richard was one of the Directors and sole foreign Inspector of the Chinese High Class Girls' School, founded by the Reformers in 1898-99. She had an extensive knowledge of the theory and practice of music, and wrote a Chinese tune book in native notation and an English pamphlet on Chinese music... Many high native and foreign officials attended the funeral, including H. E. Ho Taotai and his family.¹⁹⁸

She was also one of the main actors in Western women’s presentation of the New Testament to the Dowager Cixi in November 1894, an important event that reveals a specific strategy of missionaries to promote the status of Christianity in China: missionaries’

¹⁹⁶Richard, 1916, 207. This was the way her Japanese students eventually got baptized. In addition to the grandson of Zeng Guofan, his brothers and sisters were well acquainted with Mary Richard, as Timothy Richard informs us. Ibid., 209.

¹⁹⁷Richard, 1916, 167; Reeve, 64.

¹⁹⁸Reeve, 123, 124.

appropriation of the voice of Chinese Christian women in communicating a fabricated message about the ardent acceptance of Christianity in China.¹⁹⁹ In November 1894 missionaries presented a Chinese translation of the New Testament, beautifully adorned in the silver casket, as a gift to the Empress Dowager Cixi. The Anglophone audience was informed that the gift was “the offering of Chinese female converts in connection with the Protestant Missions throughout the country as a token of loyalty on the occasion of Her Majesty's sixtieth birthday.”²⁰⁰ The Empress Dowager returned the favor by sending the gifts to the women involved.

The exchange of gifts caught the attention of foreigners in China since the Empress Dowager's acceptance of the gift, as they saw it, suggested possible improvement of the official Chinese attitude toward Christians and Christianity. Thus, it was reported that a leading part in this “movement” had been taken by Mrs. Richard and Mrs. Fitch. This assessment was based on the information that they received the most precious gifts of Nanjing silk, a roll of satin, a box of needlework and two cases of handkerchiefs each; while each of the other twenty missionary women who assisted them received a case of handkerchiefs and a roll of Huzhou crape from the Empress Dowager.²⁰¹

However, the account left by Timothy Richard offers us different version of the same event. Timothy Richard writes:

In the spring of 1894 Mrs. Robert Swallow, of the English Methodist Mission, wrote to my wife and Mrs. Fitch, of the American Presbyterian Mission, suggesting that it would be fitting if the Chinese Christian women were to subscribe to present a Bible to the Empress-Dowager on her sixtieth birthday. A committee was formed in Shanghai, of

¹⁹⁹ For a different reading of the event see Lydia Liu, 2004, 142-146, 149-153, 160-162.

²⁰⁰ Reeve, 88, 90.

²⁰¹ Idem. Richard reports that there were two hundred women who “had taken part in the subscriptions” and who received the gifts from the Empress Dowager. Richard, 1916, 226.

which Mr. Stevenson, of the C.I.M., acted as Chairman, Mrs. Richard as Treasurer, and Mrs. Fitch as Secretary. They decided it was better to send a copy of the New Testament instead of the whole Bible to Her Majesty. Branch committees were formed in the various provinces to collect the money, and altogether the sum of twelve hundred dollars was subscribed. An Introduction was prepared by Dr. Muirhead, of the London Mission, and translated and written by hand by a former teacher of Dr. Medhurst. The New Testament was specially printed on the best style of foreign paper, and, together with the Introduction, was elegantly bound in solid silver boards made in Canton in a design in relief of bamboo and birds. The name and inscription of the book were in solid gold characters. The book was enclosed in a solid silver casket in the same design of bamboo and birds, lined with old gold plush. A presentation address was prepared by Mrs. Richard, and translated by me into suitable Chinese with the help of my able Chinese writer, Mr. Tsai.²⁰²

As Richard also informs us, the letter of Mary Richard was presented as being written by “few thousand” and “mostly poor” Protestant Christian women from the various provinces of the Empire who had heard that “it is a custom in the West to present Empresses, Queens, and Princesses with a copy of this book on happy occasions in their lives.” Christian women, as was added, were praying “that your Majesty and all the members of the Imperial Household may also get possession of this secret of true happiness to the individual and prosperity to the nation so that China may not be behind any nation on earth.”²⁰³

The presentation of the New Testament to the Empress Dowager had served multiple interests. This occasion was utilized to represent Christianity as zealously accepted by Chinese women to the Empress Dowager Cixi, a move that may be interpreted as aiming to make Cixi more interested and sympathetic to Christianity. At the same time, positive contemporary reports of the events served as a convincing evidence of missionaries good work in China for the

²⁰² Richard, 1916, 225.

²⁰³ Timothy Richard also mentions that British Minister O'Connor and American Minister Colonel Derby handed the present to the members of the Zongli yamen, and they passed it to the Empress Dowager. Ibid., 225, 226.

audience back home, thus ensuring the continuous interest in and support of (women's) missionary work (for women). Finally, as it will become clear in the following chapter when I will discuss Mrs. Richard's report on the meeting of Western and Chinese ladies in 1897, the whole event was represented to Chinese women as proving that Empress Dowager, by accepting the New Testament, showed her appreciation to both Christian traditions and missionary women.

As Lydia H. Liu notes, "there is no existing testimony or any independent source to substantiate how the Chinese converts themselves regarded Cixi, if they thought of her at all."²⁰⁴ What these instances of multiple ends that the event served well reveal is the discursive appropriation and manipulation of the voice of poor Chinese Christian women by the missionaries, both male and female. A caution is invited when approaching the available primary historical material: a poor Chinese Christian woman is erased in the very words ascribed to her.

Mary Richard died in Shanghai in 1903.

3.3.3. *Kang Youwei (1858 - 1927): Visions of Confucianism, women and racial eugenics*

Kang Youwei was born into an educated family in Guangdong province, Nanhai *xian*, Yintang *xiang*, Dunren *li* in 1858. Having a strong sense of moral mission from his early childhood "he developed an image of himself as a Confucian sage."²⁰⁵ His education not only

²⁰⁴ Lydia H. Liu, 2004, 145.

²⁰⁵ Chang, 1980, 283.

included neo-Confucian classics, but also Mahayana Buddhist teachings and from the early 1880s it also included Western knowledge – both Christian and secular.²⁰⁶

Kang was not particularly popular at the time, especially not among the (older) literati who disapproved of his interpretation of Confucius as reformer and his insistence that Confucianism should become for China what is Christianity for the West. This was an issue that, as I will discuss in the following chapters, provoked a strong response from the participants in the women-oriented reformist projects.²⁰⁷ Whether Confucianism is a religion or not is still a heatedly debated question. What this debate, which began during the period of my investigation, reveals is the central place that “religion” occupies in Chinese-Westerns encounters, imperialist expansionist politics, and in China-strengthening project initiated in the final years of the nineteenth century.

Keri Cole notes that the problems with defining religion in Asia lays in the very nature of traditions which contain large portions of what may be functionally considered “philosophy” inherent in the ways in which the practitioners implement these “religions” in their everyday lives. As Cole suggests, Confucianism fulfills all the dimensions proposed by Ninian Smart’s model for defining religion: the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the narrative or mythic, the philosophical and doctrinal, the ethical and legal, the institutional and social, as

²⁰⁶ Chang, 1980, 284. Kang was twenty-one, when, during his meditation, he had the revelation about him being a sage, and he took it seriously: he retreated to the Xijiao Mountain to study Buddhist and Daoist books, to meditate and accomplish bigger spiritual clarification. After his stay on the mountain, Kang went to Hong Kong. Laurence G. Thompson, “Biographical Sketch of K’ang Yu-wei,” in Kang Youwei, *Ta T’ung Shu, The One-World: Philosophy of K’ang Yu-wei*, translated by Laurence G. Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1958), 12.

²⁰⁷ For the negative feelings Kang provoked, not only because of his ideas but also because of his behavior see Wu, 69. Jing Yuanshan, a main sponsor of *Nüxue tang* also did not approve Kang Youwei’s behavior. Jing is quoted writing to Kang that “you failed to really understand and practice the three words: modesty, tolerance and caution. And you seemed to be obsessed with your own reputation.” Ibid., 75.

well as material dimensions are all addressed by Confucian doctrine.”²⁰⁸ My study does not aim to provide an answer to the question whether Confucianism is religion or not. I am rather interested in the issue of how religion got defined and argued for in the Wuxu reform period.

As Thomas David DuBois explains in his book, the word for “religion” translated in modern Chinese is *zongjiao*, the word that did exist in Imperial China but with a more narrow meaning. Its modern meaning comes from the Japanese term *shukyo*, which, in turn comes from the translation of the German *Religionsübung*.²⁰⁹ Vincent Goossaert reminds us that, “The current meaning of religion, *zongjiao*, among Chinese intellectuals is a coherent, exclusive system of thought and practice with a churchlike organization distinct from society, that is, a definition imported from post-Renaissance Europe; although it applies easily to Christianity (in fact, the word *zongjiao* referred essentially to Christianity in the early phases of its use in Chinese), it does not adequately describe religious life in the Chinese context.”²¹⁰

Nonetheless, as Goossaert emphasizes, there has been a distinct field of thought and practice dealing with rituals, devotion, and salvation in China. This has also been discussed by Judith A. Berling who explains that at least from the Han dynasty there was a deep sense of cultural unity and a common cosmology which was conceived broadly and flexibly enough to accommodate Confucian, Daoist and local religious teachings.²¹¹ Buddhism was the first major

²⁰⁸ Keri Cole, “Religion in Asia Pacific,” in *Understanding Contemporary Asia Pacific*, ed. Katherine Palmer Kaup (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2007), 356, 362-363. See also Ninian Smart, *Religions of Asia* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 19.

²⁰⁹ Thomas David DuBois, *Religion and the Making of Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4-5. For the meanings of *zongjiao* in Imperial China see Anthony C. Yu, *State and Religion in China* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005) 5-25. See also Furth, 360.

²¹⁰ Vincent Goossaert, “1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006): 309.

²¹¹ Judith A. Berling, “When they go their Separate Ways: The Collapse of the Unitary Vision of Chinese Religion in the Early Ch’ing,” in *Meeting of Minds: Intellectual and Religious Interaction in East Asian Traditions of*

challenge to this unity, and, as Berling writes, “it was only through accommodation – conveying teachings in Taoist terminology, absorbing local deities, acceding to deep-rooted Confucian/cultural values, and blending with Chinese patterns of practice – that Buddhism succeeded in rooting itself in Chinese soil and was eventually claimed by the Chinese as one of the Three teachings.”²¹² Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, as Berling further notes, did nourish competitions between its teachers and disciples, but they all referred to the common ideas, myths, symbols, deities and practices, profusely borrowing from one another.²¹³

Manchu rulers needed Confucian scholars to enable an efficient and loyal bureaucratic apparatus, but did not want independent intellectual groups that could endanger the regime. Hence, as Berling further explains, they promoted strict behavioral codes and advocated orthodox attitudes, all of which climaxed in Qianlong’s (1736-96) campaigns against heterodox doctrines, which included a legal ban in 1774 of the Three teachings movement in South China.²¹⁴ Hence, as Berling concludes, the unity of the Three teachings that could have served as a unifying Chinese religious foundation was lost in the eighteenth century. In the author’s words,

Thought. Essays in Honor of Wing-tsit Chan and William Theodore de Bary, ed. Irene Bloom and Joshua A. Fogel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 209.

²¹² Idem.

²¹³ After explaining the relation of the Three teachings, Berling briefly mentions that the history of Chinese religions, also involved a variety of popular cults. Ibid., 210, 211. Goossaert also defines Chinese “pluralistic and internally contested religious system” as comprising of three institutionalized religions of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. He further elaborates that these three religions are “precisely defined by a distinctive clergy, a canon (scriptures that define orthodoxy), a liturgy, and training centers (monasteries, academies), yet they do not exist in strict isolation because they cooperate for liturgical and devotional purposes and openly share texts, values, and ideas.” Goossaert, nevertheless, emphasizes that even though these three religions have been coexisting and cooperating with local cults, ritual traditions and their specialists, i.e. diviners, spirit mediums, leaders of the sects, religious life of China is not their synergy, and “they are expected to coexist but not mingle and lose their identity.” See Goossaert, 310.

²¹⁴ The reason given was that the three teachings neglected the Three bonds between ruler and a subject, parent and a son, and husband and a wife, perceived as the most basic of human relationships, and Five Constant Virtues, i.e. benevolence, rightness, etiquette, wisdom, and trustworthiness. Ibid., 213, 232 n14.

“by the time of the cultural crisis of the mid-nineteenth century, there was nowhere to turn for a grand religio-cultural vision that could inspire and unite the whole of the Chinese people.”²¹⁵

As Mayfair Mei-hui Yang writes, “The Protestant-informed categories of “religion” and “superstition” produced a new definition of “civilization” (*wenming*),” which, to reinvoke Suzuki’s argument, complemented a taxonomic standard of European International Society in allocating individual cultures and societies in a developmental scale designated by the categories of “civilized-semicivilized-uncivilized.”²¹⁶ As a way to cope with a set of new imposed standards of civilization, Chinese intellectuals, of whom Kang Youwei is a notable example, started to argue that China was civilized and that it had her own spiritual tradition that did not lag behind Christianity. The move that was necessary, though, was to return to the “original” Confucian thought which was distorted by the generations of interested officials, and to create institutions that would show that Confucianism is China’s religion.

As Kwong writes, Kang considered Confucian teachings to be *jiao*, even though, “it is not readily apparent” what Kang meant by *jiao*: it comprised neo/Confucian moral precepts, activities assuming pedagogic persuasion, and religious systems in China such as Buddhism and popular Daoism.²¹⁷ When Kang talked about Confucian *jiao*, “he appeared to have in mind a comparative view of indigenous and foreign religions and favored education as its means of propagation,” and intended to “transform his brand of Confucianism into *jiao* for modern China, in an age of competing organized world religions.”²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Ibid., 231.

²¹⁶ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*, ed. Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University Of California Press, 2008), 8.

²¹⁷ Kwong, 106.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 106. Kang’s campaign to inaugurate Confucianism into a state religion started in 1895 and it lasted until the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916. Since Kang interpreted the separation of church and state as a key of the Western

Foreign opinion had it, as Kwong elaborates, that “unconverted China was but a second-rate state with a mere half-*jiao* and situated midway in the civilization process between the progressive full-*jiao* Western nations and backward colored races that had no *jiao* at all.”²¹⁹ A logic that motivated Kang to advocate the promotion of Confucianism into a religion was that, if Confucianism became a *jiao*, not only would it contain and control the spreading of “heretic” *jiaos* and, notably, of Christianity in China, but it would also demonstrate that Chinese civilization is civilization, just as her Western counterparts.²²⁰

In 1895 Kang proposed establishing an institute for Confucian studies which would have multiple purposes. It would provide advanced studies of the Classics as a part of specialized training for junior scholars. After receiving instructions, these scholars would have a choice; they could either be dispatched all over the Empire to supervise the conversion of the local shrines into the temples in which the immortal Sage would be worshiped. Or, alternatively, they could be sent to the missions abroad to spread the Confucian message.²²¹ Kang’s plan for the institutes was not accepted. But, after Kang memorialized the throne on July 10, 1898 with the proposal to turn all academies and temples in China (with the exception of those registered for state sacrifices) into schools, the Emperor was so happy with this suggestion that he issued an edict the same day supporting Kang’s proposition.²²²

success to uphold social morality in a pluralistic polity, he argued that the new school system and the constitutional monarchy satisfy the needs for the secularization of government, but that the “second wheel of morality” was needed. Goossaert, 366.

²¹⁹ Kwong, 110.

²²⁰ Ibid., 110.

²²¹ Ibid., 106-107.

²²² Goossaert, 307. *Nixue bao* reported that after the edict got promulgated, Buddhist nuns were especially scared because of the rumors that they will have to return to their secular lives. But, as the report informed, the officials did not decide whether this will be enforced. “Nigu shoujing,” *Nixue bao*, no. 6, September 6, 1898.

Wei Leong Tay summarizes Kang's suggestions presented in "The Memorial Requesting that Confucius Be Worshipped as [the Founder] of the National Religion, that a Ministry of Religion and a Church Be Established, that Years Be Counted from the Birth of Confucius, and that Improper Temples Be Suppressed" as follows:

Kang proposed to set up Confucian churches all over China, in all prefectures, counties and even villages. These national churches would be officiated by Confucian clergies and they would read the classics to the people during Sunday worship. Confucius birthday would be celebrated as a national holiday and a Confucian calendar would replace the current calendar based on the emperor's reign. The Kongjiao movement wanted to adopt the institutional strength of Christianity and replace its theological content with Confucianism.²²³

Vincent Goossaert, citing Huang Zhangjian, claims that this Memorial was not submitted to the throne. However, as my discussion in the following chapters reveal,²²⁴ these ideas did circulate among the participants in women-oriented reformist endeavors, and did provoke different reactions.

When it comes to his ideas and activities that specifically related to women, as early as 1883, Kang Youwei organized the *Bu chanzu hui* (Anti-Footbinding Society). Nevertheless, the society ended without any great accomplishments. In 1895 his younger brother Kang Guangren established another society in Guangdong, using the same name and rules as set down by Kang

²²³ Wei Leong Tay, "Kang Youwei, The Martin Luther of Confucianism and his Vision of Confucian Modernity and Nation," in *Secularization, Religion and the State*, ed. Haneda Masashi (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy, 2010), 104. As Goossaert comments, Kang's Memorial again employs the ridicule of foreigners in his argumentation: foreigners make photos of the statues in the temples, "show these pictures to each other and laugh," and perceive China to be one of the barbarian countries because of the Chinese worship of animals. Goossaert, 313.

²²⁴ Ibid., 331.

Youwei. In 1897 the Society's headquarter moved from Guangdong to Shanghai, and branches were set up in Hunan, Jiading and Fuzhou.²²⁵

The memorial against footbinding that Kang submitted to the throne in 1898 explicates two lines of anti-footbinding critique formulated at the turn of the twentieth century. It argued that footbinding damages women's bodies, and, in turn, the future of the Chinese race. The memorial also asserted that the practice was causing China to lose face in the international community. In Kang's words:

From the perspective of human health, it gives rise to needless sickness. From the perspective of increasing military strength, it weakens the race hereditarily. From the perspective of the beauty of our customs, it invites the slander of those other nations known as "barbarians"... All countries have international relations, so that if one commits the slightest error the others ridicule and look down on it. Ours is definitely not a time of seclusion. Now China is narrow and crowded, has opium addicts and streets lined with beggars. Foreigners laugh at us for these things and criticize us for being barbarians. There is nothing which makes us objects of ridicule so much as footbinding.²²⁶

Kang also introduces a comparison between Chinese and Western women which, reflecting the new division of military, economic and political power, places Western women in a more exalted position. He writes:

With posterity so weakened, how can we engage in battle? I look at Europeans and Americans, so strong and vigorous because their mothers do not bind their feet and therefore have strong offspring. Now that we must compete with other nations, to transmit weak offspring is perilous.²²⁷

²²⁵ Ono, 32, 33. The first Chinese anti-footbinding society founded by a woman was *Fanzu Hui*, established in Hangzhou in 1903 by Gao Baishu. Julie Broadwin, "Walking Contradictions: Chinese Women Unbound at the Turn of the Century," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10, no. 4 (1997): 421.

²²⁶ Quoted in Wang Ping, 33.

²²⁷ Quoted in Howard S. Levy, *Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious Erotic Custom* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1966), 72.

Anti-footbinding rhetoric of male reformers, gradually accepted by women themselves, paved the way for more direct and drastic interventions into women's bodies.²²⁸ Nevertheless, no matter that "the movement" tried to develop different sorts of coercive mechanisms, footbinding was not fully eradicated until the rule of Communist Party.²²⁹

Kang's *Da Tong Shu* (The book of the Great Harmony) in which he develops his vision of the ideal future world did not find its practical application in modern China because some of his ideas would be too experimental even for the most liberal social thinkers of our times. Notably, the position of woman is at the core of his concerns over the future of the world.²³⁰

Kang Youwei wrote the first draft of *Datong shu* (at the time named *Renlei gong li* [Universal Principles of the Humankind]) during 1884 and 1885, revised it in 1887, and completed it in 1902.²³¹ Kang's ideas expressed in *Datong shu* must have had an influence on other participants in late-Qing intellectual life, because, even though its complete text was not

²²⁸ See, for instance, Dorothy Ko's account on the anti-footbinding practices in early twentieth century Shanxi. Ko, 2005, 50-68.

²²⁹ Nevertheless, footbinding as "the phantom of modernity", to use Dorothy Ko's expression, continue to haunt contemporary imagination, both in text and visually. For a recent example of the book that features excessive visual material on old Chinese women with bound feet see Li Nan, *Jueshi jinlian* (Disappearing golden lotus) (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 2005). An analysis of visual material may begin with probing into the implications of the exposed poor, old, female body for our perception of the practice, as well as with the issues of foreign (white) women's curiosity and corporal comparison that is often captured on the photographs. Ko used the expression "the phantom of modernity" in her essay "Jazzing into Modernity: High Heels, Platforms, and Lotus Shoes," in *China Chic: East Meets West*, ed. Valerie Steele (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 146.

²³⁰ The following reading of *Datong shu* is extracted and revised section of a more detailed treatment of Kang's book. See Ristivojević, 2004, 51-57. I consulted both the Chinese version of text, and its edited translation made by Laurence G. Thompson.

²³¹ Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Burton Watson claim that by 1880s Kang "already formulated in his mind the ideas which became the basis of his two most famous works, *Da tong shu* and *Confucius as a Reformer*. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Burton Watson (with contributions by Yi-pao Mei, Leon Hurvitz, T'ung-tsu Ch'u, Chester Tan and John Meskill), ed. *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 725. Wang Zheng speculates that Kang was inspired by an American experimental novel *Looking Backward* (1888). See Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 36 n2.

published in Kang's lifetime,²³² he shared his views with his disciples and collaborators, and, as may be surmised, with his daughters, who were all familiar with the book's draft and outline.²³³

In the book Kang adopted Confucius's doctrine of the Three Governments (*san tong*) and the Three Ages (*san shi*), believing that after the Age of Disorder, the world will change into the Age of Increasing Peace-and-Equality, and finally into the Age of Completed Peace-and-Equality.²³⁴ Being born in the Age of Disorder Kang Youwei described his highest ideals and proposed the way to reach them.²³⁵

Kang's starting premise is that "the whole world is but a world of grief and misery."²³⁶ His claim is that there are nine kinds of divisions and differentiations (*jie*) which cause suffering, and their abolition will result in the world of Great Harmony. He asserted that when humankind, among others, eradicates the boundaries of nation, family, gender and race which are the platforms from which all suffering emerge, humankind will live in the One World of Complete Peace-and-Equality.²³⁷ Kang expresses seemingly universal critiques of women's position, and writes:

²³² He reportedly refused its complete publishing, even when his students and a Columbia University professor Friedrich Hirth insisted on it. Laurence G. Thompson, "'Ta T'ung Shu': The Book," in Kang, 1958, 27, 34. The complete version was published in 1935.

²³³ Furth, 327.

²³⁴ Kang, 72.

²³⁵ Kang did perceive China and India as "not escaping" from the first stage, but he did not think that Europe and America reached the final stage of development. Interestingly, a main supporting reason for the imperfection of Europe and America was that "in that their women are men's private possessions, they are far from [according with] universal principles, and as to the Way of finding happiness, they have likewise not attained it." Idem.

²³⁶ Ibid., 63.

²³⁷ Each of the nine *jie* had been discussed in a separate chapter. In addition to nation-boundaries, race-boundaries, family-boundaries, and gender-boundaries, Kang suggests the future without the divisions in terms of class, occupation, disorder (i.e. "the existence of unequal, unthorough, dissimilar, and unjust laws"), kinds (i.e. "the existence of separation between man and birds, beasts, insects, and fish"), and the erasure of suffering-boundaries which are perpetuating suffering. Ibid., 75. The character Kang use for gender is *xing* (form, shape).

In more than ten thousand years of human history, taking all nations of the whole earth together, incalculable, inconceivable numbers of people have had human form and human intelligence; moreover, each man has had some woman with whom he was most intimate, whom he loved the most. Yet men have callously and unscrupulously repressed women, restrained them, deceived them, shut them up, imprisoned them, and bound them. Men have prevented them from being officials, from living as citizens, from enjoying participation in public meetings. Still worse, men have not let them study, or hold discussions, or make a name for themselves, or have free social intercourse, or enjoy entertainment, or go sightseeing, or leave the house. And worse even than that, men have forced them to distort and bind their waists, veil their faces, compress their feet, and tattoo their bodies. The guiltless have been universally oppressed, the innocent universally punished. Such actions have been worse than the worst inhumanity. And yet throughout the world, past and present, for thousands of years, those whom we call good men, righteous men, have been accustomed to the sight of such things, have sat and looked and considered them to be matters of course, have not demanded justice for the victims or offered to help them. This is the most appalling, unjust, and unequal thing, the most inexplicable theory under heaven.

I now have a task: to cry out the natural grievances of the incalculable numbers of women of the past. I now have one great desire: to save the eight hundred million women of my own time from drowning in the sea of suffering. I now have a great longing: to bring the incalculable inconceivable numbers of women of the future the happiness of equality, of the Great Community and of independence.²³⁸

In urging for the equality of the sexes, Kang explains that “having become human beings, their [men’s and women’s] intelligence and wisdom is the same, their disposition and temperament is the same, their morality and immorality is the same...their ability to go about, see things, to do or stop [doing] is the same, their ability to handle affairs and to use reason is the same. Women are not different from men; men are not different from women.”²³⁹ For this reason, Kang criticized women’s inequality with men that he identified in the lack of opportunity for women to directly participate in public affairs, i.e. to become officials, scholars or members of parliament, and in the lack of women’s independence from the family.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Ibid., 149-150.

²³⁹ Ibid., 150.

²⁴⁰ As a remedy Kang suggested the establishment of girls’ schools that would be the same as that of boys’ school. Idem. For more on Kang’s visions of women’s future see Lü Meiyi and Zheng Yongfu, *Zhongguo funü yundong*

However, when an analysis of Kang's version of equality brings together the race and gender as the intersecting categories of power-allocation, it becomes clear that Kang's approach to women was utterly racially selective. A chapter of *Datong shu* that elaborates the elimination of racial differentiations is of a great importance not only for theorizing the ways in which a category of race (*zhong*) had been introduced and conceptualized by Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, but also for mapping the discourses on women that were, as we will see from the examples of a number of texts publicized in *Nüxue bao*, significantly relating and relying on male-generated visions of equality and its role in modern/izing hierarchies.

In Kang's view, racial boundary is "the most difficult [of all the boundaries to abolish]." ²⁴¹ There are four races in the world - white, yellow, brown, and black - and "their surface colors are completely different, and their spiritual constitutions are very dissimilar." ²⁴² According to Kang, the first step in abolishing racial boundaries and bringing together the humankind in equality and unity is the amalgamation and smelting of races. "The strength of the white race is assuredly superior, while the yellow race is more numerous and also wiser," Kang clarifies, and estimates that, under the influence of certain types of climate, food and drink and interracial propagation, ²⁴³ it will take less than one hundred years for the "golden-colored" races

(1840-1921) (Chinese women's movement [1840-1921]) (Henan: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1990), 68-71. See also Zhang Lianbo, *Zhongguo jindai funü jiefang sixiang licheng* (Historical development of the ideas about women's liberation in early Modern China) (Henan: Henan Daxue chubanshe, 2005), 62-67.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 140. For the way in which *Datong shu* treats the issue of race see Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 43-47. In his reading, Tsu is, however, not using intersectional perspective.

²⁴² As Kang perceives, "we have the white race of Europe, the yellow race of Asia, the black race of Africa, and the brown race of the Pacific and South Sea islands." Indians are addressed as "all black in color" and their hot land is to be blamed their "fierce and ugly" appearance. In addition, Kang talks about China's southern developed by "the intelligent posterity of our Yellow Emperor race," and predict the eminent extinction of its non-Han inhabitants under the process of "natural evolution which cannot be escaped." Ibid., 141-143.

²⁴³ Kang includes the following factors as influencing "men's appearance and color and bodily characteristics": race, environment, weather, food and drink, daily behavior, housing and exercise. Ibid., 144.

to become “silver-colored” ones. The talents and appearance of the white and yellow people being not very disparate will enable them to be amalgamated, and “before the One World has been perfected, the yellow people will already have changed completely into white people.”²⁴⁴ Without seeing any contradiction with the celebrated concept of equality, Kang deems that the black and brown people, “being so distant [in color] from the white people, will be really difficult to amalgamate”, and, by the Era of One World, after passing through thousands of years of selection, they will be decimated.²⁴⁵

Kang’s argument of racial eugenics posits the reproductive power and the desire of white and yellow women (that is, of white women and of yellow women who would eventually become white) as symbolic bearers of the future ideal world. At the same time, brown and black women are not envisaged as controlling actors in the racial politics of the desire that would lead to the ideal world. In Kang’s view, white women will continue to reproduce the white race, thus reinforcing its supremacy. Nonetheless, “with the refined beauty of white women and the monstrous ugliness of negro men, to hope for intercourse between them which will transform the race is [to hope for something] which will never be desired by human nature.”²⁴⁶ Hence, due to the “natural inclinations” of racially selective white women’s desire, black people will not be able to “transmit their kind to the new Era of One World” and would probably be swept from the earth.²⁴⁷ The only chance for black people to approach this process is to become brown in a

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 141, 144.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 141-143.

²⁴⁶ Kang explained his argument about a beautiful white woman and the impossibility of her desiring a black man by raising the example of America. After describing black men as having “iron faces, silver teeth, slanting jaws like a pig, front view like an ox, full breasts and long hair, their hands and feet dark black, stupid like ship or swine”, and expressing his doubt that a sophisticated white woman will wish to “share a mutual love with them, will [consider them to be] equals, will eat with them”, Kang admits that there are such cases in America but that it won’t pass too long, and all the offspring of these unions will be completely changed into whites. Ibid., 144.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 148.

similar way in which brown people are going to ‘improve’ their complexion, because owing to black people’s “extreme ugliness and stupidity... promoting mixed marriages with them is next to impossible.”²⁴⁸

There was a slight chance for the survival of brown and (even a slighter one of) black races though: if we apply “The Method of Migration,” i.e. move them to the geographic space that would with time alter the shade of their skin, “The Method of Mixed Marriages,” and nurture them with suitable food, drink and exercise, they would need two to three hundred years to become suitable for Kang’s racial eugenics. Intermarriages are more acceptable between white and yellow-to-become-white superior races and brown-skinned people, and, as Kang notices, there is a prospect of seeing “countless marriages between light and dark races” because, when lighter races live for a while with the darker people, they “soon lose this idea [about the ugliness of darker people].”²⁴⁹ As the author projects, in order to encourage the marriage of the “higher” and the “lower” races, “all [yellow and white] men who can mate with brown and black women, and all [yellow and white] women who can mate with brown men will have conferred on them the decoration of ‘person of *ren*’ and will [be treated with] a special kind of etiquette...The name of the decoration will be ‘race reformer’.”²⁵⁰

Hence, the vision of racial amalgamation that Kang offered is basically racially selective miscegenation aiming to re/establish the white race as the sole standard in the future One World. . Thus, through the Kang Youwei’s envisioning of the United World, as the racial borders are to

²⁴⁸ Kang also has one additional “solution” to this issue: “to remove them wholesale to Canada, Sweden, and Norway, to occupy the empty lands there”. After three hundred years in new environment and intermarriages the black people will become brown, and they would then continue “to merge into lighter shades”, only to become whites in a period from seven hundred to a thousand years. *Idem*.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

be erased – by extinguishing or whitening of the darker races - the hierarchy of white, yellow, brown and black people/women not only but it got its ultimate shape – the uniformity in superior whiteness.

After the *coup d'état* in 1898 Kang fled to Japan, and during several years following 1899 he was on the move, living in Hong Kong, Japan, America, England, Penang, Singapore, India. During his years of exile, he continued to propagate “constitutional monarchy-plus-reform” as the alternative better than the increasingly popular revolution. He returned to China 1913 but he refused the invitation by Yuan Shikai to become a member of the government.²⁵¹ He lived in Shanghai, engaged with his studies and endeavors to restore the monarchy and promote Confucianism for Chinese religion.²⁵² Kang Youwei died in 1927 in Qingdao.

All the issues that I’ve tackled in this chapter point to the level of complexity of changes that were taking place in the world of ideas and realities of nineteenth-century China. The following chapter will stay in this dynamic ideo-political contextual framework, but will refocus my investigation on the ways in which late-Qing women embraced the opportunities born out of and limited by late nineteenth century destabilization and redefinition of China acknowledged geo-civilizational *nei-wai* ordering.

²⁵¹ Thompson, 19 – 21.

²⁵² For an informative essay about Kang Youwei’s life see Howard L. Boorman, ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, Volume one* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), 230-233.

Chapter 4: Extending the *nei*: Chinese women's association, the school and the journal

As Gail Hershatter observes, women in the reformers' discourses were "footbound, confined to the inner quarters, denied the most rudimentary education, and economically unproductive," and these discourses were shifting the attention "to the domestic as the source of public ills rather than the foundation of public order."²⁵³ In the context of the Wuxu reform period China when the *nei* came to be perceived as the source of China's weakness rather than of its power, two important conditions empowered female relatives and acquaintances of the reformers to organize, argue and act in the socio-political arena. These conditions were the norms of neo/Confucian propriety which did not sanction men's unlimited access to women, and reformists' desires to reinstate the advance position of China in the value-system that related the position of women with the level of civilization and with the international standing of the country.

As I will discuss in this chapter, women in imperial China did communicate, gather and form groups, and these women's groups were focused on the exchange of women's artistic accomplishments. Moreover, as we will see, it cannot be stated that the Wuxu period inspired women to become directly engaged in the discussions and actions concerned with the political situation for the first time in the history of Chinese Empire. Women in the past did address political matters in their poetry and during their gatherings, and there was a tradition of

²⁵³ Gail Hershatter, "Making the Visible Invisible: The Fate of "The Private" in Revolutionary China," in *Wusheng zhi sheng (I): Jindai Zhongguo de funü yu guojia (1600-1950)* (Voices amid silence [I]: Modern Chinese women and state, 1600-1950), ed. Lü Fangshang, Taipei: Institute for Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2003), 259. Hershatter talks about the activists in the early twentieth century but, as I've already discusses, this view was formed by the Wuxu reformers.

celebrated women who were praised for their martial skills and political wisdom. Nonetheless, as this chapter will demonstrate, the sense of acute crises in the closing years of the nineteenth century did empower women to become a distinct and fully acknowledged group of socio-political actors. They began to form the alliances which relied on socio-political visions of China and Chinese women's future; they exchanged their ideas about the directions in which socio-political change should head; and they began to act as agents of changes that would significantly influence the future of China and Chinese women.

In the previous chapter I've analyzed the ideo-political context of late-Qing China that decisively influenced the expansion and delimiting of the socio-political space late-Qing women inhabited. In the present chapter, after discussing the notions of *nei* and *wai* when "inner" and "outer" stand for the proscribed differences organized along the gendered lines in terms of space, labor and discourse, I proceed to an analysis of this newly accommodated "outer" space women involved in the Wuxu reform period accommodated. In doing so, I focus both on the reconstruction of the networks of various actors involved in its creation, as well as on the ways in which women-oriented reformist projects functioned after their operating space was marked within the "outer" sphere.

It will become clear in the course of this chapter that the entrance of women as a group into the political life of late-Qing China has been a matter of contesting and contradicting historical accounts and interpretations, disclosing once again the issues of historical and historiographical under- and overrepresentation, as well as our full dependence on historical material and historical literature and their diverse investments and interests. My narration of the events that involved women as objects and/or subjects of discussions and actions will try to bring together and analyze multiple visions of these events presented by the participants themselves

and later by historians. My analysis is guided by the following questions: Who was involved in the establishments of women's school, women's association and women's journal? Once established, how did these three projects operate? What were the relations among women and men in these processes, and what can they tell us about the cooperation of participants and their motives in getting involved in activities which contributed to the creation of a socio-political collective identity of Chinese women?

4.1. *Nei* and *wai*: Gendered divisions of space, labor, and discursive genre

The crucial description of *nei* and *wai* domains that inspired centuries of interpretations to come is the explanation of the thirty-seventh hexagram, *jiaren* (family), from the *Yijing* (The Book of Changes), and it reads:

The proper place for the woman is inside (*nei*) the family,
and the proper place for the man is outside (*wai*) the family.
When both man and woman are in their proper places,
this is the great appropriateness (*yi*) of heaven (*tian*) and earth (*di*).²⁵⁴

Discussing the ordering of space in early China, Mark Lewis explains that its ritual organization had been conceived as nested ordering of units which are at the same time

²⁵⁴ Translation from Robin R. Wang, "Virtue (de), Talent (cai), and Beauty (se): Authoring a Full-fledged Womanhood in Lienüzhuan (Biographies of Women)," in Herschok and Ames, 95. This is an excerpt from the explanation of the hexagram *jiaren* (family). *Yijing* as a philosophical text is cherished in Confucian and Daoist traditions. The book has been usually regarded as a divination book, but, as Wang points out, "its philosophical profundity is by no means limited to divination...[since] the ideals of *Yijing* have also been employed in the areas of politics, literature, and daily life." For a brief introduction of *Yijing* and the entire text for the hexagram *jiaren* see Hai-ming Wen and John Trowbridge, "The Classic of Changes (*Yijing*)," in *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture*, ed. Robin R. Wang (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 25-28, 41-43.

depending on and influential for each other. He identifies a human body (including its physical and mental aspects) as the smallest spatial unit that gets absorbed into a larger spatial unit of the household or family. The family was, in turn, conceived as a fragment of larger orders of the kinship or the state, city, region and the world, and concludes that:

Ultimately, all these forms of ordering space were aspects of an encompassing vision of unity. The perfected body was fashioned on the image of the world state or the cosmos and culminated in an influence that reached to the edges of the earth. The household likewise was a microcosm of the state, and it became a unit for order within the larger structures of the empire or lineage. The divided city, or specifically its political half, became one element within a world empire formed by a network of such cities that culminated in an imperial capital constructed as a ritual center for the regulation of the cosmos. All regions were treated as fragments of a greater whole, drawn together through the centripetal flow of men and tribute goods to the encompassing culture of the capital and the court. And the world empire itself was only one element within a vaster cosmos formed through the progressive outward extension of the units that made up the Chinese world.²⁵⁵

As in the case of the body, Lewis further reveals, the ideas about the household stressed both its character as a fragment of larger wholes and its internal divisions which are conducted through the gendered divisions of proper space and behavior of men and women, and concludes that:

The physical structure of the elite Chinese house, the spatial distribution of power within it, and the broader imagery of spatially defined power produced the curious phenomenon in which the place of women and the place of authority converged. Indeed, this hidden reality of female power defined the history of the ruling house and the imperial institution of the period [of early Chinese history]...Thus, the tension between the structure of the household and the structure of the state and lineage that attempted to encompass it produced one of the fundamental fault lines of early Chinese society.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Lewis, 10. More on nei-wai mapping the body see the first chapter in Lewis's book. See also Vivienne Lo, "Crossing the Neihuan 'Inner Pass': A Nei/wai 'Inner/Outer' Distinction in Early Chinese Medicine," EASTM 17 (2000).

²⁵⁶ Lewis, 77, 78. What Lewis discusses is the power of the mother.

Therefore, the problem of gender disparity in Chinese society is, as Rosenlee points out, a problem of the ritual boundary of the *nei* and the *wai* as gender-based divisions of labor and spheres of activities.²⁵⁷

As I've already indicated, *nei* and *wai* are not static and strictly defined binaries. Instead, to use Rosenlee's wording, "the boundary between *nei* and *wai* is constantly moving and being renegotiated, depending on the unique makeup of its social and political context."²⁵⁸ "Ideas of spatial divisions and gendered differentiation of work were *theoretically* more rigid and less mutable," Bryna Goodman and Wendy Larson remind us.²⁵⁹ But actually, as Dorothy Ko instructs, it was precisely the ambiguity of the concepts of *nei* and *wai* which allowed "individuals much room for maneuvering between ideal norm and actual behavior" that in turn required further visual and physical accentuation of *nei-wai* distinction.²⁶⁰ And, as Patricia Buckley Ebrey notices, what was implied in the Confucian moralists' underlining of importance of maintaining the separation between these two spheres (and the two sexes) is the lack of compliance to the rules.²⁶¹

Rosenlee perceives that a relational self in Confucian thinking participates in an exchange of influences between the family, community, state and the world at large, all envisaged by the author in "a series of concentric circles."²⁶² The "focused center of relational self" is the family, Rosenlee argues, and identifies family as a main generator, sustainer and justifier of gender

²⁵⁷ Rosenlee, 2010, 180.

²⁵⁸ Rosenlee, 2006, 70; See also Ko, 1996, 144-145.

²⁵⁹ Goodman and Larson, 4.

²⁶⁰ Ko, 1994b, 145.

²⁶¹ Buckley Ebrey, 25.

²⁶² Rosenlee, 2010, 176.

disparities because it is the point of junction of the moral and cultural imperatives of the continuity of the family name, filial piety, and ancestor worship.²⁶³

As Walter H. Slote summarizes:

The Confucian family traditionally has been defined by its value system: age grading the generational sequence; the dutiful bonding between parents and siblings; the security brought to its members by a complex but highly effective extended family system; the common core of intensely structured values; an ethical code and a morality widely disseminated and known to all; a role definition in which everyone had a specific assignment; industriousness, discipline, and the elevated position given to learning.²⁶⁴

Tamara Hamlish notices that there were no legal statutes which dictated that women could not be appointed to public office, to hold government posts, or sit for the civil examinations. It was “an extensive social code” that governed the behavior of women in a way that it delegated it almost exclusively “on their roles and responsibilities within the Chinese kinship system.”²⁶⁵ Gendered social codes were learned in one’s family, where the education played a key role in inculcating the pattern of authority to male and female future loyal subjects.

The Confucian Four Books and Five Classics constituted men’s education that directed them to the ritually sanctioned engagement in the world of *wen* (literature) and *zheng* (government). The purpose of men’s education was to shape loyal participants in Chinese

²⁶³ Rosenlee, 2010, 176; Rosenlee, 2006, 121, 122. For more on relational self in Confucian thought see, for instance Kwong-loi Shun and David B. Wong, ed. *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Yu Jiyuan, “Confucius’ Relational Self and Aristotle’s Political Animal,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (2005).

²⁶⁴ Walter H. Slote, “Psychocultural Dynamics within the Confucian Family,” in *Confucianism and the Family*, ed. Walter H Slote and George A. De Vos (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 38.

²⁶⁵ Tamara Hamlish, “Calligraphy, Gender, and Chinese Nationalism,” in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (London and New York: 2000), 217. Yet, Goodman and Larson write that “women were legally barred from public service and, ideally, from serious scholarship and outdoor occupations.” Bryna Goodman and Wendy Larson, “Introduction: Axes of Gender: Divisions of Labor and Spatial Separation,” in Goodman and Larson, 2005, 3.

political and intellectual life who would safeguard the orders of culture, civility and the state, while the harmony and “good government” of the family, and, in extension, of an order on a much wider scale, had been allotted to the orthodox women’s education.

In late-Qing China peasant women, comprising at least 70 per cent of all women in China, were completely illiterate.²⁶⁶ The girls from the upper and middle class families of the merchants and artisans were schooled by their mothers, elder sisters and their female teachers in the household arts of sewing, weaving, supervising a household, and, the most important among them, embroidery.²⁶⁷ Daughters were also instructed in *Qin qi shu hua* (The Four Arts) in an endeavor to become a *cainü*, a woman who was admired for her talents and artistic accomplishments. As Chen Hengzhe, known also under the name of Sophia H. Chen, has written in her essay “The Chinese woman in a modern world studied in the light of her heritage and her potentialities”:

They [The Four Arts] are, firstly, music, particularly with reference to the art of playing the Chinese seven-stringed harp, called the *Chine*; secondly, the art of playing difficult chess; and thirdly and lastly, the arts of calligraphy and painting. These four arts were considered the essential achievements of a perfect Chinese lady, though the additional gift of scholarship or literary ability or both would make that lady even more admirable in the eyes of her intellectual male friends.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Ida Belle Lewis, *Education of Girls in China* (New York City: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1919), 14. Nevertheless, as Lloyd Eastman pointed out, “In spite of their inferior station in society, it was true...that while women were illiterate they were not uneducated. The responsibilities of the home were heavy and called for many kinds of skill. Vocational standards were set high and the instruction which she received fitted the girl for such duties as were thought properly hers.” See Lloyd. E. Eastman, *Family, Fields, and Ancestors: Constancy and Change in China’s Social and Economic History, 1550-1949* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10.

²⁶⁷ See Grace S. Fong, “Female Hands: Embroidery as a Knowledge Field in Women’s Everyday Life in Late Imperial and Early Republican China,” *Late Imperial China* 25, no. 1 (2004) and Jowen R. Tung, *Fables for the Patriarchs: Gender Politics in Tang Discourse* (Lanham Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 190, 192.

²⁶⁸ Chen Hengzhe (Sophia H. Chen), *The Chinese Woman and Four Other Essays* (Peiping: b.n., 1934).

The ethical project of educating a woman who would bring up filial sons and maintain the orders of the family, and, in extension, of larger socio-political units, was conducted by the instruction of girls and women into the Women's Four Books, particular types of literature, and historical records. This instructive material created a new extended meaning on *nei* and *wai*: appropriate forms of literacy that were to be used distinctively by men and women.

