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ABUNDANT LIFE: MATILDA THURSTON, WU YIFANG AND GINLING COLLEGE, 1915-1951

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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*****

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ABSTRACT

Ginling College was a pioneer institution of higher education for women in China founded by Western Christian missionaries. When Ginling opened its doors in 1915, traditional gender segregation and notions of female behavior precluded the entry of women into China's universities. In the years after the 1919 May Fourth Movement and its challenge to traditional society and thought, co-education became the dominant pattern in Chinese higher educational institutions, but Ginling continued as one of two Christian women's colleges.

In order to better understand the history of Ginling College, which was a cross-cultural enterprise, a partly institutional and partly biographical focus was employed. Ginling's first president, Matilda Thurston (1875-1958), was an American missionary educator who went to China to Christianize the Chinese. Although this hope was far from being realized, Thurston played a role in promoting higher education for Chinese women.

In 1927, Matilda Thurston was forced to resign when rising nationalist sentiment demanded a Chinese president. Wu Yifang (1893-1985), a Chinese Christian and a graduate of Ginling's first class—and thus one of China's first college-educated, professional women—headed a majority Chinese administration after 1927. A liberal
educator who continued the college's expansion and Sinification, Wu also held important positions in Christian, women's and government-related organizations in China.

Thurston and Wu both believed that separate women’s colleges were the best way to cultivate female leaders and fought to maintain Ginling’s independence. Although the two presidents had some success in enlarging the scope of their work and the college enrollment, their goals were ultimately difficult to attain because they operated in a Republican China wracked by war, revolution, and intellectual and social change.

Using college records and the personal papers, published articles, speeches, and recollections of its two presidents as well as faculty, staff, alumnae and former students, the lives of Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang are explored. The college history is also traced from its founding after the 1911 Republican Revolution to its demise following the outbreak of the Korean War, when Western-subsidized educational institutions became unacceptable to the Chinese Communist government.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Maps</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Archival Collections and Abbreviations</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Chinese Names and Terms</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapters

1. Matilda Thurston and the Founding of Ginling College
   - A “Call” to the Mission Field... 16
   - Death of Lawrence Thurston... 23
   - Matilda Thurston at Yale-in-China, 1906-1911... 25
   - The State of Women’s Education in Early Twentieth-Century China and the Founding of Ginling College... 34
   - Toward the College Opening... 41

2. Missionary Educators and Pioneer College Women: Ginling’s First Decade
   - A Difficult Beginning... 46
   - Wu Yifang as a Ginling Student... 51
   - Student Concern for the National Salvation and Ginling’s Early Tradition of Social Service... 59
   - Matilda Thurston as President: A Difficult Job... 61
   - The May Fourth Movement... 70
# LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map 1. Locations of Ginling College 1915-1951</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2. Former sites, Ginling College, Nanjing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1. Enrollment Figures</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2. Ginling Graduates 1919-1951</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3. Bachelor’s Degrees by Major</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4. Diplomas Awarded, Special Programs</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary / New York, New York
Matilda Calder Thurston Papers
Abbreviation: UTS

Jiangsu Provincial Archives / Nanjing, China
Files on Wu Yifang
Abbreviation: JPA

Mt. Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections / South Hadley, Massachusetts
Matilda Calder Papers, Harriet Cogswell Meyer Papers, Ginling College Records
Abbreviation: MHC

Second Historical Archives / Nanjing, China
Ginling College Records
Abbreviation: SNA

Smith College Archives / Northampton, Massachusetts
Ginling College Records

Yale Divinity School, Special Collections / New Haven, Connecticut
China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection
Record Group 8: Ruth Chester, Frederica Mead Hiltner, Emily Case Mills, Elsie Priest,
Mary Bosworth Treudley, Y.T. Zee

