

1. Missionary Journal, “Chinese Character”

This article was published in a Protestant missionary journal, based in Canton, that operated from 1832 until 1851. Its readership included both the foreigners living in Canton and home religious communities in Britain and the United States. It is worthwhile noting that the title of the article places the author in the position of knowledgeable observer, thereby rendering his comments both “factual” and honest. The author maintains a sympathetic attitude towards Chinese women, citing their beauty and charm, yet paints them as victims of insensitive males and an oppressive culture, presuming an invisible sorrow shared by all women in China. Confucianism is named as the primary offender, and Christian conversion the sole savior. One may presume that this portrayal of delicate Chinese women as victims of brutish Confucianism helped to excite enthusiasm for the missionary cause in China both at home and abroad.

Source: Lay, G. Tradescant. “Remarks on Chinese Character and Customs.” *Chinese Repository* 12 (1843): 139-142.

No apology can or ought to be made in the behalf of the unfeeling practice of spoiling the feet of the female. It had its origin solely in pride, which after the familiar adage, is said to feel no pain. It is deemed, however, such an essential among the elements of feminine beauty, that nothing save the sublimer considerations of Christianity will ever wean them from the infatuation. The more reduced this useful member is, the more graceful and becoming it is thought to be. When gentlemen are reciting the unparalleled charms of Súchau ladies they seldom forget to mention the extreme smallness of the foot, as that which renders them complete, and lays the topstone upon all the rest of their personal accomplishments. The compression of the foot does not render the Chinese lady incapable of walking, nor does it give that awkwardness to the gait which one might be apt to expect. Walking among females of the lower orders is often effected with difficulty, but this arises from the imperfect manner in which the operation has been performed, and the inequality of the surface they are obliged to tread upon. But the speed with which many of them trip over the ground when roused by any emergency would sometimes almost induce us to think they had sustained no loss at all. Within the dwellings of those whom Providence has favored with a larger share of its gifts, the ladies move about with a quick and noiseless pace, and seem to a lively imagination to float rather than walk. The ordinary specimens of the street and the wayside are not often calculated to give us a high opinion of female beauty in China. But amongst the better ranks, examples of great personal attractions are not uncommon. In them to a loveliness of form and feature are joined a peculiar softness of manner, an eye beaming with a flood of light, a smile replete with nature's own enchantments, and a voice that lights upon the ear like the melting strains of an Æolian harp, or the subdued pulses of distant music. In youth and at home she constitutes the chief joy of her mother, and requites the wakeful exercises of maternal fondness, apart from those observances which filial duty demands, with a variety of well-pleasing arts, such as the most ingenious mind alone could invent, and the kindest heart feel and put in practice. To preserve the delicacy of her hand she is not permitted to bear her part in the active duties of the household, but spends her time in works of embroidery, conversing with her female friends, or in dutiful attentions to her

mother. In the common walks of experience, I know not a more engaging sight than that of a mother and her daughter, each apparently forgetting herself to make the other happy. At home her attire is often plain, sometimes rich, but only splendid when occasions of festivity render gay clothing a point of etiquette. Some latitude must be given for the diversity of tastes, but I think the costume of a Chinese lady is in shape, style and combination of colors not surpassed by anything we meet in our own country.

At home or abroad, in holiday robes or in plain clothing, the heart of a Chinese female seems to be at all times ready to overflow with mirth and good humor. Ill usage or misfortune may make her sad for a while, but the smallest efforts to soothe or amuse on the part of one whom she values drives away all her heaviness. Confucian philosophy has done its best to unfit a Chinese for the possession of such an heritage, by assigning to woman nothing but the privilege of drudging for her lord. Those well chosen terms of esteem and preference with which we are wont to address females, and the countless variety of polite offices which we perform as matters of course, find no place either in the written or unwritten laws of Chinese society. Native poetry and romance descant upon the accomplishments of the lover and the charms of his mistress, and in beautiful terms and imagery eulogize the bliss of chaste and well-requited love. But these sentiments seem to be confined to the poet, whose imagination guided by the promptings of his heart, and the refinement of his understanding, portrays what ought to be, but what I fear seldom happens. It is hard to conceive how a man can behold the object of his best affections, and exhibit no desire to show her any marks of regard, especially when his heart has been softened by education, and no external circumstance interferes with the display of his feelings. I have seen bride and bridegroom at their home surrounded only by friends, and have chided the latter with want of attention to his partner, but without effect. To present her with a cake, or an orange, seemed to be beyond the sphere of his acquirements. In obedience to my wish he would order a servant to perform the office, but would not venture to do it himself. Whenever the light of heaven-born Christianity shall dawn upon this people, and begin to dissipate the mists of a diabolical system of ethics which has so long brooded over the land, one of the first evidences of its presence will be a restoration of fair woman to all her rights and privileges; she will then be regarded, as she ought to be, "the glory of the man," and a Chinese will then behold a paradise yielding flowers to embellish his feasts, to adorn the friendly board, to refine, ennoble and rejoice his own heart. Now a Chinese woman looks forward to no such recompenses in her husband; her solaces prospective as well as present must be found chiefly among her female friends and acquaintances; as they do not form the subject of her hope, so the loss cannot affect her with any keen sense of disappointment. Still sorrow at being slighted an joy at being honored, are so natural and instinctive, that we can scarcely conceive a human heart to be without them. But if she wants the prerogatives which belong to her sex, she by no means lacks a fitness to enjoy them;—no one is more perceptive of what is kind and courteous, no one more ready to evince her sense of it by words, and acts that are always clothed with meekness and humility.

2. Newspaper, Confucian Women

This excerpt is part of a serial article entitled “The Natural History of a Chinese Girl,” that ran between July 4, 1890, and July 18, 1890. *The North China Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette* was a secular newspaper published in Shanghai between 1870 and 1941, enjoying a wide readership among the foreign communities along the Chinese coast. One might remark on the choice of title for the article—“natural history” implies an anthropological perspective. In the introduction of the article, the Chinese people are described as physically and intellectually superior but morally deficient, leading to the following rhetorical question: “How happens it, then, that the Chinese are almost the only people boasting an ancient and developed civilization who despise their own daughters...?” (*The North China Herald*, 4 July 1890, p. 15). The section excerpted here lays the blame on “the Confucian system,” delineating seven “sins” against Chinese women. With the exception of the last “sin,” this litany is quite representative in rhetorical terms: foreign observers often described Chinese women as objects of oppression.

Source: North China Herald and Supreme Court and Consular Gazette, “The Natural History of a Chinese Girl,” July 18, 1890.

We must regard the position of women, and especially of wives, in China as the ultimate outcome and most characteristic fruitage of the Confucian system. In our view it has been a bitter fruit; and in recapitulating we wish to lay especial emphasis upon the Seven Deadly Sins of Confucianism in its relation to women.

I.—It provides them with no education. Their minds are left in a state of nature, until millions of them are led to suppose that they have no minds at all, an opinion which their husbands often do much to confirm, and upon which they habitually act.

II.—The sale of wives and daughters. This comes about so naturally, and it might almost be said so inevitably, when certain conditions prevail, that it is taken by the Chinese as a matter of course. Except in years of famine it appears in some parts of the empire to be rare, but in other parts it is the constant and the normal state of things for daughters to be as really sold as are horses and cattle.