Paralleling the formation of the classical cannon for men, the corpus of Four Books for Women (*Nü si shu*) was created for women and by women. These four books are: Ban Zhao's *Nüjie* (Admonitions for Women); *Nü lunyu* (Analects for Women) written by Song Ruoxin and Song Ruozhao during the reign of the Tang dynasty; *Neixun* (Instruction for the Inner Quarters) written by Empress Xu of Ming; and *Nüfan jielu* (A Brief Outline of Rules for Women) written by the compiler Wang Xiang's widowed mother, Madame Liu.²⁶⁹

These works are problematic when read from egalitarian perspective,²⁷⁰ but, as Kang-I Sun Chang theorizes, instructive works for women in Imperial China managed to "triumph, largely through women's own consent and promotion" because they were about the power that women gets if she adhere to ethical codes.²⁷¹ As Dorothy Ko explains, "all the social power of elite men were conferred onto their women as long as the latter fulfilled their filial duties as

²⁶⁹ More on the role that women's education played in preparing young women for their marital lives see Susan Mann, "Grooming a Daughter for Marriage: Brides and Wives in the Mid-Ch'ing Period," in *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, ed. Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994a), 213-214. See also Susan Mann, "The Education of Daughters in the Mid-Ch'ing Period," in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994b). *Women's Four Books* are organized as the anthology by male literati Wang Xiang (1789-1852) in the mid-Qing period. Rosenlee, 2006, 103.

²⁷⁰ As Tu Wei-ming points out, when observed from the modern egalitarian and liberal perspective, a most problematic legacy of Confucian ethics is the concept of Three Bonds (*sangang*), that is, the idea that emerged relatively late (in A.D. 75) which prescribed the authority of the ruler over the official, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife. Tu Wei-ming, "Probing the 'Three Bonds' and 'Five Relationships' in Confucian Humanism", in Walter H. Slote and George A. De Vos, *Confucianism and the Family*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, 122, 135.

²⁷¹ Kang-I Sun Chang, "Ming-Qing Women Poets and the Notions of 'Talent' and 'Morality'," in Hutters, Wong, and Yu, 242.

mother and wife,²⁷² and it was the educational material that played a significant role in women's appropriation of the neo/Confucian norms of gendered propriety.

Ban Zhao's (45–120 AD) *Nüjie* was a symbol of “tremendous *power* of [women's] moral suasion,”²⁷³ and was persistently used as an instructing material in women's education until the 1930s.²⁷⁴ Ban Zhao is celebrated for completing the *Hanshu* (The book of Han) after the death of her brother, the Imperial historian Ban Gu, in the midst of his compilation of the dynastic history.²⁷⁵ Rosenlee follows Chen Yu-shi and interprets the “excessive humility and conservatism” of the *Nüjie* as “a public statement by Ban Zhao and Empress Deng to display their loyalty to the patrilineal Han court under the watchful eye of their male counterparts.” In other words, Rosenlee suggest that Ban Zhao was compelled to write in this fashion so as to persuade the male officials and the Emperor that the ladies of the court won't endanger and usurp male political power.²⁷⁶

Nü lunyu was originally written by Song Ruoxin, the eldest of the five daughters of a Tang literatus Song Tingfen, and later annotated by her sister Song Ruozhao. It was written simple style of writing, brief twelve chapters composed of four characters lines which may be interpreted as the authors' intention to make the learning less demanding for young girls, it was one of the most widely circulated texts in ancient China.²⁷⁷

²⁷² Dorothy Ko, “Rethinking Sex, Female Agency, and Footbinding,” *Jindai Zhongguo funiushi yanjiu* 7 (1999):102.

²⁷³ Kang-I Sun Chang, 242. Emphasis is in the original.

²⁷⁴ Sherry Mou, “Introduction,” in *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*, ed. Sherry J. Mou (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), xviii-xix.

²⁷⁵ In addition to *Nüjie* and *Hanshu*, the material she authored that is available for contemporary consultation include the memorials written to the Emperor and the Empress, three poems, and an essay about her trip to the eastern frontier that she took when accompanying her son to his new imperial post. Rosenlee, 2006, 127.

²⁷⁶ Ban Zhao tutored the Empress Deng (d. 121 CE), palace ladies and numerous male historians. Rosenlee, 2006, 103.

²⁷⁷ Rosenlee, 2006, 107.

Neixun was written by the Empress Xu of the Ming dynasty. Unlike *Nüjie* and *Nü lunyu*, the texts written to educated general female public, these instructions were written exclusively for the members of the Ming royal family - empresses and high court ladies. The content was, thus, modified to serve its purpose: the manual was not concerned only with female virtues in the familial realm but it also included the narratives on the praiseworthy behavior and characters of the past empresses, the ways to treat the servants in the Palace, how to deal with the empress's relatives.²⁷⁸

Nüfan jielu was written by the compiler Wang Xiang's widowed mother Lady Liu. The text does not discuss in a great detail house management nor uses "excessive humble rhetoric that naturalizes the lowly position of women" characteristic for Ban Zhao's *Nüjie*. Instead, it is preoccupied with the cultivation of virtue and historical women who exemplify it.²⁷⁹

In addition to the Four books, *Lie nü* (Exemplary Women) tradition played a critical role in fostering the particular sense of morality among women and in creating the opportunities to women from the later generations to negotiate the meanings of the short stories so as navigate through the strict moral precepts, opportunities sanctioned and limited by the situational and complementing social relations, and their personal inclinations.²⁸⁰ The earliest compilation of these instructive stories was made by the Han dynasty scholar Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan* (Biographies of Exemplary Women) in c.a. 18 BC, and composed of 125 life sketches of exemplary women. The virtues that Liu Xiang praised were *muyi* (maternal rectitude); *xianming* (sage intelligence); *renzhi* (benevolent wisdom); *zhenshun* (purity and deference); *jieyi* (chastity

²⁷⁸ Rosenlee, 2006, 108.

²⁷⁹ Rosenlee, 2006, 109.

²⁸⁰ Nanxiu Qian claims that there was a parallel *xian nü* tradition. See Nanxiu Qian, *Spirit and Self in Medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yü and Its Legacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

and appropriateness); and *biantong* (skill in argument), but the virtues for which women were praised was changing over the time.²⁸¹

In the later dynastic biographical sketches of women, they were chiefly applauded for their roles of a filial daughter, chaste wife and self-sacrificial widowed mother, and the number of included biographies in the dynastic histories was gradually but persistently increasing over the centuries.²⁸² The texts and its accompanying illustrations in the Qing period that I observe represented, thus, advocated virtues of filial piety, chastity and marital fidelity. Hence, in the introduction to the section on women's biographies, a record from the Qing dynasty celebrates women primarily for being “*xiaonü* (filial daughters), *xiaofu* (filial wives), *lienü* (daring daughters), *liefu* (daring wife), *shoujie* (protecting chastity), *shunjie* (dying for chastity), and *weihuan shoujie* (protecting chastity before marriage).”²⁸³

Just like the afore-discussed forms of education - the education in the household arts, the four arts, and textual and visual instructions pointed to cultivation of women's virtue – that were transmitted by women to women, footbinding, as “a feat of physio-psycho-sociological engineering”²⁸⁴ not only physically and visually accentuated the *nei-wai* distinction in terms of gender, but have also exemplified self-discipline, cultivated beauty, Han ethnicity, that is, the civilization itself.²⁸⁵ A mother or an older female relative would do the first binding usually

²⁸¹ Rosenlee, 2006, 97.

²⁸² The later Han compilation contained eighteen stories; in Sui, Tang and Song dynasties the number of the stories about *lie nü* varied from 16 to 55; while we see a sharp increase to one hundred eighty seven accounts in Yuan dynasty. Rosenlee speculates that this happened because of the general increase of the population, as well as because of the institutionalization of the chaste widowhood. An additional development in the genre happened during the Ming dynasty when the illustrated *Lienü zhuan* appeared, blurring the boundaries between literate and illiterate audience. Rosenlee, 2006, 99-102.

²⁸³ Rosenlee, 2006, 100.

²⁸⁴ John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 72.

²⁸⁵ About footbinding as accentuation of *nei-wai*, see Ko, 1994b, 145.

when the girl was between five and seven years old, when she became able “to understand things” (*dongshi*) and accept constraints and pain as a means of self-discipline. From that point, as Fred C. Blake speculates, footbinding would be a means of cultivating her mindful body through footbinding.²⁸⁶ The pain was agonizing, but it would vanish in a few years, and from that point on a girl would bind, cherish and ornament her small feet and shoes by herself.²⁸⁷

The origins of footbinding still remain obscure because of only vague references from classical poetic and prose works about it.²⁸⁸ Its more documented, but still inconclusive history claims that the first woman who bound her feet was a famous beauty and a dancer Yao Niang, a favorite concubine of Li Yu at the end of the tenth century AC. In Northern China, footbinding started in the Imperial harem during the late Tang dynasty as a custom of trained dancers. The ladies of the imperial palace accepted the custom by the twelfth century, and it spread gradually in terms of class and space during the succeeding dynasties. Thus, in Song period (960-1279) footbinding was performed among the families that claimed aristocratic lineage; during the Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty it was transmitted from the north to the center and south of China, and in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-19121) eras it was accepted by a mass of the Han Chinese population.²⁸⁹

In terms of ethnicity, by the end of the seventeenth century Han Chinese women of all socioeconomic backgrounds were binding their feet, together with the Jewish and Korean upper-

²⁸⁶ At the approximately the same age, a disciplining process would also begin. His mother’s affection had to be restrained, and his textual education began. Fred C. Blake, “Foot-binding in Neo-Confucian China and the Appropriation of Female Labor,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 3 (1994): 679, 680.

²⁸⁷ On women’s shoes and the ways in which they served to show women’s industriousness and sophisticated artistic skills and taste see Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

²⁸⁸ For an example of different interpretation see Wang Ping, 29-30.

²⁸⁹ About regional and class variations in undertaking footbinding during the late Qing see Turner, 445-453, 457, 459-464; Levy, 54.

class ladies, male prostitutes and the male actors of the traditional Beijing opera. Manchu ladies were forbidden to do so, but they were trying to imitate the small feet with the help of specially-designed shoes, while Hakka, Mongol, Tibetan, Miao and Muslim women did not invest in their feet.²⁹⁰

Pre-nineteenth century world observed from the Chinese perspective, as I've discussed in the previous chapter, assumed the unquestioned superiority of the neo/ Confucian tradition over its surrounding neighbors. A constitutive part of the *nei-wai* civilizational relations were ritualized gender roles, with cultural and political interpretations of the bound feet of Chinese women significantly contributing to China's self-understanding of *the* civilization.

Hence, as Dorothy Ko credibly claims, in the Chinese projects of *you hua qi su* (to entice them to civilize their customs), the uncultivated area peripheral to the Chinese empire and its inhabitants were to be incorporated in the Chinese civilizational realm by the production of local history, by the building of Confucian schools, and by the canonization of virtuous women.²⁹¹ Footbinding got demarcated as the "necessary 'attire' of a virtuous Chinese woman" and "a sign of the civility that China monopolized."²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Levy, 53; Jackson, 97.

²⁹¹ Dorothy Ko, "The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 4 (1997): 10; Mann, 1997, 44. On a point that Chinese woman served as "the bearer of civilization to the 'savages'" see Emma Jinhua Teng, "A Brief Record of the Eastern Ocean by Ding Shaoyi (fl. 1847)," in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, ed. Susan Mann and Yu-yin Cheng (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), 254. For a consciousness of upper-class Chinese women in high Qing "who saw themselves as embodiments of a 'civilized' society, displaying Confucian morality along with literary accomplishments" see Susan Mann, "Women, Families, and Gender Relations," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 9, Part One: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, ed. Willard J. Peterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 468-471; and Mann, 1997, 215-216.

²⁹² Ko, 1997, 10. A different set of documents also imply that footbinding represented a constitutive element of Han Chinese cultural identity. Manchu Emperors understood footbinding as a marker of loyalty to the Ming dynasty, and, starting with 1636, Qing court started to issue edicts that prohibited it and urged Chinese women to start wearing Manchu dress. All these edicts were not successful.

As yet another constitutive part of civility created by and displaying *nei-wai* boundaries was gendered division of labor defined by the expression *nangeng nüzhì* (man plows and woman weaves). As the texts published in *Nüxue bao* reflect, “in symbolic terms, *nangeng nüzhì* constitutes the moral character of one’s own person through which the virtues of diligence, industry, and filial servitude are expressed.”²⁹³

The relation between gender, labor and civilization may be schematized as follows: civilization starts with a proper demarcation of gender norms through the regulation of the use of space, body, and possession and use of ritual items, all defined by and defining the symbolic division and operation within *nei-wai* spheres. Allocating the men to agriculture and women to sericulture, the division of labor at the same time defines and reflects the proper *nei-wai* gendered ordering, and, in turn, a civilizing process.²⁹⁴

A supreme source and display of civility, literacy and writing, are the parts of the *wai* proper. *Wen* (literary learning), as Rosenlee explains, leads to exclusively male appropriate engagement in *zheng* (governance). Hence, as she concludes, the imposition of the *nei* and *wai* boundaries on gender roles is the root of gender disparities in premodern China: gender division along the *nei* and *wai* lines reduces women to reproduction and denies her “a legitimate access to vital cultural resources that are needed for the cultivation of the consummated Confucian personhood.”²⁹⁵

Discussing women’s writing Grace Fong notes:

²⁹³ Rosenlee, 2006, 81.

²⁹⁴ Rosenlee, 2006, 80, 81.

²⁹⁵ Rosenlee, 2006, 113. This sharp statement may be a good place to emphasize that I am quoting the authors who discuss the precepts, not “real” practices of women and men in late-Qing China.

Daughters in liberal families in the Ming and Qing received training in reading and writing, especially in poetry as the genre appropriate for women's self-expression and communication, but, with few exceptions, the average women's life led to inexorably to marriage and her domestic role as wife (daughter-in-law) and mother...After marriage, the opportunity to engage in writing in a regular and sustained manner varied greatly among women and among families. The attitude of the husband, his parents, and the general environment of his family were often crucial factors determining whether a woman could or would continue to write...it is only through the indispensable support, encouragement, and efforts of others, most notably husbands, fathers, and other close male kin, that women's writings were published and preserved.²⁹⁶

Rosenlee contends that a writing woman in Imperial China is subversive per se because she is trespassing the boundary which posits *wen* – literary culture, into the *wai* sphere, and that women, through their writing and presence in the literary world legitimized both female authorship and readership.²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, women's literature, in Guo Yanli's words, "mainly focused on hidden love and romance, like, female parting sorrows, spring longings, autumn thoughts and boudoir love affairs."²⁹⁸ Men, on the other hand, had the access to different forms of discourse and culturally valued genres.²⁹⁹

According to Andrea Janku, there were several categories of genre created and consumed by literati of Imperial China that were of a great importance for the emergence of journalism in late-Qing China. In the context of my thesis, the beginning of usage of these genres by women,

²⁹⁶ Grace Fong, "Introduction," in Fong and Widmer, 9.

²⁹⁷ Rosenlee, 2006, 102. This point is made by almost all the authors with whom I am aligning with in my study.

²⁹⁸ Guo Yanli, "An Introduction to Modern Chinese Female Literature," *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no. 2, 2003, pp. 109-122.p.110, 111. Scholarship on women's literary pursuits in Imperial China is abundant. In addition to Ko's, Mann's, and Fong's work I've quoted so far, see, for instance Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang, ed. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) and the impressive compilation of women's work collected and contextualized in Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant, ed. *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

²⁹⁹ On the importance of analysis pointed to the access to particular communicative events and culturally valued genres see, for instance, Teun A. Van Dijk, "Discourse, Power and Access," in *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1996).

that is, their appropriation by the contributors to *Nüxue bao* may be understood as an additional destabilization of *nei-wai* relationships in terms of gendered socially-sanctioned access to particular forms of discourse and genre. These genres are: *lunbian* (judgment and argumentative essays), *xuba* (comments on texts), *shushui* (letters and speeches of persuasion) and *zouyi* (memorials and policy proposals).

The essay of judgment, “the most authoritative genre,” served to make a distinction between of what is true and what is false and between right and wrong, and rely on the authority of the Classics and the ancient philosophies when representing the author’s opinion. The writings of this genre have in their headings *lun* (judgments), and some are identified as *yuan* (the origins of), *bian* (argumentations), *jie* (explanations), *yi* (proposals), *shui* (persuasions) and song (panegyrics). However, as Janku adds, the presence or absence of these words in the title does not necessarily mean that the text is or it is not *lun*. It is rather the content of the text that is conditioning the genre.³⁰⁰ Comments on texts have the basic function to “explain the origins” and “expound the correct meaning” of the text and are mostly called *xu* (prefaces), *ji...hou*, *du...hou*, or *shu...hou* (comments on reading), or *lun* or *bian* (judgments on). Whether a text belongs to the genre of memorial or letter of persuasion depends on “the communicative situation”. That is, memorial may be the same text as a letter of persuasion, written by the same man, but submitted in a different capacity of a writer to the sovereign. That is, if the writer acts a minister in the government of the ruler, the letter he wrote and sent to his master is memorial, while the letter he sends to the ruler to whom he doesn’t serve is persuasion.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Janku, 114.

³⁰¹ Janku, 115.

Thus, although it would be a generalization to say that “women’s education aimed at perfect submission not personal development,”³⁰² women’s education was expected to perpetuate the order within demarcated social structures, not to facilitate women’s direct participation in the *wai* realms of government and certain types of literacy. Nevertheless, in contrast to the Ming and early Qing period of the expansion of female literacy, when, “unlike their male counterparts, talented and learned women have no legitimate access to the *wai* realm where their talents can be utilized by the state and hence their advanced literacy can be justified,”³⁰³ late-Qing ideological context extended an invitation to women to organize, discuss and participate in educational and journalistic reformist projects.

4.2. Setting the networks in motion: Chinese “public”, press and cooperating men

The modes of actions and discussions that participants in the women-oriented reformist project undertook were embedded in the wider framework of the state-society relations in Imperial China. As R. Bin Wong explains:

Europe’s public sphere was an arena in which politically engaged populations could express their claims against states. Processes of formal and informal bargaining took place to create government policies and political practices that social groups found acceptable. Within the social space of the public sphere, groups with shared interests could establish an identity and pursue their claims against the government...In late imperial China, claims were far less important than commitments. Officials and elites

³⁰² Fan Hong, 52.

³⁰³ Rosenlee, 2006, 113.

were connected not by competing claims but by common commitments to the principles and strategies formulated to construct social order.”³⁰⁴

Bin Wong argues that, in contrast to the socio-political landscape of early-twentieth century China in which local elites formed organizations with economic, social and political purposes, claiming formal political voice, late-Qing elites used institutionally less implicit ways and with a shared neo/Confucian agenda for maintaining the social order.³⁰⁵ This point is important point for appreciating the ways in which contributors to *Nüxue bao* understood the priorities of their elite social positions.

Late-Qing press, according to Joan Judge, operated in the “middle realm,” that is, the socio-political dynamics of space in which late-Qing press operated was “less one of the ruled in opposition to the ruler and more one of the rules becoming complicit in the construction of the state in order to alter the principle of power.”³⁰⁶ China’s own print tradition is the oldest in the world, with the invention of paper in the Later Han Dynasty (25-220 C.E.), woodblock printing in the Sui (589-618) and Tang (618-907) and movable type in Song (960-1279). China had its own official press called *dibao* (metropolitan gazettes) most probably since the Han dynasty (25-220 b.c.). Even though the Qing period had its *Jingbao* (Capital gazette), renamed into *Zhengzhi guanbao* (Political gazette) in 1907 and *Neige guanbao* (Cabinet gazette) in 1910, it was the presence of missionaries that provided models and technology for the late-Qing Chinese press: lithography was introduced in the 1870s and by the 1890s movable lead type print. Shanghai was “the leader in the development of China’s new journalism...precisely because it was the treaty

³⁰⁴ Wong, 1997a, 126.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.,164. See also R. Bin Wong, “Citizenship in Chinese History,” in *Recasting Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*, ed. Michael P. Hanagan and Charles Tilly (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 100-102.

³⁰⁶ Judge, 1996, 11.

port city per excellence, offering enclaves of extraterritorial protection, access to imported paper and printed machinery, and a cosmopolitan culture,” Judge explains.³⁰⁷

At this point it is important to reemphasize that, as Judge articulates, the attempt to read late-Qing social history through the prism of Western-generated theory, i.e. to try to approach the issue of the press in China through Benedict Anderson’s famous claims about the role of print in the processes of forming imagined communities, shows that:

...neither the beginning nor the endpoint of Anderson’s story coincides with the unfolding of Chinese print history. It was not the interaction between capitalism and print that made a new political community imaginable in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century China. Rather, it was the connection between new-style printing and reform politics that made it possible for the publicists to challenge old truths and foster, for themselves and their readers, a nascent sense of collective identity.”³⁰⁸

The first new-style journals emerged after the Shimonoseki Treaty and were founded by the reformers whose female relatives and acquaintances will become directly involved in the reformist educational and journalistic enterprises. As I will show in the following parts of my study, *Nüxue bao* adopted the ideas about the journal’s authorship and genres that these earliest new-style newspapers exemplified. These journals were written in the classical style by “literati-journalists assuming the guise of quasi-officials loyal to the throne,” and had aspired to inherit the authority of the orthodox texts. The press was perceived and represented as providing the

³⁰⁷ Judge, 1996, 17, 18,

³⁰⁸ Judge, 1996, 18.

truth, confirming or correcting the rumors, and, as Janku claims, “as such, they were to be read thoroughly from beginning to the end.”³⁰⁹

Hence, among the earliest publications were the reformist journals launched by *Qiangxue hui* (Self-Strengthening Study Society) led by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Xu Qin and Tang Juedun: *Zhongwai jiwen* (Sino-Foreign News), launched in 1895,³¹⁰ and *Qiangxue bao* (Journal of self-strengthening) established in 1896. *Qiangxue hui* was closed down in January 1896, but the reformers were quick to replace *Zhongwai jiwen* and *Qiangxue bao* with one of the most influential reformist journal *Shiwu bao* (China progress) in August 1896.³¹¹ The new-style press did, as Barbara Mittler tells us, introduce “women as a topic of public discourse and as implied readers of news,”³¹² the need to have a distinctive women’s journal was recognized in the Wuxu reform period.

Chen Wenlian writes that it has been estimated that at the beginning of the twentieth century there were around three hundred and eighty famous politically active women.³¹³ There is no similar estimation about the number of women actively involved in the 1898 Reform

³⁰⁹ Janku, 112, 153.

³¹⁰ *Zhongwai jiwen* was originally named *Wanguo gongbao*, just like Young Allen’s journal that will be mentioned shortly. Kang Youwei was convinced that the Qing elite needs to be reeducated and informed about “the things of the world,” so he organized the free circulation of *Zhongwai jiwen* together with *Jingbao*, the official gazette read by approximately one thousand high-level subscribed Qing governmental officials. Early reform press had a strong appeal for the bureaucrats, and, since they preferred it to the provincial and central governmental gazettes, the Court became alarmed with the reformist press popularity. It was proposed to increase the number of official gazettes and reprint of some of the articles from the early reform press in the pages of official organs of the central and provincial governments. These measures were not successful and the official gazettes could not attract as many readers as new-style reform political press did. Judge, 1996, 22, 23

³¹¹ Judge, 1996, 20, 21.

³¹² Mittler, 2004, 248.

³¹³ Chen Wenlian, “Ershi shiji chu zhishi nüxing de nüquan sixiang” (Feminist thought of female intellectuals in the early twentieth century), *Chuanshan Xuekan*2 (2001): 114. For the list of names and basic information of one hundred and eighty three women politically active from 1898 to 1911 see Chang Yu-fa [Zhang Yufa], *Qingji de geming tuanti* (Revolutionaries of the late-Qing period: an analysis of groups in revolutionary movements, 1894-1911) (Taipei: Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History 1982): 83-92.

movement, but Nanxiu Qian claims that there were more than two hundred men and women who were active supporters and promoters of women-oriented reformist projects.³¹⁴

A notable feature of the Wuxu reform period is intensive cooperation between Chinese and foreign elite. The network of foreign and Chinese men was created around the idea that China needed to change in a way that would entail broader understanding of the Western learning, institutions, and modes of government. The creation of educational institutions for Chinese girls and women occupied a significant place in the reformists' plans. Since the reformers' idea of desirable education for women, as I will discuss later in greater detail, assumed new organization and content of female learning, the establishment of Chinese-led girls' school invited the engagement of Westerners who had already had the experience with female education and who were already recognized as collaborators of the Chinese reform-oriented literati, notably, Young Allen and Timothy Richard.

Missionaries themselves proudly claimed that the knowledge they propagated was crucial for the forming of the Reform movement in 1898. As it was reported, the Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge among Chinese had been strategically focused on Chinese students, and that when ten thousand students who petitioned the Emperor for reforms, their demands were "in close accord" with the advocacies of the Society.³¹⁵ The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge, later known as Christian Literature Society for China, also reported that there was "an active correspondence" between the reformers and the Society, to which the Chinese literati "freely acknowledged their great indebtedness," emphasizing that the Emperor ordered "no less than eighty-nine specimen copies of the Society's

³¹⁴ Qian Nanxiu, "Chongsu 'Xianyuan': Wuxu funü ziwo jiegou" (Remolding 'Xianyuan': Identity construction of women in the Wuxu period), *Shuwu* 12 (2007):46.

³¹⁵ Christian Literature Society for China, *Christian Literature and the Reform Movement in China: A Brief Resume of the Story of the Christian Literature Society for China* (1911), 10.

publications, and a complete set of the *Review of the Times*, including the back numbers, covering a period of several years.”³¹⁶ Missionaries’ self-satisfaction aside, the role of *Wanguo gongbao* (Review of the times) and its owner Young Allen in introducing the Western learning to the Chinese reform-oriented elite is undisputable.

The press and publishing enterprise played a decisive role in missionaries’ endeavor to reach the Chinese elite. In addition to a wide array of missionary literature published in English which was read mostly by the foreign members of missionary societies in China and abroad, a separate body of knowledge was presented to the educated Chinese elite through the Chinese language publications written and/or edited by the foreign missionaries and their Chinese assistants. At the beginning, these publications were preoccupied with spreading the faith and not warmly received outside a tiny community of Chinese Christians. But with the inclusion of secular topics in the discussions published, the readership increased. Young John Allen’s *Wanguo gongbao* was among the most successful foreign-led media in late-Qing China.

Young John Allen (1836 - 1907) was an American missionary who founded *Wanguo gongbao*, a most popular missionary journal in late-Qing China. *Wanguo gongbao* was established in 1868 under the name of *Jiaohui xinbao* (The Church News), but it changed its Chinese name in *Wanguo gongbao* in 1874, and its English name into *The Review of the Times* in 1889. *Wanguo gongbao* was different than existing missionary newspapers in that it did not serve the needs of treaty-port businessmen, nor did it serve for Christian church communications. Instead, the magazine was published in literary Chinese, and had gradually become “not only a channel for spreading Christian beliefs and Western secular knowledge but a forum for social

³¹⁶ Ibid., 10, 11.

criticism and public proposals.”³¹⁷ The circulation of *Wanguo gongbao* in the 1890s reached four thousand copies, and *Wanguo gongbao* was strongly recommended as the source of new knowledge by the reformers who had compiled the bibliography on Western learning.³¹⁸

In 1881 Young Allen, known in China as Lin Lezhi, was appointed as the superintendent of the China Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church South by Bishop Holland N. McTyeire. From that period Allen coordinated MECS Woman’s Missionary Society in China and had insisted that the Society should establish a school that would aspire to recruit the girls from respected families. Allen proposed Laura Askew Haygood to be a principal of the school. Haygood was a graduate of Wesleyan Female College in Georgia who was active in the establishing of the Women’s Missionary Society.³¹⁹

The school that Haygood established with Allen’s ardent support started its operation in March 1892. The English name of the school was *McTyeire School for Girls*,³²⁰ with its Chinese name *Zhongxi nüshu* (Chinese-Western Women’s School). In addition to educating girls from the elite Chinese families, the school was a meeting point for female missionaries upon their arrival to China. In Heidi Ross’s words, “The Home, as it came to be called, would provide for

³¹⁷ The newspaper was suspended from 1883 to 1889, when it resumed its publication under the auspices of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese and continued to introduce the Western knowledge and discussions on the world affairs to the Chinese readers. Chang Hao, 279.

³¹⁸ Chi-yun Chen, “Liang Ch’i-ch’ao’s ‘missionary education’: a case study of missionary influence on the reformers,” *Papers on China* 16 (1962):111-112. Cited in Chang Hao, 279. Reportedly, the importance of Young Allen’s publishing work was so immense that “Viceroy Li Hung-chang was petitioned to address a memorial to the throne, suggesting that the Society’s *Review of the Times*, which had borne so large a part in the genesis of the Reform movement, should be adopted as the official organ of the Chinese Government, and that 10,000 copies should be printed monthly for circulation amongst the governors and mandarins.” Christian Literature Society for China, 10.

³¹⁹ Heidi Ross, “Cradle of Female Talent: The McTyeire Home and School for Girls, 1892-1937,” in *Christianity on China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 210-212. Laura was a sister of Allen’s old friend Atticus Haygood.

³²⁰ The school was named after Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, who supported the establishment of the School, but had died just before its opening. Ross, 214.

unmarried foreign educators a touchstone of familiarity, a moral and physical preserve that could stave off the perceived threats of an alien environment.”³²¹

Zhongxi nüshu, like other women-oriented institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century, was not a massive project. The school had seven students enrolled in 1892, twenty nine girls in 1897, while the number of students dropped to twenty one by 1902.³²² More important for the missionaries was that it attracted the girls from influential Chinese families. According to Heidi Ross, the girls were from the families of the two “mandarins,” a manager of the imperial telegraph, a well-known Shanghai’s newspaper’s editor, and five Episcopalian and Methodist ministers.³²³ As will become clear shortly, *Zhongxi nüshu*, its staff and educational program played an important role in the establishment of *Nüxue tang* in 1898, with some authors claiming that the school was unanimously perceived by the Chinese administrator as the best model for the first Chinese girls’ school.³²⁴

In addition to Young Allen’s initiatives, Timothy Richard’s advisory role and active involvement of in the Wuxu Reform movement in general, and, as we will see, his rather indirect but significant support of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* in particular reveal the dynamics of Chinese and Western connections which preceded, enabled and influenced the creation and operation of the women’s school, association and journal. Richard arrived in China as a member of the British Baptist Missionary Society in 1870. He started his study of Chinese language, literature and beliefs as a “part of the move to ‘seek the worthy’ in China” and to

³²¹ Ross, 213.

³²² *Shanghai by Night and Day, Vol. 1* (Shanghai: Shanghai Mercury Limited, Printers and Publishers, 1902), 155.

³²³ Ross, 214.

³²⁴ See, for instance, Liu Xiaoyi, “The Rise of Women’s Modern Schooling in Late Qing China (1840–1911),” *Education Journal* 37, nos. 1–2, (2009): 101.

approach the non-orthodox religious and cultural elite of the Qing Empire.³²⁵ He was a regular contributor to numerous missionary journals and to Allen's *Wangguo gongbao*, and it has been estimated that his texts published in Chinese in which he proposes the reforms for China's salvation had "the most marked impact on the political history of China."³²⁶

He was the editor of Tianjin's *Shibao*, where he published numerous texts which intrigued the influential governmental officials.³²⁷ In October 1891 Richard accepted the invitation of the *Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge* (*Guangxue hui*) to undertake the position of its General Secretary. This role further accelerated his contacts with the educated Chinese elite.

In addition to being well connected with male and female missionaries, merchants and diplomats who were advocating women's education and anti-footbinding initiatives,³²⁸ Richard was very close with the leading Chinese reformers: Liang Qichao acted as his secretary while he resided in Beijing in 1888, while Kang Youwei consulted him during the 1898 Reform period

³²⁵ Richard was so eager to be accepted by the Chinese, or, in his explanation, to be free to move without causing the sensation, that he shaved the front part of his head, tied the artificial queue, and wore the Chinese clothes. After the death of the emperor Tongzhi in 1875, he imitated the people and left his hair to grow as a sign of mourning. Gregory Adam Scott, "Timothy Richard, World Religion, and Reading Christianity in Buddhist Garb," *Social Sciences and Missions* 25 (2012): 61-64. See also Richard, 1916, 80.

³²⁶ When discussing Richard's texts which suggested that China should undertake the educational and governmental reforms after the defeat in the war with Japan, Scott explicates a very important feature of these texts: Christianity was seldom named and did not irritate the Chinese readers. In contrast, his texts written for the anglophone audience emphasized the necessity of a "Kingdom of God on Earth." Scott also writes that Kang Youwei in his memorials to the emperor "almost verbatim" adopted Richard's reformist suggestions explicated in 1895 in *Xiduo* (The Western Bell) and *Xin zhengce* (New Policies). Gregory Adam Scott, "Famine and Political Reform in China," (2012): 4-7. Additional Section for Gregory Adam Scott. "Timothy Richard, World Religion, and Reading Christianity in Buddhist Garb." *Social Sciences and Missions* 25 (2012): 53-75. Available at http://www.buddhiststudies.net/Scott_Famine_and_Political_Reform.pdf. Accessed December 26, 2012.

³²⁷ Zhang Zhidong, for instance, had asked Richard to send him the copies of *Shibao* to Wuchang, and, when Richard in 1894 republished his texts from *Shenbao* under the title "Essays for the Times" the preface was written by Li Hongzhang and the son of Zeng Guofan. Richard, 1916, 215, 224.

³²⁸ See, for instance, Richard's account on his promise to Alicia Little that he would translate all the tracts and pamphlets that her *Tianzu hui* wanted to disseminate for anti-footbinding propaganda in Richard, 1916, 227.

and had invited him to become the Emperor's advisor. He was invited to the Palace, but the coup d'état took place just prior to his scheduled audience with the Emperor.³²⁹

When it comes to Chinese men, Xia Xiaohong in her recent article reconstructs a widely spread network of supporters of women-oriented reformist enterprises. Writing about the donations to *Nüxue tang*, and taking the names of women as a main lead, Xia creates a long, but certainly not conclusive list of men who were directly or indirectly involved in modernizing initiatives. This supporting group was formed of scholars Kang Youwei, Kang Guangren, Liang Qichao, Mai Menghua, Long Zehou, Di Baoxian, Chen Sanli, Wu Baochu, Wen Tingshi, Zhi Rui, Zeng Guangjun, Huang Zunxian, Wang Kangnian, Jiang Biao, as well as Shanghai's industrialists and entrepreneurs Zheng Guanying, Sheng Xuanhuai's eldest son Sheng Changyi and Yan Xinhou. Famous men from the publishing world Wang Kangnian, the manager of *Shiwubao*, Chen Jitong, the establisher of *Qiushi bao*, Shen Yugui, editor-in-chief of *Wanguo gongbao*, Li Baojia, the owner of *Youxi bao*, as well as leading educators and scholars Zhao Yuanyi, Zhang Huanlun, Zhong Tianwei, He Sigun and Shen Dunhe also supported women's projects.³³⁰

The man who initiated the establishment of the first Chinese-operated schools for girls opened in Shanghai,³³¹ who was among the organizers of the meetings of the *Nüxue hui* and whose correspondence with the Qing governmental officials was regularly shared with the audience of *Nüxue bao*, was Jing Yuanshan, the director of the Telegraph Office in Shanghai. Jing did not manage to pass the exams for the office in the Qing government. He "learned

³²⁹ Richard, 1916, 255, 263, 265.

³³⁰ Xia, 2010, 126.

³³¹ Xia notices that the Republican press addressed another school based in Changzhou as the first established Chinese women's school, but I could not find any additional information about this school. Xia, 2004, 4, 30 n2.

business” in Shanghai when he was seventeen, and had acted as a member of the board of trustees of the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill and the chief of the Shanghai Telegraph Bureau.³³²

On November 15th 1897 Jing initiated the first meeting of the Steering Committee for the establishment of the school for girls. He gathered forty eight committee members and their Chinese and foreign supporters. Among others the meeting was attended by Zheng Guanying, Jing’s colleague from the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill who had already in 1893 advocated women’s education in his influential reform-oriented work *Shenshi weiyan* (Warnings in a prosperous time), Kang Guangren, younger brother of Kang Youwei who was actively involved in all women-oriented reformist projects, Liang Qichao, Shi Ziyang, Wang Kangnian, the establisher of *Shiwu ribao* newspaper, Yan Xiaofang, the aide of Li Hongzhang, Chen Jitong, a veteran diplomat and his younger brother Chen Shoupeng.³³³ Even though the members of the steering committee were men, Nanxiu Qian claims that the French wife of Chen Jitong Lai Mayi (Marie Talabot?) and the wife of Chen Shoupeng Xue Shaohui also attended the meeting, while Xia Xiaohong claims that Liang Qichao was in Changsha at the time, and that his wife Li Duanhui participated in the preparatory work for the establishment of the school as his representative.³³⁴ Four foreigners were listed as participants: Young Allen, Timothy Richard, “western scholar” (*xi ru*) from England whose name was transcribed as Fei Lisi and Danish manager of the electric company whose Chinese name was Mai La.³³⁵

³³² Wu, 44, 50.

³³³ Qian, 2003, 402, 403, 405. Xiong Xianjun, *Zhongguo nüzi jiaoyushi* (A History of Chinese women’s education) (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 188.

³³⁴ Qian, 2003, 403; Xia Xiaohong, *Wan Qing wenren funüguan* (Late-Qing literati’s view on women) (Beijing: Zuojiang chubanshe, 1995): 19 n2.

³³⁵ For a very detailed list of the participants see Jing Yuanshan, “Zhongguo nüxuetang yuanqi” (The establishment of Chinese girls’ school) (1897 [?]), in *Jing Yuanshan ji* (Collected writings of Jing Yuanshan), ed. Yu Heping (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1988), 181-182.

The participants of the meeting came up with the plan of action which, as reported in *Xinwen bao*, assumed the goal to “gain large-scale financial support through fund-raising; establish a solid financial footing; break ground for the school building within ten days (with a detailed budget for construction and maintenance); recruit only women for faculty and staff positions, as well as call a meeting of both Chinese and Western women for further deliberations within ten or fifteen days; seek the support and approval of local government; use the *Girls’ School* to train more faculty, with the expectation that similar schools would be established across China within ten years.”³³⁶

As Xia Xiaohong informs us, the participants discussed various school-oriented arrangements, but their main concern was drafting the regulations of the school. It was already during the first meeting that the participants agreed that their present female relatives need to meet with the Western teachers and directors of girls’ schools, to hear about their experiences, and to “choose what is good and follow it” (*ze shan er cong*).³³⁷ This emphasis on Chinese women’s agency in defining what is useful in foreign practices that they would selectively emulate made clear the intention of reform-oriented participants that these projects would not be the mere imitation of the West. However, the second meeting of the (male) steering committee held six days later would reveal the shadowed limitations of proclaimed agency of Chinese women within reformist enterprises in which they participated.

After the first meeting of the steering committee, Chen Jitong’s well-educated French wife Lai Mayi drafted a detailed plan for the school’s operation. When seven members of the (male) steering committee met for the second time, Jing Yuanshan addressed the participants,

³³⁶ *Xinwen bao*, November 19, 1897. Quoted in Qian, 2003, 403-404.

³³⁷ Xia, 1995, 19.

pointing to the main problem of the presented plan. As Jing saw it, it betrayed the vision of the school as being a venture for mastering both Chinese and Western learning.³³⁸ Jing's criticism was so authoritative that the plan was revised, and Shen Ying and Lai Mayi were signed as co-authors of the revised plan, their joint signatures additionally symbolizing the cooperation between Chinese reformers and their western supporters.

What this, as Xia puts it, "significant episode" from the second meeting of the school's steering committee³³⁹ reveals is the power that men could and did exercise in this important moment of Chinese women's history. Men's interference and decision-making authority in the process of women's recognition as legitimate socio-political actors cannot be overstated. This is, I would argue, an important aspect of Chinese women's entrance to the late-Qing *wai* sphere as recognized socio-political actors that should be carefully traced throughout women's debates and activities in the Wuxu period.

There are two extreme interpretations of women's power to act independently of men in the period under my investigation. Takashima Ko notices the startling contrast between the lack of any communication between Alicia Little's *Tianzu hui* (Natural-foot society) and Chinese male reformers' *Bu chanzu hui* (Anti-footbinding society), as well as the intensive, yet specific form of relations, assignments and authorities in the spheres of women's education between reformists and foreigners. Takashima interprets this dynamics of assigned activities and responsibilities as implying that Chinese reform-oriented men subordinated both Chinese and

³³⁸ Xia, 1998, 62. Unfortunately, I could not detect the source that would allow me to analyze the content of Lai's plan. But it seems that for Jing Yuanshan it was very important to emphasize the distinction between Chinese reformers' women-oriented projects and foreign missionaries' enterprises. The distinction was the reason that the official seal of the school bore the name *Chinese women's school* (Zhongguo nü xuetang). See [Jing Yuanshan et. al], "*Nüxue tang* bing Nanyang dachen Liu gao" (A memorandum of the *Girls' School* to the Official Liu), NXB, no. 4, August 20, 1898.

³³⁹ Xia, 1998, 62.

Western women.³⁴⁰ In contrast to Takashima's interpretation which implies the existence of stable power of men over women, Nanxiu Qian states that "Chinese women reformers of the late 1890s had their own agenda, their own agency, their own organizations, and their own specific strategies for achieving selfcultivation and national strengthening."³⁴¹

Yet, my reading of sinophone and anglophone primary sources supports Xia Xiaohong's understanding that the role of men was crucial in women's organizing in the Wuxu period, and that it ruled out the possibility for it to be an independent movement.³⁴² This rendered reformist men both partners and the conditioning party with which women needed to negotiate their moves. Thus, while the relations between and among men and women were certainly complex and unstable, men could not "do it all" and women's plans and aspirations must have been constantly negotiated within the framework of these relations.

The explanations that we read from the existing scholarship which speculate about the motives of men to empower women to become directly involved in the organization of the school, the association and the journal, confirm that women did operate within the boundaries demarcated by men. I am not convinced by the existing interpretations that assume that men gradually transferred the organizational power to women because of the "convenience,"³⁴³ or that "[women's] own logic as well as circumstance forced the men reformers to relinquish care of the Girls' School to women."³⁴⁴ I conclude rather that male reformers continued to view women, their bodies, minds and behaviors as signals of the civilizational standing of China, but that they

³⁴⁰ Ko Takashima, "Tianzu hui yu Bu chanzu hui" (Natural-foot society and Anti-footbinding society), Unpublished manuscript, 2003, 17. I thank Professor Takashima for sharing his writing with me.

³⁴¹ Qian, 2003, 400.

³⁴² Xia, 1996, 14.

³⁴³ Idem.

³⁴⁴ Qian, 2003, 407. Qian does not specify what she assumes under "circumstance".

adjusted their understanding of what civilization was to the semi-colonial context of late-Qing China.

As I've already indicated in a discussion on the established relation between footbinding and civility, in the processes of civilizational mapping and in the creations of self-images of cultural supremacy, Chinese literati positioned neo/Confucian Han Chinese woman as a measure of civility in the *tianxia* domain. The nineteenth century destabilized multiple *nei-wai* meanings on multiple levels. First, China's self-fixed *nei* geo-civilizational position was in the process of self-reinterpretation amid the forced inclusion of East Asian polities into European International Society. The new, modern international world also introduced civilization as a means of Western mapping of the world. But different notions of civilization defined according to European standards placed China to the position of semi-civilized entity and treated it accordingly.

Hence, for China, the nineteenth century was not the beginning of the treatment of women as, to use Ann Towns' expression - "a measuring rod" in ordering the international world.³⁴⁵ It was rather a historical moment when the ongoing process of redefinition of what was understood as civilization instructed Chinese men to propose the involvement of their female relatives and acquaintances in the activities which they saw as a way to position China highly in the changing world-order and value-systems. However, if the reformers were to do it in the way they deemed necessary, Chinese women could not do it alone.

³⁴⁵ Ann Towns, "The Status of Women as a Standard of 'Civilization,'" *European Journal of International Relations*, 15, no.4 (2009): 684. Even though Towns argue that in the nineteenth century it was the exclusion of women from the political life rather than their inclusion that was a marker of civilized state, I find useful her essay because it clearly relates "woman" with "civilization", even if it becomes clear that the contents of these two categories are changeable and contextual.

4.3. The time for women to get to know each other: The preparatory meeting of *Nüxue tang*'s female steering committee, *Nüxue hui* and the grand meeting on December 6th, 1897

The third preparatory meeting of the female steering committee took place on December 1st 1897, and it gathered fifteen female committee members.³⁴⁶ Jing Yuanshan, however, records the names of participants as follows: Lai Mayi, her and Chen Jitong's daughters Chen Qian (Chaxian)³⁴⁷ or and Chen Chao (Banxian), Kang Tongwei, Lady Peng, Lady Wei, Lady Sun, Lady Li, Lady Wu, Shen Ying (Heqing) and Wei Ji.³⁴⁸ Women who participated in this meeting were addressed as “inner directors” (*nei dongshi*), “supervisors” (*tidiao*) and “instructors” (*jiaoxi*), but, as Xia discloses, the proclaimed and the reality differed and there were only three women present at the meeting who were actually active as directors, recruiters and teachers: two daughters of Chen Jitong, and Shen Heqing.³⁴⁹

When Jing wrote about this meeting in his compilation of the documents he found relevant for the women's education *Nüxue jiyi chupian* (The first edition of collected opinions on women's education) (1898) he invoked Shen Heqing's report which described this meeting as the event at which women freely expressed and exchanged their ideas. In addition to Lady Wu's

³⁴⁶ See the table in Qian, 2003, 405.

³⁴⁷ The names in the brackets are women's courtesy names.

