Leaving the Inner Chambers:

A Comparative Study of Chinese Women in Medicine

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Emerging from the Archive:

A little over a year ago I was doing a cursory look over some archival materials from the *China Medical Missionary Journal* when the first page of the Journal from December 1896 caught my interest. The inside cover featured a full-page photograph of two young Chinese women in traditional dress; yet it was not the picture itself that was startling, but the caption below that simply stated “Mary Stone M.D., Ida Kahn M.D.”¹ My interest peaked, never before had I heard about Chinese women doctors going as far back as the 19th century.

I moved forward in the document, reading with fascination the story of these two women returning to China for the first time in four years from medical school at the University of Michigan. As the author detailed the reaction of Chinese people upon seeing these women, the trajectory of my thesis morphed from studying traditional care practices, to studying who these women were.

I began to look into other Chinese women who received their medical degrees in the United States. As it turned out Drs. Stone and Kahn were not the first women to receive their medical degrees in the United States. That honor belonged to Jin Yunmei who graduated from medical school in New York City ten years prior to Stone and Kahn. Some research had already been performed on Stone and Kahn, and so I turned my sights on Jin Yunmei.

At first she was much more elusive in the historical archive, much of the preliminary encounters I had with her story came in the form of newspaper articles and letters from her adopted parents. Fortuitously new sources emerged from the archival material to present themselves to me, namely her short story on the Chinatown in Honolulu and the letters she wrote while at the government hospital in Beiyang. With each discovery my understanding of her

shifted. In her adopted parent’s letters she is a dedicated daughter and learner, who remains a largely passive figure mentioned briefly in cramped cursive on yellowing pages. The newspapers saw her as a novelty; a Chinese woman who could converse with them easily and provide spunky criticisms on both American and Chinese culture. But the central question that plagued me still remained, who was Jin Yunmei in her own words? In this paper I attempt to recreate her story and offer not a passive depiction of Yunmei, but rather a story where she is as active of a participant as her interviews and letters suggest.

Yet to understand who Yunmei was, a discussion had to be opened into the larger context of the world Jin Yunmei lived in. While Jin Yunmei may have been the first Western-educated Chinese woman in medicine, by no means was she the first Chinese woman well versed in care practices. Chapter 1 seeks to explore the broader context of medical practice in China from the conception of Chinese medical thought and how women fit into this dialogue. The second chapter introduces the influx of missionaries and Western thought and begins Jin Yunmei’s story. The third and final chapter focuses primarily on Jin Yunmei and the liminal space she occupied temporally and spatially. In the words of Susan Mann “it took a scene to show me the full picture. Evidence can tell us only what we are able to hear, and setting a scene makes it talk louder.”2 Through the reading of this paper I hope the voices and experiences of these people speak to you as they did to me.

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When Jin Yunmei returned to China in 1887 to practice medicine in Amoy with the Women’s Board of the Dutch Reformed Church, she was entering a “medical marketplace” in Qing Dynasty China that had existed for centuries. Historian Harold Cook developed the concept of a medical marketplace to do away with preconceptions about strict hierarchies in medical care in England. Instead he noted:

the boundaries between physicians, surgeons and apothecaries were blurred to the point of irrelevance: regulation had limited force, professionalization was anachronistic. Early modern practitioners…competed for custom in an open ‘medical marketplace where services were advertised and sold to those sufferers who cared to shop’.

While historians first applied the concept of a medical marketplace in the context of England, other countries, regions, and places have unique medical marketplaces as well. In the instance of China, the historical identity of which spans three thousand years, the dynamics of its medical marketplace changed with each dynasty. Clear trends, however, emerge in the longer traditions and practice of medicine in China, the threads of which trace as far back as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E-220 C.E.) up through the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

The early periods of written Chinese history (around 1500 B.C.E.) “were dominated by the belief that disease was caused by supernatural influences…the primary diagnostic tool was divination and the primary method of treatment was exorcism.” With this belief system, ancient healers did not depend solely on patient interaction coupled with herbal tincture treatment;

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instead they also “had to be experts in local lore, [and] the patient’s lineage,” indicating that medical encounters between patient and practitioner in early China were extremely personal. Information pertaining to medical encounters in the lower classes is essentially non-existent during this early period, but historians have discovered that “elites sought health guidance and healing from…shamans, diviners, and exorcists, but also adepts who specialized in different life-cultivating “Ways” ( 道) and medical healers ( 医).” Leading up to the beginning of the Han Dynasty, physicians gradually came to travel from patient to patient (instead of living near rulers), establishing systems of care involving patronage where the wealthy patient would supply the medical healer with various supplies.

The Han Dynasty largely maintained this fusing of medical knowledge between formally educated physicians and shamans and diviners. Medical thought, however, slowly narrowed into specific systems of knowledge: qi 气 (essence, or life force), yinyang 阴阳 (balance of different types of energy), and wuxing 五行 (five elements). In line with the codification of medicine during this period, medical manuscripts detailing information relating to care and cures became central to any practitioner’s understanding of the larger picture of Chinese medicine. In the Han period these texts were indices of power, not only to the scholars and physicians, “but also to noblemen who sponsored and collected the texts.” The importance of medical manuscripts would carry through to the Qing period, some of which sons published as a tribute to their healing mothers.

In the knowledge system of Yin and yang, the terms are signifiers to delineate between female and male, however they are also categories into which plants and characteristics can fall.

6 ibid., 11.
7 ibid., 36.
For example, the characters for *yin* and *yang*—阴阳 respectively—are split vertically into two parts: the photophonic radical at the left, and the right which dictates the meaning. For *yin*, the female essence—the 月 (yue)—indicates moon or month, while 日 (ri) means sun or day. Medical men prescribed medicines derived from plants, and a diagnosis would often require the medicine to specifically harness the feminine or masculine energy unique to each plant’s properties. However, historians Charlotte Furth and Lisa Raphael have illuminated that gender differences in patients did not influence the treatment prescribed by physicians.8 Additionally, as far back as the Han Dynasty, one physician’s account details “a young female slave as ‘skilled in secret formulae (fang), capable in several arts, and knowing how to use the newest methods.’”9 Yet another woman “learned her skills from her father and used them in a domestic context”; this trend of Chinese women learning medical knowledge from parents and applying it as part of their household duties was not singular to the Han Dynasty. This is not to say, however, that the women who administered care in such a manner were an accepted group in strict Confucian and patrilineal China.

An idiomatic phrase exists dating back to the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368 C.E.) to describe female professions: *SanGuLiuPo* (三姑六婆). The Chinese language has many idiomatic phrases, heavy with cultural connotations, that carry a specific meaning. In the case of *sanguliupo*, the literal meaning is three nuns and six old women, with the idiomatic meaning being women with disreputable or illegal professions. Of the six old women three are pertinent to the subject of this paper: *yaopo* (药婆), *wenpo* (稳婆) *shipo* (师婆), meaning quack doctor,

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8 Hinrichs, *Chinese Medicine*, 45.
9 Ibid., 43.
midwife, and witch respectively.\textsuperscript{10} This term in Chinese language is indicative of how Chinese Confucian society perceived healing women. Regardless of this perception, these healing women played a key role in medical care, especially those surrounding childbirth.

Moving into the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, historian Angela Ki Che Leung asserts that “elite women became more restricted to the ‘inner quarters,’ but elite men could not block their access to alternative knowledge and healers such as the ‘three aunties and sex grannies [sanguliupo].’”\textsuperscript{11} The idea of the ‘inner chamber’ is central to the study of Chinese women, specifically the influence of Confucian principles reflected in the family hierarchy and strict separation of the sexes. The ‘inner chamber’ is the space in the traditional elite houses where wives, daughters, concubines, female servants, and old matrons resided and engaged in household activities, primarily sewing and needlework. The regime of feminine virtue, Joan Judge states, “followed Ming and Qing dynasty interpretations of ancient principles of gender propriety such as the strict separation of the sexes and a rigid division of the inner (nei) and outer (wai) spheres.”\textsuperscript{12} While relegated to the inner chamber, these women played a key role in the labor force of the Qing Dynasty through their production of woven material that would often augment the cost of living among the elite families. Furthermore, some Chinese women were able to exercise a great deal of agency when it came to the care of household members; male authority figured often deferred to their female counterparts in matters concerning family health, especially when it involved pregnancy.


\textsuperscript{11} Hinrichs, \textit{Chinese Medicine and Healing}, 159.

\textsuperscript{12} Judge, Joan. \textit{The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China}. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. 3.
闺秀 and 才女: Women of Talent

男子有德便是才，
女子无才便是德。

“A man with virtue is a man of talent; a woman without talent is a woman of virtue”

Qing Dynasty elite culture rested on the assumption that women heads of household would manage household finances in addition to the relationships within the inner chamber. The exceptional research of Susan Mann and Li Xiaorong have challenged many preconceptions about elite Chinese women. In fact, many elite women received an education, wrote poetry, and took charge of the education of the younger generation. While women had historically been fixtures in the inner chambers, the Qing Dynasty marked a shift where, as Susan Mann argues, “learning secured elite women’s integral place in family, society, and the polity of the Qing empire.”

This section will explored this female “learning” by using several women’s writings and poetry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

By the end of the Ming Dynasty the rapidly growing print culture lead to a rise in female literacy and concurrently morphed what women’s acceptable roles were in the inner chamber. The expansion of boudoir poetry at the time marks this shift in women’s roles, a phenomenon explored excellently by historian Li Xiaorong. Li’s text *Women’s Poetry of Late Imperial China* focuses on the spatial setting of the 閣 (gui or inner chamber), specifically, how the poetry writing that occurred within that space “sheds light on the level of meditation of women’s textual production by the literary tradition as well as ideological and sociohistorical conditions.”

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13 ibid., 87.
the gui was the space Chinese elite women in the late imperial period almost exclusively occupied, it is natural that the focus of their poetry lay in this area as well. In fact, “the most easily identifiable textual feature is their heavy reliance on conventional codes and formulaic descriptions developed in the literati boudoir literature, such as terms describing women’s garments, ornaments, and the boudoir setting.”\textsuperscript{16} As depicted in Gao Jingfang’s “My Morning Makeup” the space the author occupies is the gui, specifically the author’s private room, where she is fixing her hair.

\begin{quote}
I open up my dressing room in the clear dawn;  
Morning sunshine lights up the painted railings.  
As my chignon isn’t done up yet,  
I dare not pay respects to my parents.  
I properly add a phoenix hairpin…\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Li Xiaorong interprets this poem to be “a ritualized aspect of paying respects to parents” where the “woman author sets up a new, “serious” context for the reader in which to locate the meaning of a typical boudoir activity.\textsuperscript{18} Analysis of the original Chinese character text of the poem corroborates this interpretation. The verb modifier properly （妥帖 tuotie）particularly stresses this point, as the character for tuo features the female radical 女, directly correlating the concept of female with the idea of propriety. The use of the word ‘properly’ is important as boudoir poetry previously had been a genre of poetry written about women by men, often highly imaginative and sexualized. The hairpin is a symbol of sexuality and desire so its use here is juxta posed with the idea of virtue and chastity. Another word that could be used appropriately in the context of the poem is 合适, however without the female radical, using this word would not be as effective for driving a point home about filial piety and the feminine space of the gui.