III.—Too early and too universal marriages. A considerable part of the unhappiness caused by Chinese marriages may fairly be charged to the immaturity of the victims. To treat children as if they were adults, while at the same time treating them as children who require the same watch and ward as other children, does not appear to be a rational procedure, nor can it be claimed that it is justified by its results. That a new pair constitute a distinct entity, to be dealt with independently, is a proposition which Confucianism treats with scorn, if indeed it ever entertains such a conception at all. The compulsory marriage of all girls forces all Chinese society into cast-iron grooves, and leaves no room for exceptional individual development. It throws suspicion around every isolated struggle against this galling bondage, and makes the unmarried woman seem a personified violation of the decrees of Heaven and of the laws of man.

IV.—Infanticide of female infants. This is a direct, if not a legitimate result of the tenet that male children are absolutely indispensable, applied in a social system where dire poverty is the rule, and where an additional mouth frequently means impending starvation. In a chapter in her "Pagoda Shadows" on "The extent of a Great Crime" Miss Fielde combines a great variety of testimony taken from several different provinces, in the following paragraph. "I find that a hundred and sixty Chinese women, all over fifty years of age, had borne six hundred and thirty-one sons, and five hundred and thirty-eight daughters. Of the sons, three hundred and sixty-six, or nearly sixty per cent, had lived more than ten years; while of the daughters only two hundred and five, or thirty-eight per cent, had lived ten years. The hundred and sixty women, according to their own statements, had destroyed a hundred and fifty eight of their daughters; but none had ever destroyed a boy. As only four women had reared more than three girls, the probability is that the number of infanticides confessed to is considerably below the truth. I have occasionally been told by a woman that she had forgotten just how many girls she had had, more than she wanted. The greatest number of infanticides owned to by any one woman is eleven."

Infanticide will never cease in China, until the notion that the dead are dependent for their happiness upon sacrifices offered to them by the living shall have been totally overthrown.

V.—Secondary wives. Concubinage is the natural result of the Confucian theory of ancestral worship. The misery which it has caused and still causes in China is beyond comprehension. Nothing can uproot it but a decay of faith in the assumption underlying all forms of worship of the dead.

VI.—Suicides of wives and daughters. The preceding causes, operating singly and in combination, are wholly sufficient to account for the number of suicides among Chinese women. The wonder rather is that there are not more. But whoever undertakes to collect facts on this subject for any given district will not improbably be greatly surprised at the extraordinary prevalence of this practice. It is even adopted by children, and for causes relatively trifling. At times it appears to spread, like the small pox, and the thirst for suicide becomes virtually an epidemic. According to the native newspapers, there are parts of China in which young girls band themselves into a secret league to commit suicide within a certain time after they have been betrothed or married. The wretchedness of the lives to which they are condemned is thoroughly appreciated in advance, and fate is thus effectually checkmated. It would be wrong to overstate the evils suffered by women in China, evils which have indeed many alleviations, and which are not to be compared to those of here sisters in India or in Turkey. But after all abatements have been made it remains true that the death-roll of suicides is the most convincing proof of the woes endured by Chinese women.

VII.—Overpopulation. The whole Chinese race, is and always has been given up with a single devotion to the task of raising up a posterity, to do for the fathers what the fathers have done for the grandfathers. In this particular line, they have realised Wesley's

conception of the ideal church in its line, where as he remarked the members are 'All at it, and always at it.' War, famine, pestilence sweep off scores of millions of the population, but a few decades of peace seem to repair the ravages of the past, which are lost to sight like battle-fields covered with wide areas of waving grain. However much we may admire the recuperative power of the Chinese people as a whole, and individually, it is impossible not to feel righteous indignation toward a system which violates those beneficent laws of nature, which would mercifully put an end to many branches of families when such branches are unfitted to survive. It is impossible to contemplate with equanimity the deliberate, persistent, and uniform propagation of poverty, vice, disease and crime, which ought rather to be surrounded with every restriction to prevent its multiplication, and to see this propagation of evil and misery done, too, with an air of virtue, as if this were of itself a kind of religion, often indeed the only form of religion on which the Chinese take any vital interest.

It is this system which loads down the rising generation with the responsibility for feeding and clothing tens of thousands of human beings who ought never to have been born, and whose existence can never be other than a burden to themselves, a period of incessant struggle without respite and without hope.

To the intelligent foreigner, the most prominent fact in China is the poverty of its people. There are too many villages to the square mile, too many families to the village, too many 'mouths' to the family. Wherever one goes, it is the same weary tale with interminable reiteration. Poverty, poverty, poverty, always and evermore poverty. The empire is broad, its unoccupied regions are extensive, and its undeveloped resources undoubtedly vast. But in what way can these resources be so developed as to benefit the great mass of the Chinese people? By none, with which we are acquainted, or of which we can conceive, without a radical disturbance of the existing conditions. The seething mass of overpopulation, must be drawn off to the regions where it is needed, and then only will there be room for the relief of those who remain. It is impossible to do anything for people who are wedged together after the manner of matches in a box. Imagine a surgeon making the attempt to set the broken leg of a man in an omnibus in motion, which at the time contained twenty other people, most of whom also had broken legs which likewise require setting! The first thing to do would be to get them all unloaded, and to put them where they could be properly treated, with room for the treatment, and space for breathing. It is, we repeat, not easy to perceive how even the most advanced political economy can do anything of permanent benefit for the great mass of the Chinese without a redistribution of the surplus population. But at this point practical Confucianism intervenes, and having indeed the begetting of this swarm of human beings, it declares that they must not abandon the graves of their ancestors, who require their sacrifices, but must in the same spot continue to propagate a number their posterity to continue the interminable process.

The world is still large, and it has, and for ages will doubtless continue to have, ample room for all the additional millions which its existing millions can produce. The world was never so much in need of the Chinese as to-day, and never, on the other hand, were the Chinese more in need of the world. But if China is to hold its own, much more if it is

to advance as other nations have advanced, and do advance, it must be done under the head of new forces. Confucianism has been a might power to build up, and to conserve. But Confucianism with its great merits has committed many 'Deadly Sins,' and of those sins it must ultimately suffer the penalty. Confucianism as a developing force is a force which is spent. Sooner or later it must give way to something stronger, wiser, and better.

3. Missionary Journal, Christianity and Confucianism

This selection is the ninth of ten sections in an article comparing Confucianism and Christianity. The article was published in a missionary journal printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai. *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* operated between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. This selection very favorably compares the fate of women in Christian societies to those in Confucian societies. For example, Christianity uplifts women, Confucianism degrades them; Christian women are beautiful, Confucian women are ugly. The author employs the logic that women as mothers have an indelible impact on society, concluding, "There is little hope of renovating China until the mothers of China are renovated in heart and life." One interesting aspect of this article relates to its representation of women in general terms: whether Confucian or Christian, women are not agents, but rather wholly shaped by the moral forces that surround them.

Source: "The Ethics of Christianity and Confucianism Compared." *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 17 (1886): 377-378.