³⁴⁸ Jing Yuanshan, “*Nei dongshi Guishuli huishang gongyan zhu Hu Zhong Xi guanshen nüke di san ji*” (Meeting of the female directors in Shanghai Guishuli: The third meeting of Chinese and Western ladies), December 1, 1897. This text is originally published in Jing's compilation *Nüxue jiyi chubian* (First edition of Collected opinions on women's education) (Shanghai: Privately published by author, 1898), and it has been reproduced in *Jing Yuanshan ji*, 196. Even though Jing mentions foreign women in the title, it is questionable whether they participated in the meeting. Foreign women were not mentioned as participants in the text itself, and Qian describes this meeting as being attended by fifteen members of the female steering committee, without specifying nationalities of the participants. Qian, 2003:405.

³⁴⁹ Xia, 2010, 122.

discussion of the need to combine the insights from Western and Chinese medicine, and the concluding invitation extended to foreign and Chinese women to participate in the joint meeting, the view of Kang Tongwei, the oldest daughter of Kang Youwei, was publicized in detail. I will analyze her vision in detail in the later chapters.

As I've already indicated, women's groups were not an exclusive feature of modern/izing China. In addition to women's religious groups which existed throughout Chinese history, it was already in the late-Ming period when women in Jiangnan region, when, in their free time after helping their husbands and instructing their children, could become the members of literary circles due to their poetry and prose. Xia states that women's poetic clubs started to be formed for women to "communicate and compete."³⁵⁰ While Dorothy Ko's studies reveal women's joy and fulfillments that the poetry-writing brought to educated women, Susan Mann describes these family competitions as being a sort of a pressure for a girl born into the elite family "where education was the norm and poetic talent the expectation."³⁵¹ As Mann reconstructs, the comparison and competition started when a girl began to read. At some family competitions, cousins would meet and select "the thing" that the poetry would be about. Their poetry would be exchanged, or "linked", published together in family collections, so the reader could judge "who excelled and who was mediocre." Additionally, the anthologists of women's poetry also participated in burdening upper-class girls because it was up to them to decide who deserved the appraisal and fame beyond the family.³⁵² During the Qing dynasty's Kangxi (1662-1723) and

³⁵⁰ Xia, 1991, 138.

³⁵¹ Susan Mann, "Biographical Sources and Silences," in *Beyond Exemplary Tales: Women's Biography in Chinese History*, ed. Joan Judge and Hu Ying (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: Global, Area, and International Archives and University of California Press, 2011), 21.

³⁵² Mann, 2011a, 21. For a discussion of fulfillments that women obtained by forming communities through poetry writing and criticism see also Grace Fong, *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency, and Writing in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 121-158, especially 123-129 and 142-158.

Qianlong (1736-1796) eras the most famous women's clubs were *Jiaoyuan shishe* (Banana Garden poetry club) and *Qingxi yinshe* (Clear Brook poetry club, also known as Ten Poets of Wuzhong [*Wuzhong shizi*]), which had evolved from the gatherings of talented women pursuing their literary endeavors.³⁵³

Women also met each other as a result of their involvement in painting and calligraphy. Tamara Hamlish reminds us about Marsha Weidner's study of Chinese women's painting which reveals that these networks allowed them to receive and provide instruction to each other, to create audience, and to give them a wider circulation and acknowledgment of their achievements. However, differing from the formal and enduring political networks sustained by men within the political structures and institutions of the Chinese Empire, women's networks were particular, stemming from the individual relationships and existing only as long as women remained in contact.³⁵⁴

Hamlish takes Weidner's thinking further and claims that:

³⁵³ In the final year of Ming dynasty, to use the examples from Xia Xiaohong's research, small groups of female relatives, i.e. mother and her daughters, mothers-in-law and their daughters-in law, sisters, were famous for their literary pursuits, like the wife of Ye Shaoyuan, Shen Yixiu, and her daughters Ye Wanwan, Ye Xiaowan, and Yan Xiaoluan. Xia, 137-138. See also Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, ed. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 266-283. For *Jiaoyuan shishe* see, for instance, Daria Berg, "Negotiating Gentility: The Banana Garden Poetry Club in Seventeenth-Century China," in *The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations Beyond Gender and Class*, ed. Daria Berg and Chloë Starr (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Idema and Grant, 471-498; and Ko, 1994b, 234-240. For *Qingxi yinshe* see Beata Grant, "Little Vimalakirti: Buddhism and Poetry in the Writings of Chiang Chu (1764-1804)," in *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, ed. Harriet T. Zurndorfer (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999); and Dorothy Ko, "Lady-Scholars at the Door: The Practice of Gender Relations in Eighteenth-Century Suzhou," in *Boundaries in China*, ed. John Hay (London: Reaktion Books, 1994a).

³⁵⁴ Hamlish, 225. See Marsha Weidner, "Women in the History of Chinese Painting: Women and Social History of Chinese Painting," in *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women's Artists, 1300-1912*, ed. Marsha Weidner, Ellen Johnston Laing, Irving Yucheng Lo, Christina Chu and James Robinson (New York: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1988). For more on women painters in Imperial China who were instructed by and were instructing both men and women, in and outside their homes, see Ellen Johnston Laing, "Women Painters in Traditional China," in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 84-87.

Alternative networks for the circulation of their work allowed women to participate in existing communities of artists and calligraphers, but they effectively excluded them from the social production of calligraphic style that took place in the distribution of images and the recognition of individuals among the men who comprised the scholarly elite.”³⁵⁵

Even though the poetry clubs from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were organized by women and had only female members, late-Qing women’s groups were, in Xia’s words “utterly different” in terms of the aim of women’s gatherings.³⁵⁶ As Xia extracts from her sources, women’s groups in late-Qing China were not [primarily] formed on the base of shared literary and aesthetic endeavors, as were the previous women’s groups. Instead, late-Qing women came together to advocate their common ideals and goals, and were not necessarily acquainted prior to the group’s formation.³⁵⁷ As Ma Yuxin observes, these women “met in Shanghai through their men.”³⁵⁸ That is, women used their connections from the *nei* realm to get to the *wai* domain, and in that way they began to form a collectivity that became recognized socio-political actor in modern Chinese history.

Women’s preoccupation with the *wai* sphere of the public/political is one additional feature rooted in the socio-cultural milieu of Imperial China that was adjusted to the specific historical moment of the Wuxu reforms. Women did reflect on historical and political changes in the Imperial past in their poetic works. While Li Wai-yee persuasively argues for the existence of women’s historic-political expertise, experience, and interest in the period of transition between

³⁵⁵ Hamlish, 225.

³⁵⁶ Xia, 1996, 13.

³⁵⁷ Idem. Yuxin Ma confirms this view in her book *Women Journalists and Feminism in China, 1898-1937*, (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010), 41.

³⁵⁸ Ma, 2010, 41.

Ming and Qing,³⁵⁹ Susan Mann draws our attention to a distinctive style of women's poetry *gan shi* (moved by the times), and claims that after 1840s women increasingly wrote poems about political and military struggles, social issues and state policies.³⁶⁰

Mann reveals that “seemingly modern political consciousness of women” has its roots in Chinese Classical tradition, and claims that the endangering presence of the western imperial powers and the devastating Taiping rebellion had “drawn [women] into a consciousness of the empire as a polity under siege.”³⁶¹ Mann further explains that the social circles to which women writers and their male relatives belonged “brought wives and daughters directly into conversations involving foreign trade and coastal defense, as well as pacification campaigns and the militarization of local administration,” creating the self-image of elite women as “an untapped resource, waiting to be called into action.”³⁶²

As Maureen Robertson suggests, starting with at least Ming and Qing periods, “there was a gradual transition or expansion of the site of women's authorship from familial tutelage/coterie/manuscript sharing, to print and public - even commercial circulation in a series devoted to women authors for some - followed in the late Qing and early twentieth century by direct political engagement.”³⁶³ Robertson further claims that “in some respects, Ming and Qing

³⁵⁹ See Li Wai-ye, “Women Writers and Gender Boundaries During the Ming-Qing Transition,” in Fong and Widmer. Also, Hu Siao-chen in her article published in the same volume shows that a considerable number of *tanci* peaces written by women and about women - usually observed as domestic and romantic due to their preoccupation with the heroines successful in their careers, family and love - do address the issue of war. Hu Siao-chen, “War, Violence, and the Metaphor of Blood in *Tanci* Narratives by Women Authors,” in Fong and Widmer.

³⁶⁰ Susan Mann, “The Lady and the State: Women's Writing in Times of Trouble during the Nineteenth Century,” in Fong and Widmer, 283.

³⁶¹ Mann, 2010a, 311, 313.

³⁶² Mann, 2010a, 311, 312.

³⁶³ Maureen Robertson, “Literary Authorship by Late Imperial Governing-class Chinese Women and the Emergence of a ‘Minor Literature’,” in Fong and Widmer, 381.

women's authorship can be understood as a historically transformative process that prepared many authors in the later generations with the ability to rapidly adjust, to seek education, and to speak out. It allowed women to meet such challenges as the urgent need for the creation of new literary and political forms and ideals, and the abrupt fading and outright rejection of *guixiu* (cultivated lady) culture in the early decades of the twentieth century.”³⁶⁴

Nonetheless, even though the poetic work of women in earlier periods of Chinese history do create “rich historical record of ‘inner’ comments on ‘outer’ events and issues,”³⁶⁵ and do testify that women did relate to the politics of Chinese Empire and did possess and express political interests and competency, women did not have the space for action allotted to the recognized socio-political actors. In contradistinction, as we will see, women who participated in the Wuxu reforms were recognized as legitimate socio-political actors and invited to participate in discussions and actions in the *wai* realm of late-Qing China.

An additional remarkable feature of the Wuxu period which distinguish it significantly from the existing discourses and practices of women in Imperial China was that it included foreign women, both as a discursive trope that served for articulations and legitimizations of Chinese reformers' agendas, and as cooperating partners in their educational enterprise. The presence of (Western) foreign women, both in women-related discourses and activities in this crucial historical moment for Chinese women's socio-political empowerment signals at least two significant issues. It reveals that particular meanings of and relations between China-designated *nei* and *wai* domains were destabilized, and that the reformers used a “foreign woman” to

³⁶⁴ Idem.

³⁶⁵ Susan Mann, “Womanly Sentiments and Political Crises: Zhang Queying's Poetic Voice in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in Lü, 200. Li Wai-yee, for instance, demonstrates the existence of women's historic-political expertise, experience, and interest at the period of transition between Ming and Qing. See Li Wai-yee, 179.

articulate and treat this destabilization. Furthermore, it draws attention to the fact that an initial articulation of Chinese women's collective identity of socio-political actors assumed the presence and involvement of women from China and abroad. My parallel reading of selected sinophone and anglophone sources which address women-oriented reformist enterprises will reveal a part of the picture of the troubled relationship between Chinese and western women in modern Chinese history.

4.3.1. *Deciphering December 6th, 1897*

Writing about women's organizing in the Wuxu reform period, Xia Xiaohong acknowledges that she had not yet managed to locate any document that would say more details about the establishment of *Nüxue hui*, the association that signals the beginnings of formation and operation of women as recognized socio-political actors in the *wai* sphere of modern china.³⁶⁶ She, nonetheless, assumes that women who were actively involved in the establishment and operation of the school were the active members of *Nüxue hui* as well. These women were: female superintendants of the school Shen Heqing and Lai Mayi;³⁶⁷ the directors of the school, Wei Ji, Li Duanhui, Liao Yuanhua, Liu Jing and Jiang Lan;³⁶⁸ as well as the donors to the School Lu Suqiu, Lady Zhao, Wu Ruonan, Lady Xu and Kang Tongwei.³⁶⁹ Huang Jinyu, the wife of

³⁶⁶ Xia, 2010, 121.

³⁶⁷ Shen was in charge of the issues related to Chinese women and Lai was responsible for the foreign women.

³⁶⁸ As Xia admits, it is pretty complicated to list the female directors (*nü dongshi*) of the school, and she speculates that these were women who signed the letter published in *Qishi bao* on behalf of *Nüxue hui* in response to Xue Shaohui.

³⁶⁹ This division is not as neat as presented here because some donors were at the same time more actively involved in the school's arrangements, and their activities were not fixed. Xia, 1996, 14.

Kang Youwei's brother Kang Guangren contrary to the popular understanding, according to Xia, did not have a significant role in *Nüxue hui*.³⁷⁰ Yuxin Ma disagrees with Xia, and reintroduces Huang as an important person in the operation of the society.³⁷¹ Just as Huang, almost all involved women were related to the male intellectuals who participated in rethinking the China's ways to the more glorious future: Lai Mayi was Chen Jietong's wife, Wei Ji was Jing Yuanshan's wife, Li Huixian was the wife of Liang Qichao, Lu Suqiu the wife of Mai Menghua, Lady Zhao the wife of Ceng Guangjun, Wu Ruonan the daughter of Wu Baochu, Lady Xu the wife of Zhang Sai, and Kang Tongwei the daughter of Kang Youwei.³⁷²

Writing in 1911 Margaret Ernestine Burton³⁷³ states:

True to their purpose the men who had originated the plan very soon turned over the execution of it to their wives and daughters, giving their own efforts to raising the necessary funds. The committee of Chinese ladies, thus confronted with the task of establishing and determining the policy of this pioneer Chinese school for

³⁷⁰ Xia, 1996, 14.

³⁷¹ Ma, 2010, 41. The unsigned authors from the *Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhehui* (All China Women's Federation) also note that Huang was one of the directors of the association. See *Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhehui* (All China Women's Federation), ed. *Zhongguo funü yundongshi: Xin minzhuzhuyi shiqi* (History of Chinese women's movement: New democratic period) (Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe, 1989), 25. Wu Yan also lists Huang Jinyu, Li Run and Li Huixian as the initiators for the establishment of the association. Wu Yan, ed. *Cong xiaojiao nüren dao shehui ban bian tian* (From the small-feet women to the ones who hold up half the sky) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2003), 40. See also Liu Shisheng and Liu Yang, *Zhongguo funü tongshi* (Chinese women's history) (Qingdao: Qingdao chubanshe, 1999), 486; and Ma Gengcun, *Zhongguo jindai funüshi* (Modern Chinese women's history) (Qingdao: Qingdao chubanshe, 1995), 71.

³⁷² Xia, 1996, 14.

³⁷³ The second half of the nineteenth century is the period when Western women started to produce a startling number of English-language publications about China and Chinese women. Hopefully, this opus will become the focus of future research, not only because of the rich factual insights this material has to offer, but also because of much-needed analysis of historical development of gender-specific writing within the field of anglophone Chinese studies. Margaret Burton wrote two books about Chinese women which are still regularly cited: *The Education of Women in China* (1911) and *Notable Women of Modern China* (1912). Yet, we just know that she was an American who spent "some months in China in the year of 1909" when she got deeply impressed by the Chinese female students and their life accomplishments. As she herself explained, she decided to make these women's stories accessible to the American public, after she "found that many people were greatly surprised to learn that Chinese women were capable of such achievements." Margaret Burton, *Notable Women of Modern China* (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912), 2.

girls, and feeling the lack of such experience or training as would fit them for an undertaking of this kind, at once turned for cooperation and advice to those who were more versed in the methods of woman's education. Dr. Young J. Allen and Dr. E. T. Williams³⁷⁴ were asked to furnish them a list of the foreign ladies in Shanghai who would be particularly interested in the plan.³⁷⁵

The grand gathering of December 6th 1897 has been considered to be a historical meeting of Chinese and foreign women. Even though available primary sources about *Nüxue hui* are not sufficient for confident historical reconstruction of its operation and inner organization, its descriptions suggest that this was the meeting attended by Chinese women who were involved (or at least interested) in the work of *Nüxue hui* and their foreign counterparts.³⁷⁶ The meeting was held on in *Zhangyuan Ankaidi*, the Arcadia Hall in Shanghai's Zhang Garden. The English name of the *Nüxue hui* was the *Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge among Chinese Women*, the name that reminds us to the missionaries' *The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese*.³⁷⁷ What the English name of the association (which was not mentioned in the first nine issues of the journal I consulted) may imply is both the influence of missionaries' educational campaigns before and during the Wuxu reform period, and the reformers' desire to show the parity of their capabilities with the foreign missionaries.

³⁷⁴ Edward Thomas Williams was an American diplomat who served as an interpreter and vice consul general in the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai from 1897 to 1898 and as a translator at the Imperial Government's Jiangnan Arsenal from 1898 to 1901. Williams ended his career as a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, revealing once again the direct relation between the imperialism and sinology departments at highly-esteemed American (and other China-encroaching nations') Universities. Before undertaking his diplomatic and academic career, Williams was a minister and missionary for twenty years, but he abandoned conventional Christianity in a deep disappointment with faith and the condescending attitude of his colleagues toward Chinese in 1896. See Dimitri D. Lazo, "The Making of a Multicultural Man: The Missionary Experiences of E.T. Williams," *Pacific Review* 51, no. 4 (1982): 357-358, 374.

³⁷⁵ Burton, 105.

³⁷⁶ Yu Heping, the editor of Jing Yuanshan's collected works, reminds us that some reports published in late-Qing press which followed the activities of reformers did not report that the meeting was related to women's *tang* (school) but to women's *hui* (association]. *Jing Yuanshan ji*, 199.

³⁷⁷ Xia, 1996, 14,

The location of the meeting attests to the interplay between the Western encroachment in China, the changing urban landscape, and the influence those changes had on the social life of the inhabitants of the Treaty ports and on women's lives in particular. Originally, *Zhangyuan* was farmland in the International Settlement which an English merchant had transformed into the gardens in 1878.³⁷⁸ Being located in the foreign concession, Zhang's Garden could host the political meetings not allowed elsewhere in Qing controlled Chinese territory, the gardens became a "critical urban public space for political speeches and organizational activities."³⁷⁹ Arcadia Hall, the building where the meeting was organized, was completed in 1893, stood as the tallest building in Shanghai and had the capacity to host more than one thousand people. It was a western-style building with its name written in English at the entrance.³⁸⁰

The meeting of *Nüxue hui* and its foreign guests gathered one hundred and ten women and twelve Western men.³⁸¹ It was presided over by Lai Mayi and Shen Heqing who, in Qian's words, "made it a family gathering, a poetry club meeting, and a business conference combined in one."³⁸² This long meeting³⁸³ started with a discussion of founding and curriculum issues, and

³⁷⁸ Zhang Shuhe was a protégée of Li Hongzhang. After he bought the Gardens, he opened it for public in 1885, and made it, in Guo Wu's words, "the largest public recreation center in Shanghai for twenty years, with its restaurants, photographer's studio, tennis courts, amusement facilities, and botanic, art, and even electric products expositions." Wu, 123.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. Zhang's Garden was an autonomous space to such extent that it hosted a meeting on July 26 1900 when Yan Fu (1854-1921), Rong Hong (1828-1912) and Tang Caicheng (1867-1900) convened "China Parliament" (*Zhongguo Guohui*). For more details about Zhang's Garden see Xiong Yuezhi, "Zhang Yuan yu wan Qing Shanghai shehui" (Zhang's Garden and the late-Qing Shanghai society), *Dang'an yu shixue* 12, 1996.

³⁸⁰ For an informative account on the urban development of Shanghai from the late thirteenth century to the modern period and the influence of imperialist expansion on this process see Lu Xinglong, "Zujie yu jindai Shanghai chengshi jianshe" (Foreign concessions and the construction of modern Shanghai), in *Zhongguo jindai chengshi qiye, shehui, kongjian* (Modern Chinese City Enterprise, Society and Space), ed. Zhong Zhongli (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1998). 36 – 47.

³⁸¹ See table in Qian, 2003, 405. Xia claims that there were more Western than Chinese women: according to her, there were sixty five foreign women present. Xia, 2004, 22.

³⁸² Qian, 2003, 407-408. Xia speculates that the organization of this joint meeting was the reason why Lai Mayi was inaugurated to the high position of the school's superintendent, adding that Lai could timely discuss the issues raised

ended with “a banquet and a literary composition.” Qian characterizes the meeting as deeply moving for its participants since women composed and published their poetry to celebrate the event.³⁸⁴ Soon after the banquet, as Burton informs us, Western women “entertained the school directresses at the home of one of their number, for a further discussion of plans.”³⁸⁵

The meeting was a contemporary sensation with coverage in the local press. The illustration of the event and accompanying text that appeared in the second issue of *Nüxue bao*³⁸⁶ described the meeting as the most glorious gathering that had happened in the last two thousand years. The illustration depicts many women interacting around a huge working table placed in the center of the room, which helped to convey the seriousness and significance of the meeting.

Around the central table in the illustration, there are two Chinese women and eleven foreign women. The Chinese women are positioned in the center of the illustration, at the head of the table. One Chinese woman is involved in discussion with a Western woman; the other is depicted drafting a plan in cooperation with one of the Western women. Almost all women in the illustration are shown as actively involved in the discussions, conveying an image of egalitarian relationships between the women. Cultural difference was communicated through the women’s dress, hairstyle and hats. However, the women shared the common feature of being elegant and gracious. Men, though present at the meeting, were not readily visible in this illustration, thus downplaying the involvement of male reformers and emphasizing that the meeting was foremost

in the speeches of sixty five foreign women in a “western language.” However, as Qian claims, Lai Mayi did not speak Chinese, and her daughters served as interpreters at the women’s meetings with Chinese women. Xia, 2010, 123; Qian, 2003, 411.

³⁸³ As one Chinese participant conveyed, women “spent a whole day in pure conversation, discussing in great detail the merits of women’s education, both in China and in the West.” Qian, 2003, 408.

³⁸⁴ See Ibid, 408-410.

³⁸⁵ Burton, 107.

³⁸⁶ The illustration was originally published in Shanghai’s pictorial *Dianshizhai huabao*.

a great gathering of women. The illustration also conveyed another interesting message. Huge windows of the room where the meeting was held were not crowded by the observers as in some other *Dianshizhai huabao* illustrations, persuading the audience that even though women were in the spatial *wai* sphere, they did not lose their respectability as the objects of the public gaze.³⁸⁷

Nanxiu Qian claims that “the common understanding that prevailed among women reformers in Shanghai, whether Western or Chinese, seemed to transcend the barriers of language, culture, and nation.”³⁸⁸ However, I find this interpretation potentially overly overoptimistic because of at least two issues that must be taken into account in order to avoid uncritical idealizing of the communication between women and celebrating the establishment of their transnational alliance.

First, the excitement of Chinese women in the face of historically-unprecedented opportunities for their engagement is unarguable. I have already mentioned an important work on mid-Qing poetesses published by Susan Mann which discloses the persistence of women’s aspirations to widen the space of their actions from their primary *nei*, that is, kinship-based and practiced roles, to the *wai* realms of politics and government. When the space for action that had a potential to eliminate the feeling of being “an untapped resource,” to repeat Mann’s expression, was occupied, women must have been overwhelmed by the imaginations of new possibilities in the Wuxu period. However, to suppose that what Chinese women experienced emotionally was a sense of commonality with Western women might be assuming too much in this context.

³⁸⁷ Unfortunately, my study did not allow me to systematically study *Dianshizhai* pictorial. Still, I’ve noticed this difference by comparing the above-discussed illustration with the one of the Western merchants’ meeting published in Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong, ed. *Tuxiang wan Qing* (Depicting Late Qing) (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 2006), 15.

³⁸⁸ Qian, 2003, 411.

The contact between two groups of women was conditioned by the historical moment and the resulting power relations, and, in my view, an interpretation that puts emphasis on the altruistic aspect of its initiation may be seen as over-romanticizing. Chinese men who had the power to launch as well as to stop educational and journalistic initiatives were closely cooperating with the foreign men; further, these reformist men considered the promotion of women's education as a remedy for China's problems. Even though the visions of the content of this new education were not uniform, reformers advocated the introduction (of at least some segments of) Western education as being necessary to amend the current crisis China faced. If we reread Burton's account of the motives of Chinese women in seeking Westerners' help, and if we put aside for the moment the implied superior competence of Westerners in Burton's and other anglophone writings about this period, we find at least one rather compelling explanation for Chinese women's eagerness to cooperate. We see that, practically speaking, Chinese women could not do it alone. That is, they needed Westerners' help certainly not because of their inherent intellectual inabilities, but because of the lack of experience in the transformed educational foci and goals.

Nonetheless, there is no evidence to confirm that in this context Chinese women's "need" necessarily went with a sense of identification or enchantment with Westerners. If we take into consideration the complex web of power relations within which Chinese and Western women found themselves in the context of late-Qing China - between semi-colonial China and imperialist West, between foreign and Chinese male intellectuals, between women and men in their respective cultures - at least one question about the historical agency, strategies and political choices of Chinese women in this particular historical moment emerges. We are left

with the question - could Chinese women in fact achieve their goals without the cooperation with Western women and men?

Second, Nanxiu Qian builds up her arguments about this meeting mainly by using and interpreting the testimonies of Chinese women.³⁸⁹ Close reading of the writings of Western women about this event, as well as their reminiscences of cooperation in the wider matters related to the school that I will discuss in the following part of my thesis, shed additional light into the romanticized picture of transnational women's cooperation based on a mutual sense of commonality and sincere friendships. I will discuss two different visions of the grand gathering of women. I analyze the texts of Mary Richard and Alicia Little, attending to the different explicit and implicit messages they convey. There was certainly much to be gained from the establishment of this cooperation, for both groups of women, and they all had a good reason for the celebration of this encounter, but not necessarily because of the idealistic vision of transnational women's sisterhood.

As I have mentioned in chapter three, Protestant women who managed to position themselves as an indispensable part of the mission work and its civilizing aims in the non-Western world did so on the basis of gender-segregated work with "other" women. Shanghai was the center of missionary educational activities directed at Chinese girls, and by 1897, there were twelve missionary schools for girls in Shanghai, which represented one third of all girls' schools in China.³⁹⁰ The cooperation of Chinese and Western women may be read as the long-awaited legitimization of missionary women's work in China, which significantly elevated missionary women's social status within their own contexts. Mary Richard's report on this meeting, as well

³⁸⁹ My attempt to bring in the accounts of foreign women is meant to complement Qian's analysis.

³⁹⁰ Zhao Xin, "1843-1937 nian de Shanghai nǚzi jiaoyu: Jieduan yu tedian" (Education for girls in Shanghai, 1843-1937: One phase and its characteristic), *Huadong Shifan daxue xuebao (Jiaoyu kexue ban)* 28, no. 3 (2010): 90.

as her address of the role that she and other foreign women played in the educational initiatives in the Wuxu period, may be considered as an example of the ways in which Western women framed this event for the anglophone audience which financially supported their work abroad.. The second example will be Alicia Little's representation of the event which offers a significantly different reading of the power-relations between Chinese and Western women in this meeting.

Talking at the meeting of the *Educational Association of China* in May 1899, Mary Richard stated that "the Chinese ladies in Shanghai at the head of [educational reform] movement - and among them the daughter of the modern sage, Kang Yeu-wei - were seeking the advice and co-operation of foreign ladies in the matter."³⁹¹ Chinese women, according to Richards, invited foreign women to a banquet "served in English style" in a big restaurant in the Chinese pleasure gardens with more than a hundred persons present.

Tellingly, Richard's first comment about this meeting was related to Chinese women's (lack of) ability to use forks and knives. She was in Europe at the time of this meeting and therefore did not attend it. But the impression of her colleagues was obviously so widely circulated in foreign women's circles that Richard repeated it in her official address to the Educational Association. Hence, instead of highlighting other details about the Chinese women's behaviors and appearances, Mary Richard recounted to the Educational Association that "it was observed at this function that while some of the Chinese ladies were awkward in handling knife and fork, several handled them as deftly as any foreigner."³⁹² As may be interpreted, the tone of

³⁹¹ Mrs. Timothy Richard. "History and Working of the First Girls School Opened by the Chinese," *Records of the Third Triennial Meeting of the Educational Association of China, held at Shanghai, May 17-20, 1899* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1900), 155.

³⁹² Idem.

Richard's and other evaluation of the Chinese women's sophistication (even when praising) has the effect of (re)asserting the "civilizational" distance of the two cultures (by emphasizing the use of Western cutlery), and of marking the Westerners' advanced position as a civilization. Richard, perhaps not surprisingly, read the details of the encounter as further evidence of her and her fellow-Westerners' mandate to uplift the Chinese, and most importantly, women.

Richard continues the report by informing the Association that Chinese women presented the Prospectuses of the school and had asked foreign women to make suggestions. While, as we will see, footbinding was not the central concern of Chinese women, at least not in the same way as women's education, Mrs. Richard stressed the anti-footbinding stance of the educators. She did so by commenting on Alicia Little's attendance to this and the following meetings, and by conveying that "Chinese ladies of rank proudly displayed the natural feet of their daughters."³⁹³ This reinforced her message that missionary goals and Western women's engagements, among which the natural feet held a prominent position, has finally started to bear fruit.

When expressing her satisfaction over this meeting, Richard writes that it "might almost be said to be the first step towards the bridging of the chasm that had formerly kept Chinese ladies *proudly* separated from their foreign sisters."³⁹⁴ Richard's audience at the conference, as well as the anglophone readers of her printed report, were most likely familiar with regular outbursts of missionary women's anxiety and frustration with their inability to gain access to prominent Chinese women.³⁹⁵ Richard's communications thus reveal a pleasure that the "pride" of the Chinese female elite had finally been compromised. It celebrates two dimensions of the victory foreign missionaries had achieved. First, Chinese women were not proudly separated

³⁹³ Idem.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 156. Emphasis is mine.

³⁹⁵ See, for instance, Ristivojević, 2007.

from foreigners anymore. And second, if their pride had been diminished, it happened so because Chinese women realized that they need to change, and the fact that they are now getting together shows that Chinese women realized they need the kind of change that missionary women promoted all along.

Nonetheless, an issue we glean from Richard's report is the ongoing ideological conflict among Chinese and Western women, which is missing from the Chinese participants' representations studied by Nanxiu Qian. According to Richards, when discussing the prospectus of the school with Chinese women, foreign women were not informed that Confucius would be worshiped in the school. When this was revealed, Richard conveys, foreign women refused to become directresses of the school unless Christianity was to be introduced to the students in the same way as Confucianism.³⁹⁶ Richard's narrative continues with her claim that the school's prospectus was changed, alluding again to the power of Western missionary women to influence the educational project. As I will discuss in the sixth chapter, the veneration of Confucius was indeed not mentioned in the School's prospectus, but had continued to play a significant role in representations and practices of women's reform-oriented activities. Nonetheless, Richard noticed that it was "somewhat peculiar" to see that the letter of the school's committee with the announcement of the undertaken changes was "dated from the birth of Confucius, viz., the year of 2449."³⁹⁷

This brief account of foreign women's alarm at the prospect of students' veneration of Confucius, and not Jesus, reveals that in fact conversion to Christianity was still a critical motive to at least some of the foreign women in their support of the planned school. Their desire to

³⁹⁶ Richard, 1900, 155. Ida Kahn and Mary Stone also refused their participation in the educational projects when it was disclosed that Confucius would be worshipped, but for other reasons. Alicia Little reproduced their letter of December 27, 1897 in Little, 1899, 555-559.

³⁹⁷ Idem.

impose their own vision of “change” (read: religious and cultural transformation) for Chinese women undermines a more romantic reading of this meeting as an encounter based on equality and mutual respect.

Alicia Little’s account reframes the power-relations between Chinese and Western men and women on the meetings. When discussing the meeting in the Zhang Garden, she transmits a huge impression that the meeting had on all its participants and observers. Little writes:

...I received an invitation to a public dinner in the name of ten Chinese ladies, of whom I had never heard before...I found all my most intimate friends were invited. We agreed with one another to go, though wondering a good deal what the real meaning of the invitation was, and why we were selected... [A]fter the English ladies had laid aside their wraps in a room to the right - one or two Chinese gentlemen, who had evidently been superintending the arrangement of the dinner, encouraging them to do so - we asked where our Chinese hostesses were. They were already assembled in the rooms opening off the hall to the left, and I still remember the expression of intense anxiety on the Chinese gentlemen’s faces as they saw us leave them and advance to join their womankind, none of whom spoke any English, nor knew anything of English ways and manners.

At first the Chinese ladies did not exactly receive us; but when we began to go round and bow to each lady in turn, after the Chinese fashion, one after another stood up and smilingly greeted us. Then those of us who could talk Chinese, and one or two of the Chinese ladies began to move about, exhibiting the ground-plan of a proposed school for the higher education of Chinese young ladies. And thus gradually we began to understand what it was all about.

But on that occasion it was the English ladies who were frivolous, the Chinese who were serious. For they were so elaborately dressed, so covered with ornaments, English ladies were always breaking off and saying, “Oh, do allow me to admire that bracelet!” or “What lovely embroidery!” whilst the Chinese ladies very earnestly pointed at their ground-plan, and look interrogations...

That dinner was the beginning of an interchange of civilities between foreign and Chinese ladies such as had never occurred before...

At the subsequent meetings some of the Chinese ladies pleaded earnestly that Europeans should take shares in the school. They did not want their money, they said, but feared that unless there were European shareholders their Government might seize all the funds. The European ladies, however, could never quite satisfy themselves as to the various guarantees necessary.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Little, 1899, 551-554, *passim*.

Hence, what Alicia Little's interpretation of the event transmits is the anxiety of Chinese men and triviality of the "English ladies", standing in contrast to the Chinese women's confidence, graceful beauty and their devotion to the educational plan. What we also come to think about is an additional motive for establishing Western and Chinese reformers' cooperation: the politics of the Qing court. This, the commonality of reformers' interests and motives must be questioned and further explored, but the benefits of cooperation were, as we may assume, gratifying enough for both parties to sustain it. The school for girls established in 1898 will be the focus of my analysis in the following section.

4.4. Announced practices of *Nüxue tang*

Nüxue tang was established on May 31, 1898. When Jing Yuanshan gathered reform-oriented men in November 1897 to suggest the establishment of the women's school, they did not discuss what the school should be called. Hence, the first newspaper reports used the name *Nüxue tang* (Women's school), in some newspaper reports it was named *Zhongguo nüxue tang* (Chinese women's school) or *Zhongguo nüxuehui shushu* (The School of Chinese women's educational association). The use of the name that is frequently mentioned in contemporary scholarly articles as *the* name of the school *Jingzheng nüxue* (alluding to Jing Yuanshan) as a

name that appears in the historical records only twenty years after the school's establishment, according to Xia's archival research.³⁹⁹

The school was located in the Southern part of Shanghai, at Guishu lane, or as Timothy Richard explained to his readers, showing a different sense of spatiality that foreigners and Chinese formed in a semi-colonial city, "it was situated a little beyond St. Catherine s Bridge, on the way to the Arsenal."⁴⁰⁰ Because *Niixue tang* was inconveniently positioned at the southern edge of the city, an additional branch of the school was established in Taoshachang in October 1898.⁴⁰¹

Jing Yuanshan and his colleagues tried to get the governmental funding for the establishment of the school. However, their lack of success in this attempt meant that the school had to rely completely on funds gathered by the school supporters, male and female, Chinese and foreign, both for its establishment and for the everyday expenses of the school's operation.⁴⁰²

Foreign women were actively involved in the operation of the school. Mary Richard describes the opening day in the following way:

By this time [June 1, 1898] sixteen girls belonging to higher class families had been enrolled as pupils and boarders at the moderate fee of \$3.10, which included everything. We were taken over the building and shown the waiting room, dining rooms and dormitories. The arrangements in these, as in the school room, were very much after the

³⁹⁹ Xia, 2010, 120, 121.

⁴⁰⁰ Richard, 1916, 261.

⁴⁰¹ Xia claims that the central branch in Guishi Lane was at the level of higher primary school, while the branch in Taoshachang organized classes of the lower primary school level. Xia, 2010, 121, 122. The branch in Guishili was a boarding school, while the school in Taoshachang was a day-school.

⁴⁰² Xia speculates that, in addition to the political turmoil that certainly influenced the closure of the school, funding issues have also contributed to the end of school's operation. See Xia Xiaohong's article for her calculations regarding the money school received and spent. Xia addressed this question to such a detail that she informs us that, for instance, the expenditures of the school in the sixth month of the Wuxu year were 441.94 yuan, while, in the inner-city branch of the school, as Xia calculated, it was 466.96 yuan. Xia, 2010, 125.

model of the mission school for higher class Chinese girls, namely that at McTyeire. Maps and charts of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge and The Educational Association adorned the walls of the school room. A Christian matron, a member of the North Gate church, had been secured, and also the services of a Christian Chinese girl (a pupil of Miss Haygood) to teach English two hours daily. Chinese books were to be taught by an educated Chinese lady. The funds at first were not sufficient to meet the salary of a foreign lady teacher.⁴⁰³

Once again, different strategic tropes were employed in writing about the school. *Nüxue bao* not only neglects the school's connection to Christianity,⁴⁰⁴ but it instead, as I will discuss in the sixth chapter, represents it as an alarming threat to Chinese values and a significant reason for establishing the school. The notable exception is a short note which informed its readers of the *Zhongxi nüshu* and about the women's missionary society's donation for reconstruction of the School's building. Nonetheless, even in this text *Zhongxi nüshu* was represented as providing both Chinese and Western learning, without any reference to Christianity, and, in fact, it used the information about the donation of missionary women to provoke the Chinese donations.⁴⁰⁵

Mary Richard's text, as a representative piece of missionary women's writing about Chinese women, contrastingly, emphasizes that Western schools served as the model for the school as an institution, and that the school would mainly use Western educational materials in its lessons. She writes:

⁴⁰³ Richard, 1900, 155.

⁴⁰⁴ *Nüxue bao* silenced the fact that some of the Chinese teachers were Christians. In addition to the help that the Chinese ladies received from Young Allen's daughter Mary Allen, Richard emphasizes the involvement of two Chinese Christian women: Miss Ting, who was educated in St. Mary School in Jessfield [Shanghai's suburb], and Miss Zee, who was educated in Miss Haygood's school. It is interesting to note that Mary Richard reports that the students sang Christian songs during one of her visits to the school and conveys to her audience the content because of this "advance". It is also interesting to read how Xia Xiaohong tried to convince her audience that students' singing of the Christian songs did not necessarily mean that the school introduced Christianity. Richard, 1900, 157. Xia, 2004, 25.

⁴⁰⁵ The closing sentence of this short news piece expresses the hope that Chinese will donate more to the School, and that in the future Westerners would not be the only ones who deserve the praise for supporting this worthwhile effort. See "Xi fu kai juan" (Generous contribution of Western women), NXB, no. 3, August 15, 1898.

At the request of the directresses I, for some time, visited the school once a week, examined them in their progress in English, gave a lesson in geography and other subjects which the then native staff could not give. Taking with me Betel's Portable Globe, which shuts up like an umbrella, it was easy to explain the different motions of the earth, and the cause of seasons and eclipses. That such explanations were necessary not only for the girls, but for the Chinese ladies always present on these occasions, will be plain from the fact that at the second lesson one of the otherwise intelligent Chinese ladies, who reads and writes Chinese well, gravely asked if in England we had the same sun and moon that they have in China, and when assured it was so, remarked that of course when it was new moon in China it would be full moon in England and vice versa.⁴⁰⁶

What we also read in Mrs. Richard's address to the Educational Conference in 1899 is her vision of cooperation between Chinese and western women, written in somewhat milder, but similar self-satisfactory tone. According to Richard, Chinese ladies were invited and had joined the closing exercises of the missionary girls' schools, where the students' expertise in English, Chinese character classics and history, astronomy and mathematics "astonished and pleased those ladies immensely."⁴⁰⁷

The staff of the missionary schools visited by Chinese women also expressed satisfaction with the tutelage of the Chinese women. As Miss Marietta Melvin wrote to the headquarters of the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands to inform them about 1897-98 period:

The last year has brought to us little perceptible change, but the agreeable feeling that it has been one of our best...The semi-annual examinations in June was long-filling three

⁴⁰⁶ Richard, 1900, 157. Burton reproduced almost all celebratory parts of Mrs. Richard's report. Burton, 105-109.

⁴⁰⁷ The visited schools were McTyeire Home, Bridgman Home and the South Gate. Richard, 156, 157.

days-and difficult, but especially satisfactory and well attended. Among the visitors were Chinese ladies who came to learn methods for their school, recently established.⁴⁰⁸

Nüxue bao constructed the image of the school as an exclusively women's enterprise via its reports of exclusively female fundraisers, donors, and superintendents.⁴⁰⁹ However, the understanding which equates women with the inner sphere and men's activities with the outer domain served as a model for the organization of the school's operation, thus problematizing the claims that women-oriented reformist projects were women-only enterprise as the texts of *Nüxue bao* were often implying or enthusiastically announcing.

Twenty female donors were called "inner directors" (*nei dongshi*), said to be undertaking supervision of the coursework and to help the directors in dealing with miscellaneous general affairs related to the "inner" school affairs.⁴¹⁰ The names and actions of women who were engaged in the operation of the school had been regularly reported in the opening section of the journal's issues. However, what contributed to the sense of having an authentic and representative women's voice, initiative and agency in women-oriented reformist projects was that the readers did not receive information about the names and activities of the school's twenty "outer directors" (*wai dongshi*) who were men.

Among rare information about the male influence on the school that the readers of *Nüxue bao* received was a section from "Provisional Regulations for the Girls' School affiliated to the

⁴⁰⁸ Miss Marietta Melvin, "Report of the Bridgman Memorial School, September 1897, to September, 1898," in *Thirty-Eight Annual Report of The Woman's Union Society of America for Heather Lands*, New York: The Knickerbocker Press (1899): 10,11.

⁴⁰⁹ This information was regularly published on the first page of the journal.

⁴¹⁰ The position of the "inner director" (just like the one of the "outer" director) was unpaid. See [Liang Qichao] "*Nüxue hui shushu chuangan zhangcheng*" (Provisional regulations for the Girls' School affiliated to the Society for Women's Learning), NXB, no. 2, August 3, 1898.

Society for Women's Learning"⁴¹¹ which pronounced that the "outer school affairs" were supposed to be managed by sons, husbands or brothers of women donors who were knowledgeable about both Chinese and western education. These men, as the section publicized, were in charge of collecting the contributions; recruiting the school's teachers and managers. They were to be consulted in decisions about the school's courses and to supervise the school's expenses. Men were also appointed as secretaries, selected by the schools "outer directors," and were to receive a salary for overseeing the financial administration of the school.⁴¹²

Xia Xiaohong speculates that more than half of the school's teachers were recruited through introductions, and emphasizes that the prerequisite for gathering educated women to teach in the school was Jing Yuanshan's dissemination of information through the press.⁴¹³ These details further indicate the indispensable role of media for the success of women-oriented reformist projects in the Wuxu period.

The implications of Xia's note on the way directors "judged" the suitability of the prospective teachers must be noted at this point. According to Xia, Hong Shuzu introduced two teachers, Zhou Yuanxiang and Zhang Jingyi (Yunhua), who showed their poetry as a proof of their teaching abilities. The cases of Zhou and Zhang illustrate not only the way in which women used and depended on the *nei* to get to the *wai*, that is, how their reform-oriented male kin served as promoters and guarantors that women's abilities practiced in the inner space would be appropriate for utilization in handling the outer matters. We can also see that the role of women's

⁴¹¹ The abbreviation "Provisional Regulations" will be used for this set of rules serialized in the first, second, third, fifth, and the eight issues.

⁴¹² "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no.2.

⁴¹³ Xia, 2010,123.

poetic achievements, practiced and mastered in the *nei* sphere, was not perceived as irrelevant for the *wai* domain as the leading reformers claimed.⁴¹⁴

Educated Chinese ladies were invited to apply for a teaching job and the salary proposed may reveal an ongoing process of reevaluation of particular kinds of knowledge. The pay scale was delineated as follows:

[women] who can teach children's primers [will get] twenty yuan every month; [those] who can teach writing of letters and argumentative essays [will receive] fourteen *yuan* per a month; for teaching elementary knowledge of Chinese and western classics, history, astronomy and geography [teachers] will get twenty *yuan* per a month; [those who can teach] elementary knowledge of the foreign language, spelling and essay writing will [also] get twenty *yuan*; teachers who can teach the translation from Chinese to the foreign language and from the foreign language to Chinese will have thirty *yuan* per month, just like those teachers who will teach mathematics. [Ladies] who possess the understanding of advanced physics will receive a monthly salary of forty *yuan*.”⁴¹⁵

Relying on the school's monthly reports published in the press, Xia reconstructs the school's work during the 1898/99 academic year. She explains that during the first semester (which lasted from May 31 till July 18 1898) Shen Ying was acting as a chief director and supervisor of the school, with the help of Madame Zheng. Four women were appointed as Chinese (writing) teachers: Liu Jing (Lady Cheng), Jiang Lan (Lady Liu), Ding Suqing, and Zhang Yunhua, as well as Xu Xianmei who was teaching “western languages” and Madame Chen who was instructing the students in needlework. In the second semester (taking place

⁴¹⁴ Xia also mentions the example of Wen Tinghai who recommended his older sister Wen Jingfang (Yunying). Wen was invited to teach, but she could not undertake the position because of her two children. Xia, 2010, 123.