\textsuperscript{16} ibid., 12.  
\textsuperscript{17} ibid., 61.  
\textsuperscript{18} ibid., 62.
Frequently, large analects of Chinese women poetry during this time repeated this trend. Therefore, the *gui* in the Qing Dynasty is “re-encoded as a space within which a talented daughter, a cultured woman, or capable wide can take pleasure in her daily life.”¹⁹ These talented women often were a part of literati families in which the women educated and encouraged other younger members of *gui* to pursue nontraditional domestic tasks. Susan Mann’s book on the women of the Zhang family explores how the women of a single family gradually changed the degree of their political involvement throughout the duration of the nineteenth century.

Born in 1763, Tang Yaoqing was a precursor to the late-nineteenth-century *cai nu* (talented women), and although she lived her life entirely within the confines of the inner chamber, her education rivaled that of her male counterparts. Yaoqing’s grandfather taught a young Yaoqing along with her older sister and five male cousins. At the age of twelve however, this education with her male family members ended as she transitioned to life within the inner chambers where “she had only her older sister and a few female cousins to set examples…she lost touch with her male cousins…”²⁰ Due to the urging of her Aunt Tang, who wanted to encourage Yaoqing learning potential, Yaoqing was able to continue her education under the tutelage of her father. While Yaoqing’s father relied heavily on the classics as a rulebook for the education of his daughter, Yaoqing’s aunt relieved Yaoqing “of all household duties so she could devote her full attention to reading and writing.”²¹ When presented with one of Yaoqing’s poems her father angrily admonished her, “women’s words do not pass beyond the women’s quarters!”²² Yet she would continue writing in secret, even as she got married and bore children,

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¹⁹ Li Xiaorong, *Women’s Poetry*, 84.
²¹ ibid., 11.
²² ibid., 13.
composing a few poems here and there while managing not only her husband’s household finances but also that of her natal family.

The majority of the management of the household hinged on maintaining its appearance as upright and virtuous, so as to maintain her husband’s reputation. During this time her husband’s close study of medical texts, and practice of medicine in his later years, benefited her immensely. Yaoqing “became known in the county as a philanthropist, caring for the elderly and the sick…offering comfort and kindness to people who were afflicted.” In one instance, recounted in her husband’s eulogy for her, Yaoqing serves the county as a qualified midwife.

Yaoqing was:

…called to a delivery in the middle of the night—she arrived to find the mother already dead with a living fetus still undelivered. She forced down the mother’s throat the medicine she had sent earlier with a maid, and the baby was miraculously delivered and survived.23

The retelling of the detail that Yaoqing had sent medicine with a maid gives one reason to believe that this was common practice for Yaoqing and means that she had a large working knowledge of the *materia medica* texts, as well as the skill set to deliver children. Either she learned this from her husband (a literati doctor), from texts her aunt supplied, or it was passed down to her through the other women of the inner chamber. All of these possibilities signify that women’s medical knowledge was something that was considered part of the household duties, and even allowed women to extend their reach beyond the inner chamber in the name of charity.

After her death, younger members of the family chronicles Yaoqing’s charitable pursuits, highlighting the importance of Yaoqing’s care, but also marking care of others as a decidedly Confucian virtue for a woman of elite standing. The memorialization of her care stands in direct

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23 ibid., 42.
contrast to the concept of sanguliupo, as her family respects Yaoqing’s medical knowledge. While one cannot generalize that all elite families were as “dedicated to women’s learning” it is certainly true that these women came from the same lineage of successful giuxiu.24

In addition to lineages of giuxiu, many families involved in medical practice could trace their involved in medicine back through the generations. Soon other practitioners that opened practices in the same space threatened these almost dynastical medical families. In Changzhou, the area where Yaoqing lived, the Fa family dominated the local medical practice. However, Li Xiaorong argues that in Yaoqing’s era “medical specialists like the Fa family physicians were encountering competition from self-trained individual literati who acquired patients through their scholar networks…”25 This trend led to more people having greater access to medical texts, but also different types of medical care, as they had a greater choice of the practitioner or treatment that they preferred. Here, as in the Han Dynasty, medical manuscripts gave power to the scholar literati class and enabled them to study medicine. Furthermore, access to these texts allowed educated elite women to disseminate knowledge within the inner chamber, even going as far as writing manuscripts of their own. Regardless of the effect the manuscripts held on the individual level, the presence of readily available medical texts to an increasingly literate population morphed the existing medical marketplace.

The existing model for receiving medical care among elite families in nineteenth-century China involved an intricate and largely decentralized healthcare system. Historian Yi-Li Wu describes the medical setting during this period as “fluid boundaries between multiple realms of curative and health-promoting activities…no regulations controlled who could provide healing

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24 Susan Mann, Talented Women, 48.
25 ibid., 54
services.” Furthermore, as medical handbooks became more commonplace with an increase in access to print texts “knowing what foods to eat, what tonics to use, and what charms to hang on one’s front door were forms of everyday knowledge exchanged among relatives, friends, and neighbors.” The following section will explore this exchange of medical information in the Qing Dynasty as it relates to Zeng Jifen, a traditional Confucian woman from an elite family.

**Zeng Jifen: A Confucian Woman in Changing Times**

The autobiography of Zeng Jifen demonstrates this interplay between medical professionals, family care, and superstition during the same time that missionaries began to spread Western medicine. Her autobiography spans the course of her life and is “an account of the changes in elite family life in China during the transition from a bureaucratic to bourgeois society, told from the viewpoint of a daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother.” Zeng Jifen belongs to one of the lineages of Chinese medical families in which “a greater number of educated men saw medicine as a worthy career or attractive hobby, and they blurred the lines between scholarly doctors and literate medical amateurs.” Often the women in these households would also become well versed in the medical literature, Zeng Jifen being a worthy example. Born in 1852 and passing in 1942, Zeng Jifen offers insight into the exchange of ideas and practices that were the hallmark of the end of the Qing Dynasty and Early Republican Period. Furthermore Zeng Jifen lived at the exact same time as Jin Yunmei, making her an excellent counterpoint to the experiences of Yunmei.

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26 Hinrichs, *Chinese Medicine*, 166.
27 ibid., 167
29 Hinrichs, *Chinese Medicine*, 140.
Born as the youngest daughter of Zeng Guofan, an important military leader during the Taiping Revolutionary Movement, and “paragon of traditional Confucian values,” Zeng Jifen’s father brought her up to be the “idealized…cloistered guarantors of a concordant cosmos.”\(^{3132}\)

Therefore, some knowledge of medicine and care for family members fit neatly into the role that elite, educated women held only in the inner (内) chambers. Zeng Jifen’s early life mirrored that of Tang Yaoqing, as they navigated the interplay between their education and their Confucian duties to the family. Liu Chuntung asserts that the Chinese wife “in a privileged family was never central to the caring role and played a secondary part in both tending the sick and in bringing up children.”\(^{33}\) However, through Jifen’s observations of her own family as well as herself, her experience as a wife, mother, and grandmother places her at a central role in the care for those around her.

From an early age Zeng Jifen made many observations that corroborate historians’ findings on the importance of ritual and superstition to medical practice during this period. After repeated deaths in a specific chamber of the family compound, “Uncle Zeng Guoguan’s wife became pregnant, she was fearful of dwelling there…consequently she engaged a wizard to exorcize the spirits that seemed to inhabit the place.” Zeng Jifen’s recounting of this story emphasizes the notion that women held considerable agency within the inner chambers, especially when it came to issues related to medical care and childbirth. It is not Uncle Guoguan who asks for the wizard to come, but rather his wife. While the wizard was in the compound, Zeng Jifen’s father “upbraided him angrily.”\(^{34}\) The strict Confucianism and frugality of Zeng Guofan, meant that he resisted the use of a wizard for medical care as frivolous and useless.

\(^{31}\) ibid., xxi
\(^{33}\) Liu, Chun-tung. “Sanguliupo” 318.
\(^{34}\) Zeng, Jifen. *Testimony of a Confucian Woman*. 10
This instance establishes an interesting example of women disregarding male authority when it came to consulting medical practitioners, especially in regard to childbirth and birthing. This trend has its roots as far back the Tang Dynasty where “most deliveries were handled successfully through the cooperation of…the pregnant mother, her female relatives, and midwives.” The ritual of pregnancy often excluded male doctors or family members, however many “male-authored medical texts after the sixth century sometimes accused female attendants of hasty and unnecessary interventions.”

Oftentimes the women of the family could exercise certain power not seen in other areas of their lives, going as far to request specific care providers but they also could self-diagnose and prescribe medicine or tinctures for themselves. In one such instance, Zeng Jifen exerted herself too much physically while with child and afterwards she “took frequent doses of medication to prevent a miscarriage, and the problems stopped temporarily.” Zeng Jifen was well versed in medicine and into her later years her son observed that after lunch “she attended to clothing materials, medicines, tonics…each year she mixed medicines according to prescriptions, some of which she drew from her accumulated wisdom; others still she got from shops; still others she had acquired through inquiries and then recorded for future use.” This active participation in medicine even at an old age indicates that this was common practice throughout her life, even though her autobiography rarely explicitly mentions it. Furthermore, this interplay between personal observation and learning from other practitioners demonstrates the contours of the medical marketplace in the Qing Dynasty, and also provides evidence that these exchanges hardly excluded women like Zeng Jifen.