IX.—Christianity and Confucianism are agreed in regarding the relation of husband and wife as a sacred and exalted one. Christianity places it first in importance, while Confucianism subordinates it to the relation of parent and child. Christ came into the world, born of a pure and devout woman. His tenderness and love towards the women who followed him, and ministered to him, has done much to exalt their place in Christian society. The wife has come to be the companion of her husband. In childhood she has been trained in knowledge, and cultivated in virtue, and when the responsibilities of motherhood come upon her, she is prepared to educate the young lives committed to her care, both by wise precepts and a right example. Good seed is thus sown in the tender years of childhood, which produces beautiful flowers and luscious fruits in later years. Confucianism degrades woman, it neglects her education. The popular saying; — — — — —. "It is the virtue of a woman to be without talent," is a true embodiment of the spirit of Confucianism towards women. This reminds us of the saying in the evil days of American history, now happily past, that "slaves were only injured by being educated," which was true if they were to be kept in slavery. Women in China are kept in ignorance. Among the wealthy they live in pampered idleness; among the poor their lot is one of drudgery. Children are born to them, and committed to their care, but they are themselves but children in knowledge and self-government. They rule with passion and caprice, and the minds of the children in their most impressible years, are fed on husks and chaff. Without steady, judicious government, they grow wild and lawless, or cunning and

hypocritical. They follow their evil impulses, and the evil example set before them, of abandonment to paroxysms of rage, when their wills are in the slightest crossed; and thus in a land of boasted filial piety, filial impiety abounds in all classes of society. There is little hope of renovating China until the mothers of China are renovated in heart and life. Confucianism justifies polygamy. It declares that the greatest act of filial impiety is to be without children. Confucius was the son of a concubine, and the Confucian literature has no word of condemnation for the practice of polygamy. Shun received from Yao his two daughters at once for wives, and emperors and high officers, in an unbroken line, have set before the people, in this regard, an evil example. Women can be divorced for seven reasons; irreverence to the husband's parents, impurity, laziness, barrenness, excessive talking, theft, evil disease. If a husband is stricken down by death in any extraordinary way, it is a meritorious act for the wife to destroy herself, and be buried in the tomb with the husband. There is a tablet in Tungchou near my home, erected by the officers of the city in honor of a woman, who starved herself to death by the grave of her husband. The memory of this commendable act is thus preserved for the imitation of other women. There is no lot so hard in China as that of the young wife. She is yoked in life, without choice of her own, to an entire stranger. For the husband to love the wife is a weakness to be condemned. The son must side with the mother against the wife, and beat her as he would a child, at his own or the mother's caprice. Cases of suicide are continually occurring among the people, where young wives find life insupportable, and they choose self-destruction to end their miseries. So general is the tyranny of mothers-in-law, that young wives are congratulated by their friends, where the mother-in-law has been removed by death. Christianity softens and enriches the lives of women, until the graces of gentleness and purity, of patience and love, write themselves in lines of beauty upon their faces, as they grow old in years. Confucianism neglects the culture of women, and as they grow old in years, their faces grow ugly with the marks of ignorance and neglect, of selfishness and passion.

4. Missionary Journal, Foot Binding 1

This article was published in a Protestant missionary journal, based in Canton, that operated from 1832 until 1851. Its readership included both the foreigners living in Canton and home religious communities in Britain and the United States. The author begins the piece with the shocking statement that the Chinese are both physically and morally deformed and goes on to present the practice of foot binding among Chinese women as proof for his remarks. This article, which presents foot binding in a negative light, is noteworthy in two aspects. First, in asserting authoritative knowledge about foot binding, the author only cites texts by Western authors. Second, the author deliberately employs "Science" to serve his viewpoint in appending the transcription of a dissection of "a specimen of a Chinese foot." The introduction of this transcription is included here.

Source: "Small feet of the Chinese females: remarks on the origin of the custom of compressing the feet; the extent and effects of the practice; with an anatomical description of a small foot." *Chinese Repository* 3 (1835): 537-539.

Art. I. Small feet of the Chinese females: remarks on the origin of the custom of compressing the feet; the extent and effects of the practice; with an anatomical description of a small foot.

Ample evidence of the inefficiency of the ethical systems of the Chinese, is found in their national and domestic customs. Not only the minds of the people, but their bodies also, are distorted and deformed by unnatural usages; and those laws, physical as well as moral, which the Creator designed for the good of his creatures, are perverted, and, if possible, would be annihilated. The truth of these remarks is presented to our view in a clear light by the anatomical description, which forms a part of this article. Historians are not agreed as to the time or place in which the practice of compressing the feet originated. Du Halde states, but on what authority he does not inform us, that the practice originated with the infamous Take, the last empress of the Shang dynasty, who perished in its overthrow, B.C. 1123. "Her own feet being very small, she bound them tight with fillets, affecting to make that pass for a beauty which was really a deformity. However, the women all followed her example; and this ridiculous custom is so thoroughly established, that to have feet of the natural size is enough to render them contemptible." Again, the same author remarks, "The Chinese themselves are not certain what gave rise to this odd custom. The story current among us, which attributes the invention to the ancient Chinese, who, to oblige their wives to keep at home, are said to have brought little feet into fashion, is by some looked upon as fabulous. The far greater number think it to be a political design, to keep women in continual subjection. It is certain that they are extremely confined, and seldom stir out of their apartments, which are in the most retired place in the house; having no communication with any but the women-servants." Others state that the custom originated in the time of the woo tae, or 'five dynasties,' about A.D. 925. According to the native historian, quoted in Morrison's View of China, "it is not known when the small feet of females were introduced. It is said that the custom arose in the time of the five dynasties. Le Howchoo ordered his concubine, Yaou, to bind her feet with silk, and cause them to appear small, and in the shape of the new moon. From this, sprung the imitation of every other female."

In regard to the extent and effects of the practice, there is not the same degree of uncertainty. It prevails more or less throughout the whole empire, but only among the Chinese. The Tartar ladies do not yield to the cruel custom, but allow their feet to retain their natural form. In the largest towns and cities, and generally in the most fashionable parts of the country, a majority of the females have their feet compressed. In some places, as many as seven or eight in ten are tormented in this way; in other places, the number is not more than four or five in ten. The operation of compressing the feet is commenced in infancy; and so closely and constantly are the bandages applied, in the most successful cases, as to prevent almost entirely the growth and extension of the limb. Ladies of rank and taste, who are fashioned in this manner, are rendered quite unable to walk. The effects of this process are extremely painful. Children will often tear away the bandages in order to gain relief from the torture; but their temporary removal, it is said, greatly increase the pain by causing a violent revulsion of the blood to the feet. This violent compression of the limbs, moreover, is injurious to health, and renders the victim a

cripple through life. In some cases the compression is very slight, and consequently the effect is less hurtful. It is no marvel that the Chinese ladies never dance; it is rather a matter of surprise that they can move at all on such ill shaped and distorted members; some of which, scarcely if at all, exceed two and a half inches in length. Those who can avoid it, seldom appear abroad except in sedans; (we speak of those in the neighborhood of Canton;) but there are frequent cases, among the poorer classes, where the unhappy victims of this barbarous custom are compelled to walk on their little feet. Their gait appears exceedingly awkward to others, and must be painful to themselves. Generally, in attempting to walk any considerable distance, they find a stick, or the shoulder of a matron or servant girl, a necessary support. In walking, the body is bend forwards at a considerable inclination, in order to place the centre of gravity over the feet; and the great muscular exertion required for preserving the balance is evinced by the rapid motion of the arms, and the hobbling shortness of the steps.

The form of these ‘golden lilies,’ kin leën, as the Chinese call them, is accurately describe din the following paper, from the Transactions of the Royal Society of London. It was written by Bransby Blake Cooper, esq., surgeon to Guy’s hospital; and was communicated to the society by the secretary, P.M. Roget, M.D., March 5th, 1829.

“A specimen of a Chinese foot, the account of which I have the honor to lay before the Royal Society, was removed from the dead body of a female found floating in the river at Canton. On its arrival in England, it was presented to sir Astley Cooper, to whose kindness I am indebted for the opportunity of making this curious dissection. Without entering into an inquiry whether this singular construction, and as we should esteem it hideous deformity, of the Chinese female foot, had its origin in oriental jealousy, or was the result of an unnatural taste in beauty; I shall content myself with describing the remarkable deviations from the original structure, which it almost every-where presents.”