⁴¹⁵ “*Nüxue hui shushu gaobai*,” (The announcement of the Girls' School affiliated to the Society for Women's Learning), NXB, no. 5, August 27, 1898. The names of the teachers, as well as the precise information about their salaries were listed in “*Zhongguo Nüxue tang Wuxu liu yue di zhi shou fu qing zhang*” (A detailed list of income and expenditures of the Chinese Girls' Schools until of the end of the sixth month of the Wuxu year), NXB, no. 6, September 6, 1898.

between August 17 1898 and January 31 1899) the school was directed by Liu Jing (who was also teaching Chinese and, after her resignation from the position of the director in early 1899, a “comprehensive/ miscellaneous course”, with Lady Zheng acting as a supervisor. Young Allen’s daughter Mary Allen was a main teacher for “western knowledge;” Chinese classes were taught by Jiang Lan, Gong Huiping (Lady Wang) and Western/English language was taught by Xu Xianmei and Ding Mingyu.⁴¹⁶

Writing about the female students in Japan in the first decade of the twentieth century, Joan Judge calls the schools they attended as the “quasi-*wai* zone.”⁴¹⁷ What the pages of *Nüxue bao* suggest is that the school was placed in the spatially-defined *wai* sphere, helping us to understand the perception of the *wai* domain as hosting both endangering and legitimizing public gaze. Hence, we read that the girls were disturbed by the “hooligans,” that these local people were watching the girls, disturbing the work of the school, and that they even damaged the roof of the school. Actually, there was a need for the officials to issue an order that all “idle” people who disturb the work of the school should be severely punished.⁴¹⁸ Nevertheless, the presence of the imagined gazing subject also served to justify the school’s success. Thus, in the part where the arguments about the benefits of bodily exercises that girls are doing in the school are listed, the text states the following: “when the neighbors see women students going back home from school, in a good health, with a raised spirit, [they] praise and admire [the female students], and their parents are happy and gratified.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Xia, 2010, 123,124. Xiong Xianjun lists Ge Ruixing and Xu Xianmei as foreign language teachers. Xiong, 2006, 188. Ding Mingyu is the Christian teacher Mary Richard mentions in her 1899 Conference address.

⁴¹⁷ Joan Judge, “Between *Nei* and *Wai*: Chinese Women Students in Japan in the Early Twentieth Century,” in Goodman and Larson, 122, 134.

⁴¹⁸ See the reproduced announcements of the high officials Mr. Liu and Mr. Huang in NXB, no. 3.

⁴¹⁹ See the text that accompanies “Ticao tu” (Calisthenics), NXB, no. 6.

The illustration of an on-going class held in the School which was published in the seventh issue of the journal, depicts both Han and Manchu female students.⁴²⁰ On the day of the school's opening, there were sixteen students enrolled, additional twenty girls enrolled in a day school in Taoshachang, while, reportedly, there were seventy graduates before the school was closed. The relatively low numbers of students can be misleadingly interpreted as a lack of interest in girls' education that reformers proposed. *Nüxue tang*, just like the other women's and girls' schools established in China in the second half of the nineteenth century, was not a large-scale project in terms of size. It was however highly important and socially transformative insofar as it extended the socially-acceptable women's physical presence in the out-of-family proper-space. The school's significance also lay in new kinds of knowledge it promoted for girls, expanding its prior boundaries of social use.

As the announcement indicated, students could choose between three majors: mathematics, medicine and law. The students were supposed to master one of the majors, but the students of medicine and law were expected to have basic knowledge of mathematics as well.⁴²¹ There was an additional educational option for the students who were preparing to be teachers: to attend the "normal education major". They were supposed to major in all three streams of classes offered by the school. Classes would be conducted in Chinese and in foreign languages,⁴²² and all classes were to start by the study of writings characters, grammar, and by the study of "basic books." These were to be followed by books in history, medicine, law and government, and

⁴²⁰ This illustration of the on-going class also sends the messages about the "global" knowledge that the students are obtaining through the map of the world visible on the wall, and the globe placed on the teacher's table. See *Nüshu tu* (At class), NXB, no. 7, September, 1898.

⁴²¹ "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no. 3.

⁴²² The announcement did not specify which foreign language(s) would be employed.

philosophy.⁴²³ It was not specified what kind of medical education the girls were planned to obtain the school, but the publication of a short report “New insights about pregnancy” may suggest that gynecology was discussed in the school.⁴²⁴ As added, spinning and weaving (*fangzhi*), drawing and painting were the skills which “women must master”, but additional funds were needed to hire the teachers who would instruct the students in Chinese and foreign fine arts skills.⁴²⁵

I will discuss the content of the proposed education in more details in chapter six. For the moment, it will suffice to say that what the announced curriculum discloses is an intention to instruct female students in the way that late-Qing girls were instructed by their mothers, female relatives and other female teachers. The girls would acquire knowledge of the *wai* domain that would add the *wai* to the *nei* space of women’s legitimate interests and expertise. *Nüxue bao*, as a media platform that at the same time facilitated and represented the entrance of women in the *wai* sphere of socio-political actions and discussions, played a crucial role in a far-reaching reorientation of social expectations for women. The remaining part of my dissertation will discuss the myriad of ways that it did so.

⁴²³ “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no.3.

⁴²⁴ “Tai yun xin shuo” (New insights about pregnancy), NXB, no. 9, October, 1898. The article is informing the readers about a new theory developed by a Chief of the hospital in Ao guo (Australia[?]) who claim that a woman may influence the gender of the baby by taking certain kind of food in pregnancy: if she wants to have a son she should eat the food that “increases the blood.” The advice for having a daughter was not presented.

⁴²⁵ “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no.3.

4.5. *Nüxue bao*: Its first nine issues

There is perhaps no better way to explain the relation between *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* than using the words of Pan Xuan, an active contributor to the journal. As she wrote:

Nüxue hui, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* are like a fruit tree: the society is its root, the school its fruit, and the journal its leaves and blossoms. If people want to see what kind of tree it is - whether it is promising, and what kind of fruit it may breed - shouldn't they first observe its leaves and blossoms? All the matters of the society and the school will be published in the journal, [and these news will be] just like green leaves and red blossoms hanging from the tree. Looking at them, wouldn't passersby's eyes feel pleasure, and their minds feel freshness?⁴²⁶

Nüxue bao made public women's activities and discussions. By doing so, as Nanxiu Qian points out, it challenged the ancient precepts of *nü bu yan wai* [women should not discuss the outer issues] and *nei yan bu chu* [the words from the inner chambers should not be heard in the outer sphere].⁴²⁷ The journal thus exemplifies the critical role that the modern(izing) media assumed in the process of extending the spheres of women's expertise, action and of their socio-political recognition. As the text written by Pan Xuan and published in the third issue of the journal explains:

There were no [Chinese] women's journals in the past. That is why [Chinese] men and foreigners look [at *Nüxue bao*] with curiosity (*xiqi*), and we [Chinese women] cannot but feel [overwhelmed with this] new and strange (*xinqi*) situation [when we are getting through] the old wall [which divided] inner and outer speech.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Pan Xuan, "Shanghai *Nüxue bao* yuanqi (The purposes of the *Chinese Girl's Progress* in Shanghai), NXB, no. 1.

⁴²⁷ Qian Nanxiu, "Chongsu 'Xianyuan': Wuxu funü ziwo jiegou" (Remolding 'Xianyuan': Identity construction of women in the Wuxu period), *Shuwu* 12 (2007):46.

⁴²⁸ Pan Xuan, "Lun *Nü xuebao* nanchu he Zhongwai nüzi xiangzhu de lifa" (On the problems of the *Chinese Girl's Progress* and the mutual assistance between Chinese and Western women), NXB, no. 3.

In addition to bringing together “the inner and outer speech,” by being available to a broad audience of the anticipated female readers, *Nüxue bao* was a medium that was primarily meant to bring together women and to highlight their common interests and agenda. These are the reasons why, as indicated earlier, I perceive *Nüxue bao* as not only as an important archive of information about the actors and the events of the Wuxu period. But I also see it an invaluable media site which reveals some of their primary representational strategies.

Nüxue bao is the central empirical focus of my dissertation; a detailed analysis of its content will be my focus in the fifth and sixth chapters. This section will, thus, provide a brief presentation of “biographical” data about the establishment, organization and operation of the journal.

On May 17th 1898 *Xinwen bao* published the announcement by *Nüxue hui* in which the forthcoming publication of the women’s journal is communicated. The announcement invited the “worthy ladies” to contribute their writings for the publication.⁴²⁹ The planned name for the journal was *Guanhua nüxue bao* (“Vernacular” women’s journal), but the name was changed before the first edition at the initiative of Xue Shaohui.⁴³⁰ There were indeed two competing views about the language that should be used in the journal. Pan Xuan, one of the main contributors to the journal, argued that *guanhua* should be used, while Xue Shaohui argued that *guanhua* would diminish the journal’s “elegant appeal,” and urged the use of elegant literary language of Chinese high culture, to which the women themselves belonged.⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Qian, 2003, 413.

⁴³⁰ See the advertisement about the establishment of the school, the association, and the journal published in *Xinwenbao* on May 17th 1897 reproduced in Xia, 2012, 25.

⁴³¹ Qian claims that Xue responded to *Nüxuehui*’s announcement about the launch of the journal (through Chen Jiping) and offered to contribute her six thousand characters’ essays every month, without remuneration. Xue also

Literary Chinese, “the main vehicle of the cultural legacy,”⁴³² was, as Ge Liangyan conveys, “confined to the largely homogeneous community of the cultural elite...a written language of the literati, by the literati, and for the literati.”⁴³³ It was not used for everyday speech, as the prestigious cultural meaning of writing necessitated a clear-cut distinction between written and spoken language. A distinction between written and spoken Chinese perpetuated the perception of written language as prestigious and divine, and, as Zhou Gang writes, “as the sole legitimate language, *wenyan* was believed to have derived its potency not from ties to speech but from its affinity to the patterns to the cosmos.”⁴³⁴

Guanhua, on the other hand, was a language based primarily on a northern dialect and was used by governmental officials in an attempt to bypass the barriers for oral communication. Beside officials, monks and merchants also used *guanhua* because it helped them to move across regional borders of the Empire. But, as Shang emphasizes, even though *guanhua* was considered to be “easy to understand” by the numerous people, it was not “the people’s language,” and it would be inaccurate to describe its relation with *wenyan* in terms of the distinction between official and popular, high and low, and between center and periphery.⁴³⁵

addressed *Nüxue hui* via the general press with her suggestions about the journal’s language issue, to which *Nüxue hui* responded with the text published on July 19th in *Zhixin bao*. This text read: “Now you advise us that with such a vernacular approach, the journal might lose its elegant appeal, and you are absolutely right!” *Zhongguo Nüxue hui zhi houguan Xue nüshi Shaohui shu* (Letter to Xue Shaohui from the Women’s Learned Society), *Zhixin bao* 59 (July 19th, 1898): 8b – 9a, quoted in Qian 2003, 413.

⁴³² Patric Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 1981), 15.

⁴³³ Ge Liangyan, *Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 16.

⁴³⁴ Zhou Gang, *Placing the Modern Vernacular in Transnational Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 19.

⁴³⁵ Shang Wei, “*Baihua*, *Guanhua*, *Fangyan* and the May Fourth Reading of *Rulin waishi*,” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 117 (2002): 4,7. Available at http://www.sino-platonic.org/complete/spp117_baihua_rulin_waishi.pdf Accessed December 26, 2012.

Guanhua cannot be called vernacular, as Shang further argues, and there are two reasons for that: first, *guanhua* is by definition the spoken language of the officials whose geographical center moved along with the change of China's capitals through history – from Yuan's Dadu, to Ming's Nanjing, to Beijing of the Qing reign. Second, *guanhua* (later called *putonghua*) crossed the boundaries of local dialects, and, as Shang maintains, "if we insist on using the term "vernacular", then it is *fanyan* (local dialects or topolects), not *guanhua*, that are closer to the vernacular."⁴³⁶ Hence, if we acknowledge Shang's position that the coupling of *baihua/guanhua* versus *wenyan* as low versus high, vernacular versus elite is yet an additional myth of the May 4th intellectuals, it is important to highlight that neither of the proposed languages for *Nüxue bao* did allow a de-classed massivization of communication.

When the journal was launched, the chosen Chinese name was *Nüxue bao*, with its English name *Chinese Girl's Progress* printed at the cover page together with its Chinese title.⁴³⁷ The first two issues of the journal announced on the cover page that the journal would be seventy percent vernacular (*su*) and thirty percent elegant (*ya*) texts.⁴³⁸ However, *guanhua* was used mostly in the news reports, while a majority of the editorial essays, essays sent by the readers, and announcements were written in the elegant elite *wenyan*.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, 7. To use *fanyan* was considered too impractical for women's communication, and, since the lack of language uniformity and the usage of different dialects were, in Sun Yun's words, a "matter of ridicule of cultured people," *fanyan* was not an option for the women's journal. See Sun Yun, "Nüxue bao xu" (Preface to the *Chinese Girls' Progress*), *Nüxue bao*, no. 2, August 3, 1898.

⁴³⁷ It is interesting to note that there are Chinese authors who are re-translating the name of the journal from its English name. Hence, according to these works, the name of the journal is not *Nüxue bao* but rather *Zhongguo nüjie jinbu* or *Zhongguo nüzi jinbu*. See Jiang Meihua, *20 shiji Zhongguo nüxing jiaose bianqian* (Changes of women's roles in twenty-century China) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2008), 26; and Qiao Suling, *Jiaoyu yu nüxing: Jindai Zhongguo nüzi jiaoyu yu zhishi nüxing juexing (1840-1921)* (Education and women: Early modern education of Chinese women and mobilization of female intellectuals (1840-1921) (Tianjin: Tianjin guxiang chubanshe, 2005), 26.

⁴³⁸ "Benguan gaobai" (Our announcements), NXB, no. 1 and no. 2.

The journal had eight densely typed pages printed on one large panel sheet. All nine issues I have consulted had elaborate illustrations on the second pages. With the exception of the first issue's illustration of the young Empress (which was borrowed from Young Allen's *Wanggong gongbao*), and the second issue's illustration of the great gathering of the Chinese and Western ladies (which was, as I mentioned, reprinted from *Dianshizhai huabao*), the illustrations were the works of Liu Jing (Keping) and Jiang Lan (Wangfang).⁴³⁹

The texts were not punctuated, following the conventions of contemporary writing styles. Emphatic punctuation (used to highlight the crucial parts of the texts for the reader) was not used as well, perhaps because such punctuation was not considered appropriate for a journal that needed recognition.⁴⁴⁰ Andrea Janku writes that in 1876 *Shen bao* launched *Min bao* (People's daily) which tried to reach a mass readership. The editors of *Min bao* included punctuation spaces indicating phrase and sentence breaks within the text which would help the reader greatly. However, this experiment failed, in Janku's opinion "not because the technology necessary for punctuation was lacking, but because there was not social grounding for it."⁴⁴¹ Such social grounding was not present in 1898 either.

The journal, as I emphasized, allowed women to express their thoughts using the respectable genres that were traditionally related to the ritually-sanctioned communication of men in and about the *wai* sphere. Thus, among the published texts, we read political discussions,

⁴³⁹ Xia claims that Chen Xiefang wanted to include more illustrations, but that it was too expensive.

⁴⁴⁰ Janku explains that since Song times, cheap commercial prints used such punctuation, so it is possible that it was perceived as "too vulgar." Janku, 124. Only after 1900 did journals start to use emphatic punctuation.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 155.

forms of propositional letters and, following journalistic trends of the times, the news as an “epistemological mode of factuality.”⁴⁴²

The publications dates of *Nüxue bao* were given in the Western calendar and Chinese dynastic calendar, and were printed at the first page of the journal. The issue of calendar was politically charged issue since the usage of officially sanctioned dynastic time was related to the loyalty to the dynasty.⁴⁴³ As mentioned, Kang Youwei in his wish to reconstruct Confucianism as a “religion” and to emulate Christian-Gregorian calendar suggested adaptation of a Confucian system of dating.⁴⁴⁴ As seen earlier in Mary Richard’s speech, the reformers did use this style of marking the time in certain documents. However, one may speculate that, since Zhang Zhidong in 1895 banned reformist journal *Qiangxue bao* because the journal used dates calculated from Confucius’ birth and not from the beginning year of the rein of the Qing dynasty, using a Confucian calendar was not an option appropriate for *Nüxue bao*.⁴⁴⁵ In contrast, the editors’ choice to employ both dynastic time and the Western calendar may have been a savvy decision that garnered support for their projects.

There is an ongoing debate about the distribution of leadership and power among the women engaged in reform-oriented projects. Scholar Nanxiu Qian has focused on Xue Shaohui in her research and thus emphasizes the central role of this extraordinarily educated woman. Chang Yu-fa contends that *Nüxue bao* was established and led by Shen Jingying; while Li Xieli

⁴⁴² Christopher A. Reed, “From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Printing, Publishing, and Literary fields in Transition, Circa 1800 to 2008: Introduction,” in Brokaw and Reed, 13.

⁴⁴³ Suzuki follows Ronald Toby and discusses the issue of the calendar as a sign of Japanese (lack of) acknowledgment of the Chinese Court. See Suzuki, 49.

⁴⁴⁴ Kwok, 107.

⁴⁴⁵ For the ban of *Qiangxue bao* see Judge, 1996, 23.

in her MA Thesis speculates that Pan Xuan must have been acting as the chief-editor, judging from the number of her texts published in the journal.⁴⁴⁶

Nevertheless, *Nüxue bao* itself does not reveal the hierarchical power structure behind the journal's operation. It just claimed to have an all-woman editorial board which consisted of around twenty *zhubi* (editorial/main writers). The names of major writers were written at the beginning of every issue, with the names added and removed from issue to issue. The list of main contributors (*zhubi*) for the first nine issues includes Xue Shaohui, Pan Daofang, Jiang Lan (Wanfang), Shen Dun, Ding Suqing, Gong Huiping, Kang Wexian (Tongwei), Liao Yuanhua (Peiqiong), Shen Jingying, Zhu Shilan, Qiu Meilü (Yufang), Shen Heqing (Ying), Liu Jing (Keping), Zhan Wangxiang, Wen Jingfang (Yunying), Li Duanyang, Sui Nianqu, Shen Cuiying, Pan Yanglan (Xuan), Di Wanjia, Zong Hengyi, Zhang Jingyi (Yunhua), Zhou Yuanxiang, Wu Yiqiu, Xie Peilan, Xie Moqing, Zhu Qinfen, Wu Pengxian, Cheng Xiangheng, Zhong Qianjun, and Jiang Renqiu.⁴⁴⁷ What the journal did not publicize, however, were the names of its male contributors. Such an omission may be read as a strategic choice to create and reinforce the feeling of the authenticity of the journal as a women's initiatives.

There has yet to be a thorough study of "migrating" texts and authors, as well as the implications of the interaction of *Nüxue bao* with the general contemporary press, Chinese and foreign.⁴⁴⁸ However, it is certain that men actively participated in the textual production of the

⁴⁴⁶ Qian (2003, 2007, 2010); Chang Yu-fa [Zhang Yufa], *Qingji de geming tuanti* (Revolutionaries of the late Qing period: an analysis of groups in revolutionary movements, 1894-1911) (Taipei: Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, Monograph series no. 32, 1982):79; Li Xieli, *Zhongguo jinxindai funü baokan yanjiu (1895-1919)* (Research of early modern Chinese women's press) (master's thesis, Sichuan daxue 2003), 6.

⁴⁴⁷ In the first two issues women were signed by their maiden names, their hometowns were written before and the respectable title *nüshi* (lady-scholar) after the name. From the third to the ninth issues the title *nüshi* was removed from the first page, but some authors continued to use it when signing the submitted texts.

⁴⁴⁸ While sometimes informing the audience that the short pieces from the news section originated in the foreign press, *Nüxue bao* did not announce that several articles published by their main contributors were reproduced from the general Chinese press.

journal. As Xia Xiaohong and Nanxiu Qian inform us, communication with officials published in *Nüxue bao* was conducted by Jing Yuanshan; Liang Qichao's text was also published; and, as Mary Richard's writings indicate, Young Allen had been involved in the operation of the journal.⁴⁴⁹

In elaborating the three main issues she identified as the burning concerns about the journal, Pan Xuan highlights a problem concerning the number of submissions, the limited number of copies of the journal available for circulation, as well as the need for further funding of the journal.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, women were specially addressed in the call for submissions, as well as in the suggestion to buy and share the journal with other members of their families. Western women were appealed for financial donations to support the journal and to provide assistance based on their experience with comparable journal in their own national contexts.⁴⁵¹ Women did send their contributions, and the letter of one female reader named Lady Wei sent to the *Nüxue tang* reveals that they used the help of their male relatives to do so. Lady Wei, thus, acknowledges the contribution of her son in law who helped her to send the letter and contribution to the school.⁴⁵²

Starting with the eight issue (September 1898), and, as it is interpreted, responding to Cixi's coup d'état the journal emphasized its relation to foreigners. The names of close relatives of the leaders of Wuxu reforms were removed from the cover of *Nüxue bao*, while the name of

⁴⁴⁹ Xia, 2012, 281; Qian, 2003; Richard, 1900, 157.

⁴⁵⁰ Pan Xuan, NXB, no. 3.

⁴⁵¹ Idem.

⁴⁵² "Wei Gongren shu" (Letter from Lady Wei), NXB, no. 1.

Young Allen's Daughter Young Mollie was added, noting her as being in charge of the "Western learning."⁴⁵³

Further research is needed to clarify a full scope of changes in the operation of the school, association and the journal after the end of the One Hundred Days reforms, and one would certainly need access to the remaining issues of *Nüxue bao* to understand the ways in which women-oriented projects adapted to the new political situation. Nevertheless, available resources suggest a set of circumstances to us at this point.

For instance, as Xia reconstructs the events from September 1898, the publishing office of *Nüxue bao* moved from Xiamen wai wenyuanfang to the vicinity of the school in Guishuli in a quest for "more auspicious *qi*."⁴⁵⁴ Even though their foreign collaborators tried to keep the projects going, it nevertheless appears that the violent end of the Reform period in the fall of 1898 was also the beginning of the end of Chinese-led women-oriented reform projects. *Nüxue hui* probably dissolved in September 1898; *Nüxue bao* ceased its publication in October 1898 after the twelfth issue; and the branches of *Nüxue tang*, though with changed leadership, managed to operate until the beginning of 1899 and 1900. This brief and speculative reconstruction of events following 1898 provides an outline for our historical records to be filled in or corrected by additional research.

Notwithstanding their short-lived operation, the establishment of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* certainly represent a significant development in modern Chinese women's history. As demonstrated in this chapter, a group of foreign and domestic actors, male and female, were brought together to set these project in motion. Male reformers held a certain authority over these

⁴⁵³ Xia, 2012, 28. Unfortunately, the copy of the ninth issue of the journal I can consult is not allowing me to see clearly (all) the names of the signed *zhubi*.

⁴⁵⁴ Xia, 2012, 28.

projects and had continued to channel women's communication. Thus, Chinese women used their *nei* connections to gain an unprecedented access to the *wai* domain: what distinguished a particular moment of the Wuxu reform period from the Chinese Imperial past was the formation of a group of women that represented political collectivity which was recognized as legitimate participant in the reform-oriented discussions and actions.

An additional specificity of Chinese women's positioning in the *wai* domain, that is, of the initial stage in definition of elite neo/Confucian educated women as recognized socio-political actors was their cooperation with Western women. These encounters echoed the communication between Chinese and Western men, and came with particular opportunities and limits. The presence of foreign women in the Chinese-led social project did allow Chinese women to undertake the reforms in the way reformers deemed necessary, but, as I will further discuss in chapter six, the inclusion of the "(Western) foreign woman" into women-related discourses served perhaps more important role than foreign women's actual engagements in women-oriented reformist projects implied.

The chapters that follow will look closely into the content of *Nüxue bao*. The process that was intrinsic to the women's entrance into the *wai* sphere in the context of the Wuxu Reform period was the multivocal negotiation of the boundaries and meanings of a recognized socio-political collectivity of Chinese women. The fifth chapter will examine the strategic inclusions and exclusions of particular groups and characteristics of Chinese women within this process.

Chapter 5: *Nüxue bao* and the defining of boundaries of collective identity of women as recognized socio-political actors

Nüxue bao, as reform-oriented women themselves attested, had no historical precedent. Because, as Lisa Gitelman reminds us, “it makes no sense to think about ‘content’ without attending to the medium that both communicates that content and represents or helps to set the limits of what that content can consist of.”⁴⁵⁵ The previous section of my thesis presented available “biographical data” about the journal. This chapter will focus on one crucial process that the Wuxu reforms allowed and that *Nüxue bao* mediated as both its facilitator and display.

When women stepped into the spatial and discursive *wai* sphere in the Wuxu reform period, they did so as a recognized socio-political collectivity invited to act and discuss the directions of change that China and Chinese women should undertake. The three women-oriented reformist projects – the school, association and the journal – may, thus, all be understood as venues for the formation of the political collectivity of “Chinese women.” *Nüxue bao*, as a specific mode of communication, exchange and community building enabled and displayed multivocal process of defining the borders and the meanings of a newly-emerging political collectivity of Chinese women.

Of crucial importance for my dissertation in general and for this chapter in particular is Alberto Melucci’s argument about the approach to the analysis of collective actions. For Melucci, it is essential to relinquish the idea of a monolithic and metaphysical idea of collective actors,

⁴⁵⁵ Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (London and Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 7.

and to understand instead the processes through which a collective becomes collective.⁴⁵⁶ In my analysis I will explore the dynamics of the formation of meanings and boundaries delineating Chinese women as a distinct socio-politically active group. I will do so by asking the following questions: What were the groups and characteristics of Chinese women praised in the texts of *Nüxue bao*? Or, in other words, who was understood as representative for the newly-emerging group? How did a woman from the Chinese past figure in the texts of *Nüxue bao*? What may be concluded about the process of “internal” marginalization within the socio-political category of “Chinese women” conducted by the participants in women-oriented reformist projects in their arguments? What do the announcements and reports tell us about the process of creating a respectable socio-politically active collectivity of Chinese women in late-Qing China?

5.1. Approaching the collectivity

If media are understood as “very particular sites for very particular, importantly social as well as historically and culturally specific experiences of meaning,”⁴⁵⁷ one of the central meanings created in *Nüxue bao* was the identity of the respectable Chinese woman who is to assist China in its return to power. That is, *Nüxue bao* offered a set of contesting representations

⁴⁵⁶ Alberto Melucci, *Challenging codes: Collective action in the information age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 70, 80. I find parts of Melucci’s work especially rewarding for my own study despite the fact that he addresses contemporary social movements and claims that the processes of formation of social actors and maintenance of unity in the past were either less important and/or less visible. See Melucci’s, in my view, rather problematic explanation about this distinction between the present and past formations of social actors. Ibid., 84.

⁴⁵⁷ Gitelman, 7.

which defined Chinese women as legitimate participants in the discussions, imaginations and actions for social change in the *wai* sphere of the 1898 Reform era.

I approach the notion of collective identity in a manner defined by social theorist Alberto Melucci who, in his elaboration of collective action and actors maintains that “the notion of identity always refers to these three features, namely, the continuity of a subject over and beyond variations in time and its adaptations to the environment; the delimitation of this subject with respect to others; and the ability to recognize and to be recognized.”⁴⁵⁸ Melucci’s definition of collective identity assumes “an interactive and shared definition” of the orientations of individuals’ or groups’ action, and of the opportunities and limitations of the setting in which their actions take place. For Melucci, collective identity is not a static entity, but rather a *process* that involves the emotional investments of its contributors and which enable individuals to feel themselves a part of community. It also involves cognitive definitions of “ends, means and the field of action” which are constructed through the members’ interactions and are often contradictory. And it consists of a network of active relationships between the actors which are constituted by forms of organization and leadership.⁴⁵⁹ With these processes in mind, I will explore *Nüxue bao* as a modern/izing media platform which played a key role in facilitating and displaying the formation of Chinese women’s socio-politically active group.

Along the similar lines, but with added classificatory tone, Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston and Rose McDermott define collective identity as an unfixed and varying social category which has two variable dimensions: content and contestation. The contestation signals the agreements and disagreements of group members over the content of the

⁴⁵⁸ Melucci, 71.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 70, 71.

shared category and its meanings.⁴⁶⁰ The content of collective identity, according to the authors' understanding, describes the meaning of collective identity, and it interlocks several features that I will address in my analysis. It involves constitutive norms which represent formal and informal rules that define group's membership; social purposes of the formation of the group, that is, "the goals that are shared by members of the group;" and it entails relational comparisons, or the ways in which a group defines what it is not by members' particular views on other identity groups.⁴⁶¹

This chapter will primarily be dedicated to the discussion of the "constitutive norms" of the formation of collective identity of women. The analysis will examine the explicit and implicit ways of defining the membership in the early stage of creating a collectivity of women who were starting to be recognized as direct political/public actors. As Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston and McDermott specify, constitutive norms "fix meanings and set collective expectations for members of the group," that is, they "identify the 'proper' and 'appropriate' behavior for a particular identity."⁴⁶² More importantly, as the authors suggest, these norms are "the very actions that lead others to recognize an actor as having a particular identity," thus defining the distinctive practices and the boundaries of the group.⁴⁶³

I am interested in the boundaries of emerging group identity of women in late-Qing China because the insights about internal marginalization within the women's group reveal that a

⁴⁶⁰ Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," in *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientist*, ed. Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston and Rose McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 18, 19. The authors also include cognitive models which subsume "the worldviews or understandings of political and material conditions and interests that are shaped by a particular identity" as important for a content of collective identity. However, the cognitive models must remain out of the scope of my thesis.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 21.

historical moment of women's initial self-positioning within the *wai* domain of reform-oriented public/political sphere was marked by marginalization, silencing and/or erasure of certain groups of women by those women who were occupying the position of a recognized speaking socio-political actor in modern China. Therefore, I will discuss the expectations imposed on women articulated in women-oriented reformist projects and publicized in *Nüxue bao*. I will trace inclusions and exclusions of particular groups of Chinese women in debates, reports and announcements published in *Nüxue bao*.

“In its formative stage, a ‘movement’ always adopts the language of previous struggles. Still unable to define itself in terms of an identity of its own, the new collective actor uses the symbols, the organizational experience, and the forms of action of the movements that preceded it,” Melucci observes.⁴⁶⁴ Even though I remain reserved when it comes to defining women's activities around 1898 as a women's movement, this observation is useful for the approach to women's activities and debates in the reformist projects.

Male reformers of the Wuxu period, as I've indicated in my discussion of Kang Youwei in chapter three, positioned Chinese woman as a linchpin of the decay of China's glory. These reformers were the ones who, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, initiated the process of transformation of the social ideals from *cainü* to *xin nüxing*. An important study of Hu Ying discloses the ways in which Kang Youwei's most famous disciple, Liang Qichao (1873-1926) initiated the removal of the cultural capital of *cainü* from the modernizing nationalist narrative.⁴⁶⁵ In his essay *Lun nüxue* (On women's education) published in 1897 Liang established what would become a common trope in the modernizers' suggestions for the reform

⁴⁶⁴ Melucci, 207.

⁴⁶⁵ See Hu Ying, 2000.

of gendered practices. As Joan Judge summarizes, “women had to be transformed from parasites to producers; from helpless creatures who lived off the labor of their fathers or husbands to economically independent individuals.”⁴⁶⁶ What Liang and his like-minded colleagues also addressed was “useless” knowledge and artistic skills of the “talented women”. As Jin Feng explains, Liang Qichao created an image of *cainü* who was:

essentially the type of traditional woman “who toys with ditties on the wind and the moon, the flowers and the grass ... who makes ditties on spring sorrow and sad departures,” and summarily excluded them from the project of Chinese modernization on the basis of their sentimental tendency and their lack of contact and concern with pressing social realities.⁴⁶⁷

As Hu Ying perceptively concludes, in addition to the discarded *cainü*, Chinese intellectuals drew on the figure of the *xifu*, a particular type of Western women which exemplified the ideas of the proposed Chinese and Chinese women’s modernity. Hu Ying’s study, as well as Joan Judge’s works, articulate the role of these two “others” of the New woman, and are exceptionally important for my thinking about gender-related transformations in late-Qing China. I am particularly interested in seeing how, in the Wuxu reform period, Chinese women themselves embarked on the project on reimagining themselves and their “others” in a rapidly changing world around them.

Among the most significant insights that a close reading of the texts published in *Nüxue bao* offers is the way in which the authors created a specific discourse about historical time. As I

⁴⁶⁶ Judge, 2002, 36. For discussions about Liang Qichao and his thoughts and actions related to women see an excellently researched book of Sudo Mizuyo, *Zhongguo ‘nūquan’ gainian de bianqian: Qingmo Minchu de renquan he shehui xingbie* (Historical changes of the concept of “women’s rights” in China: Gender and human rights in Late-Qing and early Republic) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007).

⁴⁶⁷ Jin Feng, *The New Woman in Early Twentieth-Century Fiction* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2004), 9.

will show in the following section, a particular temporality women created at the same time allowed the inclusion of exemplary women from the Chinese past into the newly-forming socio-politically active and recognized group of women; and have set the stage for strategic inclusion of narratives about foreign woman in general, and Western woman in particular into the reform-oriented discourses. This chapter will look closely into the principles of the inclusion and exclusion of selected women from the Chinese past and present into the socio-politically active collectivity of women in the Reform period. The employment of figures of foreign women in the logic of *Nüxue bao*'s internationalized imaginary will be the focus of the sixth chapter of my dissertation.

5.2. Benefit of the state: A precondition for the inclusion of exemplary women from the Chinese past

5.2.1. Framing the past: Non-linear historical time, Three Dynasties and the notion of xixue zhong yuan (Chinese origin of the Western learning)⁴⁶⁸

As Jörn Rüsen explains, historical memory and historical consciousness are operational in forming identities.⁴⁶⁹ Historical memory and historical thinking, as he further elaborates, carry out this cultural function in a temporal perspective by familiarizing the outcomes of change

⁴⁶⁸ A part of this subchapter that elaborates the literature concerned with the differences between western and Chinese conceptions of time was published in the proceedings of the Conference Commemorating the Centennial of 1911 Revolution organized at Tokyo University in December 2011.

⁴⁶⁹ Jörn Rüsen, "Introduction: Historical Thinking as Intercultural Discourse," in *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 1.

human beings are constantly faced with. Historical consciousness, as he further elaborates, produces the identity through individual and collective memory by using the experiences of the past and expectations of the future for creating the comprehensive image of temporal advance.⁴⁷⁰ There are, however, numerous culturally and historically-specific ways in which the creation of a vision of temporal flows has been imagined.

Western historical thought, as Peter Burke aptly puts it, should not be understood as “a series of unique characteristics but rather as a unique combination of elements each of which is to be found elsewhere, a pattern of emphases, which themselves vary by period, region, social group and individual historian.”⁴⁷¹ In his schematic representation of the features of Western historical thinking, Burke argues that the crucial and most evident characteristic of Western historical thought is its linear conceptualization of time/past and the emphasis of progress, i.e. the perception that change is cumulative and irreversible.⁴⁷² Burke wants to emphasize, however, that the primacy of linearity and development is historical as well. There were different ideas of progress which have long coexisted with the cyclical theory of historical change.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ Idem.

⁴⁷¹ Peter Burke, “Western Historical Thinking in a Global Perspective – 10 Thesis,” in Rüsen, 16. Burke lists ten features of western historical thought. For critical responses to Burke’s inventory, see the articles from the same volume, especially Tarif Khalidi’s “Searching for Common Principles: A Plea and Some Remarks on the Islamic Tradition” and Aziz Al-Azmeh’s “The Coherence of the West”, as well as Burke’s reply at the end of the book.

⁴⁷² Johan Galtung adds the concept of closure - the existence of a beginning and an end - to Burke’s statement about progress, linearity, cumulation and irreversibility. See Johan Galtung, “Western Deep Culture and Western Historiography,” in Rüsen, 87, 90.

⁴⁷³ Burke, 18, 19. Sadik J. Al-Azm mentions the European Renaissance as the beginning of history of the idea of progress and claims that the idea of cycles had been present in all pre-modern societies. See Sadik J. Al-Azm, “Western Historical Thinking from an Arabian Perspective,” in Rüsen, 122, 123. Contrastingly, Tarif Khalidi points out that we should not think in terms of a strict binary linear vs. cyclical view of history, and argues for the possibility of spiral historical thinking, i.e. the coexistence of both recurrent patterns and evolution in the way history is understood. In Khalidi’s view, the difference is between teleological and nonteleological notions of history. See Khalidi, 54.

As Georg G. Iggers notices, what Burke calls Western is in fact modern, and argues that the conceptualization of coherent historical process invaded the non-Western conceptions of history.⁴⁷⁴ In the second half of the nineteenth century, as a part of politics, thought, culture and the way of life named ‘Western system’ Western historiography circulated throughout the world. As Masayuki Sato explicates, various regions of the world which “placed their new point of reference on this new mode of existence” had to rethink their own past.⁴⁷⁵

A Chinese philosophical understanding of the relation between historical time and progress was not linear but rather was circular in a sense that ideals are not to be reached through straightforward progress toward the future, but rather by returning to the ideal past. Arthur F. Wright explains that the Chinese view of history heavily relied on the indigenous world view which inspired a vision of history as “devolution from a golden age: the sage kings of the distant past had presided over an ideal order; in later times men moved further and further from that idea. Change was considered desirable if it promised a return to ancient ideals.”⁴⁷⁶

Furthermore, in contrast with western-generated linearity of time, as Huang Chun-chieh argues, time in Chinese cosmological thinking is reciprocal, with “the past giving factuality to the present, the present giving meaning to the past, mutually corresponding, going back and forth

⁴⁷⁴ Georg G. Iggers, “What is Uniquely Western about the Historiography of the West in Contrast to that of China?,” in Rüsen, 107, 108.

⁴⁷⁵ Masayuki Sato, “Cognitive Historiography and Normative Historiography,” in Rüsen, 130.

⁴⁷⁶ Arthur F. Wright, “Chinese Historiography,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Volume 5*, ed. David L. Sills (New York and London: The Macmillan Company, The Free Press and Collier-Macmillan Publishers, c1968), 401, 402. Nonetheless, as Iggers warns, the claim that the Chinese view of history and time are neatly cyclical should be taken with a grain of salt. Chinese historians did start to write universal histories which were actually the histories of the Chinese world, where the transformation of nomadic cultures into urban civilizations has been the key concern. Iggers, 104.

in time.”⁴⁷⁷ As Huang also reveals, Chinese historical thought has been exploring time through the two concepts: *xing* (to arouse, to excite) and *bi* (to analogize, to compare, to relate). *Xing* implies the arousal by the past events to realize something, and *bi* means to analogize from the historically familiar to the presently novel and uncertain.⁴⁷⁸

As the author further elaborates, using these modes of operation in historical thinking the classical Confucians created a recurrent pattern of historical argumentation which may be described as consisting of several factors. It is the initial one of these that is crucial for this chapter of my thesis: “there is always the Golden Past, the Three Dynasties of illustrious Xia, Shang and Zhou, when the world was in a perfect order: the rulers were benevolent and thoughtful, the people were loyal and obedient, and everything flourished according to the seasons. It was the Garden of Eden in Chinese history.”⁴⁷⁹ Or, in Yi-fu Tuan words:

In traditional China the image of an ideal world, in which society conforms to the nature of things, tends to override any sense of history as cumulative change. The constant references to a Golden Age in the past are exhortations to restore harmony to the present in accordance with an idealized model. They call for the return to a former social order and to the rites that sustain it. Their tone is not sentimental or nostalgic. The Chinese do not postulate that the material furnishings of life were more gracious in the past and hence merit the compliment of imitation. What ought to be imitated and perpetuated are the abstract and rather austere rules of social harmony.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Huang Chun-chieh, “Historical Thinking in Classical Confucianism - Historical Argumentation from the Three Dynasties,” in *Time and space in Chinese culture*, ed. Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher (Leiden, New York, Koln: E.J. Brill, 1995), 77.

⁴⁷⁸ Idem.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p.80. For other factors of which historical argumentation consist, see Ibid., 81-83.

⁴⁸⁰ Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, c1977 [2001 edition]), 190.

By adopting the discourses on the three dynasties, the texts from *Nüxue bao* employ a conception of time and an idea of progress which is to be accomplished via the movement toward the past accomplishments. It was noted that there are no historical records about women in the period of the three dynasties (Xia, Shang and Zhou), but that “we have heard” about the women of these periods whose heroic acts reveal that women were highly ethical and capable.⁴⁸¹ The Qin (221–206 BCE) or the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 A.D.) were perceived as the beginning of the decline of Chinese cultural accomplishments. The claim that decreased number of schools and educated men and women in China in the Qin/Han periods marked the beginning of neglecting the Chinese culture, signals the equation of (Confucian) education with the glory of China’s civility.

Kang Tongwei in her article published in the seventh issue of the journal reminded the readers about the gradual fading of Chinese women’s glory:

In the ancient times, the ladies from the royal palace were well-educated. Specialized instructors were hired to guide women’s behaviors, to instruct women in the classics, in rituals, in ancestors’ teachings. [The education] helped women to form their aspirations. Because the education within the palace was well-administered, the matters outside of the palace could be well-done. If women are encouraged to foster good morals, the social conduct will be improved. This is the reason why the atmosphere in the ancient times was so auspicious. [However] during the Spring and Autumn period, women’s education gradually started to lose its high esteem. But it was hard to influence the people who maintained the proprieties; they thought that the reason why the people from the past excelled in the debates laid in the fact that in those times women’s instructors and the tradition of educating women had not completely vanished.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ See Liu Renlan, “Quanxing nüxue qi” (Letter about advancing women’s education), NXB, no. 4, August 20, 1898; and Xu Fu, “Chaozhou Yaoping xian Longdu Qianxi xiang Nüxue tang ji (A note about the Girls’ School at Qianxi Village, Longdu Town, Yaoping County, Chaozhou Prefecture), NXB, no. 2.

⁴⁸² Kang Tongwei, “Nüxue li bi shuo” (On the advantages and disadvantages of women’s education) NXB, no. 7, September 1898.

Kang highlights the significant change. She explains that when people ceased to appreciate the moral uprightness, the education of women decreased. There was no real knowledge to pass to new generations of women, Kang thought, and women received education that did not teach them integrity. Noblewomen were showing off with their poetry, being very proud with their talents, lacking understanding of the teachings of the ancient monarchs and learned gentlemen. Such vanity, she explains, may have communicated to others in society that a woman is moral if she doesn't have education. Afterwards, as Kang narrated, critics distorted the ancient teachings by saying that it is a disaster to allow the hen to announce the dawn. As a consequence of neglecting women's education, as Kang argued, "women in China have eyes but they cannot see; they have ears but they cannot hear; they have heads but they cannot think; they have hearts (*xin*, heart-mind) but they don't have wisdom (*shen*, spirit)." ⁴⁸³

However, the glorious tradition of Chinese women's education did not vanish. As Xue Shaohui explained:

After the fall of the Zhou dynasty, Laozi went to the Western borders [of the Chinese Empire] and became the Sage. The institutions of the Zhou were preserved in the Western parts [and were] gradually transmitted toward the west. At the present, [the Chinese institutions of the Zhou which traveled westward] became the institutions of the Western countries. ⁴⁸⁴

Xue's claim resonates with the notion of *xixue zhongyuan* that claims that "Western sciences, technologies, music, parliamentary system, economics, religion (Christianity), and law

⁴⁸³ Idem.

⁴⁸⁴ Xue Shaohui, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo" (On the relation between women's education and the government). NXB, no. 4.

all had originated in classical China and somehow had found their ways to Europe.”⁴⁸⁵ The claim that the Western knowledge had Chinese origins gained great popularity after China’s defeat in the war with Japan in 1895, and it was applied “in an almost inflationary manner to nearly every realm of Western knowledge.”⁴⁸⁶ Writing about *xixue zhongyuan* Michael Lackner explains:

This is, of course, one variant of the autochthonous culture myth, known to countless epochs and found in many locales. It is one that frequently emerges in situations in which a society or culture is confronted with something new that is of such overwhelming power that one’s own position - or perhaps better, one’s sense of what has been taken for granted - is placed under such threat that it must be defended.⁴⁸⁷

Xue did use “an apparently widely-known legend about Laozi having gone to the West once he had completed his *Daodejing*, to educate - as well as civilize - the barbarians.”⁴⁸⁸ The legend was undoubtedly a part of *xixue zhongyuan* discourse. By appropriating it, Xue defends the existing and threatened accomplishment of China and Chinese women, and, as I will elaborate more in the following chapter, allows the introduction of the desirable practices and institutions of the West in the most acceptable way - by claiming that they are not foreign and dangerously new.

Moreover, the lack of elaboration on what happened to China’s glorious culture while in the West goes along with the techniques of history writing in pre-modern China. As Georg G. Iggers explains, history is not observed by Chinese pre-modern historians as a continuum representing a master narrative, but rather as fragmentary. The practice of “a scissors and past

⁴⁸⁵ Yü, 139.

⁴⁸⁶ Michael Lackner, “*Ex Oriente Scientia?* Reconsidering the Ideology of a Chinese Origin of Western Knowledge,” *Asia Major* 21 (2008), 190. Yü Ying-shih estimates that the popularity of the notion decreased after 1900. Yü, 139. For a history of the notion prior to the 1890s, see Lackner, 186-189.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

approach,” as Iggers calls it, may serve as an explanation why the author did not feel the need to go into details about the process through which the Chinese ideas went while removed from their “native” civilizational environment.⁴⁸⁹

Narrative about the return of traveling Chinese culture continues with the idea that Japan received these originally Chinese institutions of education through the West. Further, since the Chinese nowadays observe the praxes of the West and Japan, it is a process in which China “lost civility (*li*) and is now retrieving it.”⁴⁹⁰ The unsigned article of Liang Qichao, “The call for establishing women’s school in China” further claims that the West is far from China, but that the situation in Western countries now is as if inherited from China’s past. Women in Western cities and villages are educated, women teachers are in charge of medical and children’s education, and women’s accomplishments are outstanding.⁴⁹¹ Hence, Western women are not the markers of destabilizing or alluring modernity, but the performers of the roles Chinese women’s ancestors played in the past; while the education of women was not perceived as foreign and genuinely new but as a return of the indigenous practices which were perverted in the last two thousand years of China’s past. An additional sequence of the article reconfirms that:

The United States became strong because of the equality between men and women. Japan became strong because of the wide spread of women’s education. Flourishing of the country, wisdom of the people, it all starts from here [equality and education of women]. In the times of [China’s] antiquity, women’s learning flourished, and it was not different than [the situation] in the United States and Japan today. The tradition [passed down] from the antiquity has not vanished. We [just] need to recover it, to adopt [useful] institutions of the Western countries, and to handle the things according to the

⁴⁸⁹ Iggers, 106.