China Records Project Record Group 21: Esther Tappert Mortenson Papers

United Board for Christian Higher Education in East Asia (Abbreviation: UBCHEA)
Record Groups 11, 11A, 11B: Ginling College Records
Abbreviation: YDS

xii
**LIST OF CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Chinese Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abundant Life</td>
<td>厚生</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Girls Normal School</td>
<td>北京女子師範學校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Shutong</td>
<td>陳叔通</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Women's Association for War Relief</td>
<td>中國婦女慰勞自衛抗戰將士總會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora Deng</td>
<td>鄧裕志</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginling College</td>
<td>金陵女子大學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(金陵女子文理學院)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoebe Hoh</td>
<td>郝映青</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Jianqiu</td>
<td>劉劍秋</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing Normal University</td>
<td>南京師範大學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing University</td>
<td>南京大學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nat'l Association for the Children of the War Areas</td>
<td>戰時兒童保育會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nat'l Beijing Women's Higher Normal School</td>
<td>國立高等師範學校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North China Union Women's College</td>
<td>華北協和女子大學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nanking</td>
<td>金陵大學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Yifang</td>
<td>吳贻芳</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y.T. Zee</td>
<td>徐亦蓁</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western Christian missionaries made an intensive effort to convert the Chinese to Christianity. Judging from the number of converts, they were wildly unsuccessful. Nevertheless, although less than one percent of the Chinese population became Christian, missionaries did ultimately achieve a measure of success in the realm of education, particularly women's education.

Traditional Chinese thought and society relegated women to the private sphere of the home; there was no Chinese tradition of public schooling for girls. Although women from families with sufficient means might study at home with private tutors, the majority received little or no formal education. Western Christian missionaries, however, were not bound by traditional Chinese thought. From victory in the Opium War (1839-1842) onward, when Western governments forced China to accept unequal treaties, missionaries successfully lobbied for the right to establish missions. Included in this work were single-sex schools for boys and girls. Indeed, virtually all of the first modern schools for girls and women in China were founded, funded and administered by missionaries. Until the last years of the nineteenth century, however, they were generally small affairs since few Chinese parents were willing to send their girls to such institutions.
Although the founding of Christian colleges for women in China lagged well behind those for men—by the turn of the century, several mission institutions offered college-level instruction for men—the establishment of higher educational institutions for women in the first two decades of the twentieth century preceded such efforts on the part of the Chinese. Ginling College, which opened in 1915, was the largest and most prestigious of the Christian women’s colleges.¹

Ginling was conceived in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)² and came to fruition in the early Republican period. Its founding converged with a time of great change, as China was in the throes of a transition from a traditional society to modernity. Extensive educational reform was a part of this change. From the last few years of the nineteenth century into the 1920s, modern educational institutions mushroomed at all levels. This period saw the inception of modern educational institutions for women, beginning with elementary schools in the late nineteenth century. The new Chinese-run institutions joined the long-established Christian mission institutions, which were themselves attracting increasing numbers of students. By the second decade of the twentieth century, higher education for women in China was no longer the purview solely

¹ Protestant missionaries founded three women’s colleges: North China Union Women’s College in Beijing, Ginling College in Nanjing and Huanan College in Fuzhou. The first became part of Yenching University (then called Peking University) in 1920. Renamed Yenching Women’s College, it was ostensibly affiliated with Yenching as an autonomous women’s college. In fact, it was never truly autonomous, and Yenching gradually evolved into a coeducational institution. Ginling and Huanan survived as institutions for women until 1951.

² In this study, I have used pinyin in transliterating Chinese terms and names, with the following exceptions: I have retained the original spellings for the Christian colleges such as Ginling and the University of Nanking, and for those names that are more commonly rendered another way, such as Chiang Kai-shek, and for the names of Chinese who lived outside mainland China and did not use pinyin. I have noted the pinyin pronunciation as much as possible for names that are romanized in another form, but there are some names I am unable to identify. (Romanization was not standard in Republican China. The fact that Ginling alumnae could be referred to by various versions of their maiden names as well as their married names or an English name makes the problem of identification difficult.)
of Christian missionaries; the number of women attending government universities soon surpassed the number of those attending Christian institutions. The latter, however, continued to enroll a larger percentage of women students in their student bodies than government universities into the 1920s.\(^3\)