5. Missionary Journal, Foot Binding 2

This article was published in a missionary journal printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai. *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* operated between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. The article takes up a subject that excited great interest among Western residents of China: foot binding. The author begins with a review of the origins of the practice, discusses it as current fashion, relates the practice to public health, and concludes with a detailed description of the bound foot. The author pronounces a relatively benign interpretation of the practice (compared to “Small feet of the Chinese females...,” *The Chinese Repository* 3 (1835): 537-539 for example), noting that it does not render women incapacitated. Nevertheless, Dudgeon makes clear the abhorrence Westerners feel for the custom, labeling it “positively repulsive and disagreeable.”

Source: Dudgeon, J., M.D. “The Small Feet of Chinese Women.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 2 (1869): 93-96.

THE SMALL FEET OF CHINESE WOMEN.

BY J. DUDGEON, M. D.

My attention has been called to this subject by a case of a remarkable bony-fibrous tumour of the small foot, the result of a fall seven years before, and which is fully detailed in the Hospital Report for 1868.

Those who have looked into this matter, even in the most cursory way, must have been struck with the uncertainty of the time at and the manner in which the practice first obtained. The reasons assigned for it, also, are equally curious. Some ascribe the honour of having set the fashion to Li-yao-niang, the favorite concubine of Li-heu-chu, the last prince of the Heu T'ang dynasty (A. D. 934.) she had the repute of being slender, beautiful, and an accomplished dancer. The Emperor caused golden lilies to be made, adorned with all manner of precious stones, and covered with images of snowy clouds; and upon these the favorite danced, with her feet compressed by bandages into the shape of the new moon.

Mention is made in Chinese books of small feet in the time of Chen-heu-chu, the last prince of the Chen dynasty (A. D. 583.) But their statements are not quite to be relied upon. The similarity of the story may be traced to the likeness in the names and characters of the two Emperors, both being also the last princes of dynasties.

Others ascribe a similar story to Yang-ti of the Sui dynasty (A. D. 505-613.) The practice is not referred to in the classics, which is presumptive evidence that it did not exist so early as the time of Confucius. We know from reliable authority that the Empress of Hieuntsung (A. D. 713) had large feet; it is therefore highly probable that the practice does not date further back than the 10th century. From the concubine P'an-fei of Chen-heu-chu, it is said to be derived "golden lilies," a term applied to small feet. Tradition reports that this poetical term originated in this way; her lord caused the palace floor to be adorned with lilies, figured in gold, and exclaimed as his favorite walked upon them, "Every step produces a lily." This may be the date of the origin of the practice, or at least of the poetical term, although it may have been 500 years later before small feet became general.

Among the sundry reasons assigned for the origin of this custom, some relate that one of the princesses or concubines in the Shang dynasty (B. C. 1766-1122), of extraordinary beauty and virtue, had feet like a bird, and therefore kept them always carefully wrapped up and concealed, even from the Emperor, her husband. The court ladies followed her example, and thus it soon became universal. The literati place little faith in this story. Others inform us that it arose from copying the pattern of a club-footed Empress; or, in other words, because of her own club-feet, she caused all the court ladies to adopt small feet, to appear like hers—a condition of parts resembling what we term *talipes calcaneus*. It is alleged by others that small and delicate feet being fashionable and much admired,

even one sought to be in the fashion, and thus what could not be had by nature was gained by art. Perfect beauty is thought to lie in extreme delicacy. By others, the concubine of the T'ang prince is said to have begun it, by first binding her own feet; and the people imitated her example. This account is not inconsistent with the usual course of the capricious dame, Fashion. On the other hand, it is said that having some deformity in her feet, she had recourse to compression to remedy the natural defect, and gallantry suggested that all women should imitate her. In regard to this last course, an old writer points the moral, that princes ought to avoid making themselves the authors of ridiculous novelties. Of this personage with the ill-shapen feet, it is said she was so lowly and virtuous, that the court matrons naturally and voluntarily bound their feet to appear like her.

Li-yao-niang's whole conduct has received quite another construction by some Chinese, and considerable weight has been attached to it. It is attributed to her that she adopted this mode to gain increase, and to excite the affection of her imperial lord; and it is said to be on this account, even at the present day, that the small foot is always robed and concealed in pictures, that it is banished from the conversation of the polite and learned society, that it is rude and immoral to gaze upon it, or seek to examine it, and that having done so, it is made a matter of confession in Roman Catholic churches. As it originated in a desire, and is probably partly maintained or at least found, to create and excite lustful and licentious feelings, by the display of a small foot, a small and highly embroidered shoe, and flowery and gaudy under dresses, so the subject on this account is shunned in society. It is evidently inconvenient for all the purposes for which the foot was intended; and to the Chinese—who, not to speak of their highly practical turn and character, abhor amputations, decapitation, cutting into a thousand pieces, and even tooth extraction, because of its filial impiety—its existence must indeed seem strange and inconsistent. Their bodies, received from their parents, should be kept complete and un mutilated; how otherwise, too, could they appear respectable in the next world? Moreover, Confucius did not know of its existence, or at least never inculcated it, and this too should be a good reason for its discontinuance! This view of the subject is here lightly touched upon (further digression and amplification would be out of place in a journal of this kind), as some prominence has been given to it by one or two modern French writers, who, for the reasons above stated, have ascribed some unusual development of certain organs as the cause and effect of the practice; and this is founded on the law of equilibrium, which it is said the Chinese fully understand when applied to the vegetable world. I do not believe that any such result follows from compression of the foot. It is difficult to see what osseous, vascular, muscular or nervous connexion there is to account for this supposed condition of parts.

There are not wanting those who ascribe it to jealousy—a device of the husbands to keep their wives at home, prevent too much gadding about, to curb their power, and place them under subjection to their lawful lords. One of their ancient Emperors is said to have planned this, and to have purposely given the preference to small feet. But this crippling of the instruments of locomotion, and attempt to render walking a burden, has not deprived them of the power of walking, or of longing to see the world. It is also said to have sprung up from the desire of an Empress to please her royal master; and having

succeeded in this, the other ladies of the court vied with her by following her example, and so divided the imperial attentions. The peculiar, graceful, easy, and waving-to-and-fro motions of the stage in dancing and playing were much admired and coveted by the ladies, and the desire for the obtainment of this excellence resulted in bandaged feet. Such are a few of the many reasons given by different persons for the origin of this practice.

Different nations vary in their ideas of beauty. All have more or less adopted some standard, and practised it; no matter how far that standard may be removed from the natural one. The Chinese thing *small feet* beauty, *par excellence*. To us these little feet, "which lie in their gilded haunts like some criminals, who for parricide or other heinous offences are buried alive," and which give to the body that hobbling, unsteady, always inclined gait, are anything but charming. The club appearance, the unnatural instep the uncouth ankle (!), or the shriveled, lifeless skin, and the apparently ankylosed joints, are to us positively repulsive and disagreeable. The Chinese are not alone in having departed from the standard of nature, and having sought beauty and distinction even in deformity. The Caribs, Mexicans, and at an early date the peoples of Eastern Europe (and the Poles of the present day), flattened the foreheads of their children by applying boards, bandages, or other suitable contrivances, because they thought those the most noble who had the longest heads; as Hippocrates, the Father of Physic, says regarding the Macrocephali, a Scythian race, who probably inhabited the Crimea; and cranial remains, recently brought to light at Kertch, would go to prove the truth of the practice. The Malays file off the enamel of their teeth, and dye them black, for the all sufficient reason, according to Davis, that dogs' teeth are white. The Greek and Turk are believed to have in part produced their rounded heads by the effect of the national cap and turban. (The continued compression however for centuries has had no perceptible influence on the structure and size of the Chinese female foot, which if allowed to grow becomes perfectly natural in size and figure.) The Polynesian chiefs have had their distinctive coat of arms emblazoned on their skin and the Esquimaux are said to have bits of stone stuffed through a hole in each cheek.