⁴⁹⁰ Xue Shaohui, NXB, no. 4.

⁴⁹¹ [Liang Qichao], “Zhongguo chang she nüxue tang qi” (The call for establishing women’s school in China), NXB, no. 1.

instructions of the Sage [Confucius]. [We must] promptly start conducting this long-term plan for our country.⁴⁹²

Chapter six will analyze the ways in which the texts of *Nüxue bao* integrated late-Qing China, its past and future, with the modern/izing world that was in the making. As I suggest, a part of this process entailed using the figure of the foreign woman which, as I will show, conveyed contradictory messages about the directions in which the future of China and its women should embark. In the remaining part of this I will examine the ways in which Chinese women were discussed in the texts of *Nüxue bao*. I analyze the characteristics they embodied and constitutive norms of the formatting of collective identity of women as recognized socio-political actors in the 1898 Reform period.

5.2.2. “We all know them”: Women from the past

The presence of celebrated women from the Chinese past in the discourses of *Nüxue bao* exposes the multivocality and contestation of the reformist discourses in the 1898 Reform period. As I have indicated, the leading male reformist voices and, as I discuss using the articles of *Nüxue bao* in a later section of this chapter, one group of female reformers sharply criticized women of the past and present for their perceived contribution to China’s disgraceful position in the international community of the modern/izing world.

⁴⁹² Idem.

Nevertheless, there was a parallel voice within the reformist group that wanted to keep selected parts of the past and use them to support their contemporary claims about women's abilities and aspirations that involved the matters of both the *nei* and *wai* spheres. The articles of Xue Shaohui (1866-1911) are among the most elaborate examples of the discursive move which creates temporal continuity of women's abilities and achievements that are beneficial for the state. This move led to the creation of a community that related reform-oriented late-Qing women with selected exemplary women from the Chinese past, one of notable features of the discourses of *Nüxue bao*.

With its "rich interpretative possibilities," women's life stories, disseminated through the compilations of *Women's Biographies*, offered the means for women to link stories from the past with their own aspirations.⁴⁹³ Judge and Ying maintain that the ways in which various historical actors "deployed or contested the biographical tradition at a particular moment in time reveals more about the complexities of that moment than about the enduring influence of a set of unchanging values."⁴⁹⁴

Acknowledging Harriet T. Zurndorfer's argument that the various purposes the tradition of exemplary women played should be explored,⁴⁹⁵ I argue that Xue Shaohui and other contributors who celebrated the tradition of (particular types of) exemplary women created a temporal link and the sense of community and continuity with the celebrated women from China's past, their accomplishments, aspirations and abilities. They did so, as may be speculated, because in a moment of nineteenth-century crisis when China needed to find away to reinstate its

⁴⁹³ Joan Judge and Hu Ying, "Introduction," in Judge and Hu, 4.

⁴⁹⁴ Idem.

⁴⁹⁵ Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "The *Lienü zhuan* tradition and Wang Zhaoyuan's (1763 – 1851) Production of *Lienü zhuan buzhu* (1812)," in Judge and Hu, 69.

civilizational supremacy, a group of female reformers did not want to discard the potential of the Chinese past and the roles that Chinese women assumed in creating and displaying China's supreme civilization.

Confirming previously mentioned points by Huang Chun-chieh about the critical importance of historicity in traditional Chinese thinking and argumentation, Xue Shaohui, a representative of one line of reform-oriented argumentation, raised examples of historical women who were perceived as assets to late-Qing women's ongoing project of fixing their new position as a collectivity that deserves to be recognized as a legitimate participant in the discussions and actions of and within the *wai* sphere.

In her essay "On the relation between women's education and the government," which was serialized in the third and the fourth issues of the journal, Xue shows her impressive and elaborate knowledge of Chinese history. She does so by contrasting the fiascos of the dynasties that did not value the education of women with examples of successful rulers and ruling periods in which women's desirable skills, as Xue considered, were developed, further invested in, and highly appreciated. What Xue's text addresses is the temporal persistence of Chinese women's abilities that were crucial for the good government of the state, thus creating a community with women from the past whose abilities, gained through what Xue calls "cultured education", were represented as crucial for the power of the state.

Xue's texts treated the state's benefit as one of the constitutive norms of the newly forming collective identity of women and positioned selected exemplary women from the Chinese past within its borders. Xue Shaohui begins her historicized narrative, which legitimized her contemporary requests, by raising the examples of Weiji, the wife of Huangong and Fanji,

the wife of Zhuangwang of the Chu, both of whom were praised for their morality.⁴⁹⁶ After concluding that the highly ethical character and behavior of these two women were the reasons that the states of Qi and Chu became powerful, Xue continues:

The mother of Zang Wenzhong, the minister of the State of Lu from the Chunqiu period, had saved the state of Lu because she deciphered the clues [secret messages] and saw that the state of Qi was preparing the attack. The maidservant of the minister Yanzi of the Qi, with the help of a poem from the *Book of Songs*, had helped the state of Qi to recognize a good minister Ningqi. In addition to these examples, we [also] have the mother of Gongfu Wenbo, the wife of Gonggong, Lady Jing, Lady Juan, Lady Su Liu, Lady Wu Yan... Clearly, the realization of women's aspirations, their plans, their speech [are] related to the good government of the state. If someone claims that these women did not have cultured education, who can believe [in such a claim]?⁴⁹⁷

In the second part of Xue Shaohui's essay, which was published in the fourth issue of the journal, the author continues the narration of Chinese history. Significantly, Xue discusses the selected examples "that we all know" from the *Historical records (Shi ji)* and Liu Xiang's *Lienü zhuan*, and argues for the necessity of women's education by relating the indispensable role of cultured education in the creation and nourishment of women's character, abilities and great accomplishments, with the dynastic and states' success or fall.

Xue highlights numerous historical women who were praised for their wisdom and skills, with which they helped govern the state. Hence, as an example that implies that women are able to be China's envoys, we read about Lady Ping from the Han dynasty, who travelled to the western regions of the country and managed to resolve the political upheaval of the Wuxun people. Xue also praises the wife of Qiao Guo, Lady Gao Liangxi, who "pacified the tribes from

⁴⁹⁶ Xue Shaohui, "Nüjiao yu zhidao xiangguan shuo" (On the relation between women's education and the government), NXB, no. 3.

⁴⁹⁷ Xue Shaohui, NXB, no. 3.

Hainan” and brought them under the influence of the ruling dynasty. These two examples show that the writer, a prolific writer who represents one of the voices of women active in the reform movement, emphasizes the examples of women who were involved in the project of building and maintaining the Empire. In doing so, she defines the newly-forming group of women as continuing these exemplary women’s legacy, implicitly marginalizing women from the “pacified” regions, that is, from the edges of the cultured and civilized Chinese Empire.

After positioning women who were complicit in the Empire-building project within the newly-forming women’s group of the Reform period, Xue proceeds to examples which show that women possess a wide range of skills that are beneficial for the state. Hence, Xue opts to present exemplary women from the past who possessed deep sense of justice;⁴⁹⁸ women who acted as historians,⁴⁹⁹ teachers⁵⁰⁰ and military officers;⁵⁰¹ women philanthropists and volunteers;⁵⁰² and Empresses who could promote the ideals of temperance, simplicity and propriety to the people.⁵⁰³ Xue also brings in the women who possess a deep appreciation of literary work and

⁴⁹⁸ She talks about the mother of Juan Buyi of the Han dynasty and about the mother of Zheng Shangguo of the Sui-Tang period. As the readers were reminded, Juan Buyi inspected the prisons in “the subordinated provinces”, and his mother wanted to hear that the unjust imprisonments were addressed, while Zheng Shangguo’s mother supervised his public issues behind the screen, to be sure that his rulings were just. Xue Shaohui, NXB, no. 4.

⁴⁹⁹ Examples of women who were meant to prove Xue’s point that women can be historians included Ban Zhao, as well as Cai Wenji who, as we read, after being bought back from the Xiongnu chieftain by the Han official Cao Cao, recorded from her memory four hundred lost essays (the essays were written by her father, but this was not mentioned in the text). Idem.

⁵⁰⁰ The example was Xuan Wenjun from the Qin dynasty who instructed the officials in *Zhou guan*, the text she recovered from the lost *Zhou guan yinyi*. Idem.

⁵⁰¹ The examples raised were Madam Han, the mother of Zhu Xu; Miss Guan, the daughter of Xun Song; Madam Liang, the wife of Han Shizhong; as well as Sha Lizhi, the wife of A Lin. These women were praised for erecting a wall to resist the enemy’s attack, for defeating the army of the enemy, and for bravely coming to the frontlines to fight the enemy. Idem.

⁵⁰² Madame Kong, the mother of Gu Chen, and Madame Liu, the wife of Liu Licai were mentioned as women who donated their family money to the poor and volunteered for the country. Idem.

⁵⁰³ Mentioned exemplary Empresses are Ming Dema, praised for her prudence, He Xideng, praised for her modest spending, and Shun Lieliang for observing the rules of propriety. Every Empress was, in turn, represented as receiving these model features by mastering the classics: Empress Ming Dema was able to recite *Zhou yi*, read

have developed their literary skills, thus being endowed with the talents and abilities to act as literary commentators;⁵⁰⁴ women who were excellent writers⁵⁰⁵ as well as the exquisite embroiderers and silk- picture-weavers.⁵⁰⁶

In addition to women mentioned by Xue Shaohui, the essay signed by Liu Renlan introduces more women from the past to support the reformers' argument about the usefulness of women's education, and these women joined other Chinese female exemplars in the newly-created political body of socio-politically active women of the Wuxu period. The author introduces women who helped their husbands to practice wise government: the two Imperial concubines of the Emperor Shun, Ehuang and Nüying, were praised for their desire to follow the Emperor on his Southern tour, Youtiao of the Shang dynasty, praised for helping the ruler of the Shang dynasty in battle, and Taixi of the Zhou dynasty "who continued the tradition of high virtue of the women from the previous dynasties."⁵⁰⁷ The text also introduces unnamed educated

Chun qiu and *Chu ci*, while being especially knowledgeable in the interpretation of *Zhou guang*; Empress He Xiding, as Xue writes, read books about history, she understood *Yi jing* and *Lun yu*, while Empress Shun Lieliang, in addition to reading books about history, understood *Han shu* and used *Lienü tu* (Illustrations of Exemplary Women) as the models for her behavior. Xue also mentioned Tang Empress Zhang Sun and Song Empress Xuan Rengao, who were praised for following the teachings of their predecessors and helping the Emperors in their good ruling. Idem.

⁵⁰⁴ Xue brings in the example of Shangguan Wan'er, whose mother, while she was still in her womb, had a dream that announced her great talents. Xue goes on with to describe Shangguan Wan'er's appreciation of good poetry, as well as her famous style of poetry writing and knowledgeable literary commentaries. Idem.

⁵⁰⁵ Xue raises the examples of Lady Chen, the wife of Liu Xuan and Lady Xie, the wife of Wang Yi, and compares these two women to the famous male writers from Bao Zhao and Wei Heng. The author also points our attention to the female writers Ban Jieyu, Zuo Guipin, Xu Guifei, Madame Hua Rui, who were related to the Palace and whose essays, which became models to be emulated, were useful for good government. Idem.

⁵⁰⁶ The author mentions Su Ruolan, the wife of Dou Tao and Lu Mei, "peculiar girl from Donghai," whose works are national treasures and their skills deserve to be celebrated. Idem.

⁵⁰⁷ Liu also starts her argumentation with the lament over the lost glory of the period of the Three dynasties. See Liu Renlan, NXB, no. 4.

women from the Xiqi period who “could all recite “Tao yao,” the poem from *Shi jing*, and women of Jiangnan who “could all chant *Qiao chu*.”⁵⁰⁸

The text entitled “Ms. Sui’s discussion about military affairs” adds more historical examples of women skillful in martial arts whose inclusion into the newly-forming group of women support the arguments about women’s expertise and aspirations beyond cultural involvement.⁵⁰⁹ Significantly, the author, just like Xue Shaohui, praises women for their role in devotedly defending their communities. Except for the introductory and the concluding sentences, this article is a rather long list of historical examples of women who won the battles, repelled intruders, helped or succeeded their husbands or fathers as army commanders, and helped rulers to repel enemies and to end local rebellions.⁵¹⁰ This long list of celebrated women from the

⁵⁰⁸ Idem.

⁵⁰⁹ The text starts with the point that there are many examples of women who were outstanding in military affairs, while the main point of the text gets explicated at the end: “[We can see] that Chinese women can excel not only in culture, but in the military affairs as well. It is a great pity that in the last two thousand years [these abilities] are neglected.” Sui Nianqu, “Sui shi lun bing” (Ms. Sui’s discussion about military affairs), NXB, no. 6.

⁵¹⁰ The list of historical exemplars includes Hua Mulan (as the only woman mentioned in the text about whom we do not read even a brief introduction, which may be interpreted as a sign of the author’s perception that Hua Mulan was so famous that the readers did not need to be reminded of her martial arts skills) Lady Kong, the mother of Gu Chen who was recruited by Wang Qian to serve as minister of war during the reign of the Zhou dynasty; the daughter of Wang Qian who served as a commander; Lady Hou from Weizhou, Lady Tang from Huazhou, and Lady Wang from Qingzhou who were praised by the Emperor for their sacrifice at the battlefield; Bai Jingya from Chengzhou who acted as general in the Khitan territory; Lady Feng who as a diplomatic envoy and traveled to the Western territories and resolved disputes with the Wusun people; Lady Xi who, when the enemy surrounded their town and no army had come to rescue them, lead her family members and other women, and helped her husband Zheng Baoying to defend Qiping county town; the wife of Liu Xia, the daughter of Shao Xu, who, summoning few cavalymen, managed to free her husband when he was seized by Shi Jilong and surrounded by numerous people; Lady Li from Leizhou who was in the period of Five dynasties pronounced commander-in-chief and who ensured the peace and protected the people from the loathing of the leaving government of the Southern Han; Lady Liang who in the year of 1140 fought against Jin army and won; the princess of Ping Yang who forced the rebels to back up and was feared even by the high-ranked military officers; Shalizhi, the wife of Alin, who participated and directed battles when Huanglongfu was attacked, making the rebels retreat; Lady Yan, the widow of Mr. Ceng who did not marry after his death, who lived modestly with her son during the Song dynasty, in Ningzhou, Ninghua county, and was praised for organizing a community whose members built a sheltered space when their town was attacked by the robbers who eventually left their region; Lady Zhan, the wife of Li Qi, who took the commandeering place of the army of her husband after he was murdered in the battle for saving the Emperor, and who recaptured Xi Zhou county in Longdong, dying soon afterward; Lady Liu, the wife of Zhou Zhongwu, who followed her husband to the battlefield, and who killed herself after her husband was murdered; Shen Yunying, the wife of Gu Wance, who in the founding years of the Qing dynasty entered the fight to revenge her father, managing to return her father’s remains and to receive the title of the general; Lady Xu, the wife of Xu Xiangyi, fought against the enemy and died

Chinese past imply to the reader that women and their inclusion in the *wai* sphere were, are, and will be beneficial for the endangered state, precisely in the way that may be of assistance to late-Qing China.

The article of Lu Cui adds to this message about the need to further invest in women's interest and involvement in the state affairs, but the author this time raises examples of women from the past and explicitly introduces them as supporting her argument against the claim that women are not suitable to discuss the affairs of the state. The text reads:

Unfortunately, it is thought that, because we are women, we cannot discuss the state affairs. [But] please look at the examples from the ancient past: there was a woman in the county of Qishi during the Warring States Period who cried loudly when she heard that the State of Lu may be in danger. There was also a widow who was worried that the Zhou dynasty is endangered, and had bounded herself without hesitation. [And] please, look at the present situation, [at a] recent war between America and Spain. About sixty American women organized themselves, formed a militia brigade, and requested to go to Cuba to participate in the battles against Spain. And, in New York, there were more than two thousand women who gathered in Bieneibi Hotel (Barnaby Hotel [?]) to discuss secret help of France to Spain in the war. One woman addressed the audience [with these words]: "France is despicable, [and] we should not use French clothes and materials. It should be banned to import French [clothing] goods for two years!" More than two

in the battle, inspiring the Emperor to award the inherited official title to her second son Yongnian. We also read brief narratives on Lady Huan Hua from Gaozhou who defended the border from the minority tribes, and who impressed the King Zhao Tuo during their discussions on current political affairs and military strategies so deeply that he appointed Lady Huan Hua to administer Gao Liang; on Lady Lu, whose late husband's official title got promoted after she spent the entire family property to organize and lead her husband Zhang Mao's army in punitive expedition against Shen Chong whom she managed to defeat; on Li Xiu, the daughter of provincial governor Li Yi, who was elected to replace her sick father and to supervise the town's army and government when they got surrounded by the Wutu people (wutuyi), who were eventually defeated after she encouraged the soldiers and inhabitants to be persistent in the town's defense, being the first one to eat weeds and rats when the town's grains supplies went out; on Lady Xi from Gaoliang, the wife of Ping Bao, who had temple erected in her honor and was worshiped by people for more than a thousand years, who was admired by both the Emperor and Empress for her role in ending the rebellion of Wang Zhong, pacified the entire Lingnan (Guangdong) area, and who, after she was awarded the symbols of the governmental officials – the seal, her office and bureaucrats – was sent by her ruler to "persuade and console" the rebelled minorities, who were all willing to surrender after they heard Lady Xi's explanations; on the Tang Princess, the daughter of Li Yuan, who married Chai Shao, with whom she sold off all their property to summon the army and help her father win the war against the Sui dynasty, whose own army was called Army of the Lady [Niang zi jun] conquered Changan; and on Lady Wu from Yuwan, who, after her husband died in the battle, lead the army against the minority rebel leader Huang Chao, managed to expel the rebels from western Hengzhou, and who, even though she died in the battle, was such a great fear for the minorities, that it would be enough to send a person in red clothes on a white horse, and they would run away. Lady Wu was one more example of a woman who was (posthumously) awarded the honoring title. Idem.

thousand women cheerfully agreed. [You see that] women do have the ambition to think about the government of the state! [It is impossible that] women from the East do not love their country [just] like the women from the West!⁵¹¹

These sections reveal voices within the forming collectivity of reform-oriented women that emphasized an interrelation between proper women's education, its resulting abilities and their actualizations, and the power of the state. The authors of the texts which celebrate certain types of exemplary women from the Chinese past, similarly to their male contemporaries, did understand the benefit of the state as a measure of broader historical importance. Nevertheless, as, we see, the understanding of what was beneficial for the state was considerably wider than the opinions of the reformers who criticized "traditional" Chinese women argue. Furthermore, these texts and their authors continued to position selected historical women as creators, bearers and displays of China's past glory, and by doing so, considered the inclusion of their predecessors into the newly-forming collectivity of women to be an asset in their endeavors to demarcate and fix their place within the *wai* sphere of late-Qing China.

As the excerpt from Lu Cui's texts implies, the examples of selected women from the Chinese past smooth the proposed changes by making a connection between Chinese past, Western present and potentially equal Chinese and Western future. What is observable in these texts is a fascinatingly effective discursive move which allowed the authors not only to introduce the novelty of their demands in an acceptable way - by arguing that is not a novelty at all, but also to create a sense of common and continuous identity for a group of women who were and should continue to be recognized as legitimate socio-political actors by the power-owning participants in the *wai* sphere of late-Qing China.

⁵¹¹ Lu Cui, "Nüzi aiguo shuo" (On women's patriotism), NXB, no. 5, August 27, 1898.

The following chapter will deal in more detail with the ways in which the texts of the journal interrelated the geo-political *nei* and *wai* of the Chinese Empire through the introduction of the figure of the foreign woman who conveyed the contested messages and requirements of the reform-oriented contributors. In the following section I will turn to an additional constitutive norm of the newly-forming socio-political collectivity of late-Qing women, that is, to the issue of proper education and its employment.

5.3. Proper education and its employment: Ruling women of “Our Qing dynasty”

Proper education as a constitutive norm of the collective identity of Chinese women enabled and employed the strategic creation of the discourse on “Our Qing Dynasty” and the inclusion of Manchu female rulers in the forming socio-political group of Chinese woman. At the same time, as I will show, the discursive treatment of proper education as a crucial distinction between “us” and “them” brought about and was used in critical discourse on, what may be called, “frivolous” Chinese women. I will first discuss the strategic inclusion of the Manchu female rulers into the socio-political category of Chinese women, while the support of certain reform-oriented voices to the male-generated discourse on “frivolous woman” will be my concern in the following section of this chapter.

5.3.1. Courting the Court

Nixue bao contains a number of articles which reveal that the reformers involved in its production aligned themselves politically with the Qing dynasty, representing their women-

oriented reformist endeavors as resulting from a desire to help empower the dynasty. It is important to emphasize here that in addressing and praising the Court, that is, in asking for the support of the Empress Dowager Cixi, a group of reformers gathered around Jing Yuanshan and women-oriented enterprises significantly departed from the reformist plans directed by Kang Youwei and his followers.⁵¹² The memorandum written by Jing Yuanshan to Liu Kunyi, and published in the fifth issue of the journal, contains a brief but important remark on the praiseworthy way of governance that the Qing dynasty practiced from its ascension to the throne, and the “good way” in which “our” dynasty endorsed the practice of Confucian rituals.⁵¹³

One way which the reformers used to articulate their loyalty to the Court, and to highlight properly endorsed neo/Confucian principles as a foundation for the strategic commonality of the reformers and the ruling dynasty was the proposed curriculum for *Nüxue tang*. Hence, the reformers anticipated that girls enrolled in the schools would be instructed in “western learning”, neo/Confucian classics for women and, as the notes to the Qing officials conspicuously emphasized, *Neize yanyi* (Annotations to the Inner Principles [of the Record of Ritual]), the book compiled and edited by the “intelligent and bright” Qing Emperor Shunzhi in 1656, dictated by the Empress Dowager, and included in *Siku quanshu* (The Imperial Collection of Four Treasures), the greatest collection of books endorsed by the Qing Dynasty.

Memorandums to Liu Kunyi repeatedly explained that women wanted to include this text in the curriculum, but, even with the help of their like-minded male relatives and friends, they found that the book was only available in the Imperial library. As it was explained, to include this book in the school’s curriculum would be beneficial for all. Not having the book is like

⁵¹² Wu, 76, 99 n106.

⁵¹³[Jing Yuanshan et. al], “*Nüxue tang* bing Nanyang dachen Liu gao” (A memorandum of the *Girls’ School* to the Official Liu), NXB, no. 5.

“walking in the dark, not knowing where to go,” and, as was added, if the book remains available only to the readers of the Imperial library, it would not reach a broader audience and would not be advantageous for the success of the Emperor’s reforms.⁵¹⁴

The note also explains:

[It seems that] people nowadays do not meticulously study the instructions of [our] ancestors. If these admonitions were to be studied, the country would be empowered and able to stand up against the intruders. Even though women’s education is newly-established, it is in accord with the institutions set up by our ancestors...As if they foresaw the establishment of the educational system for women and girls, our Imperial ancestors edited books for women’s education two hundred and fifty years ago. [Therefore, our actions are certainly] in accordance with the intention of [our] Imperial ancestors.⁵¹⁵

Besides the reformers’ efforts to gain the support of the Court by emphasizing the importance of recovering “our ancestors’ learning,” especially of the text compiled and edited by the members of the ruling Manchu dynasty, an additional strategy was employed to promote women’s education: female rulers of the Qing dynasty were addressed as members of a newly-forming group, and appealed for support and involvement in the reformist causes.

5.3.2. *Empress, Empress Dowager, youmin (vagabonds) and tufan (indigenous primitives)*

A sense of commonality and community between reform-oriented women and the ruling Manchu women was created through the discourse on proper education and its employment. Not accidentally, the opening article of the first issue of the journal was an elaborate praise of the

⁵¹⁴ [Jing Yuanshan et. al], “*Nüxue tang di er ci bing Nanyang dachen Liu gao*” (The second memorandum of the *Girls’ School* to the Official Liu), NXB, no. 6.

⁵¹⁵ Idem.

Empress Xiao Ding Jing (1868 - 1913).⁵¹⁶ The texts which joined the portrait explained that the Empress should be admired by the nobles and commoners, in and out of China, because she is virtuous and respectful. The unsigned author(s) strategically linked two powerful female figures of the ruling dynasty by claiming that the Empress Dowager made a good choice when deciding on the marital union of the Emperor with the intelligent, virtuous, and knowledgeable Empress, that the Empress is treating the Empress Dowager with the sincere filial obedience, and that her admirable moral character is having a good influence on the ladies of the Palace.⁵¹⁷ The internationalization of the imaginary, which will be the focus of my following chapter, is also present in the opening article of the inaugurating issue of the journal. The article claims that all around the world well-educated Empress promotes women's learning. The example of the Japanese Empress and her supervision of the Japanese girl's and women's education was raised, as well as an observation that the neighboring countries' admire and respect China because of the establishment of the women's school in Shanghai.⁵¹⁸

Another example of a text which posits neo/Confucian educated Manchu female rulers within the emerging collective of Chinese women is a letter sent by sixty four years old Lady Wei, the wife of a mandarin from Guilin. The letter was also reproduced in the first issue of the

⁵¹⁶ The Empress's name on birth was Yehonala Jingfen. She was a cousin of the Empress Dowager Cixi who had chosen her for Guangxu's first wife. After the death of the Emperor in 1908, Jingfen received the title of the Empress Dowager Longyu and adopted the Emperor Xuantong (Puyi). She ruled China together with the father of the Emperor until 1912 when she signed abdication which ended two thousand years of the monarchical system of China. The choice to disseminate her portrait complies with the opinion of Kang Youwei who, along with publishing and disseminating the copies of reform decrees, perceived the distribution of the Emperor's picture to the wider population as a possible measure to foster popular trust. On Kang's suggestion, see Lawrence R. Sullivan, "Intellectual and Political Controversies over Authority in China: 1898-1922," in Herschok and Ames, 175.

⁵¹⁷ "Huanghou ci rong xu" (The portrait of the Empress), NXB, no. 1.

⁵¹⁸ Idem. Japanese Empress was also mentioned as an example of a wise decision-making that transforms women's hobby into a state benefit. According to the news that informs the readers about various ways in which foreign royal women spend their free time, it was reported that genteel women in Japan are becoming especially interested in hunting, and that the Empress advised that women learn more about hunting. According to the author, this was a very smart move because, when women learn how to hunt, they learn how to use the guns and defend themselves. See "Nüzhu shihao" (Indulgences of the royal women), NXB, no. 6.

journal, revealing how important it was for the reformers to induce the Qing Court's support for their projects. Lady Wei was reportedly a neighbor of the Empress Dowager when Cixi was in "her mother's house," and she decided to share her impressions about Empress Dowager's intelligence, diligence, and admirable ruling abilities with the audience of *Nüxue bao*.

Madame Wei recollected that Cixi was educated in her home in Confucian classics and history. She argued that it was the education that Cixi received in her youth that gave birth to the wisdom with which she ruled China during the political turmoil of the times.⁵¹⁹ Lady Wei continues with a description of the Empress Dowager Cixi as a model ruler: "Our Holly Empress Dowager of the Qing dynasty, calm and sober, not turning a hair, eliminated the [evil] high officials and created the order [in the] dynasty." According to Madame Wei, Empress Dowager Cixi open-mindedly accepted others' suggestions, acknowledging their opinions and observing reality, she adjusted the administration, launched Tongzhi restoration, and she had, from 1861 on, "calmed down a great disaster, revived the ancestors' endeavors, created peace in the country (tianxia), rigorously pursuing the morals of the Empress."⁵²⁰

Similarly to the afore-mentioned note of Jing Yuanshan in which the expression of loyalty and respect to the Manchu Qing dynasty is used to introduce the request that, since the Emperor has the power to establish the educational system, "our ancestors' learning" should be used for launching the education of women, Lady Wei turns from a rather detailed narrative on the Empress Dowager's political abilities and concludes that:

⁵¹⁹ "Wei Gongren shu" (Letter from Lady Wei), NXB, no. 1

⁵²⁰ Idem.

The Heaven indeed sent a Goddess to our throne to bless and protect us! But, could [the Empress Dowager] have such big achievements in finding the way to strengthen the country if she hasn't had [such a] profound learning.⁵²¹

Stressing the importance of education in a flattering narrative about the Empress Dowager's character and her admirable ruling skills and accomplishments, Lady Wei certainly had in mind Cixi's key role in the Empire. Hence, the texts of *Nüxue bao* which offer tributes to the Qing regime may be read as a strategic move by the reformers to gain the support of the court for their requests, positing a group of Manchu women within the boundaries of the forming group of women recognized as legitimate socio-political actors in the *wai* domain.

There are no articles in *Nüxue bao* which directly address the ethnic differentiations and hierarchies among Chinese women that influenced the dynamics of the forming of the women's collective identity. Nonetheless, an important distinction was worded in terms of culture/civility and barbarity/savagery dichotomies. "The call for establishing women's school in China" implies the interrelation of gender, civility/barbarity and the state.⁵²² The text reads:

Both men and women are humans. Yet, men are [allowed to become] wise, and women [had to remain] ignorant. [This is] as if the parents [become] intimate with sons and distant with daughters. For thousands of years, in so many families, women didn't have the chance to gain [the true] knowledge, to receive the education passed down from the ancient sages. If [the problem] would only be the lack of education... Women's bodies and minds are devastated. Their ears are covered, their eyes are blinded, and they are not allowed to become wise. [Women are] cut off from the education, imprisoned in the household, and tied up by the customs. Alas! [This kind of life] make them as indolent as vagabonds (*yumin*) and as incorrigibly obstinate as the indigenous primitives (*tufan*).⁵²³ If two hundred million of its people are vagabonds and primitives, is it

⁵²¹ Idem.

⁵²² "The call for establishing women's school in China," NXB, no. 1.

⁵²³ Because I could not find the term *tufan* as an entry in any of the dictionaries I had a chance to consult, in translating *tufan* as "indigenous primitives" I follow Rebecca Karl and her translation in "'Slavery', Citizenship, and Gender in Late Qing China's Global Context." See Karl and Zarrow, 231.

possible for the country not to disappear...Is there a notable person in China who is not horrified with the decline of [the power of our] country caused by [having] the people [who are like] vagabonds and barbarians.⁵²⁴

The anxiety of the educated elite audience over being perceived as *yumin* and *tufan* was again strategically played on in the article on the women's school that Chen Buchu, a man from Qianxi village, established in his home for the female members of his family. This time the need to recover female education was accentuated by employing the trope of losing face in front of Westerners. Xu writes:

Nowadays the majority of two hundred millions Chinese men are illiterate, [and if] men are not educated, [is there a need] to talk about [the situation with] women? If the situation does not change, how can the tradition of education inherited from our ancient sages flourish? If the education is not flourishing, the people will remain ignorant... [The lack of education is the reason why] westerners consider us to be indigenous primitives [*tufan*]⁵²⁵

As this chapter aspires to demonstrate, the process of defining the borders of the collectivity of late-Qing women involved simultaneous processes of inclusions and exclusions. The assumed characteristics, aspirations and behaviors of women that were excluded from the self-defined emerging collectivity of women, will be the focus of the next section of my thesis.

5.4. Who we are not and what we don't want to be: Textual and actual exclusions

At the historical moment when women involved in the reform movement needed to persuade the male and female audience that they have the authority and cultural competence to

⁵²⁴ "The call for establishing women's school in China," NXB, no. 1.

⁵²⁵ Xu Fu, NXB, No. 2.

speak to and for the women of China, a group of contributors to *Nüxue bao* did not want to discard the legacy of accomplishments of historical Chinese women. Instead, diverse women's abilities and aspirations were represented as a long-existing and admired tradition that late-Qing reform-oriented women wanted to sustain, enrich and further develop. Yet, what *Nüxue bao*, as a media site with a unique role in the creation of a socio-politically active group of Chinese women reveals is the criticism pointed to assumed female dispositions, features, behaviors and aspirations that the authors did not want to be associated with.

Hence, *Nüxue bao*, the medium that claimed to be a historically unprecedented platform for women's self-representation, at the same time testifies to the admirable competence of the highly-educated and able Chinese women *and* contributes to the creation of a modernist view that considers "traditional" Chinese women's alleged deficiencies to be responsible for China's humiliations. Some of the texts of *Nüxue bao*, as I will show, overemphasize the weaknesses of women, and, as may be suggested, reiterate male-generated criticism as a means of enhancing support for the reformist requests. They do so by knitting together three common themes: women's vulgar, unrefined beauty and beautification; excessive consumerism; and a lack of proper education.

Even though some of these texts, as I will show, interrelate the narratives about women who need to be changed with the sharp criticism pointed to Chinese men and society that allowed, encouraged and/or initiated this situation, the women with depreciated characteristics were not to be considered a part of women's group that was heavily invested in their socio-political recognition.

5.4.1. Textual exclusions: Women as vulgar beauties, frivolous readers and unproductive consumers

Classical Chinese texts use the expression *nü se* (woman's color) to address the beauty of women. Female beauty is of a visual nature, but believed to emanate from the heart.⁵²⁶ As Eva Kit Wah Man uncovers, when talking about the female beauty, Confucian and Daoist texts created the basic beauty criteria for women. A desirable woman should embody the following beauty standards:

young; small; slim but fleshly; soft bones; drooping shoulders; smooth white skin under colorful and tight silk underwear; clean slender fingers; long neck; broad and white forehead; long ears; dark and thick hair with stylish hairpin; thick and bluish-black eyebrows; clear and sentimental eyes; charming smiles; tall and straight nose; red lips exposing seashell-white and small teeth; relaxed and elegant bodily gestures; and finally, gentle behaviors.⁵²⁷

When it comes to historical accounts, the material on women's beauty is mostly related to the stories about beautiful women. Pre-Qin dynasty women Xi Shi (also known as Xizi) and Mao Qiang are the epitomes of beauty, but the historical records do not talk about their physical look. *The Book of Songs* (*Shi jing*) and *The Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci*) present the physical descriptions of the women's beauty. Thus, we know that in the period of the Chunqiu period (777 – 476 b.c.) a beautiful woman was pretty tall, her face was dignified and sedated, her skin clear-white and

⁵²⁶ Chinese word for heart *xin* connotes the hearth-mind, the cognition that does not separate feelings and reason. As Eva Kit Wah Man explains, *se* (color) is formed when the heart manifests its feeling in *qi* (vital force, energy). *Se* today means color, whereas in Classical Chinese the character also referred to the markers of femininity: the skin color, the shape of the limbs and the body, the way that the body is adorned, female gentleness, voice, scent. Eva Kit Wah Man, "Female Bodily Aesthetics, Politics, and Feminine Ideals of Beauty in China," in *Beauty Matters*, ed. Peg Zeglin Brand (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 170.

⁵²⁷ Idem.

tender. In addition, to be beautiful women needed to act solemnly, to be reserved and placid like a ‘fair maiden’ (*shunü*). This description came to be the orthodox standard of Chinese beauty.⁵²⁸

The Songs of Chu, however, introduce us to one additional kind of beauty: the beauty of the sorcerers, female musicians, courtesans, and goddesses (who were the incarnations of the courtesans). These beauties were the antipode to the serene images of the noble women of the inner chambers. Positioned outside of the household’s ethics, these women were sexual, bold, vigorous, enthusiastic, and impulsive. These women were described as having small waists and delicate necks, gentle, flexible and delicate bodies with a notable softness. They were always present but not appreciated like their noble counterparts. These two ideals of beauty – dignified and sedate, and soft and delicate – came to be the two prototypes of Chinese beauty, and they served as a base on which variations and interventions were made throughout Chinese history.⁵²⁹

In contrast to the Daoist teachings that explicitly address and value sexual connotations of woman’s beauty over “the inner beauty” of a woman, the Confucian teachings in *Analects* and Mencius relate beauty to moral virtue.⁵³⁰ If we follow Liu Jucai’s more historicized way of narrating the history of beauty in China, that is, if we observe the changing ideals of beauty relative to political and socio-cultural power of a particular philosophical cannon, then we see that from the period of the Three dynasty Xia, Shang and Zhou there is an issue of how to relate “inner beauty” and “outer beauty.” That is, from the periods of earliest historical memory, there are accounts that reveal the tension of how to reconcile moral beauty with sexualized beauty.⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ Liu Jucai, *Xuanmei shi* (A history of selecting the beauties) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1997), 5.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 – 7.

⁵³⁰ For a brief overview of Daoist attitudes on beauty, see Man, 171 – 175. The author concludes that while Daoism stresses “natural physicality,” Confucian teaching accentuates behavior control or “inner beauty.”

⁵³¹ Liu, 9.

As Robin R. Wang explains, Chinese intellectual tradition posits virtue (*de*) as the most prominent aspect of a human being, with women's disposition, character and behavior being sites of revealing and cultivating their virtue.⁵³² Beauty is a manifestation of inner virtue, Wang explains, and it is revealed through the strength of female disposition, traits and character. The power of agency, i.e. "the capacity for making an authoritative, and hence transformative, impact upon a situation" is constitutive of beauty.⁵³³ But, as Wang points out, if not joined with virtue, beauty makes men lose proper focus in their lives because of the overindulgence in sensual pleasures. Hence, beauty is not inherently evil, but it is the possession of virtue or the lack of it that engenders beauty and leads the ways that beauty will be exploited. In other words, if we understand that "it all depends on the possessor's virtues," then the strong reasons for female virtue being historically placed on a "pedestal to be admired, championed, and lived by consistently" become much clearer.⁵³⁴ It is precisely the overall lack of moral and intellectual abilities of its possessors that makes beauty and beautification banal in the text of Qiu Yufang. She claims that:

The ears and eyes of women in China are covered [and] their bodies are restrained. When they are young, they are [just] dressing up and putting on makeup, when they grow older, they are just preparing meals. They are confined in their houses and illiterate. Those who have a slight understanding of culture, they compose poems and essays, feeling good about themselves. [None of them] can support herself, they are useless and rely on men's work.⁵³⁵

⁵³² Robin R. Wang, 94, 95.

⁵³³ Ibid., 107, 108.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁵³⁵ Qiu Yufang, "Lun nüxue tang yu nanxue tang bing zhong" (On equal importance of the girls' and boys' schools), NXB, no. 7.

We read more details about most direct relation between sexualized beautification on the one hand and ignorance and the lack of self-awareness on the other in Liu Renlan's essay. Even though the author notes at the beginning of the article that men and women have the same abilities, the text continues with a detailed explanation of the evils that women are to be blamed for:

The tradition of women's education had been discontinued, [and] for already two thousand years people don't know what women's education is. Women became playthings, [they] powder their faces, wear lipstick, pierce their ears, bind their feet. Women wear expensive dresses, and their hair needles are as expensive as a piece of gold... In two hundred million Chinese women, there is not even a single one who doesn't have a charming smile, who doesn't wear make-up and who doesn't wear a jet-black hair bun. In the countryside when women walk they swing their waists and wiggle their buttocks. Nowadays, women put on seductive makeup and do not respect husband's parents, they maltreat their son-in-laws, they make brothers fight over the inheritance, [and] if they are married to brothers they are not friendly to each other. They don't recognize even one single character and they don't understand the principles (*li*). Women of the higher classes [just] care about the wind, moon, grass and flowers, they write seductive lyrics and the statements of feelings, and study the poetry style of Li Qingzhao and Zhu Shuzhen. They think that they have the talents like Madam Chen, the wife of Liu Zhen from the Jin dynasty, like the famous poetess Xie Daoyun from the Eastern Jin, and they are not aware that they have fallen down to the lascivious level of the prostitutes. If women would be as outstanding as Xie Daoyun and Cai Wenji, that would be helpful for the future generations and for the household. But it is difficult to find one in tens of millions of women who is outstanding [like these two great women]... There is nothing in this world that may confine women's wisdom, and there are no spirits who may limit their talents and abilities, but the reason why women remain uneducated is that they themselves do not care that they became the playthings of men, that [they don't care that] they live in the lascivious atmosphere in which the prostitutes live. It's a pity, isn't it? Women are not educated, [and that is the reason why] there are few good women. [That is why] the literati came up to the idea that it is a good fortune to have a woman without a talent. To advocate this idea is to think that all women are the same [and this will lead] gifted women to adopt the uncivilized customs (*yeman zhi su*).⁵³⁶

The text transmits a message about the debilitating consequences of female beautification and sexuality, reminding the readers about the overall disrespect of authority and disobedience of

⁵³⁶ Liu Renlan, NXB, no. 4

protocols and rules by contemporary undignified women. The second part of the article joins the cohort of numerous remarks in *Nüxue bao* with its criticism of educated women of late-Qing. These coquettish poetesses, “somewhat cultured” elite women are literate but not considered to be educated, at least not in the correct way. Moreover, the text reveals further division within the group of women who were to be reformed. “Women in the countryside” are described in *Nüxue bao* in terms of their sexualized physicality and corporality (i.e. “they swing their waists and wiggle their buttocks”), while, at the same time, the upper-class women, regardless of their unappreciated behaviors and aspiration, are addressed in terms of intellectual abilities, since, as the text conveys, “they care about the wind, moon, grass and flowers; they write seductive lyrics and the statements of feelings.”

In accordance with this line of criticism, beautification was supervised in practice as a result of the reformers’ efforts to influence the character and deeds of its students. In addition to promoting the desirable practices and personal characteristics (i.e. observing the *li*, speaking sincerely and honestly, loving to study, respecting teacher’s instructions, keeping up the good spirit and physical strength), it was emphasized that students should stop with footbinding and they should not compete in who has more beautiful make-up, because this would increase the harmful atmosphere of excess and extravagance.⁵³⁷ At the same time, sexualized beauty was contrasted with the chastity expected from the prospective students. The regulations of the school also specified that the women of Shanghai, and especially the women in foreign concessions, are notorious for their bad morals, and that the school must enforce strict moral rules, in order to

⁵³⁷ “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no. 5.

prevent major damage. Therefore, as the school's regulation emphasizes that the students will learn about the virtue in order to be able to resist the bad influences of their environment.⁵³⁸

As I've already discussed in the third chapter of my thesis, footbinding has been a highly politically charged issue which intersects the discourses on female beauty, discipline and accomplishment, racial/ethnic and civilizational hierarchies, gender regimes of pre-modern and modern China, iconoclastic modernization of post-New-Culture movement period, and the western gaze. Most of women who participated in the establishment and operation of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* had bound feet, so their perspective on the practice would certainly offer important clues about women's understandings of its meanings. Unfortunately, in the first nine issues of the journal that I had a chance to consult there are no essays whose main concern is footbinding. The essays briefly address footbinding as a social custom performed by women to please the sight of men,⁵³⁹ or as a result of superstitions and a lack of knowledge about virtue,⁵⁴⁰ and, as I've indicated, the regulations of the school on its opening signed by Shen Heqin and Lai Mayi announce the stricter treatment of the footbinding in the school. As it was already announced in the school's provisional regulations, "footbinding is a bad habit of Chinese women, [and], since it is a widespread practice, wise and cultured people must do the effort to persuade the others to abandon it."⁵⁴¹ This rule of the school continues with the explanation that "[Given that] the school has just been established, [and since] the old ways did not vanish, [the school] brought a temporary decision to accept both students with bound and unbound feet. [But] after

⁵³⁸ [Lai Mayi and Shen Heqing], "*Nü xuehui shushu kaiguan zhangcheng*" (Regulations for the Girls' School affiliated to the Society for Women's Learning on its opening), NXB, no. 9. I will abbreviate this text as "Regulations on the school's opening."

⁵³⁹ Wang Chunlin, "Nan nü pingdeng lun" (A discussion of equality between men and women), NXB, no. 5.

⁵⁴⁰ Kang Tongwei, NXB, no. 7.

⁵⁴¹ "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no. 2.

several years, the rule will be brought that no student with the bound feet would be accepted to school.”⁵⁴²

In fact, the only textual treatment of footbinding which discloses absolute lack of empathy and drastic distancing of the newly forming women’s group from the small-feet women was voiced in the unsigned text that accompanied the illustration published in the sixth issue of the journal. The illustration itself offers interesting conclusions about the way that *Nüxue bao* has not only textually, but also visually, participated in the creation of the emerging collective identity of late-Qing women. It consists of four scenes which depict women doing calisthenics. In the upper level of the illustration there are two separate sections, one showing a woman exercising, while the other shows two women doing the exercises together; the middle level of the illustration presents a joint exercise of eight women, while the lower level shows ten women exercising in pairs.⁵⁴³ All the women are represented as having the same strong and vital bodies,⁵⁴⁴ the same neat hairstyles and the same dress that further accentuate their bodily strength: sports jacket, wide trousers, and sporting boots which cover women’s small but unbounded feet. The emphasized sameness of women’s clothes, hairstyles and bodily postures implies that the women’s group has already been formed and unified. Furthermore, by emphasizing women’s collective bodily discipline and strength, this illustration at the same time

⁵⁴² Idem.

⁵⁴³ See “Ticao tu” (Calisthenics), NXB, no. 6.

