

Proposal: The Anti-Foot Binding Movement During the Late Qing Dynasty China

Foot binding is an ancient Chinese tradition where mothers break the bones of their young daughter's feet and bind them in a silk strip in order to form the feet to be so small that they are about three to five inches long. "Lotus feet," as they were called, would be used as a social status and a form of mobility among women in Chinese society. The tradition of foot binding came to an end after the Chinese defeat in the First Opium War in 1842. The British government forced the Qing government to open its doors to the western world. As the influences of the western world entered china, it impacted the tradition of foot binding. Christian missionaries that entered Qing China were able to convince traditional Chinese men to end the practice of foot binding that their daughters, mothers, and grandmothers practiced for years. This began the Anti-Foot Binding Movement in China from 1875 to 1912.

The reason why the Anti-Foot Binding Movement was successful is due to Western influences by Christians missionaries in 1875. By having these Westerners advocate and criticize traditional Chinese society and cultural norms, there is a change within Chinese citizens to adapt to these western norms. The proposed paper will explore the opposition towards the practice and investigate how Western perception of Chinese traditions cause a change of traditional, conservative men into reformists through the Anti-Foot Binding Movement. The research paper will focus on individuals like Reverend John Macgowan, Timothy Richard, and Alicia Little, who began the Anti-Foot Binding Movement in China by creating the Natural Foot Society (天足会) in 1875. The primary sources are English translations of Chinese documents available and from English-speaking people and journals, most of the sources will be coming from British nationals and missionaries' journals, since they had the most impact in Chinese reformation of foot binding.

A second aspect of the research paper is looking into how these influential people and their writings were able to convince traditional Chinese men to reject the tradition of foot binding, especially with Chinese reformists such as Kang Youwei and Qichao Liang. They were Chinese men

who were important participants in the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898. Kang Youwei is Chinese philosopher and politician that established the Foot Emancipation Society in 1887 and influenced Emperor Guangxu to attempt a nation-wide foot binding ban in 1898. Qichao Liang is a Chinese historian, journalist, and politician who is known for the ideology of modernity, viewing foot binding as the symbol of humiliation for China. Unlike Macgowan, Richards, and Little, men like Youwei and Liang were much more hostile towards women's role in foot binding. With their opposition to foot binding, they believed that women were the blame to create a shameful practice that caused China's inability to modernize.

There are numerous primary and secondary sources relating to the Anti-Footbinding Movement. The sources focus on many various and different perspectives of foot binding, including Chinese and Western viewpoints. The primary sources include newspaper articles, letters, memoirs, and autobiographies, as well as books published by both Chinese and Western reformists. A critical primary source to the research is John Macgowan's 1913 *How England Saved China*. His book provides insightful information about a Westerner's perspective of Chinese society. As a founder and advocator towards the Anti-Foot Binding Movement in China, Macgowan's recollections of his time in China and personal accounts of educating Chinese women to end their foot binding practices tells about the Western Gaze and British cultural superiority in Chinese society. A notable secondary source is Dorothy Ko's 2006 *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*. As one of the leading historians in the topic of Foot Binding, Ko's book suggests that foot binding has been dominated with anti-foot binding views as well as being discouraged by men and rarely seen in the perception of the women who bind their feet.

I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.

Katie Molina

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