In Europe even, at the present day, fashion has compelled too many to cripple a region much more essential to life than the feet. The tightly compressed wasp-like waist is quite as absurd and much more mischievous than the cramping of the foot, which after all is more inconvenient than dangerous. I have never seen a strong, robust, small-footed woman; but neither have I seen any diseases of the small foot, or other parts, traceable directly to this cause; and the tumour case, mentioned in the Report, might have happened to a large-footed person. In the South, a few cases of caries, necrosis or softening of bone, sprains, bruises, and fractures, simple and compound, have been noted; and in a few instances gangrene, where the feet dropped off at the ankle-joint. Many of the diseases peculiar to woman are however, more amenable to treatment in the large-footed class; for as a rule they are without those restrictive, seclusive and sedentary rules prescribed by society for the small-footed class. The former, except where the Tartar element prevails, as in the capital and the garrisons of the large cities, are of a low grade in society. One reason, however, why diseases of the small foot are seldom if ever seen, may probably be owing to the natural reluctance to exhibit their feet. By no means can a

sight of them be had for examination. There is a sort of masonic secrecy about them; the maid turns away her gaze, it is said by some, while her mistress is engaged with her golden lilies. The repulsion is sometimes so great, that it is said that the husband even is not permitted to see the bare feet of his wife. But the experience of this and other hospitals in China proves that diseases of the small foot are rarely, if ever, seen; and at the same time the dispensaries are often thronged with this class, who frequently come long distances on foot. In most cases, the better class come in chairs or cart, and are supported while walking by leaning on the shoulder of a maid servant.

Such diseases as chlorosis, dysmenorrhœa, amenorrhœa, leucorrhœa, &c., are found more frequent and intractable among the small-footed class, and these affections seriously affect population. As a rule, Chinese families are smaller than European; the number of unfruitful marriages is enormously great—partly owing to the causes above stated, but doubtless also in part to the extensive use and deleterious effects of opium smoking, and to the practice of suckling their children for three, four, or five years, which is so common here. At the same time in no country is the desire for posterity greater, especially for the male children.

The Tartar women do not wear small feet, but shoes with large square piece of wood in the middle of the sole. These likewise appear very inconvenient; but in wet weather or muddy streets, they raise the finely embroidered satin slipper above danger. In Peking, the Tartar element is so strong, that small feet are less frequently seen than in the South. The small foot, too, is much larger here. A milder form of compression, especially among the country people, exists; the four toes being bound under the foot, without changing the direction of the heel very much. Ladies in the South desire a three inch foot; here they are content with a seven inch. The Chinese have naturally very small hands and feet. The proximity of the large-footed Mongols and Mantchus, and the influence of the court, we have said, exert their influence here, and render possible the marriage of large-footed daughters to Mantchu husbands. It is illegal for the bannermen and Chinese to intermarry; nevertheless about 20 per cent of the former marry large-footed Chinese; but the marriage of Mantchu daughters to Chinese husbands—a union not considered respectable and complimentary from a Mantchu stand-point—is rare, not more probably than about one per cent. The Emperor's wives and concubines must belong to the large-footed class; in other words, must be Mantchus. Women of no class beyond the above are permitted to enter the palace; and some one has said, with what degree of truth I know not, that a small-footed woman entering the palace would be put to death immediately. One of Taukuang's concubines, tung-fei, out of sport, one day dressed herself in the habiliments of the small-footed class, and appeared before the Emperor. She was instantly ordered from his presence, and he refused ever to see her again. She remained in strict seclusion in the palace. It is a rule of this dynasty never to expel those who have been once admitted to the seraglio. Once in the Forbidden City, always there. The Chinese generally choose, or rather have chosen for them by their mothers or go-betweens, a small-footed woman for their first or principal wife; and they themselves add to this, by purchase or otherwise, a large-footed concubine; and vice versa, a Mantchu with a large-footed wife, if of sufficient means to maintain more, adds the desired number of small-footed secondary wives to his stock.

Poverty and necessity sometimes lay an interdict on this essential of all female beauty. Were it not so, all would be in fashion. The richer the families, the earlier in life is the compression commenced. Like the long nails, small feet convey the idea of gentility and exemption from labour. The strength of this fashion may be judged of from the very poorest striving to conform to it. Fashion leads mothers not to neglect this part of the education of their daughters, however careless in other matters. Few girls are taught to read; almost all have their feet bound. Fashion must always prevail over convenience. Women ought never to appear in public; in state affairs they neither assist by their counsel, nor disturb by their ambition; and thus, to make this maxim more observed, they are taught that small feet constitute beauty, and the mother's first care therefore is to make her daughter fashionable by making her a cripple.

It has been said by some one, that before the marriage engagements take place, the parties not being permitted to see each other, the exact size of the lady's foot is given, after the manner of sending photographs sometimes practised in Europe. And again, that the small shoe is exhibited to the parents of the bridegroom, as one of the arguments employed in discussing the amount of purchase money, or money to be given in presents, to the bride and her family; which after all looks very much like a business transaction. Ripa tells us of the case of a physician, who he knew, whose only intercourse with a woman, with whom he lived, was viewing and fondling her feet. In most parts of China, and especially in the South, the relatives and friends of the bridegroom have a custom of examining on the day of marriage the feet of the bride. The smaller they are, the greater the rejoicings; and the fortunate husband, and the living and attentive parents of the bride, are highly congratulated. In the North of this province, in the district of Suen-hwa fu, there is said to be a custom among the inhabitants of holding, in the fifth month of each year, a sort of "Small Feet Exhibition." All classes of the people turn out in mass, and line the streets, and fill the door ways, while the young and the married ladies strive with each other in the display of the smallest feet. This show takes place through the principal streets of the town.

The age at which the process of cramping commences varies with regard to the social status of the family. Some report bandaging at the age of three months, but this is evidently false. The usual period is from six, seven, or eight years of age to thirteen or fourteen. The feet are bandaged afresh every day, and undone each night. Sleeping shoes, without soles, are worn at night to prevent the foot expanding. The cotton bandages are about six feet long, by three inches broad, and the edges are sometimes stitched to prevent their becoming loose. The greatest care in these respects is exercised by those who are anxious about their children, and love them very much. The feet often swell and suppurate, and these sores are difficult to heal, because they cannot intermit the bandaging. At night when unloosed, they are dusted with alum, to absorb the perspiration, or washed with millet spirit, to harden the skin. They do not, on the whole, seem to suffer much. It is somewhat wonderful that this severe and constant pressure, and suppuration in many cases, does not lead to disastrous results in the case of the scrofulous and ill-conditioned. Custom and fashion oblige parents to conform to this practice, however much opposed to it and however great their *true* love for their daughters. Three

excellences are always held out to the little sufferers, which carry them through this severe hardship—viz., the fact that small feet are pretty, other people will admire them, and the certainty of getting good husbands, and being thereby introduced into a good family.