⁵⁴⁴ While this illustration makes straightforward relation between the strength of a woman’s body and the power of her country, the text “The incoming letter of Lady Di” interrelates a metaphorical body of the country and woman in a different, but very telling way. Her letter starts with a sharp criticism that women are not educated in the useful knowledge, that they are economic burden to men, and that they are not like the Western women who, by being equal with the Western men, make their countries strong and prosperous. The author then brings in the metaphor of a sportsman to describe China’s situation: China is like a wrestler with the broken arm, like a runner with one leg cut off. Women of China, thus, came to represent the missing part of China’s body which made her easy to be enslaved and made her the livestock of the Westerners. See “Di nüshi shu” (“The incoming letter of Lady Di), NXB, no. 3.

talks back to the common line of critique that translates the perceived women's corporeal vulnerability into the weak international standing of the Chinese Empire, and supports arguments for women's involvement in the military and in state affairs.

Still, the illustrator differently portrays women's faces and earrings, paying attention to the smallest details. This accentuation of the differences among women adds complexity to the message about the emerging collective identity of women conveyed through the visual medium by confirming that newly-forming collective is a group of admirable and state-needed women who are "one" despite their differences.

The text that accompanied the illustration treats women with bound feet in an especially severe way. It consists of two parts: the opening part of the text, to which I will return to in the sixth chapter, introduces women of ancient Greece, Athena and Sparta and their practices, and the second section which elaborates the benefits of calisthenics. After explaining that "from the perspective of health, reading books consumes one's energy and strength, [while] calisthenics is very useful for obtaining the strong body," the text informs the reader that half of the fifteen women's schools in Shanghai introduced gymnastics/calisthenics. The text includes a list of the "many advantages calisthenics has to offer:" "[it] improves the breathing and increases the appetite, [it puts] the shoulders and waist into the proper upright position; it makes people lively, it makes motions of hands and feet agile, facilitates the good sleep, and it prevents all sorts of disease of the uterus."⁵⁴⁵ The closing sentence of this text is particularly telling, since it reads that "there is one additional benefit of the calisthenics. Women with the bound feet cannot follow all the steps of the gymnastics/calisthenics. They can feel like [they are] losing their face, [and

⁵⁴⁵ Idem.

that can make them] decide on their own to untie the banding clothes from their feet.”⁵⁴⁶ By opting to emphasize shame as the expected main motive for the students’ decision to abandon the practice of footbinding, and for instance, not mentioning the pain and discomfort that was present when a woman with the bound feet tried to do calisthenics, this text embodies a lonely reformist view that was voiced by *Nüxue bao* that categorically distanced itself from the women and girls with bound feet.

In addition to these textual treatments of footbinding we also receive the information that *Nüxue bao* was sold in the offices of *Nichengqiao bu chanzui hui*, a local anti-footbinding society, and that the donations may be handed in the offices of the anti-footbinding society, clearly showing that, in the eyes of the journal’s leadership, the anti-footbinding advocates were targeted audience and supporters to the women-oriented reformist enterprises.⁵⁴⁷

Numerous articles of *Nüxue bao*, as I’ve demonstrated, condemn unrefined sexualized femininity, and, taking a neo/Confucian stance in the dilemma of how to reconcile the moral with sexualized beauty, many contributors ridicule, disrespect and perceive the physical female beauty as endangering morality and the state. Nonetheless, since one of the aims of my research is to show that *Nüxue bao* did not have a unified view and that it served as a platform for multivocal and often contradicting imaginations of the scope and the directions that reforms should take in this particular historical moment of China’s repositioning in the modern world order, I want to emphasize one short text that conveys a different message and reveals a different understanding of the role and power of physical beauty and its relation to China’s international standing.

⁵⁴⁶ Idem.

⁵⁴⁷ See, for instance, “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no. 8 and “Our announcements, NXB, no. 3.

A short report published in the fifth issue of the journal informed the readership about the third beauty contest which was going to be held in Paris.⁵⁴⁸ Women from all over the world, it was written, have sent more than twenty thousand photos/portraits (*xiao zhao*) to the organizing society. Due to such a great number of participants, as it was explained, the winner would be announced next year. The report further informs the reader that previous year's winner is a girl from Italy who lives in Germany, and that the author learned that more than ten Japanese women sent their photos/portraits to the organizers of the contest, but that it is unknown whether someone from China was taking part in this event. The final sentence reaffirms the fascinating beauty of many Chinese women and laments over the fact that Chinese women had not yet participated in this contest.⁵⁴⁹

When suggesting that women should gather and compose a joint petition to the Court with their concrete reform-oriented demands, Lu Cui, among many other interesting and telling requests that I will further discuss in the sixth chapter, proposes the establishment of the Society for choosing the beauties (*Xuanmei hui*).⁵⁵⁰ This brief remark shows that some participants in the reforms did not find at least a certain type of beauty and its public exhibition and examination to be problematic for women and the state. When read together with the report about the international beauty pageant and its author's implied conviction that the exquisite beauty of the Chinese ladies could not pass unnoticed, it reveals that in the times when China was all too rarely favorably compared with the modern west and Japan, some voices within reform-oriented women's group embraced women's beauty as a means of China's favorable representation and international recognition.

⁵⁴⁸ "Meinü saihui" (Beauty contest), NXB, no. 5.

⁵⁴⁹ Idem.

⁵⁵⁰ Lu Cui, NXB, no. 5.

As I've shown so far, education was a constitutive norm in the process of creating a collective identity of Chinese women in the 1898 Reform period. However, the texts published in *Nixue bao* also voice concerns which sharply critical and dismissing of certain types of knowledge women cherished, thus leaving a group of "frivolous" readers out of the forming collectivity of women respectable enough to enter and act in the *wai* sphere of government and certain types of literacy.

Thus, Kang Tongwei, the author which utters the ideas and ideals which are perhaps, and not surprisingly, most resonant of the ones of her father Kang Youwei and his comrades, asks for a change of the way in which women are being educated, singling out women's vanity and their pride in their talents and poetry as a reason why foreigners see China as a country of savages.⁵⁵¹ By arguing for a change in women's education and not for its complete discard, she claims:

[I]t is not that women [in China] do not read books and do not know how to write. [The problem is that] well-educated women indulge in writing poetry, in short essays, in writing about feelings between men and women for entire days. Women who have some education like to read novels, to sing *tanci*, and they indulge the entire days...If women have this kind of education, then it is really useless. But, if we get rid of the eyes because they are shortsighted; if we break the lame leg of the person who limps, then we only fool ourselves that [we are doing something that is] useful. Isn't this tragic?⁵⁵²

Ironically, the author who proclaimed egalitarian ideals when describing women's inclusion and involvement in the reformist projects, Pan Xuan, also dismisses the knowledge of women who are reading *chuanqi xiaoshuo* (romance novellas, or romance novels), perceiving

⁵⁵¹ Kang Tongwei, NXB, no. 7.

⁵⁵² Idem.

these women as having their thoughts occupied only by immortals, ghosts, gifted scholars and beautiful ladies, all being insufficient to perceive them as properly educated.⁵⁵³

Similar disdain for the content, or rather for the lack of a proper content in the education of women is voiced in the article named “Talking about the Double Seven” signed by Pan Daofang.⁵⁵⁴ Pan is lamenting that women do not care about *Mu yi* (Exemplary mothers) and *Nü lunyu* (Analects for women); that they haven’t heard about Confucius, Yan Hui, Ceng Xi or Mencius; and that had they never read *Shi jing*, *Li ji* and *Chun Qiu*. She continues with her bitter critique by singling out women’s ignorance in drawing and painting, fine art, as well as their lack of knowledge and interest in national and international affairs and social and historical developments.⁵⁵⁵ Pan wrote this text on the night of the Double Seven, the holiday related to women’s needlework skill. She informs us that this day inspired her to criticize women for being skillful only in needlework and being content with that. This devaluation, depreciation and perceived insufficiency of needlework skills - women’s art highly esteemed in premodern China - was followed by a critique of women from the wealthy households who were, once again, represented as overly indulging in luxuries, heavily made-up and overdressed, mistreating servants, and “[even] asking others to do the needlework for them.”⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ The entire article of Pan Xuan is very interesting for the analysis because she presents the vision of the reforms which, according to the studies of Nanxiu Qian, Xue Shaohui denounced by arguing for a more elitist approach to the directions in which women’s endeavors and abilities should be developed. Nevertheless, I observe *Nüxue bao* as a whole which allows me to bring certain types of conclusions about particular issues precisely because I read all the texts together, searching for common themes through various texts created by various authors. Even though I am quoting Pan here for her implicit critique of what she perceived to be a banal reader who was not a part of imagined body of the collective of women, I have to add that she also thinks that reading of the proper books without the proper understanding of their meanings is not knowledge. See “Shanghai *Nüxue bao* yuanqi (The purposes of the *Chinese Girl’s Progress* in Shanghai), NXB, no. 2.

⁵⁵⁴ Pan Daofang, “Qi xi shuo” (Talking about the Double Seven), NXB, no. 6.

⁵⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁵⁶ Idem.

As I've shown so far, a number of texts published in *Nüxue bao* reinforce men-generated criticism, contributing to the creation of a category of the image of "frivolous" Chinese woman, and, indeed, Pan Daofan dismisses embroidery as women's skill and disapproves of women's lack of interest and proficiency in cultural and socio-political matters; and Kang Tongwei blames women for the humiliating foreign perception of China as an uncivilized, uncultured country. However, after a careful reading and interpretation of these very critical articles, we may see that it was rarely women alone who were to blame for their condition and its devastating influence on the power of the Empire.

Wang Chunlin's article "A discussion of equality between men and women" represents a sharp critique not only of the present situation, but also of the historical development that led to it. Society is to be blamed for misinterpreting the original idea of the equality of *yin* and *yang* and allowing men to obtain all the social power (most significantly embodied in the creation of the laws and regulations). Men are criticized for beating their wives when angry and treating them like actresses when happy. "The customs," and, by extension, women who accept these customs which are "not imposed by force," are criticized for agreeing to please men in ways that adds to their disadvantage. These women are also criticized for ear piercing, footbinding and powdering, for serving men with food and clothes, for amusing them like flowers and birds, and working for them like dogs and horses.⁵⁵⁷ In Wang's view, women do not know that they are equal to men because they are not educated, but, when this situation changes, woman will quickly and "naturally" accept equality, in the same way that they accepted the present inequality. The critique also includes a common discursive trope of women as burdening their husbands financially. However, the author balances the blame: women are to be blamed for being

⁵⁵⁷ Wang Chunlin, NXB, no. 5.

economic burden, but they are burdensome only because men and society do not allow them to establish their own enterprises and to become involved in the matters outside of the household.⁵⁵⁸

Similarly to the text signed by Wang Chunlin, the discussion “On Women’s Patriotism” signed by Lu Cui reinforces the alarming image of contemporary Chinese women, while, at the same time, relates it to the limits imposed by the women’s surroundings. Using the word “we” when talking about the depriving conditions in which Chinese women live, but distancing herself from the group of underdeveloped women by the very text she is publishing, Lu Cui explains that: “We, women, [we] are spending our days in the dark, with no cultured knowledge, with no clear understanding of the matters of the household, not to mention the big issues of the country.”⁵⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the author emphasizes that women’s ignorance about the matters of the state is the result of the obstacles and limitations the others placed on them.⁵⁶⁰

In the following section I will discuss the limitations placed on women and their participation in women-oriented reformist projects by the reform practices, actualized or suggested, and how these constraints influenced the process of forming a collective identity of women as recognized socio-political actors.

5.4.2 Observations about the boundaries of collectivity in practice: Reading Nüxue tang’s regulations, announcements, reported and suggested practices

Writing about the establishment of *Nüxue bao* Pan Xuan enthusiastically celebrates the good fortune of all women, of “mature and energetic” [i.e. old and young, *nian lao nian zhuang*],

⁵⁵⁸ Idem.

⁵⁵⁹ Lu Cui, NXB, no. 5.

⁵⁶⁰ Idem.

wealthy and honored or poor and humble,” to have an opportunity to gather in *Nüxue hui*.⁵⁶¹ She also envisages that *Nüxue tang* will allow “young genteel ladies, those who have read books, and those who have not, [to meet] and have long discussions through which they would improve each other.”⁵⁶² However, Pan’s kind-hearted joy and her visions of internal equality within the women’s group and of wide inclusivity of women-oriented reformist projects, were, as I have already demonstrated, complicated by the textual treatments of specific groups of women. An additional challenge to Pan’s vision of forming an all-inclusive group of women were the reformist practices, actualized or suggested, which, in their own way, created the boundaries of socio-politically active group of late-Qing Chinese women.

What may also be concluded from the reports, plans, and proposals of the reformers is that restrictions on membership in the emerging collectivity of late-Qing woman were based on women’s age, wealth, and social and family background. The reformist leadership was tightly related to a woman’s (or her family’s) wealth since it was announced that female donors would be inaugurated into the school’s superintendents.⁵⁶³ Tellingly, the opening announcement in the fifth issue that invites applications for new teachers specifies that “women who are too old, and who cherish the old ideas too stubbornly are not suitable for the post,” thus alluding to the generational gap among women that they recognized and reinforced.⁵⁶⁴ In addition, the regulations of the school pronounced that two female directors - the one was planned to be Chinese, and the other a foreign woman - would be staying in school, thus disabling married

⁵⁶¹ Pan Xuan, NXB, No.2.

⁵⁶² *Idem*.

⁵⁶³ “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no. 2.

⁵⁶⁴ “Guishuli Nüxue hui shushu gaobai” (An announcement of the Guishu lane Girls’ School affiliated to the Society for Women’s Learning), NXB, no. 5.

women, especially young mothers with small children, to employ and broaden their abilities and expertise and to directly participate in the process of defining meanings of the collective identity of late-Qing Chinese women.⁵⁶⁵

Lastly, there were two categories of women who were explicitly excluded from the reformist women-oriented projects, not considered to be respectable and able to get their own share of direct participation in the *wai* sphere. One of the provisional regulations of the school states:

The school is established to make women and men equal. Even though [we] don't [want to] divide people into different ranks, [given that] the school has been established to propagate the new trends and to foster the future teachers and good models, we have to choose women from the good family background who [are the only ones who] can become national exemplary models. [Hence] slave girls and prostitutes cannot enter the school.⁵⁶⁶

It is hard to neatly systematize and categorize the richness of intertwined messages conveyed in the texts of *Nüxue bao*. Being attentive to the multivocality of the emerging collectivity whose creation the journal facilitated and voiced, in this chapter I've tried to show the complexities of the process of "internal" formatting of women's collective identity as a process intrinsic to the entrance of a group of women into the *wai* sphere of governance and particular forms of literacy as recognized legitimate discussants and actors.

I've shown that the process of creation of a collectivity of women entailed on the one hand multiple exclusions within the collective of late-Qing women, and strategic alignments

⁵⁶⁵ "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no. 2. Xia Xiaohong noted some women had to resign or not take positions in school because they could not abandon their obligations in their households. A main reason for women's retirement was that they had young children who needed their motherly care. See Xia, 2010, 123.

⁵⁶⁶ "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no. 2.

with the ruling dynasty and selected female exemplars from the past on the other. As I've discussed, the texts of *Nüxue bao* upheld the temporal scheme which celebrated the period of the Three dynasties as the golden age of the Chinese past to which China should turn if she were to position herself in a more favorable way in the geo-political and socio-cultural hierarchies of the modern/izing world. This temporal scheme that calls for a return to the past in order to progress, (sometimes) combined with the notion of *xixue zhongyuan*, enabled two significant discursive operations. First, it promoted a sense of community, commonality and continuity of late-Qing women with a very diverse group exemplary women from the Imperial past, which in turn underpinned women's argumentation for requested social changes. Second, it offered a way to represent proposed social changes not as a disruption of the "ways of the Sages," but as a result of a historical developmental process that may recover China's and Chinese women's glory.

An additional legacy of framing the historical time and communication between China and the West in the way that numerous essays of *Nüxue bao* did, is the internationalization of women's imaginary and the introduction of a figure of the (Western) foreign women. Michael Lackner claims that the notion of *xixue zhongyuan*, or, as he explains it, a variant of the "the autochthonous culture myth" asks for a cognitive process of a "peculiar comparison" in which "the Other may only be accepted if it is seen as having always been a part of one's own culture or society."⁵⁶⁷ Among the main issues my next chapter will address will be the discursive creation and treatment of the figure of the (Western) foreign woman, that is, of a historically unprecedented Other for late-Qing Chinese women, and the messages these processes transmitted.

⁵⁶⁷ Lackner, 183, 184.

Chapter 6: Gender and the *wai* of the Chinese Empire: The figure of (Western) foreign woman and the discursive sites of reformist interventions she helped to define

As my study has demonstrated so far, the destabilization of China's power to order the *tianxia* and the initiation of the process of forcible inclusion of the Chinese Empire as an unfavorably positioned semi-civilized semi-colonial actor into the European International Society, influenced the rethinking of what was understood as a central terrain of Chinese civilizational superiority - ritually ordered gender norms. As a result of redefinitions of China-ordered spatio-civilizational center-periphery domains and their relations, a group of elite reform-oriented women entered the *wai* sphere of late-Qing socio-political life as recognized legitimate socio-political actors.

As I have shown, when a space for women's actions in the *wai* sphere got demarcated, or, more accurately, in the processes of the establishment and operation of the women's association, school and the journal, what was also in the making are the boundaries of this newly-forming political collectivity. As I have elaborated, the process of definition of the socio-political collectivity of Chinese women observable through the pages of *Nüxue bao* involved several strategies. So far, I have elaborated on what I approach as the "internal" inclusions and exclusions from the political category of "Chinese women", i.e. the ways in which contributors to *Nüxue bao* defined a collective identity of Chinese women by positioning themselves in relation to particular characteristics, aspirations and abilities of women from China's past and present.

I identified several features of the textual creation of the socio-political collectivity of Chinese women: making a community of reform-oriented women by celebrating continuity of their aspirations, abilities and activities with the ones of various “types” of exemplary women from the Chinese past; alignment with the Qing Court and its female rulers; as well as the distancing from certain groups of women and their assumed characteristics. These discursive moves are, as I have demonstrated, part of the wider rhetorical tools that framed women’s representations, argumentations, actions, and the processes of their legitimization.

A conclusion that *Nüxue bao* may offer is that a main strategy for dealing with the consternating reconfiguration of the relations between geo-political *nei* and *wai* of the Chinese Empire was the creation of a non-linear vision of time in which the progress was to be achieved through the revival of gender-specific practices and institutions of the Three dynasties. Importantly, this non-linear temporal scheme was joined by an attempt to acknowledge the strengths of the West and Japan as resulting from an uninterrupted evolution of originally Chinese civilizational accomplishments. This way of coping with, what Theodore Hutters addressed as “the trauma of accommodation that China underwent in these [late-Qing] years”⁵⁶⁸ brought about regular occurrence of the “(Western) foreign woman” in the texts of *Nüxue bao*, as well as a whole range of issues and demands that she articulated and legitimized.

Alberto Melucci reminds us that social actors need to define themselves in a unitary way in order to reinforce their ideological capacity for action. As a result, this propagated unity of a social group is transformed by the observers into a “subject” which becomes the object of

⁵⁶⁸ Hutters, 3.

research.⁵⁶⁹ What lays beneath the empowering representations of unity are multilayered negotiations of contested meanings of the groups' aims, as Melluci implies, which in the context of my study signals the existence and importance of examination of different ideas about the changes which should be undertaken to accelerate China and Chinese women's position. Hence, this chapter will elaborate on the ways in which the discursive figure of the "foreign woman" served as a critical enunciator of the reformists' competing visions of desirable directions in which social change for the improvement of China and Chinese women's positions should head.

As this chapter will argue, the destabilization of the China-defined world order and its assuming political geo-civilizational *nei-wai* relationships caused by foreign presence on China's soil, which challenged China's civilizational centrality, was articulated in the texts published in *Nüxue bao* in a gender-specific, culturally-sanctioned way: the figure of the "Western woman" was introduced and regularly included in the argumentation of the journal's contributors. In turn, the inclusion of the "Western woman" into the argumentative imagery of *Nüxue bao* reveal gender-specific way of coping with the forced internationalization of ideas and realities in late-Qing China.

In the articles of *Nüxue bao* that I examined, the West embodied in the figure of a woman was not "hated as an imperialist aggressor and admired for its mastery."⁵⁷⁰ Rather, what was facilitated by a non-linear version of time joined with the notion of *xixue zhongyuan*, which at least one voice within the newly-formed group clearly articulated, was a discourse that brought together celebrated Chinese historical women and Western women, glorifying both groups of women at the same time and on the same grounds.

⁵⁶⁹ Melluci uses this observation to reemphasize the need for examining what appears to be unity of the social actor, movements and collective action. In his own words: "The observed unity is the datum to be investigated, not the evidence from which to proceed. Melucci, 382, 383.

⁵⁷⁰ Hutters, 2-3.

Furthermore, this new world, imagined from the perspective of a member of the neo/Confucian Chinese elite caught in a destabilized position of cultural and civilizational superiority on the one hand, and in an imposed position of the semi-colonized semi-civilized member of the international community on the other, was created under the historically-unprecedented power ascribed to and exercised by the West. As a result, the West and particular modes of the foreign were widely acknowledged as both overpowering and potentially empowering if adopted by the Chinese themselves. This ambiguous understanding of the West, as I will show, made the figure of the foreign woman a well-used tool for various, sometimes contradicting, reformists' aims and claims.

As I will argue, the discursive meeting with the West observable through *Nüxue bao* occurred via the figure of the foreign woman, and it did not reveal a lack of confidence in Chinese (women's) civilizational and political competence. Instead, as I will suggest, the figure of the foreign woman served as a supporting explanation for and evidence that the reformists' suggestions will reposition China as the civilizational and political center of power that it had once been. Therefore, this chapter will be about the introduction of the figure of a foreign woman – and, notably, the “Western foreign woman” - as a reference point in discussions about the power of the country and the role that women are playing in it.

Including it as a concise case study, I will first discuss selected pieces of late-Qing Chinese men's travel writings which, with their “factual” reports on Western women broaden the discussions related to gender-relations in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The remaining part of this chapter will look at the main sites of textual interventions where the figure of the “foreign woman” regularly emerged and served as a backbone for the reformists' arguments: women's education, its proposed content and envisaged utilization; marriage; as well

as women's religiosity, military engagements and decision- and policy-making. However, as in the preceding chapter, I will attempt to depict the textual polyphony, if not cacophony, that is preserved in *Nüxue bao* and that testifies to the myriad of visions of social change that the Wuxu reform period allowed.

6.1. Foreign Women in the Writings of Late-Qing Male Travelers⁵⁷¹

The inclusion of the figure of the Western woman in the debates of and about Chinese women signals a change in the referencing system of the Chinese Empire. Ellen Widmer identifies a particular kind of internationalization that she relates to modernization and places it in early nineteenth century fiction. The author defines it as “a new interest in action set in multiple sites within China (or the Qing Empire) [...and] a conception of China as one country among many,” and she mentions Siam, Hami, Turfan, Ryukyu Islands, as well as the Miao tribe and Vietnam as discussed topics of these writings.⁵⁷² Widmer also writes about the familiarity of the educated female reading public with the poetry of foreigners. Thus, as Widmer claims, the back sections of Wang Duanshu's collection *Mingyuan shiwei*, published in 1667, contain examples of foreigners' poetry: “these foreigners are mainly Koreans, with a few from Dali.”⁵⁷³ Similarly, a few late-Ming and early-Qing Korean women's poems also appear in a later

⁵⁷¹ This section of my dissertation is a revised part of my essay “An Initial Ground for Construction of Modern Chinese Womanhood: Representations of Foreign Women in the Writings of Late-Qing Male Travelers Accounts”, published in *Journal of Chinese Studies-Zhongguo Yanjiu*, No.5, 2010.

⁵⁷² The author also mentions *Complete Dream of the Red Chamber* because it “contains a few European characters.” Ellen Widmer, “Modernization without Mechanization: The Changing Shape of Fiction on the Eve of the Opium War,” in Brokaw and Reed, 71.

⁵⁷³ Ellen Widmer, “Retrieving the Past: Women Editors and Women's Poetry, 1636 – 1941,” in Fong and Widmer, 86.

compilation of poetry edited by Yun Zhu (1771 – 1833) *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji* (1831).⁵⁷⁴ Nevertheless, these inclusions of foreign women into the cultural cannon of Chinese women's (literary) history and the narratives about foreign women published in *Nüxue bao* had different messages to convey to the audience.

The poems of non-Han women who were included in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century collections of women's poetry were written by women who lived in the Chinese empire, and have served to emphasize the success of the cultural politics of Empire. Thus, after enlisting underrepresented ethnic groups and regions of Imperial China, i.e. poetesses from Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangdong, and Mongolian and Hami women, Yun Zhu recorded: "The last *juan* also presents four Koreans. These examples go to show that the dynasty's literary culture is flourishing and that education for the people reaches everywhere."⁵⁷⁵

However, military and political advancements of the West and Japan, as I have elaborated throughout my thesis, created a significantly different context from the one of the writings that Widmer discussed. In the historical moment in which China's power to order the world and to contain the power of the West and Japan to interfere in it, internationalization happened under different terms, and had different meanings. *Nüxue bao* implies, as I will show, that the emergence of a much broader category of "foreign women" which also included, to restate Bin Wong's wording, "Western foreign women" at the same time displayed the changed realities of late-Qing China and served to articulate different visions of the way out of this troublesome situation.

⁵⁷⁴ The original volume of Yun's collection had twenty juans, and sequel xuji, published posthumously in 1836 thanks to editing of Yin's two granddaughters and her daughter-in-law, had ten juan. The poems of Korean women appear only in the first edition, not in the sequel. Ibid., 87, 88.

⁵⁷⁵ Yun Zhu, "Liyun," quoted in Widmer, 2010b, 90. The inclusion of underrepresented groups and support for the cultural politics of Empire is interpreted as being influenced by Yun's personal experience of being married to a Manchu man.

It is possible to speculate about multiple sources of information about the world and about (Western) foreign women that may have informed the discourses of the participants in the Wuxu reforms; the books about the world that were in circulation since the early nineteenth century,⁵⁷⁶ the foreign press,⁵⁷⁷ as well as foreigners in China with their narratives and practices might have all informed late-Qing women and men about this broader, uncontrollable world. Thus, comprehensive mapping of the discourses that introduced the figure of the (Western) foreign woman to Chinese readers is a scholarly task that invites separate research.

However, in the opening section of this chapter I will try to illustrate part of an existing discursive repertoire about foreign women available to the contributors to *Nüxue bao*. I will do so by looking at a number of written accounts written by Chinese men who travelled to and lived in Europe and the United States, and looking at the ways in which they communicated their impressions about foreign women to educated Chinese audiences.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to consult these books and I am not able to say whether and what kind of information they presented about women.

⁵⁷⁷ When it comes to late-Qing press, Xia Xiaohong reminds us that most probably the earliest accounts about western women's lives were published as serialized translations in *Wanguo gongbao* in 1897 and 1898. These texts were translated by Wang Wensi, and had familiarized the readers with the notable western women who were praised because of their scientific, artistic, and philanthropic accomplishments. As Xia reminds us, the translated texts were published on 6th, 9th, 12th December 1897 and in February 1898 in *Wanguo gongbao*'s number 101, 104, 107 and 109. Xia Xiaohong, 2009, 37-38. Young Allen compiled the texts about women published in *Wanguo gongbao*, added new material, and, with the help of his Chinese collaborator published a multi-volume piece in the period between 1903 and 1905 entitled *Quandi wu da zhou nüsu tongkao* (Comprehensive examination of the condition of women of the world) with its English title printed as *Women in All Lands or China's Place Among the Nations. A Philosophic Study of Comparative Civilizations. Ancient and Modern*. Unfortunately, I do not have enough space here to elaborate on the amazing insights that this book offers about probably the earliest attempt to offer the Chinese audience a systematic account of the interrelation of society's treatment of women, religion, civilization, the power of the state and its dominance in the geo-political hierarchies of the past and the present. For an informative account about the content presented in the book see Shi Tianyi, "Nüxue goujian de ditu: Yi Lin Lezhi 'Quandi Wu da zhou nüsu tongkao' wei zhongxin de yanjiu" (Mapping female education: A Study of Young Allen's 'Comprehensive examination of the condition of women of the world'), (master Thesis, Shanghai: Fudan University, 2006.)

⁵⁷⁸ In the collection of late-Qing travel writings published in the 1980s by the Henan Publishing House there is only one female traveler included: Qian Shan Shili (1858-1945). On Shan Shili see, for instance, Ellen Widmer, "Foreign Travel through a Woman's Eyes: Shan Shili's *Guimao lixing ji* in Local and Global Perspective," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 4 (2006).

As Elsner and Rubies maintain, travel is not a mere physical movement from “here” to “there” but rather a culturally significant event,⁵⁷⁹ which, as James Clifford has noted, subsumes a complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction, difficult encounters and occasions for dialogue.⁵⁸⁰ As Clifford further elaborates, the focal importance of a practice of displacement lay in the fact that “cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them.”⁵⁸¹ Hence, travel writing is not only an alluring form of storytelling whose main purpose is to introduce us to the other,⁵⁸² but also, as Schulz-Forberg explicates, a source for investigation of how identities are constructed through “cultural practice and discursive networks of perception and interpretation.”⁵⁸³ Importantly, although travel writings are interpretative texts that aims at representing the truth about a foreign country by carrying out meaningful representations of a foreign culture and by arranging these semantically charged icons in a way that an image of the foreign culture as a whole becomes intelligible for the reader,⁵⁸⁴ the way travel is represented, as Melanie Hunter has noted, heavily depends on from where you are coming, to where you are going and why.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁹ Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubies, “Introduction,” in *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, ed. Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubies (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 7.

⁵⁸⁰ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3, 12.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸² Casey Blanton, *The Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

⁵⁸³ Hagen Schulz-Forberg, “European Travel and Travel Writing: Cultural Practice and the Idea of Europe,” in *Unraveling Civilization: European Travel and Travel Writing*, ed. Hagen Schulz-Forberg (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2005), 13.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

⁵⁸⁵ Melanie Hunter, “British Travel Writing and Imperial Authority,” in *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement*, ed. Kristi Siegel (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 29.

The endeavors of the Qing government to come to terms with the foreign powers had provoked numerous decisions of the court. To send abroad reliable men from the Qing governing establishment to learn about the various aspects of the West was a principal one. The male members of these diplomatic missions were the first modern Chinese travelers who passed their “factual” accounts of the modern/izing world to a wider audience composed primarily of the policy-making literati and their learned male and female family members. Travelers submitted their diaries to the court upon their return to China, and these works were then further disseminated among the high-ranked Qing officials. As Hu Ying writes, these travel diaries “were made available officially, or printed by the authors through private means; in some cases, they were even commercially printed without authorization as soon as the diaries were sent back to the Zongli yamen.”⁵⁸⁶

Travel writing of the Late Qing period and their experiences, understandings and representations of the condition of women in the countries they visited influenced the direction of Chinese modernization in general and, as we will see, informed the discursive strategies of the contributors of *Nüxue bao*. Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, I have consulted the following travelogues published and read by the educated elite in the last decades of the nineteenth century: Lin Zhen’s *Xi hai ji you cao* (Random Notes from the Travel to the West [1849]), Zhang Deyi’s *Sui shi Faguo ji* (Embassy Official’s Notes from France [1871]), *Chu shi taixi ji* (Notes from the Diplomatic Mission to the West [1871]) written by Zhi Gang, *Xi yang zazhi* (Sketches from the West [1877]) of Li Shuchang, Li Gui’s *Huan you diqiu xin lu* (New

⁵⁸⁶ Hu Ying, “Reconfiguring Nei/Wai: Writing the Woman Traveler in the Late Qing,” *Late Imperial China* 18, no. 2 (1997): 75.

Record from around the Globe [1878]), as well as Liu Xihong's *Ying yao siji* (Journals from the Voyage to England [1879]).

Lin Zhen was one of the two Chinese men of this period who traveled to the West and published his impressions but was not a member of delegations sent by the Qing court.⁵⁸⁷ Zhang Deyi was a translator who accompanied the diplomatic mission to France. Zhi Gang was one of the three members of the first Chinese embassy to the West and the book was written during his stay in the United States, England, France, Russia and other European countries between 1868 and 1870. Li Shuchang went with a Chinese mission to England and France and had lived in Germany and Spain. Li Gui's travelogue is the earliest account of an appointed Chinese traveler to the United States. Liu Xihong went with the first embassy to the United Kingdom. He spent one year in London and Berlin before returning to China in 1878.⁵⁸⁸

When the travelers presented their conclusions about Western women they mostly did so by referring to their "actual" encounters with women, that is, by depicting what they saw on the streets, in the parks, at official receptions or from recollected conversations with foreign women. There are several aspects of foreign women's foreignness which are regularly highlighted in the travel accounts I've consulted: women's education; women's presence, physical appearance and behavior in the public space; and leisure.

The image of highly educated foreign women was invoked with great respect on numerous occasions. Travelers to the United States and the United Kingdom stressed the

⁵⁸⁷ The second one was Rong Hong (Yung Wing) who went to the United States with the help of missionaries.

⁵⁸⁸ Under the tributary system no resident envoys had been exchanged between the Chinese Empire and the tributary states. Even after the Beijing Convention (1860) had established the presence of Western diplomats in the capital, the Qing court was unwilling to send their representatives abroad, considering it contrasting with the age-old conceptions of the relations between China and the foreigners, and regarding it as an act of disgrace, frailty and submission. Between 1866 and 1976 China sent four roving missions overseas, and in 1876 the first resident minister was sent abroad. John David Frodsham, translated and annotated, *The First Chinese Embassy to the West: The Journals of Kuo Sung-t'ao, Liu Hsi-hung and Chang Te-yi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), xvi-xxv.

competency of the female teachers and hard-working female students who were “more devoted than the male ones.”⁵⁸⁹ Furthermore, what had been accented in very affectionate travelers’ accounts was foreign women’s curiosity about China. With this regard, we read, for example, about learned American women who traveled with Li Gui and expressed the wish to hear more about China and Chinese writing, about a French girl who had a burning desire to study Chinese, and even about an unnamed European woman who started a conversation about Chinese politics at one of the diplomatic receptions.⁵⁹⁰

Nevertheless, when the texts addressed foreign women, a notable position was awarded to American women. Li Gui, when reporting on the World Exhibition in 1876, explained that the American women were not satisfied with the fact that their work had been exhibited in the same space with men’s because they thought that this revealed disrespect for the women’s work. Consequently, the American women themselves raised the funds for building a separate room for exhibiting women’s accomplishments. There were women’s books, paintings, scathes, needlework, as well as the books written by women on astronomy, geography, politics, statistics, and the utilities they used in their everyday and professional life. After a very detailed description of the events surrounding, appearance of and the contents of women’s room at the World Exhibition, Li had ended this praise of American women’s independence as well as their organizational, financial and professional capabilities by observing that “American women are respectable and admirable”.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁹ Li Gui, 41. He even presents the number of “three, four million” educated American women without mentioning his source for this information. See also, for instance, Zhi Gang, 286.

⁵⁹⁰ When writing about the US, travelers sometimes make a distinction between American and European women, but without making further remarks about the specific part of Europe these women come from. Li Gui, 3.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 40, 41.

An additional “characteristic” of the foreign places was the presence of foreign women in public places. Hence, the Chinese observers noticed and reported the “intimacy” expressed by common women and men in public spaces, the presence of “ordinary” women in street gatherings, as well as women’s presence in the respected public spaces of libraries, colleges, church galleries, theaters and music halls, as well as at the receptions organized by the high-officials and the European courts. Nonetheless, classed spatiality of the public space was clearly demarcated. Thus, Zhang Deyi explained that (in France) female members of the noble families went for rides in their cars at least once a day, or went to the park, or enjoyed their time in small boats. Contrastingly, as Zhang noted, middle class women strolled in the streets every day, most often in the groups of three to five women.⁵⁹² Lower-class “ordinary” women were also present in public as participants in parades or as entertainment for middle-class (male and female) audiences,⁵⁹³ whereas the “respected” wives of the Western officials and influential men were located in luxurious parties, royal gatherings and religious services.⁵⁹⁴

What is common for the descriptions of various groups of foreign women is a detailed representation of their physical appearance. Yet, in the accounts that reveal the crucial role of the visual in the actual or imagined encounters with the foreign women, the body was rarely commented on directly. Instead, the foreign female body was narrated through fashion and leisure.⁵⁹⁵ Hence, late-Qing Chinese readers read exhaustive elaborations on foreign women’s

⁵⁹² Zhang Deyi, 193.

⁵⁹³ On the description of, for instance, women who perform acrobatics in circuses see Li Shuchang, 125, 126. On common British women who took part in street parades see Liu Xihong, 74.

⁵⁹⁴ For the description of one typical party organized by a (British) wife on an influential man see Li Shuchang, 34.

⁵⁹⁵ The only account of women’s physicality I’ve encountered in the travelogues is the description of Italian women presented by Zhang Deyi. He records women’s extraordinary beauty, their round eyes, rosy cheeks, and beautifully shaped eyebrows. It is interesting to notice that the image of the Italian woman most often figures as a sublime esthetic site for the Chinese observer, in both reports on the ‘truths’ about women’s habits and appearances and in

hairstyles, jewelry, and the shapes, colors and designs of women's clothes and accessories. Readers had learned that foreign women's hairstyles were not related to their marital status; that they wore hats of strange shapes and designs; and that their fans, shawls, earrings, bracelets and necklaces were eye-catching.⁵⁹⁶ Furthermore, the precise colors and fashions of (upper-class) foreign women's attire had been neatly recorded, especially the white and black colors of the wedding and mourning dresses.⁵⁹⁷

As we will see in the following section, the issue of marriage was among the most cumbersome issues to address during the Wuxu reform period. In this regard, Liu Xihong's description of the "Western" marriage is representative of the Chinese officials' rhetorical devices and lines of argumentation, and it informed Chinese readers on women's sexual freedom and immorality:

All men and women select their marital partners. When a woman likes a man, she invites him to her house to entertain him. I think that women here are encouraged to be unchaste, while men are not. When a woman likes a man, if she discovers that he doesn't have a wife yet she blatantly arrange a rendezvous. The man does not dare to make a first step. They often talk intimately, away from others and go out together. Their parents do not intervene. After a long period of acquaintance, if the two like each other they inform their parents. Then they inspect each other's financial situation and if they are not [financially] suitable they do not marry. [If someone has been cheated by the financial reports] one will treat the other as no more than a servant...After their engagement – a ring is used to control the other party so that s/he will not look for someone else – the couple has even greater freedom to go out together... [After the wedding in the Church and the inclusion in the official registry] the newly-weds often travel to distant places to consume the marriage.⁵⁹⁸

the notes on the actual encounters. On the beautiful Italian woman whom Zhi Gang met in Paris and who "charmed him deeply" see his travel account, Zhang Deyi, 322.

⁵⁹⁶ See, for instance Ibid., 83, 142, 151.

⁵⁹⁷ See Li Shuchang, 45; Zhang Deyi, 254.

⁵⁹⁸ Liu Xihong, 164.

What worried the Chinese observers is that foreign women neglected their husband's family, since, as Liu notes, the daughter-in-law does not live with her parents-in-law, even old people of seventy or eighty are often without children to serve them, and, all in all, "how to behave as a proper daughter-in-law and to nourish the virtue of feminine obedience is not known here at all."⁵⁹⁹

The reproving tone is also present in numerous records on foreign women's behavior and appearances at parties. Almost all travelogues inform the audience about the dancing parties organized and attended by foreign women and men of upper classes, where, as the reader has been constantly alerted, foreign women expose their bodies. Throughout the accounts of late-Qing Chinese observers foreign women merrily dance in sleeveless dresses, displaying half of their torsos and rubbing their shoulders, elbows and feet with men. The despicable manners of foreign woman was also depicted through the way woman danced, standing face to face with a man, holding one hand on his shoulder, while a man's hand was wrapped up around her narrowed waist.⁶⁰⁰

In addition to dancing, foreign women were skated and swam, visited public baths, attended various cultural performances, enjoyed themselves at masquerade balls, and, most impressively for the writers, women traveled without a male escort.⁶⁰¹ Yet, a foreign woman does not lose respectability by embracing independence and physical mobility. Li Gui mentions five "polite" American women whom he met on a ship. Lin Zhen spoke about women travelers

⁵⁹⁹ The figure of the foreigners' lack of *xiao* was also implied in records about the public homes for elderly people. Ibid., 172.

⁶⁰⁰ See, for example, Li Shuchang, 35, 36 and Liu Xihong, 79, 132. See also Zhi Gang, 314.

⁶⁰¹ Zhang Deyi, 195; Li Shuchang, 36, 76, 77, 124; Zhi Gang, 325.

without a judgment. Li Shucheng discussed a young British lady who traveled to Paris to enjoy a theatre show and two well-educated girls from a good family who traveled together for two years. While Zhang Deyi explained that German, English, Danish, Dutch and Swiss women traveled alone to distant places by car or with modern ships without the opposition of their parents.⁶⁰²

To sum up, even though Zhang Deyi briefly familiarized the Chinese readership by praising the productivity of foreign women who worked in French factories and with the bravery of French women soldiers,⁶⁰³ and even though we read a few accounts that presented information on women in jails and in mental asylums,⁶⁰⁴ the Chinese travelers most frequently described and recorded their impressions regarding middle- and upper-class foreign women. This will, as we will see, also be the case with the texts published in *Nüxue bao* as well, whose authors selected the “foreign women” they needed, and used them to support and legitimize their own arguments and requests.

6.2. Education, its contents and aims

The authors and readers of *Nüxue bao* were aware of negative consequences of western imperialism in China. As Qiu Yufang explained in her essay:

China has a huge territory, big population and rich resources. [Because of this] China [should be able to] proudly face other countries. But, in the last decades the strength of the country is gradually declining, the wealth is gradually decreasing, [and] people live in hardship. Western countries are encroaching on our country, [while] we just bear

⁶⁰² Li Gui, 3; Lin Zhen, 36; Li Shuchang, 110, 160; Zhang Deyi, 220.

⁶⁰³ Zhang Deyi, 166, 172.

⁶⁰⁴ Li Gui, 53, 54. Zhi Gang, 268.

humiliation and observe how China is disappearing. Is this the will of Heaven? Is this the act of men?⁶⁰⁵

Similarly, Zhi Yun, in her text “A ballad about raising the silkworms and cultivating mulberry trees” protested against the economic damage suffered by China because of foreign presence. Poor people and rich people wear clothes made of foreign fabrics, Zhi Yun explained, because the poor can afford it, and because the rich “chase the new” and crave velvet and stiff gauze. The problem that Zhi Yun stressed is that since the foreign fabric started being sold, Chinese fabric was not being bought. “Foreigners are cruel-hearted, [and they need] to make our country poor, [so that] their countries can become wealthy,” she wrote uncompromisingly.⁶⁰⁶

Nonetheless, the anti-imperialist stance did not identify Western women as accomplices in the imperialist project and China’s exploitation. The role of the figure of the “foreign woman” in general, and the “Western woman” in particular, is more complex than the reproduction of a colonized/colonizer power-divide may imply.

As I will show, images of foreign women, embodying the modern hierarchies of the international community, figure as supporting proof that the reformist ideas are leading to the increase of China’s power. In my reading, they are not the models to be emulated, but are rather configured as a counterpoint to an uninterrupted evolution of Chinese ideas and ideals that the authors want to reinstate. As it will also become clear in the course of my analysis, the

⁶⁰⁵ QiuYufang, NXB, No.7. This explicitly bitter tone pointed to the foreign presence in China gradually turns into blaming the Chinese people, both men and women, for not being educated. If the people of China would receive education, they would be able to support themselves, to trade with foreigners in the open ports and get rich.

⁶⁰⁶ Zhi Yun, “Can sang ge” (A ballad about raising the silkworms and cultivating the mulberry trees,” NXB, no. 9. It was already in 1876 that Li Hongzhang decided to establish a textile company because he realized that British cloth was sold for more than 30 million teals per a year and had become one of the biggest China’s expenses. Consequently, in 1878 Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill was established with the purpose of competing with the British companies, influencing the formation of a female work force that would historically play an important role in Modern China. Jing Yuanshan was among six members of the board of the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill. Wu, 43,44.

discourses of *Nüxue bao* espouse the idea which equates the status and advancement of a nation with the treatment of its woman, without criticizing or questioning the unequal power relations imbedded in the processes of formulation and dissemination of the standards of advancement.⁶⁰⁷

Hence, women-related reformist projects – the association, the school and the journal – were all explained through and supported by the examples of women from the countries considered to be powerful actors on the modern world stage. The first issue of *Nüxue bao* emphasizes the importance of the women’s journal by discussing the earliest British women’s journals, while the importance of having women’s associations was conveyed through the report on Women’s Educational Association from France.⁶⁰⁸ In the discussions of women’s education, and its content and anticipated outcomes, it is the frequency and regularity of the figure of the “foreign woman”, as well as the messages she was employed to convey, explain, justify and support that demand attention.

An example of informative account about foreign women’s education is the texts of Xue Shaohui in which the author, after dedicating thousands of characters to the admired women from the Chinese past, proceeds with the description of Western and Japanese women’s education. Xue writes:

⁶⁰⁷ Denise Gimpel traces the origin of the idea about “equating women with the state of the country, its level of civilization or modernity” to the writing of French social reformer Charles Fourier, but she claims that this view was popularized by the German Socialist leader August Bebel and his best-seller *Women and Socialism* of 1879. As Gimpel adds, Thomas Laqueur argues that the origins of this equation originates in the Scottish Enlightenment, but that, even though Laqueur may be right, the idea was “doubtless popularizes worldwide some hundred years later by Bebel’s best-seller.” See Denise Gimpel, “Exercising Women’s Rights: Debates of Physical Culture since the Late Nineteenth Century,” in Chow, Hon, Ip and Price, 95, 120 n2. See also Thomas Laqueur, “Forward,” in *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, ed. Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2002), xiii. Gimpel also claims that “this assumption was transmitted to China through the Chinese-language writings of missionaries,” but I think that we need a separate study that would carefully explore how this Western idea got amalgamated with the existing Chinese equation of the neo/Confucian educated women with civilization and with China’s cultural supremacy. See Gimpel, 96.