From the late Qing onward, nationalism, propelled by an overwhelming fear that China would be carved up by foreign powers and cease to exist as a nation, was a major force in Chinese politics. By the second decade of the twentieth century, concern for the national salvation had led to an intense period of self-examination and the search for a new basis for the Chinese nation. China’s educated classes began questioning virtually every aspect of Chinese culture, society and politics with an unprecedented fervor, spurring change that had already begun. This period became known as the May Fourth Movement, named after the demonstrations in Beijing on May 4, 1919, in which students protested China’s humiliating national predicament. Sparked by the news of the unfavorable terms of the Versailles Treaty, the protests soon spread to other major cities.

The role of women in Chinese society did not escape the scrutiny and re-evaluation of the May Fourth thinkers. As educational reform moved forward and the traditional insistence on gender separation eroded, Chinese women began entering China’s universities; in higher education, co-education became the norm. Furthermore, changing attitudes towards the role of women in society ensured that China’s first college women could enter the public arena after their graduation. In the U.S., after World War I,

\(^3\) In 1922, for example, national universities enrolled 405 women out of 10,535 students (3.8 percent). At provincial and private colleges, women numbered 132 out of 20,325 (0.65 percent). At mission and foreign colleges, there were 350 women out of 4,020 students (8.7 percent). Of the Christian institutions, Ginling enrolled the largest number of women. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 137.
the necessity and desirability of separate women's colleges was also called into question.4

In the changed climate, Ginling's two presidents, both of whom strongly supported female-only colleges, had to fight to keep their institution from being amalgamated with its neighboring co-educational Christian institution, the University of Nanking.5

The May Fourth intellectuals championed science and denounced superstition and religion. Since there was already an anti-Christian tradition in China, and Christianity remained strongly associated with foreigners and imperialism, it came under especial attack in the 1920s. With the rise of nationalist, anti-imperialist and anti-religious fervor, the Christian colleges, funded and administered by Westerners, became a target. A movement to restore educational rights in Chinese hands thus gained steam in the 1920s. With the success of Chiang Kai-shek in reunifying large parts of China, the government was able to implement regulations requiring devolution of mission institutions to Chinese control as well as to standardize curricula and exert more control over higher educational institutions in general. Ginling had been founded without Chinese involvement and there were no Chinese in major administrative roles in the early 1920s. After 1927, however, a majority Chinese board and a Chinese president administered Ginling in the field, even though over half of the funding required to run the institution still came from America.

Ginling's founders wanted to create a college for the Christian education of young women. The college's first president, Matilda Thurston (1875-1958), aimed to instill in her students a sense of service to Christ and to the nation. With advancing the cause of

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5 The former Ginling College campus is now the site of Nanjing Normal University (*Nanjing shifan daxue*); the University of Nanking is now Nanjing University (*Nanjing daxue*). See Map 2.
Christianity as her goal, Thurston helped establish and shape the college in the 1910s, when many Chinese and Westerners alike still questioned the need for higher education for Chinese women. An 1896 graduate of Mt. Holyoke College, Matilda Calder Thurston was one of thousands of Americans who answered the Protestant church’s call for world evangelization. During a career in China that spanned nearly four decades, Thurston’s attitudes towards education, race and gender began to change. Her views reflected a strong cultural bias which was tempered by her years in China and her decision to become a pacifist. Although Thurston was forced to resign as president in 1927, she continued working for the college until her retirement. Unconcerned for her personal safety and convinced her presence would still make a difference, Thurston returned to the Ginling campus in 1939 to work in the middle school that was operating under the Japanese occupation.