The fashionable size is about three inches, but oftener five, and sometimes seven. The size depends upon the time when it was begun, and the regularity and tightness with which it is maintained. The bandages are never left off; for, after the standard size has been obtained, they are still retained to keep the shape, and give strength to the foot. Without them, walking would be impossible; the unbound and unsupported foot is too weak to support the superincumbent weight. The feet are never encased in iron shoes, as some have thought. Simple bandages are all that are employed, and are so applied across the foot as to carry the second, third, and fourth toes and especially the fifth toe quite under the foot, and so to obtain the least possible breadth; and, by one or two turns of a figure-of-8 bandage, the foot is shortened, the heel is brought close to the ball of the big toe, and instead of forming an angle with the leg bones, it looks more like a continuation of them. The *os calcis*, from being horizontal, becomes vertical, and its posterior surface is brought to the ground. The bones of the instep are pushed out of their proper place, and made to bulge, thus giving a great prominence, and an arched crescentic form, resembling the new moon, to that part. The plantar concavity is therefore much exaggerated, and more or less filled with tough cellular tissue. The three points, then, upon which the foot rests, are the heel in its new position, the ball of the great toe, and the fourth and fifth toes—their upper surface having now become part of the sole. The foot and leg are greatly atrophied, and the skin shriveled. The leg tapers from the thigh joint to the foot, in the form of a cone, without the usual feminine risings and depressions, owing to the undeveloped calf; and that, again, is caused chiefly by want of exercise and proper motion to call these muscles into action. Were it from atrophy entirely, we should expect the limb to grow from bad to worse till it was entirely destroyed. The knee and ankle joints do not bend; all movement is from the thigh joint; the gait is mincing, with the arms slinging from side to side, and the body never straight or steady. They walk or stand, one might say, on their heels; the heel one or two inches higher than the toes, they may be said to walk on their toes. The heel extends upwards and backwards beyond the heel of the shoe, sometimes, as in the larger, poorer and neglected foot, entirely outside the shoe, and projecting, as it were from the calf—thus showing a smaller foot than really is possessed. In this way, also, Chinese ladies look taller than they truly are.

PEKING, June, 1869.

(To be continued.)

This article and corresponding letter were both written in response to J. Dudgeon's piece, "The Small Feet of Chinese Women," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 2 (1869): 93-96. This journal was printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. Dr. Kerr responds to Dr. Dudgeon's relatively innocuous description of the practice of foot binding with great energy, condemning the author for his sanguine portrayal and insisting that the practice is morally unconscionable. "H.G." responds to Dr. Kerr's criticisms in turn, refuting Kerr's argument point by point. His opposition notwithstanding, H.G.'s own aversion to foot binding is clear in his letter. What he takes issue with is the question of whether unbinding bound feet should be a prerequisite to Christian conversion. These letters are most interesting in that, first, they show the heightened interest of the foreign community in the practice and, second, that they demonstrate the manner in which "knowledge" about Chinese culture is quickly abstracted from its social and historical context to become the material for arguments that relate to Western concerns. Despite the considerable dispute over the physical effects of foot binding, at no point did any author ever interview a Chinese woman on the topic—their own opinions on the practice were sufficient evidence for their audiences.

Source: Kerr, J.G., M.D. "Small Feet." *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 2 (1869): 169-170; G., H. "Correspondence: Small Feet." *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 2 (1870): 230-232.

Small Feet

By J.G. Kerr, M.D.

Two or three articles have appeared in the Recorder on the subject of compressing women's feet. In the October number, p. 131, Dr. Dudgeon pronounces it "not morally wrong." If that is true, then it is right; and instead of condemning it, we should approve and encourage it by all lawful means.

With such a view I cannot agree. Most emphatically do I say it is wrong, morally wrong; a sin against God, and a sin against man.

Allow me to give some reasons.

1st. It is cruel, causing long continued suffering and pain. Cruelty to animals is wrong, and would not be tolerated in the church. Shall this life-long cruelty to human beings be regarded with indifference?

2nd. It makes cripples of its victims for life, and thus takes away much of the enjoyment of life, unfits them for work, on which their living may depend, weakens the constitution, generates debility, shortens life, and gives rise to enfeebled offspring.

3rd. It places an obstacle in the way of their attending the means of grace divinely appointed, and necessary for advance in Christian life.

4th. The custom is established and fostered by pride and lust, both of which are condemned by our holy religion.

Pride induces mothers to sacrifice much in order to have their daughters in the fashion, and in the present case the fashion requires the mutilation of the child for life.

That lust originates and perpetuates the custom is sated by Dr. Dudgeon in the Recorder for September, p. 93, as follows: "As it originated in a desire, an is probably maintained, or at least found, to create and excite lustful and licentious feelings * *." Such being the case in the eyes of the heathen, how can this practise be consistent with a religion which requires purity and chastity of heart, as well as of life?

To say that such a thing is not morally wrong is to confound light with darkness, truth with falsehood.

5th. The practice is in conformity with the world. No precept in God's word is more clear or imperative than that which requires the followers of Christ "not to be conformed to the world." They are a peculiar people. Their light is to shine, and dissipate darkness and error.

6th. The practice is unnatural. God has given to everyone a desire to have a body not deformed; and this desire is especially strong with reference to one's children. A deformed body is universally considered a great calamity. That parents should produce deformity in their own children is abhorrent to the better feelings of our nature, and at variance with all the precepts of our religion.

In conclusion, the compression of women's feet, as practiced in China, admits of nothing being said in its defence; and any apology for it only shows how utterly inexcusable it is when examined from a Christian point of view.

CANTON, Oct. 21st, 1869.

CORRESPONDENCE
SMALL FEET

To the Editor of the Chinese Recorder:—

The subject of "Small Feet" has already occupied a place in several number of the Recorder: but still, considering the importance of the matter, further discussion may not be thought our of place. The paper by Dr. Dudgeon, which appeared in the September and October numbers, contained a lengthy and valuable history of the practice from the beginning; and of course, coming from the pen of a physician, discussed the subject chiefly from a medical standpoint. The Dr.'s conclusion, as given on p. 131, is to my own mind the most correct that can be arrived at; for, in the present state of the church in China, legislation cannot be brought by missionaries to bear upon the matter without

detriment to the cause of missions. Dr. Kerr however does not agree with this view, and in his article which appeared in the November number of the Recorder condemns Dr. Dudgeon's conclusion so strongly, and lays down his own views so dogmatically, that we would imagine he must have truth on his side. I think, however, that exception may be taken to most of the reasons which he brings forward to support his side of the question; and I will endeavour briefly to show where I think he errs.

Reasons 1 and 2 I will not touch upon, I am not a medical man, further than to say that I think the charge of this custom taking away "much from the enjoyment of life" is somewhat overdrawn. Here in Hangchow the majority of women are small-footed, and certainly do not appear to be so wretchedly situated as the Dr. makes them to be. One thing is very certain, the binding of the feet does not prevent them from indulging in that peculiarly feminine failing, "gadding about" to learn the latest gossip.

Reason 3 I scarcely comprehend, unless the obstacle mentioned be the inability to walk to church or the place of worship. If this be the case, I think it sufficiently met by saying that while in a state of heathenism small-footed women constantly go 14 and 16 li, in order to pay their devotions at a favourite temple, and walk back again the same day. Surely, what was no obstacle in the way of their attending to the worship of idols can scarcely be brought forward as a hindrance in the way of their attending to the worship of God.