⁶⁰⁸ Pan Xuan, NXB, no. 3; “Faguo nüxue hui,” (The Society for women’s learning in France), NXB, no. 1.

Western men and women are equal, and [both men and women] receive education. I've heard that women have been among the students of literature, and that they study poetry, music and painting. These students receive diplomas, if they pass three exams they receive a title similar to *hanlin*, if they pass two exams, their title would be similar to our *jinshi*. The number of women who are studying medicine increased, and there are many women who can get [all sorts of] expertise, with some of them striving to be selected to be judges...*Japanese record of politics* writes that in the twelfth month of the fourth year of Mingzhi, Women's schools started to be established in Tokyo, and that in the first month of the sixth year of Mingzhi the government ordered that all boys and girls must start with education when they turn six. In the eleventh month of the Mingzhi year the Women's Normal School was founded. The Empress herself commenced the opening ceremony, and [on that occasion she] stated: "To promote women's normal education, to educate women to educate children, this is the matter that cannot be overlooked. [That is why] the funds would be ensured from the state treasury to establish the school. From that time on, the Empress would come to school every time prospective students were screened."⁶⁰⁹

Similarly, Qiu Yufang, first elaborates on the abilities of Chinese women, and then asserts that:

Western countries developed education for both boys and girls, [and] if [boys and girls] reach a certain age and do not enter the school their parents are punished. After they finish their studies, some women, not differing from men, become professionals (*jiuzhe*): they become merchants, or doctors, or teachers. [When] women are educated to make a living, a man's burden of making profits is split, [and this] helps the country to be prosperous. The reason why Western countries are wealthy is [Western] industry and trade, and that women are able to support themselves.⁶¹⁰

Yet, one of the most elaborate accounts that addresses foreign women's education is Kang Tongwei's essay. This article is the only text published in the first nine issues of *Nüxue bao* that refers to women from the Islamic traditions. Kang states:

[In] Persia and India [it is] disgraceful [for] women to be seen [in public places]. In the United States women are often seen [in public], and everyone is happy [because of that]. Women of all these countries are humans, but their status is different. [So, just as]

⁶⁰⁹ Xue Shaohui, NXB, no. 4.

⁶¹⁰ QiuYufang, NXB, no. 7.

there is a reason why men and women are different, [there is] a reason for a country's prosperity and decline.⁶¹¹

Even though Kang did not explore situation of Persian and Indian women with the same care that she will, as we will see soon, the situation of women in the West and Japan, it is particularly telling that she opted to mention “week” and colonized countries when linking the power of the state, non-Christian religious tradition and women's concealment. Thus, Kang is not only stating an argument about the setbacks of women's seclusion and concealment - departing from existing Chinese conceptualization of women's presence in the spatial *wai* sphere as the inappropriate and dangerous exposure of women to the public gaze - but she also adopts and reinforces the Western-generated understanding of mutually beneficial or degrading features: the power and international status (if not the mere existence) of the state, the status of women, and religion.⁶¹²

After this passing remark about women in Persia and India Kang Tongwei gives a detailed account of the educational systems in the powerful states of the West:

The strength and power of Europe and the United States are bigger than in the past. [If we] look [at them, we'll see that] their system of institutions is perfected, [that there are] many talented people; [that their] wisdom is deep and developed; [that] their customs are solid and honest; [and that they] can face the other states with dignity. The [existence of] schools is the reason [for all of this]. In their educational system, if boys and girls reach the age of eight and do not go to school, their parents are punished. When young, boys and girls study together; when they grow up, they are separated, and women receive women's education. There are three progressive levels of education: high level education [is received] at the normal school, while [one can receive] low level education at

⁶¹¹ Kang Tongwei, NXB, no. 7.

⁶¹² Rebecca Karl writes that “‘India’ was inscribed firmly as exemplar of lostness and slavery,” and raises the examples of Young Allen's 1896 unfinished essay, as well as several post-1900 texts to show that “‘Indians’ were used in almost every conceivable way to point to the direct consequences of inaction and complacency”. See Karl, 2002, 159-163.

vocational school. Women's choice of their major is based on their own affinities. The knowledge from the women's quarters is expanded by [the establishments of] women's associations. [Hence] women receive instructions in [a wide range of knowledge] from ethics to handiwork. Education consists of sacred teachings (i.e. religion, Christianity), women's precepts, moral cultivation (*xiushen*), teaching, astronomy, geography, law, home management (*jiazheng*), medicine, science (*gezhi*), music, fine arts and handiwork. Every person has a different major, but, after completing the education they all receive a certificate of the same degree. So, in the United States and France there are women judges, in the UK women are astronomers, officials, telegraphists, secretaries, doctors, lawyers, professors, missionaries, doing [all the things] men do.⁶¹³

Kang then raises the example of Japan and laments over the position of China:

Japan is one small, newly-founded country. In the last ten years, there have been over two million female students, more than one thousand female teachers, more than three hundred schools. Ours is a civilized country [with] perfected sacred teaching (i.e. Confucianism). [We] are the descendants of the divinities, [and, still, on] the magnificent territory of twenty thousand square miles, [with] two hundred million women, there was not even one women's school. Why?

The Westerners opened the ports, shared the territory [i.e. colonized our country], and founded the schools to educate [our] women. Our people are educated by the people from other countries! [What a] humiliation! [What a] lack of aspirations!

Hence, what may be concluded is that the figure of the foreign woman as a gendered site for mapping the modern world and strategic (re)positioning of China in its symbolic and political hierarchies. The forced and unfavorable integration of China into the economic and symbolic hierarchies of the modern world brought about a multifaceted engagement with examples from the parts of the world that were not of immediate concern to the Chinese court and neo/Confucian intellectual elite in the long course of China's premodern history. As in a number of texts of their male counterparts, Chinese and Western, on whose support, to remind once again, women involved in the establishment and operation of the association, the school and the journal

⁶¹³ Kang Tongwei, NXB, no. 7.

relied, *Nüxue bao*'s contributors addressed the female examples from the West as being the source and display of the power of their prospective countries. This understanding of Western women will, as Joan Judge reveals in her work, continue to be a significant feature of women-related discourses.

At the same time, what *Nüxue bao* helped to maintain were the ties of the female readers to their celebrated female predecessors, and offered them a vision of the future that relies on the Chinese past. That is, in the pages of the journal two discursive tropes are united: exemplary woman from the Chinese past and a Western woman who represents the fulfilled potentiality of the historical Chinese women. In this scheme, the figure of Western woman does occupy the position of the modern power, but it is so due to a steady evolution of cultural and civilizational practices and institutions of the glorious Chinese past. In this way, rather than being a model to be emulated, the figure of the Western woman becomes the reminder and display of fully-developed Chinese women's abilities and potential.

The second regular reference point in the texts on women's education is Japanese woman, a figure that, in the process of mapping the modern/izing world via the images of women, voices the anxieties and admirations regarding Japan. China's maritime neighbor, a significant actor in the sinosphere that managed to conduct reforms and position itself as a new power in East Asia, was often, if not always, mentioned in the context of its geographical insignificance and cultural advance. Hence, the article about the school in Qiangxi has a passing remark about widespread women's education in Japan, a country that "consist[s] of only three islands but, if compared to the United States in terms of women's education, it does not fall behind."⁶¹⁴ Similarly, a part of

⁶¹⁴ Xu Fu, NXB, no. 2.

the article that informs the audience about a Korean woman who, joining her husband, leaves for Japan to study about sericulture reads:

Japan and Korea are small countries. [Yet], women [from these countries] often go to study abroad. [They] are not like women in China who are confined, some of them never leaving their households. Except for the women who are members of the imperial envoy's family and the female students of missionary schools, there are a few women who go abroad. Is it possible that only after the country opens up, [and] after the schools for women had been established, women would [finally] go to study abroad?⁶¹⁵

The texts about Japanese women reveal that the discourses formed in *Nüxue bao* were in accord with the wider intellectual context of the second half of the nineteenth century in which, as Hutters writes, Japan came to be understood as bringing Western knowledge to China, “incapable of adding anything of its own to the complex of new ideas that needed to be dealt with.”⁶¹⁶ The Japanese woman, just as Japan itself, “seems to figure as nothing more than a transparent window on the West”: they are students of the West, not independent cultural agents, upholding thus “Japan’s presumptive identity in China as subsidiary part of the Chinese sphere of civilization [that] rendered it invisible to the sort of cultural/national inquiry that marked the final decade of Qing rule, even as the newly powerful neighbor was posing the most serious sort of challenge to China’s national existence.”⁶¹⁷

Furthermore, as I’ve discussed in the third chapter when elaborating on specificities of the tribute system, Korea was a significant contributor to China’s self-perception as the

⁶¹⁵ “Han nü you xue,” (A Korean woman travel abroad to study), NXB, no. 2. This was a piece of news about a Korean woman named Jiao Chunjia, who followed her husband Mr. Lin to Tokyo and studied sericulture at the local university. The story reads that a woman followed her husband on a trip abroad and decided to study, even though she expected to be ridiculed upon returning to her country. Her motivation to persist in her intentions, as Mrs. Jiao is quoted as saying, is her belief that in the future, she will be celebrated as an innovator in the sphere of sericulture.

⁶¹⁶ Hutters, 19.

⁶¹⁷ Idem.

civilizational center.⁶¹⁸ Raising the example of Korea may thus be read as an attempt to alarm the Chinese elite already concerned with the changing status of Japan, by pointing to the possible further shift of power relations within the sinocentric cultural sphere of influence. Smartly, the choice to report on the case of Mrs. Jiao to study sericulture, an approved and desirable knowledge and activity for women that, as we will see shortly, was respected in the past and advocated for in the future, accommodates the possible critique and makes the extension of the norm more acceptable.

The short mention of Mrs. Jiao conveys an additional very important message about reformers' desire to emphasize the importance of travel, to reconceptualize its purpose, as well as the scope of women's proper physical mobility. Genteel women of Imperial China were ardent travelers. Upper-class ladies were not only "armchair travelers" who communicated with the outside world through their writings and the letters they received from afar;⁶¹⁹ there were also several legitimate modes of travel available to a respectable woman in late Imperial China. The "most constrained" mode of travel was, as Susan Mann explains, "the ladylike visit," when women left their homes and gathered in the homes, gardens, and boats of their friends, taking pleasure in drinking, literary composition and casual tea-tasting.⁶²⁰ "A more ambiguous" form of travel, as Mann further explicates, was women's wandering in the mountains for religious quests or spiritual development. While the ladies relatively rarely wrote about the pilgrimages,

⁶¹⁸ Actually, the authors whose works I had a chance to consult represent Korea as a "model tribute state." See for instance Rose, 9 or Zhang Feng, 91. What also needs to be restated is that tributary status did not assume subservient status.

⁶¹⁹ On women as "armchair travelers" see Ko, 1994b, 224-226.

⁶²⁰ Susan Mann, "The Virtue of Travel for Women in the Late Empire," in Goodman and Larson, 56-59; Ko, 1994b, 224.

fictional descriptions show that pilgrimage was not an activity of a “proper lady.”⁶²¹ However, as both Mann and Ko explain, all elite women left their homes and acted as the sojourners of their educated male relatives on a number of occasions all around the empire.

Men had to travel if they wanted to advance their scholarly careers because the exams for civil service were organized on several levels and in several locations, moving hierarchically from the prefectural level, then to the provincial and metropolitan levels, with the final examination conducted by the Emperor at the court. After they received their degrees, men and their families had to observe the rule of avoidance, which did not allow a person to serve in his native place.⁶²² When following their husbands on their posts, women did not cut the ties with their native families, and, at least once a year, they travelled to their native families, which was “by far most pervasive, respectable, and vaunted travel for women”, that is, “a travel for family duty.”⁶²³ This type of travel that women from the elite families would undertake contributed to both the severing and forming of women’s network and ties, and it gave women a chance to form and express their impressions about travelling.⁶²⁴

In the articles of *Nüxue bao* travel becomes the epistemological prerequisite for the new knowledge. Thus, the propositions that relate physical mobility with learning do envisage travel as transgressing the borders of a woman’s country’s territory but are voiced cautiously: they

⁶²¹ Mann, 2005, 59.

⁶²² The officials did not serve in their home regions (“the law of avoidance”), and they had to move after three to six years to another post (the principle of “circulation”). Literati also had to travel for the period of mourning: the official went back to his hometown when his parents died, and stayed there reading Confucian classics. Grasso, Corrin and Kort, 23.

⁶²³ Mann, 2005, 60. Mann also discusses how a woman, when widowed, escorted the body of her husband to the proper burial place. For a deeply touching account of this additional type of women’s travel for family duty see Ibid., 63-68.

⁶²⁴ Li Guotong, “Imagining History and the State: Fujian guixiu (genteel ladies) at Home and on the Road,” in Fong and Widmer, 315, 317 n5; Ko, 1994b, 224.

praise the Korean woman who is visiting Japan for a virtuous purpose; they praise a Chinese woman who joined a male diplomat to Europe, where she became respected and sought-after companion of the Western aristocrat women and the best envoy to represent China and its values;⁶²⁵ they suggest that Cixi, after herself touring the entire territory of the Empire herself,⁶²⁶ select the most gifted female students and send them abroad to study. Hence, new travel of women, conceptualized as a process of learning and as a source of knowledge, announces (and requests) the additional destabilization of the spatial *nei-wai* boundaries of women's proper presence, but strategically legitimized with arguments about its importance for learning.

The suggestions for the content of the education call for an amalgamation of Chinese and Western learning, emphasizing again the Chinese historical legacy of the educational system established in the Zhou dynasty, when, as Xue Shaohui explains:

⁶²⁵ The eighth issue of the journal includes the article originally published in *Piping bao* about the wife of the Chinese imperial envoy. She was said to be interested in western women's education; traveled by the coach for pleasure and knowledge; visited the theaters with her husband; learned to speak and write English and to understand the foreign etiquette. She was also reported to be admired by the upper-class British women, and that she and her husband were planning to organize a banquet for the British elite in the following year, when they would gather famous British officials, businessmen and important women. "Hua fu haoxue" (A Chinese woman who likes to study," NXB, no. 8. The short text does not name the woman, and, unfortunately I was not able to decipher the name of her husband cited in the report, but we may assume that it is Sai Jinhua (Fu Caiyun), a famous courtesan who married Hong Jun and joined him on his ambassadorial post to Russia, Germany, Holland and Austro-Hungary. At the time that *Nixue bao* reproduced this text, Sai returned from Europe, she was widowed and abandoned by her husband's family. She was leading a famous upper-class brothel in Shanghai, where she herself received clients on weekends, having access to such influential political figures as Li Hongzhang and Sheng Xuanhai. It was perhaps the high esteem that she was kept in by powerful men that was among the reasons that Sai was picked to become a symbol of women as excellent emissaries of China and who would boost the Empire's image and standing in the international community if allowed to go abroad. For Sai Jinhua's biography see Wan Xinhua, "Sai Jinhua," in *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: The Qing Period, 1644-1911, Vol. 1*, ed. Lily Xiao Hong Lee and A.D. Stefanowska; volume ed. Clara Wing-Chung Ho. For the way in which Xue Shaohui represented Sai see Nanxiu Qian, "'Borrowing Foreign Mirrors and Candles to Illuminate Chinese Civilization': Xue Shaohui's (1866-1911) Moral Vision in the Biographies of Foreign Women," *Nan Nü* 6, no.1 (2004): 96-98. About Sai Jinhua and the way in which her travels are depicted in literature see Hu Ying, 1997.

⁶²⁶ "Taihou chu you" (A travel of the Empress Dowager), NXB, 3. Aligning with the interpretation of physical mobility and travel as the epistemological conditions for learning, the praise of the news that the empress dowager would tour through the Empire explicitly claims that the tour made by the Empress Dowager was not a common event in the ancient and present times, and that it announces the beginning of China's openness. The applause to the Empress Dowager's announced journey talked about the luxury of her coach and electricity, but it also resonated the idea from the Shang dynasty that the ruler organize his realm by moving through it. In the Shang period, the King regularly travelled through his realm, "securing the loyalty of followers who presented offerings and the aid of local gods with whom he renewed ties through sacrifice." Lewis, 288.

Twenty five households were organized in one *lǐ*, and every *lǐ* had one primary school. Five hundred households comprised one *dang*, and every *dang* had one middle-school. Two thousand and five hundred households made one *zhou*, and every *zhou* had one big school.⁶²⁷

Jiang Wangfan depicts the desirable amalgamation of Western and Chinese learning in the following way:

Teaching in the schools should start with the Chinese classics and their commentaries, after which the instructions should move in the direction of the student's character. Students should first understand the general meanings of the texts, [and later] to comprehend deeper messages. [After understanding the meaning of classical texts and their commentaries], every student should have her field of specialization, [such as, for instance] medicine, mathematics, law, *zaxue* (miscellaneous knowledge). In addition to specializing [in one of these fields] students should learn to sew, spin and weave, and cook. Teachers should hold monthly exams, to award diligent and punish lazy students.⁶²⁸

As for the particular Chinese books that were suggested or reported as being used in *Nixue tang*, they include *Shi shu* (Historical Records), *Lunyu* (*Analects*), *Shi jing* (Book of Songs), *Shang shu* (Book of Documents), *Li jing* (Inner Teachings from the Book of Rites), Liu Xiang's *Lienüzhuan* (Biographies of Exemplary Women), Ban Zhao's *Nüjie* (Precepts for women), Song Ruoxin and Song Ruozhao's *Nülunyu* (*Analects for women*), Zhu Xi's *Xiao xue* (Primary Learning), Lü Kun's *Guifan* (Paragons of Feminine Virtue), Chen Hongmo's instructions; *Yili* (Book of etiquette and ceremonial), Lady Zheng's *Nüxiaojing* (A book of

⁶²⁷ Xue Shaohui, NXB, No. 3.

⁶²⁸ Jiang Wanfang, NXB, no. 9.

women's filial piety) and Empress Xu's *Instructions for women*.⁶²⁹ These books are listed as the core readings which were to be supplemented by the new books translated from the West, the list of which we do not find in the first nine issues of the journal.

However, as I briefly discussed in the fifth chapter when talking about the treatment of footbinding, and as above-mentioned description of the educational system in Japan that included calisthenics implies, male and some female reformers asserted not only the inappropriateness and insufficiency of women's intellectual engagements, but have also claimed the intolerable weakness of their bodies. The figure for the Western woman was used to argue for the physical education as well. Hence, the text that accompanied the illustration of women doing calisthenics introduces mothers from ancient Greece, that is, from Athena and Sparta. These mothers fulfilled their roles as the reproducers of the state in a magnificent way: children in Athena and Sparta had strong bodies because their mothers had strong bodies. They were doing calisthenics that enables them to give birth to a healthy offspring. Furthermore, as the text says, when the children reached the age of seven, mothers from Ancient Greece would instruct them to "go and sacrifice for their country, [and] not to worry about her,"⁶³⁰ thus reinforcing the ideal of the selfless, sacrificial mother who places the common good higher than her personal interest.

In addition to restating the argument that not only intellectually, but also physically, strong mothers are important because their bodies are the reproducers of the state and because of their instructing power on the future loyal subjects or citizens, the text claims that the practice of calisthenics in Sparta and Athena inspired the inclusion of the calisthenics in Western schools.

⁶²⁹ For the suggested books see Li Renlan, NXB, no. 4. For the books Jing Yuanshan reported as being used in the school see his memorandums sent to the Official Liu published in the sixth and the eight issues.

⁶³⁰ "Calisthenics," NXB, no. 6.

By defining Sparta and Athena as “the West,” the author/s introduced Chinese readership to the narrative of the enduring existence of the West as of homogeneous cultural place that originates in ancient Greece. With this discursive move, the West came to be represented as being as long-lasting as China, thus gaining the respectable position of a continuous civilization. This symbolic equalizing of two civilizations, at least in temporal terms, makes it easier to acknowledge modern Western power and to consider and accept the practices that were introduced as Western ones. In turn, the figure of Western woman gains weight and authority, and becomes a suitable means of enunciation and legitimization of reformists’ demands and arguments.

As the quotations from the texts I discussed so far show, the aims and envisaged employments of women’s education were numerous. The school’s rule published in the ninth issue of the journal read that women’s education “inspires [women’s] knowledge and wisdom, nourishes [their] virtue, strengthens [their] bodies, [and] creates the foundation for [their] future [roles] of wise mothers and wise wives.”⁶³¹ Gu Zhongyu cites this rule when claiming that the education proposed in the Wuxu reform period was under the influence of the ideology of “wise mothers and good wives” (*xianmu liangqi*).⁶³² However, I am restraining from this assessment because of Joan Judge’s argument that the concept of “good wives and wise mothers” prominent in the discourses about women in early twentieth century should be analyzed as a “return graphic loan.”⁶³³ As Judge asserts, both the terms *xianmu* and *liangqi* did appear in early Chinese texts, but “the new meaning of the four-character compound for “good wives and wise

⁶³¹ See “Regulations on the school’s opening,” NXB, no. 9.

⁶³² Gu Zhongyu, *Zhongguo jindai nüxing guan de yanbian yu nüzi xuexiao jiaoyu* (The change of views on women in Early modern China and women’s school education) (Hefei: Anwei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 135, 136.

⁶³³ Joan Judge, “The Ideology of ‘Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Meiji Japan and Feminine Modernity in Late-Qing China,” in *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2002), 223

mother”[reintroduced from Japan] went beyond the significance of its two composite terms in that it assumed a woman had social and national duties in addition to her familial ones.”⁶³⁴

The essays I consulted treat women’s interest in study as a valid argument, as a “Preface to the *Chinese Girl’s Progress*” conveys,⁶³⁵ and put an emphasis on the benefits of female education for husbands, children, households and the state. The former view was expressed in Liu Renlan’s article published in the fourth issue of the journal, and, according to the text, there are five reasons why women’s education is needed. First, if women are educated they will not harm the stability in the household by disharmonizing the relationships between fathers and sons and elder and younger brothers. Second, women who are educated will become virtuous, and they will advise their husbands rightfully and tactically (in a moderate tone, never in a quarrel). Third, mothers will better educate their children and nourish their talents and abilities. Fourth, educated women will be able to survive if unforeseen accidents happen. Fifth, everyone should learn how to write, to study astronomy, arithmetic, natural sciences, and many other useful subjects.⁶³⁶

Furthermore, the close relation between advocated women’s education and women’s work reveals an additional insight into the reformers’ visions of the future links between women, household and the space out of women’s familial setting. The importance of woman’s work was emphasized in the first issue of the journal. Liang Qichao’s unsigned text addresses the usefulness of women’s work in the following terms:

⁶³⁴ Idem. On the notion of a “return graphic loan” see Lydia Liu, 1995, 302.

⁶³⁵ Xue Shaohui, NXB., no. 1.

⁶³⁶ Liu Renlan, NXB, no. 4.

women can help their husbands, educate their children, manage their household, be in charge of planting. If women's work is flourishing, households would be ideal. Isn't this true? Isn't this true?⁶³⁷

Developing the idea of the usefulness of women's work further, implicitly related to their education, Zhi Yun in her "Ballad about raising the silkworms and cultivate mulberry trees" writes about the relationship between women's work within the household, the economy, and the international position of a state. As I have already mentioned, Zhi Yun criticizes the Chinese people for wearing clothes made from foreign materials that, in her view, devastates the Chinese economy. The text explains in great detail how women can contribute to the wealth of their households and country. As a remedy to the critical situation in which the Empire found itself, Zhi Yun suggests a self-sustaining economy that relies on the cultivation of mulberry trees.⁶³⁸ In conclusion, Zhi Yun expresses her hopes:

I hope that every husband will persuade his wife to raise silkworms, that every wife will diligently raise silkworms, and that this will happen in every household. We will earn a lot of money [in this way]. We will wear the clothes made in our homes, [and] not only will we not buy foreign clothes, [but] we will make foreigners wear the clothes we made. I hope that everyone will cultivate mulberry trees and raise silkworms, [because] when the strength of everyone is gathered, it is magnificent, [and] it can make a country wealthy and powerful, and the Emperor Guangxu can rule forever!⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ "The call for establishing women's school in China," NXB, no. 1.

⁶³⁸ One should dig a pond to raise fish for household use and for the market; next to the pond build a piggery (that will provide fertilizer for the trees and food for the fish); a mulberry tree will be used to feed the silkworms, its fruits and skin as medicine, its sprouts as tea. After explaining all the phases of cultivating the mulberry trees, Zhi Yun also suggests a printed manual written by Mr. Wu to be used for women's instruction on this matter. Zhi Yun, NXB, no. 9.

⁶³⁹ Note the author's support to the ruling dynasty. Idem.

Maintaining the preindustrial conception of work as “a collective, not an individual, activity” with the household as a unit of production,⁶⁴⁰ an additional message about women’s productivity, and the financial benefit that a household may enjoy from it, was conveyed in the text that accompanied the illustration of the sewing machine that appeared in the fifth issue of the journal. What this text addresses and promotes is the use of new technology that would enhance the role of a woman in contributing financially to her family.

Thus, the article explains that the sewing machine was invented more than one hundred years ago in England, and that it had been used in China for more than fifty years and by more than a thousand people.⁶⁴¹ It emphasized that a person working with the machine could earn “five, six, seven *yuan* of *dayang* money,” and provide a comfortable life for a household of eight persons. The example of the lady from Shangyang who invented the new machine for folding the lace that allowed her to help her husband in, as we may assume, the time of misfortune, served as an additional persuasion. The concluding part of the text brings out an important point about the relationship between propagated women’s work and the *nei* and *wai* of the household: it was written that these new sewing machines are more expensive than the older models, but that they are worth the money since they are small and “in addition to doing the work for the foreign

⁶⁴⁰ Susan Mann, “Work and Household in Chinese Culture: Historical Perspectives,” in *Re-Drawing Boundaries: Work, Households, and Gender in China*, ed. Barbara Entwisle and Gail E. Henderson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2010b), 15, 16. Writing about preindustrial work in China, Steven Harrell explains that (ideally) all work was within the household in terms of ownership and management, with the only exceptions being “corvée, military service, officialdom, and quite unusual (and exclusively male) practices of hiring out for labor (usually in transport) and exploiting resources as a collective band (usually in mining).” Stevan Harrell, “The Changing Meanings of Work in China,” in Entwisle and Henderson, 68, 69. Harrell also clarifies that within the family enterprise the boundary defining directly compensated work and the work not for direct compensation was rather blurred. As the author argues, men were doing the fieldwork, but depending on the region and the season, women joined the men in the fields. Fieldwork, as Harrell further explains, was joined with “mostly female gardening and animal husbandry and exclusively female cooking, cleaning, and sewing to produce livelihood”. *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁴¹ “Nügong tieche tu” (Sewing machine), NXB, no. 5. To add the novelty, the machine has English words “New Home” engraved. In a similar fashion, the illustration “Cansang tu” (Feeding silkworms) features a genteel woman who is using the microscope, positioned at the beautifully adored stool and with its English name written. See “Cansang tu” (Feeding silkworms), NXB, no. 8.

factories, if you sew some clothes and stockings you could earn one, two *yuan* of *da yang* per day.”⁶⁴²

This text not only shows the acceptance of the new in terms of technology, which was, as all innovations that made life and work easier, very well accepted by the Chinese people long before the equation of modern science and technology with Western expansion and power,⁶⁴³ but it also testifies that a respectable late-Qing woman was increasingly encouraged to continue to act as a breadwinner from within her household and for her household. Agricultural labor was placed in the household, while the sewing machine was meant to be placed in the home, even if used for work for foreign factories. The ninth issue of the journal includes a note that informs the interested audience about the number of female workers in Shanghai’s factories, thus pointing to the movement of lower-class female labor from within the household out to the factories, but, unfortunately, the text does not bear comments that could point to the attitude of the reformers toward the female factory workers of the closing years of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴⁴

As the texts I cited earlier in this section show, the work that educated Western women conducted outside of the home was represented as beneficial for the community, the economy and the power of the state: women acted as a judge, doctor, astronomer, official, telegraphist, official, secretary, lawyer. Since the texts of *Nüxue bao* do not explicitly argue that the reform-oriented education is needed in order to equip women with the knowledge needed for these occupations that would push the boundaries of socially-accepted women’s presence and action further, the figure of the Western woman serves to pronounce the request for access to these

⁶⁴² Idem.

⁶⁴³ See, for instance, Elman, 2006; and especially Frank Dikköter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007).

⁶⁴⁴ See “Nügong zhisheng” (The profusion of female workers), NXB, no. 9.

professions. It was only the occupation of a school teacher that was explicitly addressed as a future profession that the promoted education would lead women to, and even this suggestion was stated in a balanced way. As Jiang Wanfang's writes:

It should be decided how many years a student should study in order to graduate, and after this period, a student can be appointed to work as a teacher in her school, or, a diploma should be issued so that she can find a teaching job in some other school where she would use the knowledge she gained. If a student does not wish to work, she can use the knowledge to help her husband, to educate her children, [and] she can assist the household, and not [be] a useless person who cannot do anything but eat. These are the benefits of girls' and women's education.⁶⁴⁵

As we've seen, with the exception of a school teacher, the authors of the texts published in *Nixue bao* opted to use the figure of the Western woman to make a link between the necessity to promote women's education and the opening of new occupations for women that would increase their physical mobility, presence in the spatial *wai* sphere and financial independence. As the following section will show, the examples from the Chinese past were, once again, used to support the claims about women's abilities, justifying a further expansion of the spheres of their proper action and responsibilities.

6.3. Women and decision-making: Participation and leadership in state-related affairs

The narratives about exemplary Chinese women from the ancient past, as I've already discussed, helped to define a community of late-Qing women as a group that is dedicated to the continuation and revitalization of the admirable actions, abilities and aspirations of their

⁶⁴⁵ Jiang Wanfang, NXB, no. 9.

predecessors. Just like the discourses on the reintroduction of women's education, the narratives about women who displayed their bravery and loyalty to their country in the times of political and military unrest regularly bring together examples of Chinese women from the past and their Western successors.

Let us first recall Lu Cui's essay that I introduced in which she directly relates Chinese women from the past with the Western women who are willing to fight for their country in the on-going wars.⁶⁴⁶ Similarly, in an article published in the second issue of the journal, images of Western women of the recent past and present mirror the martial and patriotic accomplishments of Chinese women from the ancient past. After informing the audience about the American women's brigade, that obviously made a great impression, since, as I have just pointed out, Lu Cui came back to this event in the fifth issue, the report continued with a narrative about the army led by Joan of Arc (Ruoanzi) and the Prussian women's army.⁶⁴⁷

The beginning of this story, primarily preoccupied by Prussia's women, reminds the audience that China in the past had her own female warriors, organized in *liangzi jun*, but, as if the audience was very familiar with the examples of Chinese women soldiers, continues with the praise of Joan of Arc for leading her people to the battle against the British, and of the Prussian women's army in the Prusso-French war.⁶⁴⁸ The article is concluded with the remark that women are not like men [when it comes to the military skills], but women are as patriotic and as devoted

⁶⁴⁶ For the quote from this text see p. 188.

⁶⁴⁷ "Mei fu cong jun" (American women join the army), NXB, no. 2.

⁶⁴⁸ The audience was informed that France conquered Prussia and maltreated its population. Women courageously organized women's squads and defeated French army on several occasions. The narrative ends with the victory of Prussia over France, the return of the ceased territory, and indemnity Prussia received from France. Idem.

to the country as men, “[hence] from all that has been said, isn’t it clear that there is nothing women are not capable of doing?”⁶⁴⁹

Prussia’s (women’s) history may have served as a good example of what Chinese women wanted for their country and for themselves: Prussia was conquered by a powerful enemy, but the direct engagement of women in the battlefield restored the country to a dignified position in the modern international community, all leading to Prussia becoming a dominant part of the newly-founded German Empire in 1871. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that this text did not condemn the role that the German Empire played in China’s crisis given that the most recent trauma of the Chinese Empire was caused by the German army, but had, quite contrary, opted to the praise of bravery and patriotic dedication of Prussian women.⁶⁵⁰

The texts published in the first nine issues of *Nüxue bao* did not argue for a particular direction of institutional change. The editors, did, however, include in the journal a short report about the inauguration of a Western woman, the queen of Holland, to the throne. This short piece served not only to reassert women’s ability to be placed at equally high positions of governing- and decision-making power as men, but has also introduced its readers to the political culture of the modern West. Hence, the readers were instructed that there are three ways of government: monarchies, democracies, and the political system in which the power is shared between the monarch and the people. The text further explains that in monarchies there are two ways of electing the sovereign (public elections or inheritance), and that in the monarchies where the reign is inherited there are countries in which only men can inherit the throne and those in which

⁶⁴⁹ Idem.

⁶⁵⁰ In 1861 China signed the first commercial treaty with Prussia in Tianjin, and by 1898, not only had the German Empire inherited the privileges provided by the Tianjin Treaty and became the second biggest party in trading and shipping in China (The Great Britain was the first), but it invaded Qingdao and had established the Jiaozhou Bay colony in 1898. The German invasion was undertaken under the pretext of an incident that involved the murder of two German priests. Thompson, 25.

women can inherit the crown as well. The readers were also informed that Holland is among seven countries in the world where women may inherit the throne, and that this shows the equal rights of women and men.⁶⁵¹

Yet, Lu Cui's essay treats with the greatest care the issue of the inclusion of women into the decision making processes as a state-acknowledged socio-political collectivity. All the suggestions that the author perceived as leading to the strengthening of China and to the increased role of women in this process deserve to be mentioned here because, not only does she display late-Qing women's abilities to participate in state-related leadership, but her well-developed propositions offer a comprehensive view of the ways in which women could have directed the reforms if given the opportunity to exercise more power in policy-making at this historical moment in late-Qing history.

Hence, Lu opens up her proposal by requesting that the Emperor write a preface to *Neize yanyi* and advocate female education by disseminating the book throughout the Empire. Lu also suggests that the Empress Dowager and the Empress, "just like the Westerners do," establish a House of Noble Women (*Guifuyuan*) in the Summer Palace, where all the royal wives of princes and the wives of officials, as well as "women from all countries" would be invited to gather in a yearly meeting. Twelve activities were proposed for the genteel ladies to undertake: founding of a women's school, a women's journal, a women's professional club (*nü gonghui*), a women's library, a home for orphans and old people, a women's hospital, and a club for beauty contest, as well as promoting women's work, rewarding chaste and filial women, and training the women's army.⁶⁵²

⁶⁵¹ "Nüzhu deng ji" (The Empress ascends the throne), NXB, no. 4.

⁶⁵² Lu Cui, NXB, no. 5.

Lu Cui also suggested that the Emperor order the *Guifuyuan* to select by public vote (*gongju*) twelve women who would act as high officials of the Ministry of women's education (*Nüxuebu*). Paralleling the existing ways of male participation in the government of the Empire, these women, as the author further recommends, should be sent to the provinces of the Empire to teach, and, while on their posts, they would select talented women to become involved in the matters of the House of Noble Women. One of the suggestions was that the Empress and the Empress Dowager pronounce that a woman who desires to receive an official title should present a donation to the *Nüxuebu*, adding that only female donors would be recommended for the *Guifuyuan*. In Lu's vision, it is the Emperor himself who should test and rank women. The list of propositions ends with the appeal for re-promulgation of the laws that would prohibit footbinding (under which the parents of the bound-footed girl would be punished) and a call for the Empress to travel all over the world for three years, and to suggest intelligent and talented girls from the royal family to be sent to study abroad.

Contributors to *Nüxue bao* were, thus, advocating women's direct participation in the state-related affairs, as the examples of women's martial skills from China's past and the praise of Western women for their contemporary roles in defending their countries imply. Furthermore, the announced practices, or the ones the authors praised in the reports about Western foreign women, show that the vision of electoral politics in which (at least) elite women would participate as both elected and electing recognized political subjects was under way. Like Lu Cui's suggestion that women of the *Guifuyuan* should be elected by vote, a school regulation announced a plan that persons acting as "outer" and "inner" directors would be elected by vote "like in the West."⁶⁵³

⁶⁵³ "Provisional Regulations," NXB, no. 8.

Lu's reformist program was not enacted, and the election procedure for the school's directors had to be temporarily suspended until, as the reformer explained, the operation of the school stabilized. Nevertheless, these accounts suggest - to us, to the female reformers and their audience - the possibility and the expectation that a proposed reformed political life of late-Qing China would assume the vote as a means of legitimization of the leading functions that both elite men and women should have the access to.

Throughout my thesis I emphasize the importance of the broader ideological and political context of the final years of the nineteenth century that was, due to China's defeat in all the wars with foreign powers in the second half of the nineteenth century, marked by the increased power of the West and Japan to challenge China's worldview and its definitions of civility and sense of centrality. As I have also indicated, as a part of the more comprehensive measures undertaken or proposed by the reformers, rethinking of the issue of China's "religion" was understood as a means that could place China back into the position of a civilized actor, and, in turn, invite more favorable treatment of China in the process of its integration into the international community of the modern/izing world. As I will show in the following section, it was the figure of the missionary woman that marked a space for the authors to articulate their attitudes and suggestions related to "religion" and the civilizational repositioning of China in the symbolic hierarchies of the modern/izing world.

6.4. Regulating Religiosity: Missionary woman and Confucius

When it comes to the popular religiosity during the Qing period, Susan Naquin notices two seemingly contradicting behaviors of the state and the ruling dynasty. On the one hand,

religious associations were illegal. It was so, as the author explains, due to a set of interrelated concerns: “a fear of any religious activity that was not under the government control ...a recognition of the genuine power of religious ideas and organizations, their power to challenge social norms...an assumption that ordinary people were foolish and easily duped...a preference for monitoring, controlling, or co-opting religious activities.”⁶⁵⁴ She also adds suspicions about all gatherings of large numbers of people, dislike of religious processions, and “a general preference for women to remain in home.”⁶⁵⁵

The official measures against popular religions started already in 1644 with the announcement that “troublemakers”, i.e. the persons who “disturb” peaceful citizens “with lies and magical arts,” who burned incenses and gathered in a group would be executed. In 1656 Shunzhi promulgated the edict in which he expressed his preference that women should not be allowed to go to temples and burn incenses. In 1667, 1673 and 1679 Kangxi stated that those who are burning the incenses should be prosecuted according to the law about sects, while in 1709 he protested against the assembling of crowds of mixed men and women for burning incenses. In 1724 Yongzheng went to more gender-specific prohibitions: women (and especially women of Beijing) should be forbidden to form associations to go to the temples. Qianlong in 1762 forbidden men and women joining “benevolent organizations” (*shan hui*); Jiaqing in 1800 reiterated the law which forbids long-distant pilgrimage and women burning incenses. In 1834 Daoguang once again restated the ban on crossing provincial borders when going for a pilgrimage, while 1852 and 1885 saw reinforcement of prohibition on women’s pilgrimages.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 55.

⁶⁵⁵ Idem.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 555-557.

While issuing these edicts, the Qing rulers privately made offerings to Bixia Yuanjun – the Heavenly Immortal and Holy Mother, Our Lady of Mount Tai. In 1678 Kangxi built a temple inside the imperial hunting estate where he prayed for the spirit of his late mother; Yongzheng gave a plaque to the small Holy Mother temple restored by his father; Qianlong repaired many Bixia temples.⁶⁵⁷ In the nineteenth century patronage by the Emperors was more modest, but the women from the imperial household continued to be devoted to the cult. Jiaqing's Empress bestowed gifts to the temples; Daoguang, while still a young prince, was sent to the temples to offer incenses; while the Empress Dowager Cixi took up the Miao feng shan cult, she was said to visit Yajishan in 1886, gave generous donations, calligraphy and subsidized the pilgrimage associations. Actually, it seems that Cixi had seen herself as an incarnation of the popular female deity Gyuanyin since “she posed for photographs as the bodhisattva amid the lotuses as her new summer palace, had banners inscribed with the appellation ‘Holy Mother’ (*sheng mu*), and allowed herself to be addressed as ‘Venerable Buddha’ (*foye*).”⁶⁵⁸

In an effort to “shed light on the complex experience of social control over women in late imperial times,” Vincent Goossaert identifies five “problems” related to female involvement in temples. These interrelated concerns were the fear that women would desecrate a sacred place and cause ritual impurity; women's appearance in the public (elaborately dressed up or naked); “promiscuity and sexual encounters of young women;” women's staying in the temples (either during the pilgrimages or during the overnight discussions, vigils of preaching, praying); as well as the fear that women would become “the prey of clerics.”⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 560.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 347, 348, 504-506, 561.

⁶⁵⁹ See Vincent Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety: Late Imperial Bans on Women Visiting Temples,” *Nan Nü* 10 (2008): 219-225.

As Zhou Yiqun explains, it was the place of female religious practice that directed its social acceptance.⁶⁶⁰ The temple visits encountered strong opposition, as Zhou continues, while the visits of nuns to women's home were reluctantly tolerated.⁶⁶¹ Nevertheless, as Dorothy Ko demonstrates, the genteel women of the seventeenth century Jiangnan region regularly performed religious rituals and cherished religious feelings in their homes, and their religiosity was expressed through a synergy of Buddhist, Daoist and the elements of popular religious beliefs and rituals.⁶⁶² Ko terms these rituals and religious sentiments "domestic religion," as "they were embedded in everyday life in the inner chambers and were integral to the women's worldviews and self-identities."⁶⁶³ In addition to women's "domestic religion" and its everyday practices and meanings, in Ming and Qing China, as YüChün-fang argues, women were devoutly engaged in "domesticated religiosity" that assumes religious activities performed at home (which did not, for instance, demand the practitioners' presence in the monasteries) and the phenomenon that "one could achieve religious sanctification by performing one's domestic obligations to the fullest degree", raising the cult of the chaste widowhood as an example.⁶⁶⁴

Thus, women's religiosity was a heavily invested and contested site of intervention throughout the Qing period. As I also noted, male reformers active in the Wuxu period attempted

⁶⁶⁰ Zhou Yiqun, "The Hearth and the Temple: Mapping Female Religiosity in Late Imperial China, 1550-1900," *Late Imperial China* 24, no. 2 (2003), 109.

⁶⁶¹ Zhou Yiqun, 109; Ko, 1994b, 198. Nevertheless, Beata Grant claims that "it was not unusual for a woman's (Confucian) virtue to be highlighted by the fact that she *never* went on pilgrimage, and *never* allowed nuns to enter her home." Beata Grant, "Women, Gender, and Religion in Premodern China: A Brief Introduction," *Nan Nü* 10, no. 1 (2008): 6.

⁶⁶² Ko, 1994b, 198, 199.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶⁶⁴ Yü Chün-fang, "The Cult of Kuan-yin in Ming-Ch'ing China: A Case of Confucianization of Buddhism?," in Bloom and Fogel, 151. See also Yü Chün-fang, 2001, 337, 338.

to represent China as equally civilized as the West by arguing that China has a civilizing religion, Confucianism, that serves the ethically uplifting functions that Christianity was claimed to play in the West. *Nüxue bao* offers an intriguing view into the ways in which the discourses on female religiosity in the closing years of the nineteenth century operated at the intersection of these two major concerns. An important endeavor of the journal's contributors was the attempt to safeguard China from what they perceived as further decay of "our ancestors'" teachings" and to prevent the spread of Christianity. The role that a figure of missionary woman played in this persuasion was immense.

How to address missionary women must have been a very delicate issue for the participants in the women-oriented reformist projects. On the one hand, missionary women were, as we saw in the fourth chapter, financial donors and participating supporters of the establishment and operation of the school, association and the journal, and, at a certain level, they became instrumental for the implementations of the reformist aims because of the knowledge they possessed that the reformers deemed necessary for their own aims. On the other hand, as I will discuss in the following section, the reformers needed and wanted to distance themselves from the missionaries' (educational) enterprise, supporting the vision that the conversion of China to Christianity was a grave threat for China's spirit. The figure of the missionary woman, thus, assumed a textual position that annunciated the reformers anxieties about Western power and help, Chinese women's religiosity, and the fate of neo/Confucian China.

Memorandums published in the journal regularly included remarks on missionaries.⁶⁶⁵ In these letters missionary women are represented as actively involved in the education of Chinese girls, but the praise is joined with the expressed shame that the foreigners are doing what the Chinese themselves should do and with the anxiety that missionary education is subtly leading Chinese girls and women to convert to Christianity. Thus, one memorandum first warns Liu Kunyi that Chinese girls and women are in danger of becoming Christians, and that this is so because the only educational system available to them is the one established by missionary women who “came from afar to preach their religion and [who] persuaded the [Chinese] people to do the good thing.”⁶⁶⁶ After briefly discussing a curriculum of women missionary’s schools, the author writes:

Our country has its own women, and still, the education of women was placed in the hands of women from the other countries. [This is why we are] losing face [...] Western women help us with their donations. Some of them donate money, some of them donate books, and some of them help gifted students [by giving them grants]. The women’s school is established [with the help of] private people, it is not established by the government. The communication with the Westerners continues to develop, and it certainly may become a kind of social custom that [is going to] spread.⁶⁶⁷

Raising similar arguments, memorandum publicized in the eight issue of the journal brings again the figure of missionaries and the fear of conversion of the female students in their schools:

⁶⁶⁵ These letters sometimes explicitly discuss missionary women and sometimes use a non-gendered term for missionaries. I am reading both cases as his discussion on missionary women because, as I’ve mentioned earlier, women were responsible for “the work” with Chinese girls and women.