In the turbulent early decades of twentieth-century China, as Chinese reconsidered the role of women in society and redefined womanhood, the graduates of Ginling entered a world vastly different from that experienced by their mothers. Since the college was one of the first institutions of higher education for women in China, its early graduates were therefore some of the first college-educated women in Chinese history. Although the students who attended Ginling were but a small percentage of Chinese womanhood, many of them later became very active in the public sphere in professions newly open to them. Wu Yifang (1893-1985), a graduate of Ginling’s first class and holder of an American Ph.D. in biology, was one of these new elite of college-educated women. She replaced Matilda Thurston at the head of a majority Chinese
administration in 1927, becoming the first Chinese woman to serve as university president.

Wu Yifang’s early life illustrates the changes in women’s lives in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century China. As a young girl, her feet were bound and then set free. With reluctant support from her parents and later a progressive uncle, Wu embarked on a quest to get a modern education, a task exceedingly difficult for a Chinese girl in the late Qing Dynasty. At school, she and other female students learned that they, too, could play an important role in the national salvation. Convinced of the power of education to save the nation, Wu pursued a higher education in college and graduate school abroad. She put her original career plans for teaching and research aside to accept the Ginling presidency and went on to a prominent career as an academic administrator while also holding positions in Christian, women’s and government-related organizations in China. Throughout her career, Wu Yifang was often the sole woman in a group of male leaders, both within China and in international Christian organizations.

After the conversion to Chinese leadership, Ginling and the other Christian colleges continued to grow, becoming increasingly Sinified and secular. Although Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang both had grand plans for Ginling’s future, several factors stymied their efforts. In addition to the difficulties Ginling faced in being a Christian college in a country highly suspicious of Christian activity, its two presidents had to find a place for a small institution that accepted only women. In administration, they faced difficulties with staffing and funding as well as communication with the often uncooperative administrative organs.

6

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The context in which the two administrators worked—particularly a turbulent Republican China wracked by war, intellectual upheaval and revolution—also ensured that their task would be more difficult. From 1937 to 1946, Ginling College, located in Nanjing, the Republican capital, was forced to join other Chinese refugee educational institutions in western China when the Japanese took control of a large portion of Chinese territory. With the Japanese defeat, the college returned to Nanjing in 1946. Problems worsened after the return; severe inflation and civil war made the task of administering the college extremely difficult. These conditions spurred anti-government and anti-American protests and students became increasingly radicalized. Wu Yifang, as a liberal educator, ultimately could not offer a solution to China's profound crises that was satisfactory to her students.

Ginling and other Christian colleges continued to operate after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and Wu Yifang did her best to find a place for Ginling and Christianity in the new China. In the changing political environment, particularly after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the days of American-funded institutions were nonetheless numbered.

The Christian education of Chinese women was a cross-cultural enterprise. I explore the history of Ginling College and the roles of its two administrators in the college's development as well as the lives of the administrators themselves. The dual focus on Thurston and Wu is an attempt to better understand the conceptions and worldviews of an American missionary educator and a Chinese Christian, both of whom championed the cause of Christian higher education for Chinese women in a single-sex environment. Focusing on only the American missionary side leaves out half the story of
such cross-cultural enterprises, particularly when discussing the years after 1927 when the Christian colleges like Ginling registered with the government and became more closely integrated into the Chinese educational scene. Concentrating on only the Chinese side, on the other hand, would leave out the college's formative years and miss the continuities at the college and similarities between Ginling's two administrators—particularly the strong agreement on several key issues regarding women's education and women's leadership roles.

The dual focus also helps illuminate the reciprocal cultural exchange inherent in these institutions. Both Thurston and Wu were deeply affected by their encounter with another culture. Wu Yifang converted to Christianity, which helped her to deal with family tragedy and find her own way to work toward saving the nation. Matilda Thurston's worldview was also changed, albeit gradually and less thoroughly, by the encounter.