In Reason 4, the Dr. has thrown a shaft which is not unlikely to rebound, and strike somewhat near home. How many of our western fashions and customs have been established and fostered by pride—yea, and lust too, in some instance! What originated and fostered the fashion of low-necked dresses for balls and parties? What originated the crinoline, chignons, and many other things which Western nations receive and hold? It may be said, indeed has been said by "F." in one of your numbers, that Western customs ought not be brought forward in such an argument. Granted; but still I think they may be brought forward to shew the injustice of making a more stringent law for incipient Chinese Christians than is imposed upon the highly endowed and matured Christians of the West.

Reason 5 combats the custom on the ground of its conformity with the world, and is supported by the precept in Rom. 12: 2. This precept is doubtless clear enough; but will Dr. Kerr undertake to show what the phrase "the world" means? Till he does this, his reason drawn from it does not carry much weight. Cowper's humorous poem on the renouncing of the world clearly shows the indefiniteness of the phrase. In things essential to salvation, this indefiniteness in a measure vanishes, because we are careful to keep far on the right side of the line; but in non-essentials it still remains, and will always remain. But to show the real value of this argument drawn from Rom. 12: 2, I will adduce another passage, written by the same apostle, in equally clear terms with the one under consideration. In 1st Cor. 11: 14, St. Paul says, "Doth not nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" Here we have a passage of Scripture condemning the practice of men wearing long hair, but what missionary on the strength of this passage has ever thought of ordering the Chinese male Christians to forego their

long and beautifully plaited queue, reaching in many cases down to the heels? And yet an argument drawn from their words would be as strong against the queue of the men, as the argument drawn from Rom. 12: 2 is against the small feet of the women. So that the practice must be condemned on other grounds than that of its conformity to the world. At the close of this reason, the Dr. says that Christ's followers are "a peculiar people." Doubtless; but let us not be too peculiar.

Reason 6 combats the practice on the ground of its being unnatural. This is doubtless the case in a measure, but the strong language used in working out the argument to my mind proves too much. The same reasoning, if carried out, would prove God to be the author of a custom which is essentially wrong; or to use the Dr.'s own words, which "is abhorrent to the better feelings of our nature, and at variance with all the precepts of our religion." The Dr. assumes, as the starting point, that God has implanted within us a kind of inherent principle prompting us to preserve our bodies entire and that any deviation from that principle in the shape of mutilation of the body is sinful. Now, it is undeniable that circumcision is a mutilation of the body; therefore circumcision is a sinful act; and the conclusion arrived at is that God commanded His ancient people to keep up an institution which involved a sinful act, and which necessitated their constant violation of a principle implanted within them by God himself. Such a conclusion is abhorrent to our notions of God, and His dealings with the children of men, and would doubtless be repudiated by the Dr.; but, with his strong language, I do not see how he can escape it.

In the above remarks, I have taken neither the affirmative nor the negative side of the question; but have simply tried to shew that the reasons given by Dr. Kerr in support of his view will not hold good; and therefore, if the practice is to be successfully opposed, it must be on other grounds than those advanced. My own view of the matter is that it need neither be opposed nor defended, but just left to the consciences of the Chinese Christians. If the gospel has any power over them, it will surely enable them to forego all practices which are "abhorrent to the better feelings of our nature;" and if it has no power, no influence over them, then making the unbinding of the feet a *sine qua non* to entering mission schools will in my opinion only defeat its own end, for it will elevate non-essentials to the detriment of true essentials. A Christian mother in this city has already set a good example by her determination to allow the feet of her two girls to grow to their natural size. This is as it should be. Let the Chinese take the initiative, and let not the foreign missionary make any stringent rule on the subject; for I feel convinced that such a course would not promote our object at all.

H.G.

HANGCHOW, Nov., 1869.

7. Photograph, Foot Binding

This photograph presents a very different vision of foot binding from that depicted by Western observers in the 19th century. Whereas Western visitors to China seemed most interested in the bound foot unbound, as deformity or fetish, this photo shows the bound foot as it had meaning in Chinese culture: as part of clothing or fashion. In this image, “small feet” are put into their proper cultural context as a form of female adornment. The emphasis here is on the apparel: shoes, sashes, and leggings. The photograph may be fruitfully compared to the concluding description in J. Dudgeon, M.D., “The Small Feet of Chinese Women,” *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 2 (1869): 93-96, where he focuses on the physical and anatomical effects of the practice; the impressions created by the two depictions are entirely different.

Source: Photograph of Northern Chinese woman, late Qing period. In *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*, Dorothy Ko. Berkeley: University of California Press; The Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, 2001.



8. Missionary Journal, Chinese Education 1

This article was published in a Protestant missionary journal based in Canton that operated from 1832 until 1851. Its readership included both the foreigners living in Canton and home religious communities in Britain and the United States. In this article, the editors introduce a letter “from the pen of a Christian lady” who has presumably been working with overseas Chinese families in a mission outside of China. This woman advocates for the Christian education of Chinese women in order to better equip them for their “moral duty” of nurturing within the home, a task for which they are now “ill qualified.” The introduction to the letter is as interesting as the letter itself. The preface is addressed to “the females of Europe and America” and calls on them to respond to “the universal degradation of their sex” in China. Implicit in this summons is the assumption that these “females” would recognize their superior situation with respect to Chinese women. In other words, the Chinese case is presented as proof positive that the gender order in the West represents the pinnacle of civilization.

Source: “Schools for the Education of Chinese Girls.” *Chinese Repository* 3 (1834): 42-43.

2. Schools for the education of Chinese girls. The following communication is from the pen of a Christian lady, who for a few years back has been engaged in educating Chinese girls. Brief as the paper is, it will not fail to direct attention to a subject, which hitherto has been almost entirely neglected. The character and condition of this part of our race in China are very imperfectly known to the people of Christendom. Could the females of Europe and America witness the universal degradation of their sex in ‘the celestial empire,’ proudly and impiously so styled, ways and means would speedily be devised to shed light on these benighted minds. We heartily recommend the following paragraphs to their perusal.

“It is desirable that the attention of Christian ladies should be directed in a greater degree to the females of China, to pray more earnestly to the Lord for them, and in every possible way to endeavor to teach them the knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ. It is melancholy to view so large an empire given to idolatry. In attempts to turn it to Christ, female instruction should not be undervalued; females have a great influence both up on the morals and the politics of a nation. Youth are generally under the superintendence of the female sex. But how ill qualified is the Chinese woman for this or any moral duty! She is acquainted with no revelation from her Maker; as the standard of duty; and by which she can form her principles. She does not know the Redeemer who came to deliver from sin and from condemnation. A kind, heavenly Father is not the object of her faith and worship, but dumb idols which cannot help. She is under the influence of debasing fears and superstitions, and emphatically ‘without God and without hope in the world.’ I have witnessed companies of Chinese women collected together, but seldom for wise or benevolent purposes. I have visited sick beds and death beds; but those women were not acquainted with the consoling word and promises of God, to render the former more easy, or to enlighten the latter with a ray of hope for the future. Contrasted with them what comforts and consolation do Christian females possess!

It is an important question, what can be done for the improvement of the circumstances of Chinese females in the present state of China Proper? There are systems of exclusion and seclusion there, which prevent at present much being actually attempted for their improvement. Moreover the sex is generally and greatly despised. Very few females in China can either read or write.

