



The Path to Independence:

Experience of American and Chinese Christian Women of the YWCA in China, 1927-1957

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Research Question

How and why did American and Chinese women of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) adapt successfully to the sociopolitical upheaval in China between 1927 and 1957?

Abstract

The experience of American and Chinese Christian women of the YWCA in China indicates Chinese women's path to independence during the sociopolitical upheaval between 1927 and 1957. As an American Christian woman, Marion Dudley had an evolving perception of Chinese women when she was a missionary in China (1927-47). Her journey from embracing paternalistic views to recognizing the autonomy of Chinese women indicates the process of Chinese women achieving and showing their independence to American women. Additionally, a Chinese Christian woman, Zheng Ruquan, strategically aligned with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and adapted her Christian faith to communism (1936-57). She actively engaged with the communist regime. Their experience echoed the era of intense nationalistic fervor in China, revealing the existence of cross-cultural interaction and ideological adaptation.

Context

- The YWCA in China: promoting women's education and vocational training
- The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45): the imprisonment of Americans
- The Chinese Civil War (1927-49): KMT vs. CCP; communist victory
- The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (1950): making Chinese Christians achieve self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation
- The First Five-Year Plan (1953-57): socialist transformation
- The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957): persecution

Primary Sources

- UNC
- Duke University
- Smith College
- University of Hong Kong
- University of Texas at Austin
- Yale University



Bibliography

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YWCA's American Christian Women

- Marion Dudley's evolving perspective on Chinese women: an American Christian woman's adaptation
 - Paternalistic view: the indispensable role of American missionaries
 - Recognize the independence of Chinese women
- Why?
 - Chinese women demonstrated independence during the war
 - Peers' influence; Cultural Background

YWCA's Chinese Christian Women

- Zheng Ruquan's active engagement with the CCP: a Chinese Christian woman's adaptation
 - i.e., Zheng glorified the CCP's policy
- Why?
 - YWCA's alignment with the CCP: working emphases and nationalism
 - Unique Christian belief: the possibility of coexistence
 - Illusion of a new China: desire for Chinese independence

Conclusion

- The YWCA's Chinese Christian women contributed to and were shaped by the sociopolitical upheaval of 20th-century China through their efforts to achieve independence, simultaneously shaping American Christian women's perspective.
- However, what about the experience of Christian men in China? Is there any difference? What about Chinese people with other faiths?



Fig. 1 Photo of Marion Dudley



Fig. 2 Photo of Zheng Ruquan

Fig. 3 Chinese women attending a class, a photo by Dudley in Hong Kong between 1943 and 1945

Fig. 4 Some bourgeois women performed "Ten Big Sisters," a show directed by Zheng to glorify the CCP's policy in 1957