35 Hinrichs, Chinese Medicine, 74.
36 Zeng, Jifen. Testimony, 53.
37 ibid., 103.
Zeng Jifen’s autobiography provides an example of such a woman; Jifen’s sister-in-law in this recounted story defies her husband’s wishes and uses her own judgement to care for her sick child. Upon a family friend’s recommendation to send for Dr. Ma Peizhi of Meng He, the husband resisted as he “did not want his son to take anymore Chinese medicine.” Zeng Jize’s wife did not have her husband’s distaste for Chinese medicine evidenced by the great extents she went to transport a Chinese doctor to the family quarters. Zeng Jifen stresses how her sister-in-law “personally asked my husband to send the arsenal steamer to fetch Dr. Ma. Jize was unaware of all this.” Upon Jize’s return when he learned his son was treated with Chinese medicine gave instruction for Jifen’s husband “to take care of everything for him” possibly indicating his distaste for his wife overstepping his authority and firmly placing another man at a higher point of authority in the care of her son.\footnote{Jifen Zeng, Testimony, 59.} However whilst Jize was away in Beijing for work “Dr. Ma continued to treat the boy and there was steady improvement” demonstrating how while the father did not like Chinese medicine, the care of the child continued under a Chinese doctor.

Zeng Jifen’s brother’s eight years spent as the minister to England and France likely explains his reluctance to use Chinese medicine. Zeng Jize would die only four years later at the age of fifty-two, and Jifen reflected upon his death that “there were those who said he had died young because of his unwise reliance on Western medication.”\footnote{ibid., 64} Jifen, in contrast, “had great faith in the efficacy of Chinese medicines. As a young woman I had learned something of how to mix them and began distributing remedies to those in need.”\footnote{ibid., 64} Jifen references the 	extit{Yanfang xinbian} (New compilation of effective medicine) as her tool for when it “was inconvenient to fetch a doctor or if medication was ineffective for a long time…”\footnote{ibid., 64} Zeng Jifen’s use of this
compendium is not unique to her experience, as the years of 1846 and 1847 saw the book published again in China. By the late nineteenth century “almost every home has had a copy.”

The intricacies of medical care described by Zeng Jifen in her memoir falls directly in line with what many current historians of the field hold to be true, that is, a spectrum from “a rather chaotic system with numerous different practitioners involved” with medicine often “the purview of the mainly urban-based urban practitioners.” However as Zeng Jifen’s account shows, these practitioners were not just part of the traditional list of “soothsayers, geomancers…herbalists, cuppers” and trained physicians, but also family members who operated on a knowledge base passed down through books and family tradition.

Zeng Jifen, in her lifetime, established an intricate system of care among her family and close friends where she dispersed medicine and advice. Starting with the illness of her mother in 1874, she “began making pills of ageratum, sweet dew tea, and all-purpose ointment with cinnamon, a remedy handed down through the family of Commander Zhang Shaotang of Nanjing.” This process shows not only Zeng Jifen incorporating medical knowledge from elders, but also preparing medicines for common household ailments such as throat congestion (sweet dew tea) and any sweat producing illness (cinnamon cassia). Zeng Jifen’s knowledge of the materia medica indicates that she would not have to seek outside medical advice or prescription on a regular basis. Even when her husband received a prescription and puffed melon crystals for a throat illness and recovered Jifen made her own changes to the medicine and bitter melon was used in the future. Jifen readily expanded and experimented upon existed

42 ibid., 64.
44 Jifen Zeng, Testimony, 64.
45 ibid., 64
knowledge of Chinese medicine, firmly solidifying her position as a woman of learning in the late Qing Dynasty.

Jifen’s expertise did not just extend to family members as Jifen also “cured Shao Youlian, a close family friend of my husband…in the summertime I bought cholera medicine and distributed it to the needy.” While many medical missionaries take credit for the spread of charitable medicine in China, this account by Zeng Jifen demonstrates that beyond the medical marketplace where pills and herbs, goods and money changed hands, a marketplace existed where the dissemination of care and cures involved women of the inner chamber. This was possible, according to Yili Wu, due to the nature of Chinese medicine in the Qing Dynasty where the physician “relied on the unassisted powers of human observation and on medicinal substances that were readily purchased in the marketplace…thus, the practical difference between the activities of a doctor and a layperson would be a matter of degree, not of kind.”

This idea of charity towards the poor shaped Zeng Jifen’s life and prompted her conversion to Christianity in 1917. The “Christian doctrine that enjoins us…to help the needy and assist those in distress” was in accordance with her ancestors’ propensity to give to the poor. Also towards the later years of her life, Zeng Jifen became more inclined to a Western style education. She encouraged both of her sons to learn English, and they received their education in Japan, as opposed to China; her grandsons as well continued their studies in the United States.

While Zeng Jifen’s autobiography is titled The Testimony of a Confucian Woman, at the end of her life her descendants lived in the United States, and she had converted to

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46 ibid., 64.  
47 Hinrichs, Chinese Medicine, 170.  
48 Zeng, Jifen, Testimony, 90.  
49 ibid., 75, 89.
Christianity—a move that a century prior would have shocked any traditional father. Her conversion exemplifies the extent to which the missionary movement in China led to an influx of ideas about education and healthcare. Zeng Jifen, and other women like Tang Yaoqing, demonstrate that women in the Qing Dynasty were “hardly a monolithic image of the oppressed, the cainü played a lively role in the formation of gender relations as well as in history.”

Therefore the subject of Chapter 1 complicates the understanding of subsequent chapters, as these women’s experiences offer a more nuanced understanding of the so-called modernization of China.

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Chapter 2
“A Credit to Her People”

This chapter will seek to connect the existing medical practices of China explored in Chapter 1, with the introduction of Western biomedicine by missionaries. Jin Yunmei’s early life only takes on a deeper meaning when it is used in conjunction with a contextualization of the missionary experience. When placed opposite one another the early lives of Confucian elite women can provide insight into Jin Yunmei’s early life and the cultivation of her identity.

The chapter is divided into three sections: one that provides the setting for the years before Yunmei’s birth, and the other two that tell the story of Yunmei’s life from her birth to her completion of medical school. Interludes break up her story; their purpose is to lend the reader a greater understanding of the bigger picture of China, as well as provide a deeper analysis of the source material. Overall this chapter will explore the motivations of medical missionaries in China, as well as provide insight into Yunmei’s adopted parents’ construction of her identity.

Encounters with the West: Missionaries in China

European encroachment with the Middle Kingdom happened slowly, and then all at once. The expeditions of Marco Polo and the journeymen on the Silk Road had less of an impact on the East than they did on the West. However, the beginning of the 19th century would change this trend. At that time only the southernmost cities of Macau and Guangzhou had any contact with the West. The missionaries that subsequently followed the traders and imperialist forces only had access to the immediate areas around these urban centers. After the First Opium War Britain and the other imperialist powers gained access to key ports and entry points to China; the

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missionaries followed closely on their heels. Missionaries disseminated their religious teachings to the Chinese population through the provision of medical care. While numerically, compared to the total population of China, the number of converts was not significant, historian Yili Wu asserts missionaries “were a major conduit for the modernizing ideas that would take center stage in Chinese reform movements” 52 Yet how did these missionaries interpret care practices (as explored in Chapter 1) found among the Chinese, and how did they reconcile them with their evangelical medical practices focused on conversation and the existing biomedical care?

Arriving on the Scene: Medical Missionaries in the Qing Dynasty

In earlier encounters with Chinese medical practices the exchange of medical knowledge from East to West mainly focused on pulse-taking and the efficacy of herbal cures. However, “with the arrival of the era of industrial capitalism…Western medicine experienced a modern transformation, while Chinese medicine remained in the classical world…[thus] Westerner’s estimates of Chinese medicine sank.” 53 This transformation is marked clearly in the 1877 Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China where countless missionaries discount not only their pulse-taking techniques and herbal cures, but also the decentralized health care system in the Qing Dynasty.

In this Conference, mission representatives touched upon such topics as medical missions, foot binding, and female education, highlighting a general consensus of opinions by the Western missionaries on Chinese society. According to Dr. J.G. Kerr of the Canton Mission “the physicians of all semi-civilized nations are entirely ignorant of anatomy and

52 Hinrichs, Chinese Medicine, 195.
physiology…they have substituted for a true knowledge, the most absurd theories…” Dr. Kerr went on in his prepared speech to elaborate that the medical setting in Qing Dynasty China was not only full of quack doctors with an insufficient knowledge of medications, but also full of “barbarous practices” and “stupid priests” who write charms for afflicted patients. To resolve this Dr. Kerr called on hospitals and universities in Western nations to “aid in the education and training of young men for medical work in the foreign field.” Kerr’s fellow missionaries corroborated his findings, especially Dr. William Gauld who stated that the “heathen” benefits greatly from the Christian missionaries who relieved masses from the “native doctor” whose “main desire is to secure the fee of their patients [and] let the result be what it may.” This lack of caring for members of their own was true, Gauld said, for even the Christian converts among the Chinese. He claimed that the “native assistants” to the mission hospital “even as a Christian, does not show the same practical interest in his fellow countrymen as the Christian foreigner.” These excerpts represent the group consensus at this major conference of the Protestant missions in China, and demonstrates effectively how the missionary movement during the latter half of the 19th-century saw the Chinese medical practices as effectively inferior.

To ameliorate this issue, missionaries focused their members in foreign lands on education and—most importantly—conversion and spiritual rearing of not only adults, but children. Their efforts were, for the most part, focused on the rural poor with the aim of reaching the literati, the educated Chinese elite, once they had more resources and pull within the Qing Dynasty social structure. A major goal of the missionaries was to uplift the women of China as

55 Conference, 116.
56 Ibid., 117.
57 Ibid., 119.
58 Ibid., 123.
“the men can never be Christianized unless the women are also Christianized.”

The girls at the mission school should learn “besides the religious instruction” both Chinese and Roman alphabet characters as well as math, composition, history, and tasks that would benefit them in the home. The missionaries stressed that instruction in the schools should happen in their native tongue.

**Jin Yunmei: 1864-1881**

One city of Ningpo, near the epicenter of missionary activity, served as the birthplace for a woman who would exemplify a way in which modernizing ideas moved in exchange between East and West.

Born in 1864 to lower class Christian converts, a missionary couple adopted Jin Yunmei when her parents both passed in an outbreak of fever at the age of two. Here her adopted parents David Bethune McCartee and Juana McCartee take over the reins of her story. From their correspondence with their nephew living in the States details of her upbringing can be inferred where her trail runs cold. From combing through letters dating from the date of her birth until 1901 (the death of David McCartee) and supplementing them with missionary periodicals, American newspapers, and hospital letters, the life of Jin Yunmei may be glimpsed in considerable detail. To achieve this, the wai shi style employed by Susan Mann in *The Talented Women of the Zhang Family* will be used to tell the story of Jin Yunmei as “a history that is slight outré or out of bounds.” Important themes from her story may be teased out from her story, we will see, notably experiences of mission life and self-formation as Chinese in such a transversal woman.