“In a missionary station without China Proper, it has been pleasing to witness for some years the gradual decline of prejudice against female education. The first attempts to obtain girls for instruction were unsuccessful. At present there are several schools in which children are reading Christian books exclusively. The books taught are Dr. Milne’s tract, a dialogue between two friends, one a convert to Christianity, and the other a heathen; and tracts by Mr. Collie and Mr. Medhurst, containing chiefly statements of Christian doctrines. The chief result of these schools at present is a decline of prejudice in the minds of children and people. As yet no converting influence has been perceived; but the Lord will bless his word and instruction given out of it in due season.

“It is consoling and cheering, to the hearts of all who now labor for their good, resting on the sure word of promise, to anticipate the time when idolatry and the kingdom of Satan will be overthrown in China; when the system of seclusion will be done away, and when the Chinese female will bear her part in society, and be ready to devote her enlightened mind and her sanctified talents, to the glory of the Savior who has redeemed her.

“May God pour down upon his people a spirit of prayer on their behalf, and send laborers into this field, influenced by the love of Christ and wholly given up to his cause, not counting their lives dear unto them that they may advance it, and may Christian female instruction keep pace with all the other improvements of the age.”

9. Missionary Journal, Chinese Education 2

This article was published in a missionary journal printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai. *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* operated between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. In this paper, Mrs. Farnham addresses her “missionary sisters” on the matter of working to convert Chinese women. Farnham points to education as the surest means of influencing “the girls who shall become the future wives and mothers of China,” reflecting a shared belief with the audience that it is in these roles that women have the greatest impact on society. The title of the paper notwithstanding, Farnham’s article also reveals that Western missionary women are not necessarily content working with Chinese women exclusively. They prefer to extend their efforts to men, perhaps because they do not believe their own rhetoric about woman’s moral authority in the home?

Source: Farnham, J.M.W. “Women’s Work for Woman.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 16 (1885): 218-219.

WOMAN'S WORK FOR WOMAN.*

By Mrs. J. M. W. Harnham.

*A paper read before the Shanghai Conference of Missionaries, March 31st, 1885.

Of the many vital questions which come up to us in our Mission work, perhaps none is more important or far reaching than that of work among women; and though each missionary must and probably will work out a plan of her own, yet the interchange of thoughts and views on the subject will no doubt be helpful to us all.

"How shall I best influence for good the women with whom I come in contact?" is a question which I believe finds an echo in the heart of each missionary sister not only in this conference, but in every Mission station. I suppose everyone who has undertaken any work at all among the women of China has found the same difficulties, among which may be enumerated—Our inability to reach the better class, their ignorance, their not knowing how to read, and their utter absorption in the daily affairs of life, so many of them having to eke out their daily food. "I have no time," is the constant reiteration. How then shall we work? How reach the mothers of this land?

One way, which I think will commend itself to us all, is through their children. As far as my experience goes, I cannot say I have ever felt much encouragement in visiting from house to house indiscriminately, even in company with a native assistant; on the contrary I have nearly always felt that what we said had gone into one ear and out at the other. I have never found any difficulty in getting into their houses, have generally been kindly received, and often enjoyed chatting with some friendly woman, but the trouble is, one seems to make so little impression. We feel, however, very differently towards the mothers of the scholars with whom we come in contact in our day-schools. The fact that we are educating their children commands their respect and I think in many cases their gratitude. In following the little ones to their homes, I have felt I had a decided object in view, something tangible to work upon. Much of the lesson taught during the day is taken home and talked of, so that there is no such utter ignorance of our doctrine as among those who have had no contact with us.

Another effective way of working is Industrial Classes. The extreme poverty of most of the women to whom we have access makes it impossible to obtain regular attendance for any length of time. I have never been able to get up a class, without some pecuniary inducement. A sewing class of from twenty to thirty women has been to me a very hopeful way of working; and though I have not been able to carry on one for any extended length of time, yet I think, with the help of a good native assistant, such a class may be made very useful. One of our best workers in Ningpo has had a class of this kind for many years. I am unable to give any statistics, but I know many Christians have been the result of her labors in this way.

I think, however, there can be no doubt that our most effective and hopeful work is among the girls who shall become the future wives and mothers of China. Failures there always will be in every branch of work, and we shall find discouraging features in whatever we undertake, but as I look back upon the past, school work commends itself as

being the most productive of results.

The training of native bible-women, such as Miss Fielde has engaged in so successfully, would seem to be an eminently desirable work to any one who felt called and fitted for it. It will be asked shall women confine themselves exclusively to labors among those of their own sex? I believe there is a diversity of opinion on this point; and those who are sent out by societies who confine their operations to women alone, must of course abide by such decision. I think, however, societies would do well to allow more liberty to their missionaries in this respect. There are many ladies who feel they can have more influence over boys than girls; and though woman's great and first mission may be to those of her own sex, yet if Providence would seem to indicate that more efficient work could be done for those of the opposite sex, I should surely say, go on and do it. How important it is that the boys should be trained to respect woman, and we believe that in this training, woman *ought* to take a prominent part.

10. Missionary Journal, Chinese Culture

This article was published in a missionary journal printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai. *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* operated between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. In this article the editors reprint a letter from Miss Porter, who lives in Shandong province in north China, in which she describes Chinese domestic life. The language of this piece is intriguing, offering praise and condemnation at the same time. In her description, Chinese culture is just shy of “admirable,” needing only the polish of Christianity to give it shine. Chinese women are similarly depicted, presented as self-reliant and well-mannered, yet ignorant, and superstitious. The author finds that their lives suit them “in their present condition” and predicts great improvements when all of Chinese society has wholly embraced Christianity.

Source: “Domestic Life of Woman.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 17 (1886): 153-154.

DOMESTIC LIFE OF WOMAN.

Miss Porter of Pang Chia, West Shantung, writes to the *Missionary Herald* of Chinese houses in that vicinity:—

The main features of Chinese domestic and social life are quite the best for them in their present condition Not only not opposed to the gospel, their theories and standards are such as, if tempered by its spirit of love, would be truly admirable. The Shantung woman are self-reliant, self-helpful, faithful wives and affectionate mothers. The young women are, as a rule, modest, and, accepting the position of subordination to mother-in-law and husband cheerfully, they rise out of it as the years go on, to a place in the family counsels. One would hardly desire for them a larger freedom until a gradual change has

come in all the conditions of society. Nor would one desire to see that change other than gradual. I imagine that their morals are far higher than those of the majority of the peasantry of Europe, and their manners are incomparably superior. Yet they are ignorant, superstitious, and give way to fits of passion, in which they use the vilest of language and seem utterly to forget that regard for appearances which is generally such a controlling motive.

The time has hardly come to look for much change in their homes. There are some households in the mission, living in most carefully kept houses—the husbands and wives mutual helpers—the children trained to a loving obedience—little touches of taste and culture showing themselves in the appointments and ordering of the home; but as yet I know none such except when the money which supports it comes from the foreigners. These men are young helpers in the employ of the mission—their wives Bridgman School girls. This is no test. When I see a native home where the family live away from foreigners, supporting themselves without aid from abroad, growing more neat and caring to make home attractive, I shall count that the effect of the gospel: *and this will come!*—but slowly. As yet in Shantung we do not see the dawning of that day. Our helpers all have farms, and their families work them. They are industrious and thrifty, but neither neater nor more comfortable than their neighbors.

These things are all secondary. Personal love to Christ will work the same changes in these women that it has wrought the world over. When that fills their hearts the hoes must grow pure and bright. These burdened, weary-laden ones will find 'rest,' and that rest will work outward, finding expression in gentle works and acts first; later, in making the external things of the home attractive.