⁶⁶⁶ “A memorandum of the *Girls’ School* to the Official Liu,” NXB, no. 4.

⁶⁶⁷ Idem.

Foreigners who came to our country opened the schools [wherever they settled]. They don't make a distinction between boys and girls, and teach them all. To use the example of Shanghai: there are as many as six or seven missionary schools, [their teachers] believe in Jesus, and the reason why they educate [the girls] is completely different than ours. We are very much afraid that the girls, once educated by the Westerners, will forget the aims of [our] education.⁶⁶⁸

The argument that the Chinese school should be supported in order to annul the religious influences of the Western missionary schools had proved to be very efficient: Liu Kunyi in his reply states his support for the educational initiatives pointed to women, and applauds the aim of the Chinese women's schools to break the "wrong" traditions and to prevent the spread of religious influences.⁶⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the argumentative texts of *Nüxue bao*, as well as the practices that we may see through its pages, suggest that the flexibility of the notions of "wrong" traditions and "religion" allowed the reformers to use the political and economic potential of female religiosity to support the reformist cause.

As I already indicated, male reformers, and notably Kang Youwei, argued that Confucianism is and that it should be further advanced as a cultural and religious counterforce to the West and Christianity. His daughter, Kang Tongwei, supported this position, and, as a part of her essay on women's education, addressed the importance of promoting Confucianism as the state religion.

After acknowledging that both Confucian and Buddhist teaching promote equality between men and women, Kang Tongwei mourns the representation of China on the religious map of the world.⁶⁷⁰ This map, as Kang narrates, represents the great territory of China as a land

⁶⁶⁸ [Jing Yuanshan et. al], "*Nüxue tang di san ci bing Nanyang dachen Liu gao*" (The third memorandum of the *Girls' School* to the Official Liu), NXB, no. 8.

⁶⁶⁹ "A memorandum of the *Girls' School* to the Official Liu," NXB, no. 4.

⁶⁷⁰ Unfortunately, I was not able to identify which map Kang refers to.

of Buddhism, with no mention of Confucianism. She continues with criticism of the prohibition of women's worshipping in sacred/Confucian temples (*sheng miao*). Women's visits to the temples are not only a way for them to receive education, as Kang points out, but also a display of women's respect for Confucian teachings. She warns:

Women worship Bodhisattva, [but] have not heard the venerable name of the Sage and [do not understand] the principles. Women do not understand the Good, [but] they present offerings. Women do not understand medicine, [but] they rely on blessing. Women are the most devout, most numerous worshippers of Buddha.

Out of four hundred million people, there are ten to twenty percent of those who receive Confucian education. But half of the [Chinese] population worships Buddha. If we do not react...I am afraid that [they] will not worship Buddha, [and] that they will worship Jesus. If the number of people who believe in Jesus increases, the number of those who understand the teachings of the Sage will decrease. This will not only endanger the country, but the instruction of the Sage may also vanish.⁶⁷¹

This text is not only stating often unacknowledged role that Buddhism played in the lives of Chinese women, but it also, once again, treats the teachings of Confucius as the only proper response to the spiritual, and by extension, material threat that comes from the West. However, as I mentioned in the third chapter, reformers had to be careful with their agenda to deify Confucius because it was not well-accepted by a great number of influential literati and governmental officials, and its unmediated advocacy may have endangered the operation of the school and the journal.

Hence, "The announcement of the Guishuli Chinese Society for Women's Learning" published in the third issue of the journal reassures the readers that "[this school] assimilate Chinese and western learning, [and we] do not follow any religion and do not publicize any

⁶⁷¹ Kang Tongwei, NXB, no. 7.

religious books,”⁶⁷² but the text from the ninth issue of the journal sheds additional light on the way that reform-oriented women involved in the operation of *Nüxue tang* related to Confucianism in practice. As the text published in the ninth issue of the journal reports, the students, teachers, supervisors and the “inner” directors collected ten *yuan* and sent this money to Lady Zhang⁶⁷³ to buy incense, candles, tea, fruits and other sacrificial utensils, and to report to Confucius in the name of the school. Madame Zhang was delegated to inform Confucius that:

...when we opened a school for women, we [have done so with] determination and sincere desire. We all exerted our abilities to help to open this school. [We hope that] Women’s Learned Society and Women’s Journal may always exist! We plead for the sacred spirit to bless our success, [and] to foster many persons of ability and talent! They will all repay Confucius’ teachings; [they will] contribute to the country; [they will] make the country prosperous, [they will] make peace in the world. We always devotedly pray for a bumper harvest and for people’s happiness.⁶⁷⁴

The space for discussions on women’s religiosity that was opened by a figure of missionary woman and the cultural anxiety she provoked, as we have seen, was used by some reformers to introduce Confucianism as religion that would safeguard China and its civilizational glory. However, this way of rechanneling political and economic potential of female religiosity was not uniformly supported by all the women involved.

The article named “The reply of the director of the Women’s school Lady Zhu to the letter received from Lady Wu” published in the sixth issue of the journal offers a glance into an exceptionally interesting way in which women negotiated the existing religious feelings of their

⁶⁷² Guishuli *Zhongguo Nüxue hui* gaobai,” (The announcement of the Guishu lane Chinese Society for Women’s Learning), NXB, no. 3.

⁶⁷³ Madame Zhang received the honor and a privilege of recommending the future exemplary women (reported in NXB, No.9)

⁶⁷⁴ “Yi wen zhaolu” (Published letters), NXB, no. 9.

female readership with the reformist aims. This article is a reply to the letter that was sent by Lady Wu to Lady Zhu. The letter was not reproduced in the journal, but if I may dare to attempt to reconstruct the content of that letter by counter-reading the published reply, the original letter read that Lady Zhu, an older lady of rather frail health, had a dream about and wanted to go to the pilgrimage to the Mountain Tai. Lady Zhu, or, rather her husband (Jing Yuanshan himself) who, as she wrote, clarified the received letter to her, is advising Madame Wu not to go to the pilgrimage to Mountain Tai, because she would be disrespected by “knowledgeable people.”⁶⁷⁵ Women should follow the teachings of Confucius and abide by the rule set by the Emperor not to go to the temple and burn incense, Lady Zhu continues, and only local officials know how to behave properly with prefecture gods and spirits. Women should not, thus, attempt to please the spirits. Instead, at the end of the published reply, Lady Zhu formulates the crucial suggestion: if the lady Wu could not be at peace because she did not donate the “peace-bringing money” after having a dream, she should donate the money to the Women’s School.⁶⁷⁶

Furthermore, the closing section of the Regulations of the Women’s school sheds additional light on the way in which women planned to foster their students’ worshipping feelings and to rechannel their veneration to the reform-oriented elite women. The text conveyed:

After the school resumes with its work, hard-working and pain-staking women directors will be photographed, and their photos will be scrolled in a *ci ze*.⁶⁷⁷ After they pass away, every spring and autumn they will be worshiped, making them and this school eternal and immortal.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁵ “Nü gongxue nei dongshi Zhu nüshi fu Wu nüshi shu” (The reply of the director of the Women’s school Lady Zhu to the letter received from Madame Wu,” NXB, No. 6.

⁶⁷⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷⁷ *Cize* is a form of Chinese book.

⁶⁷⁸ “Provisional Regulations,” NXB, no. 8.

The place of religiosity in the lives of women was, thus, acknowledged as a site of significant concerns and potential, which may, and should be, redirected to suit the reformists' causes. The attempted rechanneling of women's religious devotions aspired to position the school as a substitute for home and the Temple, counting on the earnestness of women's devotions and their emotional and economic investments.

6.5. Competing visions of marriage

As I elaborated in the part of the third chapter where I talked about gender roles in Imperial China, the functioning of the family and the Empire were perceived as mutually constitutive and transferrable. In this context, marriage was an elaborately regulated institution whose preparation assumed the involvement of matchmakers and geomancers, as well as convoluted betrothal and wedding rituals, all aiming to correctly join a man and a woman and to remind the newly-wed of their roles and duties in prolonging the blood-line of the man's family and in the creation of loyal familial and imperial subjects.⁶⁷⁹

As Bret Hinsch argues, marriage was generally the most important institution shaping a woman's relations to her kin: when a woman got married she had to assume an entirely new set of social roles, with her most important daily performance no longer including her performance of the roles of sister and daughter, but, instead, the performance of daughter-in-law, and eventually mother.⁶⁸⁰ That is, a woman does not have a permanent social place without being

⁶⁷⁹ See, for instance, Wang Pengling, *Hunyin shi* (The history of marriage) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2001)

⁶⁸⁰ Bret Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 34.

married, as Rosenlee reminds us, which makes marriage the only legitimate influence for positioning her in society and the most important socio-cultural institution for a woman.⁶⁸¹

A number of texts published in *Nixue bao* indeed support Hinsch's and Rosenlee's interpretation, and, in her elaboration on women's integrity, Xue Shaohui claims that "every woman of the world is [going to be] married,"⁶⁸² while Wang Chunlin explains that:

At the dawn of the humankind, people were ignorant and did not understand the distinction between a man and a woman. Gradually, human knowledge and the matters [people comprehended] increased, and they [created a relationship between] husband and wife, and established a household.⁶⁸³

The change of the institution of marriage was the most disaccorded issue on the reformists' agenda. Since marriage was crucial in upholding the entire system of familial and imperial authorities, the proposed changes must have been formulated in a very careful way so as to avoid confrontation with the holders of neo/Confucian authority. Furthermore, since reform-oriented women were relying on the support of their male relatives, the benefit and the limit that should be kept in mind in analyzing women's words and acts, all suggestions for social change must have been formulated in a way as not to turn the male reformers into opponents who would react strongly against change, which would deprive them of the privilege and power they were currently enjoying in the system.

If there was a certain level of consensus about the need and content of women's education, about the necessity to boost women's work, and about the desire to increase the power

⁶⁸¹ Rosenlee, 2006, 126.

⁶⁸² Xue Shaohui, "Si de song" (Exalting the four virtues), NXB, no. 9.

⁶⁸³ Wang Chunlin, NXB, no. 5.

and participation of women in decision-making and governing, proposals about the ways in which marriage should be adjusted to suit the set of advocated social changes were highly contested terrain. As this section will show, the reform of marriage was indeed a multivocal endeavor, which, in contrast to other reform-oriented proposals that argued for re/creation of parallel women's sphere that would co-exist in the *wai* sphere without (straightforwardly) depriving men of the power they were exercising, the issue of changing marriage was argued for, among other ways, through an open critique of men and their privileges intrinsic in the current practices of marriage.

One line of critique of the current marriage system introduced a marriage based on shared feelings and free choice of the partners as offering enduring happiness, mutual respect and companionship. The figure of the Western woman plays a crucial role in these discourses, since she is the only example that may be used to depict “free” marriages of the West and to substantiate the claims for its desirability in China. It is important to note that “free” marriage was not explicitly argued for in the respected textual genre of educated discussions. Instead, the information readers received about unregulated marriages based on feelings and free choice were introduced as factual accounts of news.

Hence, we read about a very old man (lit. “of one hundred and thirty four years) who fell in love with a woman when they were in the middle of their lives (i.e. when they were fifty years old) but who, “because of many obstacles,” managed to get marry only when they got old (i.e. when they reached one hundred).⁶⁸⁴ While the news about old couple and their long-lasting love that eventually made them join and live their lives happily together celebrates the enduring

⁶⁸⁴ “Bai sui hunyin” (Marriage in the old age), NXB, no. 8.

feelings that defeated all the obstacles, a report entitled “A Western woman is marrying a Chinese man” sends several messages to the readers.

The text informs the readers about a Norwegian missionary woman from Shanxi who fell in love with an unmarried and poor Chinese man. Their love was not approved from the beginning, and the woman was sent back home by her missionary community. However, she returned to Shanxi several years later, married the man she loved, and resigned from her missionary post because she acted against the rules and obligatory statements she signed for her missionary society. The unsigned author concludes that “[Nowadays] when there are [many many] snobbish women, that a Western woman is willing to marry a poor Chinese man is [truly] unique!”⁶⁸⁵

In addition to the critique of the influence that wealth (or the lack of it) had on marriage, there are other significant issues that this short story touches upon. First, the text is once again reaffirming the ideal of “free” marriage as one of the proposed ways in which this crucial social institution should be changed. It is interesting though, that a Norwegian missionary women’s defiance of public authority (in her case, the missionary society), is not represented as threatening to the social order, but instead gets praised as virtuous behavior revealing her higher ethical motivations – altruistic love, that this time got contrasted with the materialist motivations ascribed to numerous women in China, perhaps resulting from the involvement of Chen Jitong and his French wife in women-oriented reformist projects.

The reports that informed the readers about foreign marriage practices also reveal that, because of the importance of marriage in structuring and ordering Chinese social life, it was not an easy task to envisage its future. The report about the arranged marriage of the granddaughter

⁶⁸⁵ “Xi nüzi gui Huaren” (A Western woman is marrying a Chinese man), NXB, No. 7.

of Queen Victoria (Victoria Melita of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha) and its accompanied commentary disclose that, sometimes, there was not a clear cut between the propagated free marriage and the desire to keep it as is: an arranged institution that helps the governing of the state.

This report begins with the news that Princess Victoria entered an arranged marriage with an admirable bridegroom, Duke of Hesse (Ernst Louise Charles Albert William), who is a wealthy and capable and honorable man. The report further reads that marriage practices in China are rather strict and that the regulations of marriage often bond unsuitable persons. Once again, but rather strange for the text accompanying praise for an arranged aristocratic marriage in Britain, the example of the West was raised claiming that Western men and women freely choose their spouses after they reach the age of twenty one. The commentary ends with an explanation, pointed to the “highly ethical people,” that even though free marriage may look like an immoral affair, it is actually the way to build a partnership that brings long-lasting happiness to the married couple.⁶⁸⁶

As I have announced, another line of argumentation present in the texts of *Nüxue bao* criticized the unequal positions that the customs and laws prescribed to women and men in marriage. An example of a criticism of the double standards for men and women is the article written by Wang Chunlin “A discussion of equality between men and women”. After stating that the desires for food and sex are primordial human needs, Wang points that, regrettably, men can have concubines and secondary wives while women are not even allowed to remarry.⁶⁸⁷ She also raises her voice against the laws that allow men to demand a divorce, but disable women from making the same request, and which prescribe different punishments for a husband and a wife for

⁶⁸⁶ “Guizu lianyin” (A marriage arrangement between aristocrats), NXB, no. 5.

⁶⁸⁷ Wang Chunlin, NXB, no. 5.

murdering a spouse.⁶⁸⁸ A woman's role in getting married is described in the following terms: "Woman is the owner of her body, and still, others decide whom she will marry, she is like the object sold, and whether she likes something or not, whether she will live or die, it is others' decision."⁶⁸⁹

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the polygamy was not a matter of debate in *Nixue bao*, and that only a short note on a concubine published in the article of Xue Shaohui in reveals how polygamous marriage and the status of this group of women got represented in the journal. Xue writes:

When a girl is going to be married her father commands: do not do the things that violate morals and respect your husband. Always remember my words. While preparing her clothes, a mother commends: you have to be diligent, respect your husband, and never violate women's virtue. Father's concubine gives her a pouch as a gift, [and] emphasizing the commands of her father and mother, she commands: respectively listen (obey) the commands of your parents, never forget [their words], recall [their commands] whenever you look at your clothes.

These are three commands for a woman who is about to marry.⁶⁹⁰

Thus, the concubine possessed a certain authority over a young marrying daughter of her husband, but her authority served to backbone the authority of a father and a mother, not to make an independent claim. Yet, it is important to recall that some of the women involved in the establishment and operation of the association, the school, and the journal were themselves

⁶⁸⁸ Wang reminded the readers that if a man kills his wife, he will be whipped, while, if a woman kills her husband, she will be dismembered. *Idem*.

⁶⁸⁹ *Idem*.

⁶⁹⁰ Xue Shaohui, NXB, no. 9.

concubines,⁶⁹¹ but that the men who facilitated women's involvement themselves were polygamous and did not consider it an issue.⁶⁹²

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that "the reformed" marriage was univocally praised by the texts of *Nüxue bao*. On the contrary, the text published in the eight issue of the journal entitled "A record about Mr. Xie's widow, Ms. Wang" signed by Fen Zhufeng is reconfirmation of the existing mores about the chastity of women.⁶⁹³ A short biography of Ms. Wang starts with praise of her pre-marital virtues of diligence (her needlework was singled out) and obedience to her parents. This commending story continues with a narrative about her marriage with Mr. Xie Kaitai, a coppersmith. The couple was praiseworthy because of their readiness to share their assets with others in need, even when it meant that they would not have enough for themselves.⁶⁹⁴ The narrative moves to the sad destiny of a husband who worked so hard that he died of tuberculosis. The scene of the husband's deathbed conveys one additional message about Ms. Wang's virtuous behavior, making her an example of the correct behavior, ideals and aspirations that women should nourish. The tearful, dying husband reportedly said: "If you continue with the benevolent and righteous life [that we have been living] I cannot say that

⁶⁹¹ For instance, Zhu Shilan and Peng Jiyun. Qian, 2003, 436.

⁶⁹² We know, for instance, that Kang enjoyed a polygamous marriage. He married his first wife, *nee* Zhang, in 1876. He was nineteen, she was twenty one and betrothed to him when he was eight. Kang had two concubines: *nee* Liang, with whom he got married in 1897, and "an intelligent girl who had gone to America to pursue her studies...[who] had admired K'ang for a long time, keeping his picture on her wall while...[and] who became his concubine at the age of seventeen, with her parents' permission." Ms. He died in 1914. Ms. Zhang used her fortune to support Kang's causes. She died in 1922. Thompson, 25 n17.

⁶⁹³ "Guafu Xie Wang shi zhuan" (A record about Mr. Xie's widow, Ms. Wang), NXB, no. 8.

⁶⁹⁴ The couple was also praised for adopting a child. The adoption was a sign of benevolence because the couple already had one child, and, since they were poor, the adoption meant bigger sacrifices for their child. Mr. Xie was depicted as an extraordinarily generous man. Once, as the author narrates, he worked really hard to earn a salary, but opted to give his entire earnings to the man he knew when the acquaintance asked him for help. The sacrifice for others at one's expense was stressed in the depiction of their lunch: since Mr. Xie gave his earnings, and Ms. Wang could not earn enough money for rice, she went to ask their neighbors for help. The neighbors gave them rice, but the couple did not have anything else to eat. They shared the rice, made it salty, and ate it without complaint. Idem.

the poverty will stop, but if you do not adhere to it, I must tell you that [our] reputation will be ruined. The choice is yours.” Reconfirming her self-sacrificing virtue, Ms. Wang promised that “if I only have one piece of meat, I will give it to children, I will bring them up, I will continue the lineage, and in twenty years, our household will be prosperous.”

The exaltation of Ms. Wang continues with a description of the ways in which she supported herself and her two children.⁶⁹⁵ The highest moral worthiness of Ms. Wang was saved for the narrative’s closure: when some of her husband’s brothers asked her to remarry, Ms. Wang explained that her husband has died recently, her children were still young, and that she would always adhere to the deathbed words of her husband, choosing to commit suicide rather than to marry again. The author finishes the text with the following words:

Nowadays, when the lascivious atmosphere has been so grave, Ms. Wang, a wife of the tradesman, became widowed when she was twenty four years old. [Yet,] she remains a widow, never wearing makeup, her chastity being more firm than the one of a winter pine, her elaborate propriety is more exquisite than jade. Men and women who possess this kind of determination deserve our compassion and support, [and we should make this] kind of behavior widespread. Everyone should learn from these sublime deeds.⁶⁹⁶

Thus, continuing a tradition of writings about exemplary chaste women, this text “defines and constructs a normative standard for women (*what ought to be the case*) through stories of women claiming to be descriptive of real lives (*what is the case*).”⁶⁹⁷ In suggesting strict

⁶⁹⁵ She did not inherit anything from her husband, and she was so poor that she had to ask the relatives to help her to bury Mr. Xie. Afterwards, she was working for the county guild, washing clothes, but, as the economy worsened, she made a “wish bow” and went from door to door of the rich families. Wealthy people were paying one copper coin for one wish, and in this way, as the story says, she “earned a lot of money – one *yuan* per a month.” Idem.

⁶⁹⁶ Idem.

⁶⁹⁷ Robin R. Wang, 93.

standards of morality and of women's characteristics and acts to be celebrated, this reappraisal of chaste widowhood joins the article signed by Zheng Wen.

"About studying the Wedding ritual to correct customs" is the text which most systematically articulates the appeal for stricter observance of the "original" Confucian norms, interpreting the present problems as consequences of uninformed and immoral people misusing otherwise affirmative norms.⁶⁹⁸ The article opens with defining the ritual regulation of coupling between men and women as making the main difference between humans and wild beasts, and praising the marriage rituals of the ancient past:

The need to couple is a basic need of men and women. If there are no instructions to regulate the proper behavior, [if there are] no texts to explain it, humans would not be different from the wild beasts. Zhou dynasty established the institutions for [regulation of] etiquettes [and inaugurated] the official who supervised and guided the proper behavior of the people... If there would not be [these official bodies for supervising and regulating people's behavior] six rituals would be abandoned, five ethical relations would disappear. Women would [then] become promiscuous, [and] there would be more and more secret love affairs of men and women.⁶⁹⁹

After correlating a country's inhabitants' proper conduct and sense of shame with its powerful sovereign or colonial status,⁷⁰⁰ Zheng begins her narration of the history of the fall, survival and the hope for revival of Chinese propriety in the following way:

⁶⁹⁸ Interestingly, Liu Jucai interprets publishing of these two "traditional" views on marriage, as well as above interpreted article of Xue Shaohui published in the ninth issue as "probably related to the political change" i.e. the abrupt end of the reforms. See Liu Jucai, *Zhongguo jindai funü yundong shi* (History of early modern Chinese women's movement), (Beijing: Zhongguo funü chubanshe, 1989), 111. My response to this interpretation would be a question of why would we think that these essays are the reaction to the political climate (that is, "less honest") without raising similar doubts for the other essays that comply with the vision of what a "proper" modernizing women's journal should advocate.

⁶⁹⁹ [?]"Xiu Hunli yi duan feng hua shuo" (About studying the Wedding ritual to correct customs), NXB, no. 8.

⁷⁰⁰ "If inhabitants of a country do not feel shame, people from other countries can mock them, and despise them. Then, even if a country has a strong foundation, and intelligent and ingenious strategies, it can become a colony, it can become like a country of savages," the author writes, clearly alluding to Chinese situation. Idem.

Our China was the country that comprehended rules of propriety and music, [and her] moral institutions were already perfected. [But] during the Chunqiu period the social conduct had slightly started to weaken, some licentious poetry emerged, [and both] common people and the gentry did not observe etiquette...Just like the odor of salted fish cannot destroy the scent of the orchid, [and] just like the River Jiang is muddy [but] does not have the same source as the clear River Wei, persons of the noble character survived in the dynasties to come. [Hence] Zhou dynasty declined, but the institutions of propriety did not, and for over the thousand years *sangang jiufa* were not changed and have been passed down.⁷⁰¹

The author then proceeds to praise the marriage regulations set in antiquity, and quotes *Shijing* and Mengzi to praise the role of matchmakers and the authority of both parents in finding one's spouse.⁷⁰² After explaining that the complex procedures for arranging marriages are absolutely necessary because they are the only way to properly match suitable spouses, the author joins the cohort of writers who propose the institutions from China's antiquity for the solution of contemporary problems. What the author criticizes is sexual love, re-invoking the image of a woman as a immoral seductress, contemporary extravagant wedding ceremonies, men and women living together without being married; kidnapping, forcing and seizing women for marriage; poor men being unable to marry a woman regardless of deep feelings they cherish toward each other, rich men having pretty wives if they spend lots of money, and "love escapes" which were, in the author's opinion, idealized. What Zheng Wen proposes as a preventive measure is reinforcing the implementation of the marriage rituals as practiced in the past: she suggests the establishment of

⁷⁰¹ Idem.

⁷⁰² The quote from *Shijing* argues for the necessary involvement of the matchmaker, while Mengzi stressed the role of parents in arranging the marriage. Idem.

an institution that would supervise the marriages of commoners, that is, “a good match between [two] persons, [assuring that] their marriage will be happy till the old age.”⁷⁰³

In order to support the argument that the best way to practice marriage is according to the ancient teachings, the author includes slightly different information about the marriage practices in the west than the readers had the chance to read in previously published articles. She claims that:

Western countries do not make a significant difference between men and women, but they are very strict [when it comes to] prevention of the things that are not in accordance to the etiquette. Women have property, so they cannot be seduced by [the man’s] wealth. It is allowed for common people to freely choose their marital partners, but if they commit adultery, they are severely punished. That is why the practice of using a pretty woman to seduce a man has been diminished.⁷⁰⁴

Yet another piece of news constructs an image of a married Western woman that conveys to the reader the risk and vulnerability of women in “free” marriages if men are not ethically suitably for it. In the seventh issue of the journal a piece of news translated from the London Times (*Lundun Taimushi*) informs us about two young Western women who married Chinese men, sailed to China following their feelings and marital vows, only to be abandoned by their Chinese husbands upon their arrival. The news ends with a touchy scene depicting one of the young women crying in her empty room in Shanghai, with all her belongings lost.⁷⁰⁵

Thus, the figure of the Western woman explained and communicated both appeals for “free” marriage and informed the readers that marriage in the powerful West was not absolutely

⁷⁰³ Idem.

⁷⁰⁴ Idem.

⁷⁰⁵ “Xi nǚ liuluo Zhongguo” (Destitute Western women in China), NXB, no. 7.

free, that there are also regulations and protocols to be respected and followed, and that freedom does not necessarily bring happiness. As my study has repeatedly emphasized, advocated social changes in the Wuxu reform period were multivocal and contested. The discussions of marriage allow us to see one particularly important feature of the competing discourses that were shaping and were shaped by women-oriented reformist projects. In the texts that argue for marriage based on love and the free choice of the partners, that is, for a marriage that would supposedly put a man and a woman at the same position, and for marriage to become a more strictly regulated institution with the purpose of reinforcing the moral power of the family and the Empire, the West - narrated through the figure of a woman - is needed as solid support for the argument. The truthfulness of Western practice and the realities of Western women were not at stake here. What was crucial, though, is the embedding of women-oriented reformist projects and its discourses in the wider modern/izing logic which relates military, political and economic strength of a country with its social practices and relations. It is this wider discursive framework that requires the West (and its women) as supporting examples in the process of legitimizing arguments for proposed social changes.

However, the analysis I have presented in my thesis is certainly not conclusive, and in the concluding chapter of my thesis, I will recapitulate all the steps undertaken in the process of writing this dissertation, and will suggest new directions for research that could deepen our understanding of the opportunities and burdens inherent to the complex processes of gendered social change in modern China.

Chapter 7: Concluding remarks and further questions

This dissertation has examined women-related discussions and actions in the Wuxu reform period of late-Qing China, a historical moment that staged multifaceted attempts by the Qing court and concerned intellectual elites to enable China to enter the geo-political and symbolic hierarchies of the modern/izing world in a more powerful and dignified way. As I discussed, social actors concerned with the semi-civilized semi-colonized position which the West had allocated to China in the process of its forcible integration into the international community discussed and acted upon visions of social change in which gender figured as a central category of intervention.

The Wuxu period reformers' call for gradual but systematic socio-political change facilitated the direct participation of Chinese women in theorizations and actions for the improvement of China's and Chinese women's positions. And it tied together, in very particular ways, Chinese and foreign ideas and Chinese and foreign men and women. My dissertation focused on the ways in which women used the historical moment of the Wuxu reforms to step into the political arena of late-Qing China, to initiate the multivocal and contested, but, most significantly, self-directed formation of a political collectivity of "Chinese women," aiming at legitimization and fixed demarcation of its position as a recognized discussant and actor in state-related affairs. I observed the emergence and operation of three women-oriented reformist projects – the association *Nüxue hui* [*The Society for Women's Learning*], the journal *Nüxue bao* [*Chinese Girls' Progress*] and the *Girls' School* [*Nüxue tang*]. *Nüxue bao*, that is, the first nine issues that I had a chance to consult in public and private archives in China, served as an entry point for my discussion about women-oriented reformist projects. The texts published in *Nüxue*

bao inspired my further research steps, that is, the issues I addressed and the ways in which I treated the bodies of available primary and secondary literature used in my thesis.

I examined *Nüxue bao* as a source with a unique perspective on gender-specific changes in modern/izing China in general, and in the Wuxu reform period in particular. As the earliest journal that claimed the involvement of women as editors, contributors, and as the imagined audience, it promised its readers access to the dynamics of the newly-forming space for women in what was previously sanctioned as an exclusively male sphere of political discussions and policy-making.

We still do not possess enough empirical evidence to allow us to claim with certainty who was involved, and in what capacity, in the establishment and operation of *Nüxue bao*, or, for that matter, in all women-related reformist enterprises of the Wuxu reform period. Nevertheless, the journal's female and/or male audience understood the published texts as written by women and for women, and it is this assumption of the late-Qing reader that allowed me to analyze *Nüxue bao* as an invaluable media site which had an instructive role in directing the social changes that an implied female author proposed and that implied female reader should support and undertake.

In the opening section of my dissertation I elaborated on how I obtained and approached my primary and secondary sources. I briefly discussed my problems with the archives and how the limits and opportunities of my academic and institutional background have influenced the way in which this dissertation took shape. I engaged with historiographical literature that heavily influenced my thinking and work on this dissertation. I read together the insights of scholars who have been developing a criticism of passivizing, or, as Rey Chow implied, feminizing modern

China as a historical actor,⁷⁰⁶ with the works that question the validity of using the concepts from social theory based on the European historical experience to “the case” of China. Informed by these texts, I tried to place my dissertation within the frame of analytical and conceptual categories in which, according to the secondary literature I consulted, late-Qing intellectual elite operated.

Hence, when instituting the wider socio-cultural and political context of the Wuxu reform movement that I positioned as crucial in informing the establishment and operation of women-oriented reformist projects, I elaborated on multiple meanings of *nei* (“inner”) and *wai* (“outer”) domains. First, I addressed China’s understanding and treatment of the *nei* and *wai* realms in geo-civilizational terms. I talked about sinocentric culturalism, a worldview which took pride in China’s neo/Confucian culture and informed China’s ordering of the *tianxia* world along the geo-civilizational center-periphery, *nei-wai* lines, that was, as we saw, a reference system in which imagery of Chinese women was embedded by the second half of the nineteenth century. In this regard I also talked about the tribute system, the political institution that regulated diplomatic, cultural and trade exchange in East Asia, whose late-nineteenth century reconfiguration and China’s forced internationalization and integration into the European International Society influenced the specific moves of the Qing court and concerned intellectual elite.

I also introduced another meaning of the notions of *nei* and *wai*: their gendered, ritually sanctioned meaning that, at the normative level, prescribed different physical and discursive presence for women and men in late Imperial China. I particularly emphasized the aspects of knowledge and activities prescribed to and/or practiced by women that would be important for

⁷⁰⁶ Chow, 5.

understanding the ways in which women's school, association and the journal emerged and functioned.

As I also emphasized, military and political advancements of the West and Japan destabilized, if not diminished the power of China to designate and order geo-civilizational *nei* and *wai* domains according to self-defined cultural and civilizational standards. This enabled a group of reformers to propose and launch a set of measures aimed to strengthen China and posit it back to the political and civilizational center it once occupied. The Wuxu Reform period was, thus, underway.

I examined this immediate context of the entrance of late-Qing women into the discussions and actions pointed at empowering China to reposition itself as a dignified civilizational and political actor in the West-directed international community. I talked about both the broader ideo-political developments and interventions of the Qing Court and three "social portraits" of historical figures who may represent three distinct groups of social actors that were engaged in the establishment and/or operation of women-oriented reformist projects: Alicia Little, a representative of the social activist wives of Western merchants and diplomats; Mary Richard, as an exemplary missionary woman dedicated to changing Chinese male and female education; and Kang Youwei, an (in)famous reformer and coordinator of the reformist actions until September 1898.

These short narratives pinpointed the problematic positions of the social actors that Alicia Little, Mary Richard and Kang Youwei exemplified, the issue that provoked my deeper engagement into the complex relations between participating actors that facilitated women's organizing and engagement in the reformist years. Hence, the section of my project that reconstructed the initiation and operation of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* attempted to

map the networks of foreign and Chinese men and foreign and Chinese women that stood at the base of these reformist projects. I did so, as I have stressed throughout my thesis, in order to suggest that Chinese women did not have the free hands to act. As I implied, in a situation in which the activities and social recognition of Chinese women heavily, if not completely, relied on the support of Chinese men, and when the visions of the measures that should be undertaken to recover the power of China and of Chinese women required the involvement of Western men and women, Chinese women had to navigate through the limits that the support of all these actors involved.

In my view, to point to the limits that the need for the support of other participants in the reforms may have created, and to the vulnerability of the position of a recognized socio-political collectivity that Chinese women started to occupy does not mean to belittle their abilities or accomplishments. Quite contrary, I believe that overlooking the context in which late-Qing women operated may do so because it may represent women as having much more agency in the process that they could not direct on their own. When the analysis augments the agency, it may create unrealistically high expectations in terms of historical influence and accomplishment, playing down the importance of what was achieved and how innovatively it was done under a certain set of circumstances.

Thus I introduced a number of different Chinese and Western actors, their different social positions, the modes of engagements in and perspectives about the events of 1897 and 1898. What I also wanted to highlight are significant differences in the interpretations of these events (represented as determined facts and used for making authoritative statements) by the secondary literature. By paying attention to these historiographical dissonances present in the literature on women's participation in the Wuxu reform movement I wanted to imply my unresolved concern

with how to *practically* deal with the limits of the archives, the issue of translation, and political strategies of representation present in both historical and historiographical narratives.

When it comes to the different and unstable meanings of the notions of *nei* and *wai*, the Wuxu reform period was, as I have established, marked by multiple reconfigurations of *nei-wai* relationships in both geo-civilizational and socially accepted gender-related terms: the presence and power of the West and Japan interfered in China's ordering of the world, its designation and the treatment of what it used to be understood as the *nei* and *wai* domains, and motivated the reformers to interfere in gendered meanings of spatial and discursive boundaries of the *nei* and *wai* realms.

As I discussed, in this new, hostile international community China was placed and treated as a semi-civilized semi-colonial member. As part of their grand plan to bring China back from the political and civilizational semi-periphery to the center, concerned literati proposed that Chinese women, long-standing markers of Chinese civilizational dominance and accomplishments, should be changed. The proposed ways in which Chinese women should be reformed so as to reclaim both China's and Chinese women's cultural confidence facilitated the engagement of female relatives and acquaintances of the male reformers in the establishment and work of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao*.

I demonstrated that these venues for women's direct participation in the discussions and actions concerned with China's and Chinese women's empowerment had further reconfigured the relations of *nei* and *wai*. In spatial terms, Chinese genteel ladies entered "the outer" spaces of the school and the (massive) public meetings, the process in which the women's presence in the spatial *wai* was narrated through women's exposure to both endangering and legitimizing public gaze. Furthermore, both the actions and discussions in which Chinese women participated were

related to the urgent need to enable China to regain its political and civilizational power denied by the military and political advancements of the West and Japan. Thus, the invitation extended to and the presence of a group of elite women in these discussions and actions marks an expansion of the proper discursive sphere in which Chinese women were expected to operate, that is, it signals socially sanctioned extension of the women's "inner" concerns with state-related issues and policy-making.

As I emphasized, women in the imperial past did form and enjoy deep relations with other women with whom they shared poetic and aesthetic interests and expertise, and did disclose their commitment to state-related issues. Nevertheless, as I have shown, what distinguished this particular moment of the Wuxu reform period from the Chinese Imperial past was the formation of a group of Chinese women who embarked on defining the boundaries and meanings of a political collectivity of women, recognized as legitimate participants in the discussions and actions meant to restore China's civilizational glory.

An additional specificity of Chinese women's positioning in the *wai* domain and of this initial stage in the definition of Chinese women as socio-political actors was their cooperation with Western women. As I pointed out, Chinese women in Imperial China, as their poetry collections and fiction testify, were familiar with the foreign women, but the presence of the "Western foreign woman" in late-Qing imaginary and in the women-related reformist enterprises echoes the creation of a new world in which China started to reference itself after its vision of geo-civilizational *nei* and *wai* domains got destabilized.

These three projects did position a group of elite Chinese women within the late-Qing *wai* sphere of politics and certain forms of literacy. Additionally, as I argued, women entered the process of delineating the boundaries and defining the meanings of the emerging collectivity of

Chinese women that would fix its position as a recognized interlocutor and actor in the late-Qing *wai* sphere. As I indicated throughout my dissertation, my project does not position *Nüxue bao* solely as a specific entry point for reaching the internationalized gendered world of ideas, actors and actions in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The journal, as I expressed, at the same time displayed and facilitated the emergence of a political collectivity of Chinese women and, thus, offers an invaluable perspective on the strategies employed in the process of its legitimization.

This approach to *Nüxue bao* enabled me to address the very processes of forming a collectivity of Chinese women recognized as legitimate discussants and participants in the *wai* sphere. Thus, the journal testifies that the formation of a socio-political group of Chinese women, and women's position in the *wai* sphere of specific forms of literacy and government, heavily relied on the discursive inclusion of strategically selected female predecessors into the newly-forming group. As I demonstrated, the creation of a sense of community, commonality and continuity with the character, deeds and abilities of admirable women from the past was at the same time a result and a contribution to the creation of a temporal scheme which reaffirmed the idealization of the Three dynasties period and the notion of *xi xue zhong yuan* (the Chinese origin of western knowledge). I argued that this specific way of framing historical time enabled the creation of a community of late-Qing women that included select women from the past whose exemplary actions and aspirations fortified the author's arguments and requests for social change, and to introduce the desired changes in the least painful way - not as a novelty that would disgracefully abrupt the "ways of the Sages", but as a developmental process that would recover and continue Chinese (women's) practices from the glorious past.

Careful reading of the journal enabled me to discuss, to use the term of Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston and McDermott, “constitutive norms” of the forming collective identity of reform-oriented late-Qing woman, namely, the state’s benefit and correct “cultured” education, which allowed the inclusion of select exemplary women from both the Chinese past and from the ruling Manchu dynasty into the newly forming women’s group. I also indicated the textual and practical exclusion of certain groups of women, that is, of certain assumed characteristics, aspirations and behaviors that were condemned by the reform-oriented contributors of *Nüxue bao*. In this sense, I pointed to the textual criticism of the women’s vulgar beauty, frivolous knowledge and unproductivity, the assumed characteristics of women who urgently needed to be reformed and which were sharply criticized by the male reformers. Nevertheless, I suggested that the texts I consulted often joined the criticism of Chinese women of the present, and indeed, sometimes posit the criticism pointed at women as an introduction to the criticism pointed at the “social atmosphere” that neglects women’s capacities and abilities. Thus, my reading of *Nüxue bao* suggests that an over-emphasized criticism pointed at women may be read as a strategy to alarm the public and allow the reformers to move ahead with their agenda.

A main rhetorical device that served to introduce the contributors’ demands and to legitimize their arguments was, as I mentioned, the promotion of a particular type of temporality in which the reformers’ proposals were represented as a revival of the practices and institutions of the glorious times of the Chinese past. As I maintain, this temporal scheme (sometimes) combined with the notion of *xixue zhongyuan*, i.e. the claim that the origin of the Western learning has its origin in China, enabled two significant discursive moves.

First, it allowed, as I have just elaborated, the creation of a sense of community, commonality and continuity of late-Qing women’s group with the female paragons from the

Imperial past. Second, it allowed the reformers to introduce their proposals not in a way that would imply that the suggested social changes would be a disruption of “our ancestors’ teachings,” but, rather, as their reintroduction.

Celebration of China’s and Chinese women’s glorious past, as well as the claim that the “new” practices and institutions from the West and Japan are results of uninterrupted evolution of what were originally China’s civilizational accomplishments, introduced the figure of the foreign woman in general and “Western foreign woman” in particular in a very specific way. Writing about the first two decades of the twentieth century and the way that Chinese women in women’s journals “looked to American women for inspiration”, Carol C. Chin argues that “they saw social and cultural aspects of American women’s lives as sources of power – both to strengthen the nation and to gain equality as a matter of right.”⁷⁰⁷ The texts of *Nüxue bao*, however, allowed me to claim that while Chinese women did represent American women as possessing the rights and duties Chinese women wanted for themselves, the broader discourses in which these representations were embedded suggest more complex processes of appropriation of the accepted understanding of the Western power than the term “inspiration” can convey.

Thus, as I argued, all the aspects of the reformist agenda – education, women’s work, marriage, physical mobility and religiosity - were discussed with the figure of foreign woman supporting their arguments and legitimizing their requests. The text opened with the praised examples from the Chinese past; and/or followed by anxiety over late-Qing crisis expressed through criticism of the present state of Chinese women and suggestions for the change supported by examples of foreign women. In the case of the Western examples, women were used as legitimizing examples that the power of the state will grow if the proposed social

⁷⁰⁷ Carol C. Chin, “Translating the New Woman: Chinese Feminist View the West, 1905-15,” in Ko and Wang, 43.

changes were applied, with the social changes not being represented as new and foreign but rather neglected and in need of revival. Japanese women were addressed with a mix of condescending and complimentary tones. For example, by referring to Japan as a small country “of only three islands” that learns from the West, but learns well. Korean women, as an embodiment of the exemplary China’s tributary warns about the pace of changes that were underway in China’s vicinity. Indian and Persian women are addressed in terms of their detrimental treatment and concealment, pronouncing a colonial discourse on civilizational, religious and cultural hierarchies that China appropriated.

As I have emphasized throughout my study, a group of Chinese women engaged in the establishment and the operation of *Nüxue hui*, *Nüxue tang* and *Nüxue bao* did not produce a unitary vision of social change, they did not have identical understandings of the raised issues, and their texts often point out to various directions in which social change should head. My decision to approach *Nüxue bao*, in, as Andrea Janku and Barbara Mittler call it, “a Chinese reader’s way,” that is, to read its texts from the beginning to the end of the journal’s available issues, did allow me to articulate all afore-mentioned conclusions.

However, there are many directions in which my research may evolve in the future, with different methodologies employed and new primary and secondary sources consulted. I anticipate that two comparative studies would be especially rewarding academic pursuits. First, a comparison of discussions and activities of women involved in the Wuxu reform period with the women who participated in the Taiping Rebellion, and were active parts of the governmental apparatus on the territories conquered by the Taiping army would offer significant conclusions about the intersections of gender, ideology, class, ethnicity and religiosity in late-Qing China. Another project may entail using a comparative approach in examining the ways in which gender

issues figure in contemporary Chinese-Western relations. This may improve our understanding on the ways in which contemporary “standards of civilization” come about in the discourses and actions of various social actors and political bodies engaged with, for instance, the issue of the One Child Policy.

An additional venue of inquiry that may offer meaningful new insights about a number of issues I tackled in my dissertation is *Nüxue hui*, its operation and, as it may be expected, the contesting visions of the purpose of its activities. Xia Xuedong, in her promotion of Wu Megan into “a pioneering Chinese feminist” complied with Wu’s pride in her proposal to establish *Nüxue hui* that she herself introduced as “the first in four thousand years of Chinese history.”⁷⁰⁸ I am not convinced by Xia’s explanation that Wu’s statement “was not an exaggeration” because Jing Yuanshan and Shen Ying, “the founders” of *Nüxue tang*, as Xia addresses them, did not report on it in their successive accounts on the history of Chinese women’s education.⁷⁰⁹ First, there are many reasons why Jing and Shen would not write about *Nüxue hui* that operated in 1897 and 1898, and the speculations may start, for instance, from an analysis of the context in which the texts that Xia is referring to emerged and the audience they were addressing. And second, Xia does not elaborate on her reasons to “trust” the words of Wu and other post-1900s “feminists” and not to take into account the texts of the contributors to *Nüxue bao*, which she also consulted.

The primary and secondary sources I consulted did not allow me to establish a direct link between male reformers’ idea of learning societies (*xue hui*) and *Nüxue hui*. But, if male and female reformers indeed organized *Nüxue hui* as a proposed venue of direct communication

⁷⁰⁸ Xia Xiaohong, “Wu Mengban: A Pioneering Chinese Feminist,” in Lomová, 277.

between the gentry women and the Emperor, and if *Nüxue hui* functioned as a part of the reformers' proposal to improve the governmental system of the Empire that would link learning and action and would provide a forum for the persons with a "natural unity of purpose" to pursue enlightenment, an entire set of new questions and answers about the emergence of political collectivity of Chinese women and the expectations that led its actions may be formulated.⁷¹⁰

In addition, I believe that, when the historical sources allow, an analysis of *Nüxue hui* may offer more comprehensive insights on the issues I mentioned in my dissertation, of which I would emphasize a more comprehensive comparison of *Nüxue hui* to the communities of gentry women in China's Imperial past, as well as its relation to the existing elite women's communities in late-Qing China. Furthermore,

Furthermore, my methodologies and sources did not allow me to look deeper into the discourses on Chinese historical heroines in a way that would, for instance, allow me to analyze the implications of women's choice to celebrate particular women from the past, and not others. The focus on intertextuality, as well as more profound analysis of the exclusions within the forming political collectivity of Chinese women would contribute discussions on the historical dynamics of "internal" stratifications within the collectivity of Chinese women who have been operating as recognized socio-political actors in modern China. The question that this debate should certainly address is why the women whose discussions and actions I analyzed in my thesis did not come to be "pioneering Chinese feminists."

⁷¹⁰ Furth, 344, 345; Liu and Liu, 485, 486; Lü and Zheng, 92, 93.

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