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59 Conference, 152.
60 Ibid., 166.
After the First Opium War in 1842, Ningbo, along with Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xiamen, and Fuzhou, became the Five Treaty Ports open to the West. These open ports signaled a great many things to the various Western governments, but they also beckoned others into the country: Christian Missionaries. In 1843 the Foreign Board of Missions sent out a message to a twenty-three-year-old David Bethune McCartee, as his medical skills and education at Columbia University would be of great use to spread Christianity to the masses of China. Upon his arrival he made a quick study of the Chinese language, as he knew it would be essential if he was to practice medicine or spread the word of God. The Foreign Missionary Board identified Ningbo as the best location for mission work as the “people [were] not yet corrupted as at Canton, by foreign influence, and ready access, at least for our books, into the interior provinces of the empire.”62 Upon his arrival in Ningbo on June 12th, 1844 McCartee described the city, a snapshot into a China on the edge of great change.

For some days after my arrival I was unable to get a house, and I do not know what I should have done had it not been for the kindness of Mr. Thom, H.B.M. Consul…I am at length settled in a quite comfortable house, not far from the British Consulate, and at present the only house (but one) occupied by a foreigner…I am therefore not in the city, but…if desirable, can perhaps procure a room there in which to dispense medicines and books.63

While starting out in Ningbo, David McCartee spent his days operating a dispensary, usually seeing around twenty to thirty patients a day, all whilst he battled diseases associated with bad water and mosquitos. As more missionaries arrived in China, missions extended the number of spaces for administering health care and dispensing religious information to passersby.

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63 Ibid., 2.
By May of 1845 the church McCartee invested so much time into finally opened to the public with him serving as the ruling elder. Soon McCartee established a boys boarding school at the Church, where instruction in English was to be given “to a select few, whose talents and conduct give promise of future usefulness.”64 The first goal of the boy’s education was to be the salvation of their souls; the improvement of their “character” and workforce skill were secondary.65 All the while McCartee spent a considerable time learning about the local customs, due in part to his quick grasp of the language and local dialect, as well as providing medical services to “several thousands of patients”.66 After ten long years of work alongside both the church, the medicine dispensary, and the boys boarding school, David McCartee had given up all of his early years to be of service to the mission’s endeavors in China. Soon in 1852, after a second call for missionaries went out, Juana Knight joined the mission, and a year later David McCartee asked for her hand in marriage. While they would bear no children, they were content to serve their lives in the name of God, to bring salvation and the gospel to the peoples of China and Japan.

Life in Ningbo was difficult, “bad water and miasmic rice-fields, diarrhea was experienced in summer, chills and fever in the autumn”. It was a tough environment not only on the health of the mostly New England-born missionaries, but also on the lives of the Chinese living in Ningbo. The new congregants of the Church in Ningbo (as well as elsewhere in China) were all in extreme poverty and considered “the weak, the base, the despised”.67 Many times women, unable to care for their children, especially their daughters, left them in the care of the Church women. In 1860, Juana McCartee wrote to her father that the home she shared with her

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64 Garritt, Jubilee, 6.
65 Ibid., 6.
66 Ibid., 7.
67 Ibid., 29.
husband, David McCartee had increased by one, as they had recently taken “the charge of a little motherless girl, just two years old.” However, Juana was quick to reassure her father that they are not going to adopt the child, but just keep her for at most a year, as she felt lonely when seeing all of the other missionary women with their children running around. While she thought fondly of her time as a child, and looked forward to becoming a mother, Juana was still unsure if God was calling for her to be a mother.

Yet, something must have changed four years later, in 1864, when the McCartees took into their care a two-year-old girl, whose parents died of a fever epidemic in the city. Yunmei’s early life was relatively uneventful, she studied with the other girls in the boarding school, and also completed extra tasks with her father. Although instruction in the mission school was in Chinese, both Dr. and Mrs. McCartee thought she should be adept at English if she was to have a fruitful future, especially as the McCartees began taking Yunmei along with them on their trips back to New York. Juana put herself in charge of educating Yunmei in English, as it was essential for her while staying in New York City for a year. By this time Juana had firmly accepted Yunmei as a member of their small family, she told her relatives at home of her “little You-me”. Upon the family’s return to China, David McCartee resigned from his position as a member of the Presbyterian Mission Society, and moved—with Juana and Yunmei—to Shanghai for a short spell, before ultimately settling in Japan, working for the Ministry of Education in Tokyo. From eight until the age of sixteen, Yunmei lived in Tokyo, learning Japanese, French, and English during Japan’s great awakening to the west.

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69 Garritt, Jubilee, 15.
At this time Yunmei was quite the voracious reader; a regular occurrence in the McCartney’s home in Tokyo consisted of Juana “seated at the parlor table and the two study lamps” with Yunmei “reading, on her side.”70 Around this time, in addition to his numerous duties for the Japanese Government, David McCartney began dedicating time to Yunmei’s education. As most of the books he had with him in Tokyo involved his interest in the natural sciences and medicine, Yunmei learned much on this topic at a young age. Yunmei also had plenty of opportunity to practice her numerous language skills as many foreign dignitaries, and educated individuals from Tokyo University frequented the McCartney’s home. Yet Yunmei often yearned for the companionship of girls her age with whom she could converse.

The year 1876 found Yunmei continuing her study of various subjects, but with a welcoming new addition to the daily tedium of her life. On a late Saturday morning, a certain Clara Whitney and her mother came to call upon Mrs. McCartney. While at first Yunmei was apprehensive about meeting this slightly older American girl, soon they were conversing about everything “books, a cat, tea, and cake.” Yunmei’s style of dress fascinated Clara, who had never spent a significant amount of time in the presence of a Chinese girl. Yunmei prefered to retain the current style of Chinese women’s dress, with “long loose trousers and blouse over, fastened on the shoulders by buttons” and most importantly the “blouse below her knees.” While Clara saw that Yunmei’s outfit set her apart, Clara was in awe of Yunmei’s English skills, wondering how only two years in America have resulted in English as good as her own.

The most surprising thing about Yunmei to Clara however, was the spark of independence in the Chinese girl. Yunmei told Clara of her plan to become a teacher, “to go to Europe and finish her education and…take care of herself by the time she is eighteen.” While

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70 McCartney, April 1877-1.
Clara was first in disbelief that a Chinese girl wanted to become a teacher, Yunmei defended her desire by telling her “Why shouldn’t I as well as any other girl be a teacher?” This comment made Clara reevaluate her preconceptions about the Chinese girl, “she is just like an American—not even an accent to betray her.”71 This encounter thus allowed Yunmei to join a new club that Clara had created with her other American friends dubbed “The Asiatic Society for Young Ladies”. Yunmei loved being included with these young ladies, and able to read aloud her poetry every two weeks. But perhaps what she loved the most was the conversation and camaraderie she developed with these American girls. At only Yunmei’s second meeting she felt comfortable enough to read aloud her poem “Whispers from the Bamboo”.72

Spurred on by the criticisms given to her poem by the other girls, Yunmei dedicated the next two weeks to writing another composition. Even more so because she was hosting the meeting on March 28th. After they read aloud their compositions, the girls followed Yunmei outside to play at a nearby park. However soon enough the conversation turned to the topic of guys and Yunmei confided in the girls of a recent event that occurred. A certain college educated Japanese man, Mr. Yatabe, known well in their social circle, “was after me once, but I would not marry a Jap.” Then the girl Gussie said the most embarrassing thing she overheard Yatabe say. That he “wanted to marry that Chinese girl because she is educated” and had even asked her father, Dr. McCartee about it before being refused.73 Yunmei had not been aware of this and was grateful her adopted father refused, she desired more than an early marriage.

The next few months passed quickly, and soon enough it was time for her to leave Tokyo. Fortunately Jennie and Gussie, two members of the Society, threw her a farewell party. When

72 Ibid., 123.
73 Ibid., 124.
Clara left Yunmei sadly told her “Well, Clara, I don’t suppose I will see you again. So Good-bye”. What Clara did next shocked Yunmei, she kissed her on the cheek farewell! The other girls never kissed Yunmei, probably because they think as a Chinese girl she was not used to it. However it showed Yunmei that Clara truly valued her friendship, and Yunmei looked forward to making new friends once her family settled into life in New York City.

**Interlude I**

The story of Jin Yunmei’s early life is told by that of her adopted parents and friends. Therefore, there is no access to Yunmei’s thoughts and feelings during this time in her life, other than her reflection in later years. Yunmei often attributed her interest in the natural sciences as an inevitable by-product of having her adopted father’s books on hand. While Yunmei no doubt was an intelligent child from a young age, the cultural awakening occurring in Japan at the same time, no doubt helped her, as an Asian girl, exist in Meiji Japan free to study and converse with whomever she desired. Beginning in 1868 Japan began to incorporate some Western ideas into their government, in an effort for them to be taken seriously as an advanced country. In addition, Japan allowed for the education of its citizens in free public schools. During this time, many Japanese women clamored in women’s journals for greater representation in government and jobs outside of the home. Yunmei undoubtedly would have been influenced by these progressive women, and their ideas would inform her later perspectives on women’s liberation.

Jin Yunmei’s exchange with Clara highlights three themes that would follow Yunmei throughout her life. First, Clara and her other American friends were constantly surprised by Yunmei’s education, and grasp of the English language. While at first, she was an ‘other’ to

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74 Whitney, *Clara’s*, 126.
them, her ability to easily interact with them allowed her to be an accepted member of their circle, as evidenced by her inclusion in the Asiatic Society for Young Ladies. Second, Yunmei’s emphatic declaration that she wanted to be a teacher and to live independently by the age of eighteen demonstrates that she had clear desires that were apart from her adopted parents. Yunmei was not a figure living without agency during this time. Third, Yunmei’s choice of writing a poem with a decidedly Chinese inflection (Whispers from the Bamboo), indicates that she did not solely read Western literature, but also engaged with and enjoyed both Chinese and Japanese poetry. This desire to write literature in a distinctly ‘Chinese’ style would continue into her late life. Yunmei’s participation in writing clubs, and her attempts at writing poetry was also a theme in the early lives of many of the traditional Confucian 闺秀 guixiu like Zeng Jifen.

**Jin Yunmei: 1881-1886**

Once arriving in New York City, the McCartees sent Yunmei to the Rye Seminary school. Whilst there, Yunmei professes her faith in Christ, to the great approval of her parents who “in relation to Yuome we have much cause for thankfulness to God.”

Around this time Dr. McCartee entertained the idea of founding a girl’s school in Palatka, and leaving the city. When Yunmei asked what would happen to her schooling, Dr. McCartee assured her that arrangements would be made so that she could continue education either in Philadelphia or New York City.

However this plan soon fell through, and in 1882, at the age of eighteen, Yunmei enrolls in a three-year medical school course at the Women’s Medical College in New York City. While the work is hard, the long hours of studying often affecting her health in the cramped New York City

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75 McCartee 1880.
76 Ibid., Nov 1882.
In 1883, her second year of course work in 1883. Her adopted father, Dr. McCartee often tells others that Yunmei does credit to her country by the high stand she has taken and maintained for scholarship. I hope she will be able to do a great deal for her own people, although she is not in any way connected with or supported by any missionary society or patron.\textsuperscript{77}

However, Dr. McCartee was always very diligent with providing Yunmei every extra opportunity to learn. In January of 1884, Dr. McCartee began learning microscope photography in the hopes that it would “enable [him] to show Yuome. I think it will be much easier to study such prints than to have to look at the objects through the microscope…”\textsuperscript{78} Often Dr. McCartee and Yunmei would rely on the book shipments from William Rankin, Mrs. McCartee’s nephew. Several times a year he would lend them the latest books and academic journals on the current state of affairs of medicine.\textsuperscript{79}

In additions to books on the natural sciences, William would send various religious books and papers, of which Mrs. McCartee was ever so grateful, especially as Yunmei became more and more doubtful in her faith in God. While she never voiced these concerns to her adopted daughter, Juana wrote about them frequently in her letters to her nephew:

I want to thank you particularly for the books you have sent May, she has always had a rather independent way of thinking for herself on religious subjects, and I think the quiet influence of such book better for her than arguments or exhortation. Better than anything excepting the example of an earnest Christian life, lived before her, therein I fail, although I do try not to prove ‘a stumbling block’ in any sense to her.\textsuperscript{80}

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\textsuperscript{77} McCartee Aug 83.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. Jan 1884.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid. Aug 1884.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. Dec 1884.
This resistant and questioning approach to her own adopted religion, also drew Yunmei closer to learning about the medical practices of her fellow Chinese. Therefore the final months of her third year of medical school she spent writing and practicing for her presentation on Medical Science among the Chinese. Yunmei refused to let her adopted parents see it until her presentation in February of 1885, however she did accept the help of her adopted father in procuring certain research materials and books.

The 23rd of February marked the day Yunmei “carried off the ‘First Honor’ of the class of 1885.”

She would spend the next two years working on graduate research on microphotography, and serving as the secondary resident physician at the Mount Vernon, New York Infant Asylum. Yunmei enjoyed the work greatly, however taxing it was on her health to oversee “the joint medical care of some 300 children and a lot of women.” While she wanted to continue to stay at the Asylum and work, at the urging of her adopted father she conceded to a short graduate study in Philadelphia, before returning—for the first time in fifteen years—to her homeland.

**Interlude II**

The topic of Yunmei’s medical school thesis is an interesting one, considering most missionaries’ opinions of traditional Chinese medical practices were decidedly negative. Dr. Kerr, mentioned earlier in this paper, was the missionary doctor who at the 1877 conference of Protestant missions described the Chinese medical practices as ignorant. Dr. Kerr was a highly respected figure in the missionary field in China, and his views were certainly supported by

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81 McCartee Feb 85.
82 Ibid., Nov 85.
many in the profession. This was not the case for Dr. Bethune McCartee as here, in this letter from May 1887 as he expresses his disdain for his fellow missionaries to his nephew.

…the usual sneer at Chinese medical science is repeated on p 154. It shows an utter ignorance of what night have been learned long ago from the writings of the Jesuits, and a contemptuous conforming together of quack root vendors and regularly educated Chinese physicians. Another medical missionary society publication speaks of the Chinese habitually resorting in cases of protracted labor, to trampling upon the unfortunate woman to hasten delivery. How anyone pretending to be a medical man could print such an utterly incredible story, and make it the basis of an appeal on behalf of medical missions…

Without Dr. McCartee’s deep understanding of the existing medical practices in China, it is unlikely that Jin Yunmei would have written her medical school thesis on Medical Science among the Chinese. Dr. McCartee, in this letter, and others, had a deep understanding of the different types of care that were available to the Chinese working poor. Dr. McCartee understood, to some extent, the complex nature of China’s medical marketplace at the time of the missionary’s arrival, and made sure to impart a respect of the “regularly educated Chinese physicians” to his ward, Jin Yunmei. The perspective that Jin Yunmei possessed leaving the United States for mission work was imparted to her by her adopted parents, and was distinctly different from that of the missionaries she would soon join.

Conclusion

The letters of David and Juana McCartee provide some insight into the medical missionary movement in China, but they do not lend the casual reader the full picture. Sonya Grypma’s book on the Canadian nursing missionary movement, Healing Henan offers a more insight into the day-to-day life in a Chinese mission, as well as the motivations behind the many women that

83 McCartee, 1883. See Appendix 1
traveled to China to work as nurses in mission hospitals. Grypma’s work offers more examples showing that the consensus reached at the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China in 1877 still existed up into the 1930s. As late as 1932 missionary newsletters circulated detailing the extent to which “superstition still grips the Chinese” however this time instead of looking at their superstition with disdain one should “sympathize when they turn to quackery instead of giving us a decent chance.” Grypma’s work offers a poignant reason for why the McCartees groomed Yunmei to enter the medical field. As American missionaries even if they donned Chinese clothing, ate Chinese food, studied Chinese history, and communicated in the Chinese language, they would never belong; even those born in China were not Chinese. Features such as white skin, light hair, blue eyes, and long noses proclaimed their status as part of a privileged elite.

To Yunmei’s adopted parents she was a tool the missionary movement could use to garner greater acceptance of conversion to Christianity. Grypma also challenges popular understanding about the gender divide of medical practice as “most of the American and British missionary experience to that point had been in cosmopolitan treaty ports such as Tianjin.” Therefore, many missionaries in rural Henan saw that “whereas upper-class, urban Chinese women were secluded, rural women in China's interior were not.” While this finding applies to the mission hospitals Grypma studied, the government and missionary hospitals Yunmei would work in all conformed to the gender divide in caring for patients. Yunmei’s position as a Christian Chinese women educated in Western

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85 ibid. 220.
86 ibid., 55.
medicine made her an invaluable resource to medical missions and to also “do a great deal for her own people.”

The entirety of Chapter 1 involved the voices of those close to Jin Yunmei as she grew up away from her homeland. Later reflection by Jin Yunmei on her early life offers a different perspective. Jaroslav Prusek’s memoir My Sister China provides the historian with crucial information about the end of Yunmei’s life. This book must be approached with some caution due to its translation from Czech. Of note is the fact that Prusek describes David McCartee as “an English missionary…a white-haired Victorian character.” On her studies in New York City she said she “had little money, and Americans were then prejudiced against the yellow race. Workmen in the street would often hurl abuse at me, and even my fellow woman-students were not particularly enthusiastic about me.” This account paints quite a different story from the apparent ease at which Yunmei completed her studies according to her adopted parents.

Additionally, Prusek’s memoir states that Yunmei’s family “still had every right to decide [her] life”, this hints at the possibility that Yunmei’s primary desire had always been to teach and that her adopted parents had a greater plan in mind for her when they prompted her into the study of medicine. While Chapter 1 provides the background and context to Jin Yunmei’s life, Chapter 2 delves into questions surrounding the formation of Jin Yunmei’s identity. Chapter 2 picks up at Yunmei’s first glimpse of the homeland she had been apart from for the last fifteen years.

87 McCartee Aug 83.
89 Ibid., 182.
90 Ibid., 182.
Chapter 3
Jin Yunmei: Moving Through China

Jin Yunmei: Amoy 1887-1888

The missionary movement in China readily reported on the movements of Yunmei, as she was lauded as a great boon to the expansion of the medical missionary branch in China. One recorder of missionary activities in China noted that in July of 1887

Dr. D. B. McCartee and his wife have we understand arrived at Amoy, with their protégé, Miss Y. May King, M.D., who has taken high honors in medical schools in America, and who has been appointed by the Dutch Reformed Board as Medical Missionary to Amoy. We welcome with pleasure this first Chinese lady who has taken medical degrees abroad and has returned to work for the Chinese.91

After the McCartees got her situated in her position, they left her in Amoy—resting assured that Yunmei’s diving calling would be fulfilled. However much fanfare her arrival received initially, did not prepare Yunmei for the hardships associated with being a Chinese female missionary doctor. The first of her hardships was learning both the local dialect, and improving her own Chinese language skills, as they had suffered from her long years in Japan and the United States.92 In her first months at the Amoy mission Yunmei saw many poor women in the area receiving poor treatment because of a lack of resources available to them. Yunmei and her adopted father found the women of Amoy to be especially disadvantaged—even more so than their counterparts in the rest of the Asian countries, and in China. “As the women, find it difficult to support their children, even when in health, and when the children are sickly or delicate and require attention the mothers are unable to care for them.” As a result Yunmei saw many mothers, Christian and non-Christian alike, leaving their young children in the care of the mission. Seeing this happen repeatedly weighed on Yunmei’s conscience, as it reminded her of

what could have been her life had the McCartees not taken her under their care. As a result Yunmei redoubled her efforts to aid the women living in Amoy.

Within the first year Yunmei sent out a letter to the Foreign Mission Board, requesting additional funding from them, to supplement the funding provided by the Chinese government and other individuals. To Yunmei, the presence of a hospital and dispensary solely for women would provide an “opportunity of showing them how to obtain everlasting life, or of demonstrating more clearly, the beneficence of Christianity.” While funding was often hard to come by, Yunmei counted on her ability to attract a different type of patient to these missionary hospitals. As “the women of the better class, who it is said, never enter the general hospitals, will enter one where a lady physician is in charge…so the call [for funds] is imperative, if we wish to benefit the women of China.” Yunmei also relied heavily on her novelty within the missionary community to gain support. A tactic she devised after reading that of the seven suitable prayers for China in 1887 a prayer “For Miss May King, the medical missionary of the Woman’s Board” came after prayer “for the success of civilized intentions to open up the country for speedy evangelization.”

Regardless of her initial high status in the Amoy mission, Yunmei began to chafe under both the leadership of the Amoy Mission, as well as other external factors. While the Doctor who arrived shortly after her received a hospital and dispensary to treat male patients, Yunmei was left a hospital without a feasible way to treat female patients, and paid half his salary. Furthermore the number of patients the small facilities saw could be as high as seventy-five a day, and many were not able to stay for a long period of time due to the lack of space and

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93 *The Mission Field*, 12.
94 Ibid., 12-13.
95 Ibid., 10.
resources. Yunmei found work traveling to the families of the wealthy in Amoy to offer her medical services. She used these funds to outfit her own personal rooms into a makeshift hospital with which to treat patients. Even with this money in hand, Yunmei did not see that the quality of care in Amoy was improving, and the racism she faced from the other missionaries “on account of my race” was unbearable. “It was there and then I realized that even in the eyes of a Christian a Chinese was only half-human.”

In late summer 1888 cholera struck the Mission, severely affecting Yunmei’s health. Many days she was unable to rise from bed, and when she felt as if she had enough strength to leave her residence, the next day she would be incapacitated again. Her body was physically fatigued, a problem exacerbated by the mental strain she was under as she combatted the both the discrimination against her and the slovenly state of the mission hospital.

Therefore, in October Yunmei “resigned her position at Amoy, and severed her connection with the mission.” While the mission in Amoy was greatly disappointed that their investment in her was all for naught, Yunmei made sure that the money she had earned from her wealthy patrons went into the coffers of the mission. Yunmei felt that her skills could be better employed elsewhere, and she needed to remove her body from the humid and tropical climate immediately for her to fully recover.

**Interlude III**

Racism is probably the best word to describe what Yunmei faced while in Amoy; though she had many educational accoutrements of Western culture, the missionaries did not perceive her as one of them, indeed she was only “half-human” in their eyes. Even though she was better educated

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98 *The Mission Field* 18.
99 “A Real Chinese New Woman.” San Francisco Chronicle, December 1, 1901.
than most of the men and women at the Amoy mission, educational accomplishment was not enough for her to operate a hospital on her own, or receive the same wages as the white missionaries. When she recounted her time in Amoy to the San Francisco Chronicle later in 1901, her story was one of overcoming racialized adversities.

Among the whites I was obliged to combat some prejudice on behalf of my race, and as there was no money on hand with which to carry on the work you may imagine the affairs looked rather black. As I had no hospital worthy the name and no money to operate with. I resolved to earn money and outfit a hospital of my own. So I built up as paying a practice as I could among the better classes, and with the money I earned I proceeded to turn my own dwelling into a hospital.100

In this self-portrait Yunmei paints herself as a woman who, regardless of the circumstances, would stop at nothing to ensure that the patients had the best care. Yunmei did not think that the mission hospitals were hygienic in the least, and strived to create a clean environment for everyone. While her fellow white missionaries treated her with disdain (and perhaps envy), as inferior and lesser, this was not the case with Chinese in Amoy. One of the wealthy patrons of her medical practice, the Manchu “military Governor of Fuh Kien [Fujian]” specially called for Jin Yunmei to attend to his sick wife. Yunmei spent three days in their residence, and after the wife recovered the Governor sent Yunmei back in “a characteristically Chinese way.” Held aloft in the official Governor’s chair flanked by “twelve bright robed lictors, beating drums and clashing cymbals” Yunmei was a startling sight on the narrow streets of Amoy.

To see a woman in the military Governor’s chair was a thing unheard of. That that woman should be a Chinese woman made the sight more strange, and that a Chinese woman riding in an official chair should be clad in European clothing was strange beyond the strangeness of miracles to their simple eyes.101

Jin Yunmei was well aware of her otherness not only to her fellow missionaries, but also to the Chinese population. Unlike the white missionaries, this distinguished Qing

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100 “A Real Chinese New Woman”
101 Ibid., See Appendix 2
government member, deeply respected and admired Jin Yunmei’s medical abilities. The patients Yunmei received at her hospital would feel similarly. To the general population she was an anomaly, they did not know how to process her identity. To them she broke every convention that defined the gender of woman. Tani E. Barlow has analyzed the term *funü* (“women”), concluding that the “referent is ‘the masses of Chinese women’” and that it “has no late imperial antecedent.” Only “acting within the boundaries of ethical-practical kin relations makes a person recognizably female” and that “(good) women in the *jia* did effect social relations outside the family, no position existed for female persons outside the *jia*’s boundaries.”

If this was the method by which the character of femininity was ascribed, then Jin Yunmei could not be categorized within existing social structure of Imperial China. While Chinese people admired her for her skills, she did not fit easily into existing cultural categories and frameworks.

To those in the China, both the literati elite and government officials and the lower classes, Jin Yunmei was also an ‘other’. The story Jin Yunmei tells about military Governor provides an excellent illustration of how the Chinese perceived Yunmei. Jin Yunmei was well respected for her craft by the literati elite and government officials. The proof of this is evident in the fact that she was not only able to “build up a practice among the better classes”, but also able to use the medical fee from these house visits for funds for her own missionary practice. Furthermore, that a high-ranking official would call for Yunmei in time of a medical crisis, indicates that she not only reached many individuals in the upper classes, but that they understood her to be proficient in her craft. Later in the early 20th-century Yunmei would serve

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as the personal doctor for Yuan Shikai and his family, indicating that some of the most high-ranking officials held her skills in high acclaim.

**Jin Yunmei: 1888-1905**

Relief from the racism and *miasma* in Amoy came to Yunmei in the form of a new job offer to work for the Southern Methodist Mission in Kobe Japan. There Yunmei spent a wonderful five years full of hard work not only in the hospital as a doctor, but also as a midwife in nearby villages, and educator to a new generation of Japanese health professionals like nurses, doctors, and midwives. At the beginning of her fifth year at the hospital, Yunmei met an intriguing man named Hippolytus Laesola Amador Eca da Silva. Born to wealthy Portuguese expatriates living in Hong Kong, the twenty-four year-old had spent his time traveling Europe as a trained musician and linguist. His knowledge of both her home country, as well as his education and appreciation of the arts, drew Yunmei to him. By the middle of 1894 they were married and Yunmei, with great reluctance, resigned from her position at the mission hospital to move with her husband to Honolulu.

Yunmei and her husband lived in the Chinatown of Honolulu, as it was closest to the environment that they had known for the past several years. Immediately upon their arrival Yunmei applied to the Board of Health for a license to practice medicine while her husband was otherwise engaged in his profession as a translator. Soon after Yunmei became pregnant, and due to her previous bouts with malaria and cholera, advised herself to rest for the remainder of her pregnancy. At the end of 1895 her son, Alexander Eca de Silva was born, and when he was only six months old they traveled without her husband to California. While there her adopted mother came to live with her, Mr. Eca Da Silva, and little Alexander. Her husband would go off to work
as the interpreter for the Inspector of Customs, and Yunmei would “keep house and attend to the cooking.”

In California, Yunmei began lecturing, a living that “was at once very exhausting and very badly paid.” Around this time Yunmei grew weary of her husband’s ways, and his irresponsibility towards her and Alexander. She began using her maiden name again at all of her lectureship series, and lived apart from him in San Francisco. In San Francisco, Yunmei had the support of her adopted parent’s friends from the missionary service, who often put her in connection with jobs as chaperones to Asia or as a speaker at a society meeting.

Yunmei found that she had a true gift when it came to talking in front of a crowd. She soon began to draw larger and larger crowds, and her lectures were always preceded by an advertisement in the newspaper. Frequently she was held up after her lecture by reporters, keen to get the inside scoop on the dainty new woman from China. The questions Yunmei received ranged from “what is your opinion on the state of women living in China?” to the more common “what type of dress is most fashionable in Shanghai currently?” These questions on clothing humored Yunmei, as she never considered fashion to be her area of expertise. The interviews she loved were the ones where they would take stories to reporters, Yunmei would catch herself wishing she was back in China practicing medicine. It was that urge to do more to benefit her fellow countrymen that lead Yunmei to return to China in 1905.

**Interlude IV**

The two decades that Jin Yunmei spent mostly in United States from 1888 to 1905 marked a varied time in her life, one where she developed a love for teaching, but also began a family. The

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103 McCartee, January 1900.
years when Yunmei lived, taught, and practiced medicine in Japan served as the fulfillment of her childhood dream that she confessed to Clara Whitney many years prior. While Jin Yunmei’s thoughts on her husband are not found in any archive, his mixed ethnic background no doubt intrigued Yunmei. It seems that their marriage quickly soured after the birth of Alexander, a fact that can be attributed to three plausible factors. First, due to her “strong-headedness” it is safe to assume that Yunmei disliked doing the housework and taking care of Alexander by herself whilst her husband was working. Second, once she began lecturing she traveled more and was perhaps more liberated that her husband would have liked her to be. Third, soon after the court finalized the divorce, Hippolytus became embroiled in scandal when the authorities caught him smuggling prostitutes from Asia. It seems likely that if Yunmei had known about his activities it would have been the final straw for her in their marriage.

The newspapers reported that the divorce occurred because Yunmei had “declared herself a new woman and left him” but this conclusion seems illogical in the face of the fact that Jin Yunmei retained custody of Alexander.105 Jin Yunmei quickly resorted back to her maiden name, and in newspaper articles that followed, declared herself a widow, even though her ex-husband was still alive. Perhaps aware of the stigma that would follow a divorcee, Yunmei avoided that by claiming that Mr. Eca da Silva had died. Jin Yunmei’s fear of stigma was not unfounded, as many of the newspaper articles written about her were touched with subtle racism and stereotyping. It is to be expected that she wanted to avoid the censure that would come with being a divorcee rather than a widow. Later in life Yunmei attributed their divorce to the fact that they “lived in poverty until she eventually took her son and left her husband.”106 This is not the

story the newspapers recounted; instead the newspapers describe her actions to leave her family as irresponsible and unbecoming of a wife and mother.

While all primary sources need to be examined within the context that journalists wrote them, the articles on Jin Yunmei offer a unique perspective on the American sentiment towards this woman of the East. Almost every article defines Yunmei first as an Asian, and then as a woman; her medical degree and other accomplishments are tertiary identifiers. The signifiers that marked Jin Yunmei as ‘other’ are the ways in which the language of the articles characterize Jin Yunmei as physically typical of her race. One newspaper article in The Sun perfectly encompasses this idea, as they portray an interview with Jin Yunmei as a meeting of East and West. “The East was represented by a charming little Chinese woman, gowned in a soft clinging native robe of blue, with bands of Oriental embroidery…An interviewer represented the West.”107 Had a casual reader just read the first paragraph of this article they would have incorrectly assumed that the interviewee, “Mme. Yamei Kin” was just an elite woman of the East. The newspapers describe Yunmei using such diminutive terms such as “charming little”, or in other articles “most attractive little creature”, “typically Chinese in appearance” and “with the most musical voice”.108 These modifiers keep Yunmei estranged from Western culture, no matter how good her control of the English language is—a fact that is often stressed by each reporter. Therefore, no matter how much Jin Yunmei conformed to what the ideal of the American was, she was still Asian, and therefore other.

**Jin Yunmei: 1905-1934**

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Upon leaving Alexander in the care of close friends, Yunmei sought passage to China, seeking to set up medical clinics in Sichuan Province. These actions caught the eye of many officials in the government, as the Qing government had recently been moving towards legally sanctioning the formal education of women. Government officials saw Yunmei’s expertise as essential to establishing a medical school of sorts for women. One such government official was Yuan Shikai, the newly appointed Viceroy of Zhili, Commissioner for North China Trade, and Minister of Beiyang. Foreigners respected Yuan Shi Kai for his suppression of the Boxer Rebellion, as well as revolutionaries for his progressive influence on the Empress Cixi. It was at his urging that the Empress ended the traditional Confucian education system and instituted a system of schools and universities with state-mandated curriculum, modeled after Meiji Japan.

Yunmei was the perfect fit for a medical school modeled after Meiji Japan, as she had grown up in Tokyo during those key reform years. Yuan Shikai hoped that an American and Japanese educated Chinese woman would be the perfect candidate to run his women’s hospital in the capital city of Tianjin. The hospital work was very difficult for Yunmei, and it took her about a year to fully understand all of the administrative rules that she had to follow. The medical school took their first class of female students in 1908, after Yunmei had spent some time working on the construction of the hospital from the rundown orphanage and hospital it had been in the years prior.

The thirty-fourth year of the Guangxi Emperor (1907) passed quickly as each day presented a new challenge to Yunmei. It seemed as soon as one repair was made, the construction workers were telling her that the support beams in the old lecture hall were due to collapse at any moment. She had to be very vigilant that the workers were performing their tasks efficiently, as her superiors wanted the education reform to cost the debt-strapped Qing
government as little as possible. Yunmei made sure to update Yuan Shikai’s secretary whenever a new construction development occurred, in addition to briefing him on the development of the curriculum and the enrolled students. Enrollment at the medical school hinged on the successful completion of a qualifying exam. “Those who pass are qualified to enroll, this open-door policy is to promote more female students to register, work, and expand the diversity of student body.”

Jin Yunmei and the other teacher instructed the students daily. The lectures occurred in the same building as the hospital so that the students would be prepared for future hospital settings. Yunmei loved teaching, so she was in charge of the educating the new nursing students, as well as maintaining the sick ward of semi-permanent patients. The other senior doctors on staff were in charge of receiving new patients. Whenever there was a difficult case the doctors would always come running to Yunmei, and Yunmei often had to postpone class so as to attend to a patient the other doctors did not know how to handle.

Managing both the Northern Medical School for Women and the Government Women’s Hospital proved to be a difficult to balance. As the hospitals were considered to be a public resource, Yunmei felt as if she could not charge the largely poor population of Tianjin for their admittance to the hospital. However when the hospital was relocated to a different part of the city closer to the medical school, the Qing government implemented a $1 fee to be able to pay for the upkeep of the new hospital and new materials. Yunmei wrote frequently on this subject to the government officials in charge of the hospital as

Ever since we began charging money to see patients, we see that there is a significant decrease in the number of patients coming to see us. Before we would see anywhere from 70-80 patients a day, and after the fee was implemented we only see about 20-30 a day. Look around at other hospitals in the Tianjin area, they do not have a patient fee and have more patients there because it is cheaper. I think, if the patient is better off financially, no matter if he is coming to the clinic or asking the doctors to visit his home for treatment,
that they wealthy patient shall take the initiative to donate some money for other’s good; if the patient is not as well off, he or she does not even have the money to take ends meet…For the poor patients, I suggest to still get rid of all the fees...

Yunmei knew that the Qing government did not have the extra funds to constantly be funding the care of the poor, so she offered to temporarily donate her salary until the situation could be resolved. On top of this issue, the hospital was shorted staffed. While Xu Sheng and Dai Shi were always working in the clinic, they were unable to assist with teaching. Furthermore whenever Yunmei had to go on business trips the “the student’s homework and learning processes were delayed.” As the hospital became more and more popular with the patients in the area, Yunmei requested for a pharmacist “to help manage the dispensing of medication and other ward matters.” Towards the end of the Ob-Gyn student’s two year curriculum, the government hospital was in dire financial straits. The hospital began selling empty glass bottles to finance the running of the school, and on April 1st 1910, the hospital must collect four copper coins from every patient to stay afloat.

It was at this time that Yunmei requested four months of leave from her position so that she could return home and see both her adopted mother and Alexander, both of whom she had not seen in 5 years. The only communication she had with them was through the biweekly letters she would write to them. Yunmei reluctantly left the hospital under the supervision of the superintendent who had explicit instructions from her.

I fear that after I go to the United States, the doctors, nurses, and the other people in the hospital may hurt the hospital’s reputation accidentally due to inadequate enforcement of the regulations, which may hurt the promising future of Western medicine in China…It is a must to obtain a written statement from the family and relative, no matter how serious the illness is before the usage of anesthetics.

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110 金韵梅. *Tianjin Jian Shi:* See Appendix figure 3
111 Ibid., 12-2
112 Ibid., 4-26
113 Ibid., November 1910.
Upon her return, she found that the conditions in the hospital had deteriorated. “Ever since the rebellion in Hubei, the state treasury funds have been strained.” There was no money for coal to heat the hospital during the coming winter months, and Yunmei saw the suffering marked on the faces of the students and patients alike. By December of 1911, the government-sponsored medical school and hospital ceased function, and closed their doors to the public.

After that Jin Yunmei returned to the United States where she split her time with her aging adopted mother in New England, visiting Alexander at West Point, and going on lecture tours. When the Great War broke out in 1914, the United States Department of Agriculture hired Yunmei to look into the use of the soybean as a meat replacement in the United States. During this time she traveled China extensively, compiling a large collection of seeds and plant samples that she would then take back and present on in Washington D.C. In September of 1917, Alexander died from machine gun fire as he rushed the German line in France.

When Yunmei received the letter, she had just finished her morning tea, the letter shook in her hands and tears fell from her eyes onto the tabletop. After his death Yunmei could not find the energy to give lectures or do much more strenuous work in China on the behalf of the United States Government. Years ago, when she had Alexander’s named changed to Jin, it was with the intention that he would visit China with her for the first time, and together they would work to better the lives of the Chinese. Soon after the end of the war in 1918, Yunmei moved back to China permanently, settling in a nice traditional house in a quiet neighborhood of Beijing. She spent her time there visiting universities, entertaining elite guests, and working at government hospitals in the area. Then at the age of 72 Jin Yunmei passed away from pneumonia in the

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114 金韵梅. *Tianjin Jian Shi.*
Beijing Union Medical College, ending her years as a doctor and medical educator in the most appropriate place.

**Interlude V**

Sometimes a historian is fortunate and it is possible to portray a life - the thoughts and feelings of a subject not through the filter of others but through their own words. That is the case here, where we can glimpse and probe Jin Yunmei’s life through her own writings. Heretofore, we examined her life as documented by her adopted parents, her friend Clara, and newspaper reporters. The majority of the information in this section pertains to her time at the Women’s Government Hospital in Tianjin, and is relayed through her letters to her supervisor in the Qing provincial government. From the translation of his position it appears that the man she corresponds with is a sort of secretary for Yuan Shikai, and he relays this information to Yuan, but he is the one formally responding. These series of letters span from the year when she arrived and starting working in the hospital, around 1906, and ending in late 1911 with the closure of the hospital due to lack of funds. The lack of funds in 1911 is not a result whatsoever of Jin Yunmei’s management, but due to the severe political instability occurring in the Qing government during this year. The hospital closes with the end of Imperial rule, and would later reopen in the Republican period.

These letters are peppered with an extremely formal form of the Chinese language, reserved for formal communications between superior and inferior parties. Every letter from Yunmei beings with the characteristic phrase “受委派办理津武口岸·分省补用知府仓的韵梅禀告大人阁下: 我恭敬地禀告如下事情。Yunmei, one who is appointed by the
Superintendent, reports to you the following matters with the utmost respect and sincerity.”

Chinese government writing style formally placed Yunmei underneath another form of authority. This writing style is unlike the language Yunmei used when being interviewed by American newspapers, as also unlike the strong-headedness Juana McCartee ascribed her with. It is therefore likely that Yunmei learned this type of writing from someone else in the hospital administration.

When it came to matters within the hospital, these letters were sufficient only for matters pertaining to the overall administration of the hospital. Therefore there are many letters dedicated solely to reporting the sizes of rooms being built, the expenses for each piece of wood, and the number of students and exam scores each of them received. The exception to this bureaucratic reporting style is when Yunmei essentially pleads with Yuan Shikai to eliminate the fee for the poor patients. This deviation from the regular reporting style indicates that Yunmei felt fervently on this subject. When it was essential for the hospital to reinstate the fees in 1910, Yunmei acknowledges the difficulty the government must be in, but also stresses the number of Chinese citizens that will be without proper medical care.

Proper medical care, in Yunmei’s eyes, meant first and foremost maintaining a hygienic atmosphere within the hospital and medical school. “There were the water supply to be planned and sanitary work to be done…Dr. Kin’s aim is to make sure progress [happens] and lift the people step by step to greater sanitation and hygiene.” The strict enforcement of sanitation was characteristic of Western medicine post-germ theory, and a concept unfamiliar to traditional Chinese practices. However, it was not Jin Yunmei’s goal to supplant the traditional practices as

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115 金韵梅. Tianjin Jian Shi See Appendix 3
“she recognized that modern science is the greatest gift of the west to the east today. In method there must be adaptation rather than adoption.” Subsequently she strictly enforced sanitation as it was “indispensable”, but “in her establishment she maintains Chinese customs so far as possible…their [students] method of life is Chinese.” This coupled with her insistence that the patient’s family must grant permission for anesthesia to be used, indicates that Jin Yunmei was careful to balance the two forms of medicine in her hospital. She did not advocate for the western science to override traditional care, but only to improve it, specifically in regard to sanitation.

Even though Jin Yunmei did not grow up in a traditional Chinese household, she was able to understand the context in which the vast majority of people lived. Yunmei knew that while “the people in China recognize that western medicines are far superior to those of China…they show reluctance in giving up their old methods of treating diseases.” She ascribed this reluctance to China’s long history and the desire to preserve traditions. In one news article Yunmei depicts an example of this hesitation to accept western practices. “In China now when people are sick, especially with fever, they are afraid of water, and hence suspend bathing during their illness.” As hygiene was so important to Yunmei, she devised an innovative way to have them be clean in their illness. She told her patients that the borax she gave them was a medical powder, and for it to be effective it needed to be dissolved in a lot of water and absorbed through the skin. Thusly Yunmei developed a good reputation in the area for healing skin diseases. However, Yunmei was careful to temper this bathing directive with an understanding of the architecture of a Chinese home. In Tianjin there was a good water supply system, but no sewer system or plumbing. Therefore “if everyone bathed, the court yards would be filled with

117 “Chinese Woman Physician, Dr. Yamei Kin, To Lecture.”
118 Ibid.
mud, for there is no place to throw the water. We must impress upon our officials the need of municipal reforms.”120 Yunmei was able to use her access to western medical science and technologies to improve the care she provided to the Chinese elite and poor alike. She was also cognizant of her position at the intersection of Chinese and Western culture, and did not advocate for the western practices to displace the practices the Chinese had been using for thousands of years.

Conclusion

The use of American newspaper articles, hospital administration letters, and Prusek’s memoir has allowed for the construction of Yunmei’s fractured identity. Each source provides a version of her that does not lie congruent with the rest. In the case of her letters to Yuan Shikai, I fear much is lost in translation. The original source material was in an older form and style of Mandarin Chinese that had to be first translated into modern colloquial Chinese before any English meaning could be derived from it. The source itself comes from a larger collection on the history of Tianjin, indicating that documents pertaining to Jin Yunmei are to some extent important documents to preserve in China.

Concerns pertaining to Prusek’s memoir have already been partially addressed in Chapter Two, but a few other details he mentions warrant further investigation. When recounting Yunmei’s decision to go into the missionary service in Amoy he writes that “My [Yunmei’s] brother was entitled to betroth me, or to sell me in any way he would have liked.”121 While Yunmei did have an older brother when the McCartees adopted the two of them, no further mention of him is made in the McCartee letters. Furthermore, Yunmei never mentioned her

120 “Hospital Work Highly Important”
121 Prusek. Sister. 182.
brother in any newspaper interview. However, it is possible that because the brother was both several years older than Yunmei and a boy (rather than a girl), he was able to live as an asset to another Chinese family in the area. The discovery of this source towards the end of this research process shed much doubt on other accounts of Jin Yunmei’s life. Regardless, these multiple accounts of Jin Yunmei, each differing slightly in details, demonstrate that even in her time she was not a figure easily pinned down.
Conclusion: The New Women of China

The previous three chapters have dealt with the two different sides of the imperial encounter with China in the 19th century, particularly the spaces that women and medicine occupied during this time. Chapter one traced the encounter of traditional Chinese medicine, and how the traditional Confucian woman not only received a specialized form of medical care, but also provided care to her family. The chapter traced the life of Confucian woman Zeng Jifen as a foil to the life of Jin Yunmei, two women born in the same time, but moved through different spaces. Zeng Jifen operated still within the inner chamber, whilst Jin Yunmei operated exclusively outside of the home, and was unable to be categorized by Qing Chinese society. Their lives spanned the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, placing them temporally at a crucial turning point in China’s encounter with Western ideas. In short, these women existed at a time when China experienced its first taste of modernity.

This modernity involved the interaction between three different transformations: secularization, globalization, and temporalization.122 Just as Jin Yunmei’s government hospital suggests, the changes brought about by the influx of Western ideas did not solely involve the excision of Chinese traditional practices. “Confucian and ‘progressive’ values, local and western ideas…were not fixed entities…rather they were fluid points of departure that were transformed and often revitalized…”123 An example of this transformation is the way in which concepts of gender were “upheld, reinterpreted, or summarily dismissed at the turn of the 20th century.”124 A woman’s identity was firmly embedded in the family unit, but when public education for women began at the Qing Dynasty in 1906 it changed the structural framework of Chinese society. Now

122 Judge, Joan. Precious Raft, 3.
123 ibid. 3.
124 ibid. 3.
Jin Yunmei, who had up until this point existed outside of Confucian categories of ‘women’, became a figure that represented China’s future. The body of the woman became the canvas where both male and female revolutionaries drew out ideas about nationalism, education, and modernity. Through this conversation a new category emerged for women: 新女 (new women).

Hu Ying explores the conception of the 新女 in modernist Chinese thought in her book *Tales of Translation*. Hu Ying understands the concept of the 新女 by placing it in contrast vis-à-vis the cainü and foreign women. She asserts that the construction of the 新女 hinged on the re-imagining of the cainü by the prominent reformist Liang Qichao. In direct contrast to the “learning” proposed by Susan Mann, Liang claimed that the “ditties on the wind and the moon” were useless forms of learning that benefitted only a “privileged minority born into literati-gentry families.” Instead China “demands popular education for its (mothers of) citizens.”

Liang often used examples of cainü in his essays, without a doubt he would have accused women like Zeng Jifen and Tang Yaoqing as unworthy of the title woman of talent. The concept of cai he argued, was “in need of complete revamping through Western education.”

Liang offers a metaphorical way out of the traditional past, by offering the example of a woman to contrast the symbol of the cainü. This woman was Dr. Kang Aida (Ida Kahn) “the new-style woman knowledgeable in Western medicine—the modern cai par excellence.” Liang used the figure of the Western educated Chinese woman to serve as the symbol for the future of the Chinese woman, that of the 新女.

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126 ibid., 7.
127 ibid., 8.
128 ibid., 8.
The concept of the xinnü tied together many of the existing research on Chinese women. There are ample sources on the May Fourth Movement in China, as well as these traditional cainü, however these figures that exist between these two spaces have been largely left out of the larger debate on identity formation among Chinese women. At first Jin Yunmei looked to be the perfect piece to fit into this puzzle. She was the contemporary of these cainü (like Zeng Jifen) but had the education of the later generation of Western educated Chinese women. However few sources gave any concrete evidence that Jin Yunmei herself considered herself to be a xinnü.

While American newspapers of the day all clamored that she was the new woman would single-handedly drag China into the 20th century with her American education, their understanding of the concept of ‘new women’ was incomplete. Still, I held out hope that Jin Yunmei would be this ‘missing link’. She however, had other plans. Jin Yunmei feared that “the East as a whole might end once it unreservedly accepted European civilization. They [Japan] killed their talent, their essence.”¹²⁹ According to Prusek, she went on long tirades against “all Chinese revolutionaries, reformists, and modern scholars…like Liang Qichao” accusing them of going against Chinese traditional culture and ascribing to a Western model.¹³⁰ At first glance Yunmei’s life experiences puts her squarely within Liang Qichao’s definition of a xinnü, however this is not how Yunmei saw herself. Instead she envisioned herself as an old Chinese matriarch 老太太, and her servants called her as such.

Yunmei’s identity becomes most evident in her death. When describing plans for her burial at a rural farm she owned Yunmei remarked that “I for one would find it intolerable, even after death, to lie in a European cemetery…Here my dust will blend with soil, and after the pile

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¹³⁰ ibid., 181.
of clay they will place upon my grave has crumbled as well, I will become a field, a fertile field."^{131}

While Jin Yunmei resisted being identified as a ‘new woman’ by the Chinese reformists, this paper will end with a portrait of this ‘new woman’ as I believe it encompasses the many facets of who she was. ^{132}

"Between her handsome eyebrows her brisk spirit is revealed, and her speech is confident and sharp. A beauty carrying a precious sword, she is the divine dragon that has come alive. Who is this person? The woman of new China”.

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^{132} Li, *Women’s Poetry*. 149.
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Appendix

1. Letter from Dr. McCartee to his nephew, May 1883
2. San Francisco Chronicle December 1st 1901

女学院董事在京梅为延聘正医士等事请长芦盐运使言敦源禀文

北洋女学院董事京梅 • 女医局正医士总理女医事宜金韵梅向大人禀文

我恭敬的禀告事情如下。京梅自为是平庸之人，承蒙历届作工不嫌弃委派女医理事，自从到任以来，考虑财赋艰难，一直尽力节省。自从北洋女医院和女医学堂合并后，女医局就隶属于学堂之内，每年节省房租六百多金。它的号房和杂役都一律裁退，都将由学堂承担，每年都可以节约百金。但经费虽然减少，但医局每月没有与学堂合并之前每年所治疗的病人不减少增加了几倍。自从湖北革命以来，国库紧张，之前奉前师九天示，学堂经费十二月份后由正医士自行考虑减少，再请示师。京梅谨遵师示，在已经没问题解决的地方继续寻找，希望平衡副官的要求。宣统四年女医学堂预算表中，记有女医学堂要增添一名副医士，兼职女医局正医士，拟定月薪一百五十两，每年共需一千五百两，曾经过前贤批准。现在既然财政紧张，副医士暂时不添加。但女医局正医士一职，十分重要。必须延聘精通医术的西医担当，才能胜任。但是西医薪给较高，但女医局原额定指出大洋二百五十元不都延聘，计划请从女医学堂副医士中每月拨银五十两填补女医局正医士薪水。其余一百两一概停发，这每年可以节省经费一百五十两。女医学堂原有四十名学生，今日因为湖北叛乱，外省学生假回原籍的人有十名，计划暂时不补足学生，每月可以节省十名学生伙食费四十五，每年共节省四百八十两，学生每年毕业购买奖赏的五十两，也可以去。学堂男女杂役计划减去三名，每月可节省三十二两，每年节省一百二十四两。女医学堂每年可以节省经费两千三百五十四两。女医局原来有庶务长一职，从前是已故去世的白玉如担任的，月薪三十两，伙食费四两。这位庶务长于宣统二年八月因病逝世，后因庶务长的妻子白淑芬接任，每月支付薪水二十两，伙食费四两。又因为白淑芬年少，不熟悉局中事务，而且家中有老人小孩要照看，难以推辞，又派女医学堂司事丁凤怡兼职女医局庶务。局中杂物，都由这名庶务办理。白庶务长只每天到局中看一下，遇到家里有事可能到不到局。我想在局中忙的时候还可能抽空一点，以表体恤，现在国库紧张，雇一人就必须要当一个人用，不能浪费国家的钱，能否将女医局庶务长一职裁撤，局中公事由丁凤怡兼职庶务一人就足够处理，如果有文件等事，有女医学堂文案书记可以兼职办理，也不用另付薪水。这样每月能节省二十四两，每年节省二百四十八两。女医局每月额外杂费一百大洋，用来购买药房所需要的细布、中国棉花、标本和局中所需的煤烟、火油等，请将这笔款项停止。药房需要的物品，计划从医局每年药费中支付。局中所需煤炭、火油和其他零星用品，计划从医局款中支付，每月可节省大洋一千二百金。如果正医士精通医理，医局一定越来越好，所以挂号