As a women's college, Ginling offered an alternative model of women's education that differed from the coeducation that became dominant in China in the Republican period and the PRC. Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang both believed that higher education was an important part of training women leaders and that such female leadership could be best cultivated in a single-sex college. As administrators of a women's college, Thurston and Wu faced concerns and problems different from those of their counterparts at co-educational universities, from fighting against encroachments on their autonomy as a women's college to designing a program especially suited to women. Even deciding whether to allow Ginling students in conservative Sichuan help the war
effort by working at an American air base caused Wu Yifang problems that her male counterparts never faced.

Both Ginling presidents had broad interests outside the college and I have explored those as well. Wu Yifang, in fact, participated in so many outside activities that she quite rightly worried she had too many irons in the fire. The lives of these two women also intersected with broader social, cultural, political and economic developments in China that I have also attempted to integrate.

The higher education of women in America has been the subject of many scholarly works. Barbara Miller Soloman and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, for example, explore the history of women’s higher education in America and the lives of America’s first college women. Horowitz is also the author of a biography of Bryn Mawr’s first female president, M. Carey Thomas. There is no equivalent English-language scholarship concerning the higher education of Chinese women or Chinese female educators.

There is a substantial body of Western scholarly literature regarding the missionary effort in China and the Christian colleges. Historian Jessie Lutz provides a history of the colleges as a group, from their humble beginnings to their demise under the Communist government. Christian educator William Fenn—who tangled with Wu Yifang over the question of women’s education in the 1940s—also wrote a history of the

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Christian colleges. Some scholars have concentrated on individual institutions or on Christian educators in China. Except for a Ph.D. dissertation on North China Union Women's College, none of the women's colleges have been discussed in depth in any of these works.

As for Ginling itself, Minnie Vautrin, a Ginling faculty member who sheltered thousands of Chinese women and children on the Ginling campus during the "Rape of Nanjing" in the early days of the Japanese occupation in 1937, has been the subject of biographies in both Chinese and English. Neither of Ginling's two presidents has been

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12 Hu Hua-ling has published an English and a Chinese version of her biography of Minnie Vautrin. See Hu Hua-ling, *Jinling yongsheng Weitelin mushi zhujuan—Nanjing datusha baohu zhongguo funude huaopusa [Eternally living in the heart of Ginling: a biographical account of Miss Minnie Vautrin]* (Taipei: Jiuge
considered in any detail in Western scholarly literature, however. In Chinese a biography and two other works have been written about Wu Yifang, but these works have serious flaws. They portray Wu as sympathetic to the Communist cause long before the 1949 revolution, for example, when in fact, she favored liberal democracy and was deeply suspicious of the Communist movement before it came to power. They also rely overmuch on post-1949 recollections of Wu’s friends, colleagues and students. Not only are memories often faulty—China’s political realities also ensured that certain aspects of Wu’s pre-1949 life and worldview were left unexplored.

Western missionary women have not been left out of the story of Christian missions in China. Jane Hunter examined the worldview, motivation, perception of women’s roles, and lives of American Protestant missionary women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China. Gael Graham has focused on the importance of gender in missionary attempts to remake China, centering her study on female missionary...
educators and mission institutions for girls. The lives of female Chinese Christians and
mission school graduates, discussed by both Hunter and Graham, have been much less
explored. Kwok Pui-lan takes a more China-centered approach, addressing a variety of
issues concerning female Chinese Christians, missionary women and Christian mission
schools in her work.

All of the above monographs concerned with female Chinese Christians or
American missionaries end in the early decades of the twentieth century. Although that
is the high point of Christian activity and mission education in China, Christian
educational institutions continued until the Chinese Communist government determined
they were no longer welcome. In these years, institutions like Ginling became
increasingly Sinified and centered in China.

Much of the scholarship on the history of the Christian colleges relies largely or
even exclusively on English-language, missionary-centered sources. These documents
are plentiful, since missionaries often wrote a great deal, from letters to friends, families
and supporters overseas to official correspondence, articles, and reports on behalf of their
work. The reliance on these documents, however, overemphasizes the experience of
Westerners in China and often short-changes the Chinese experience of such cross-
cultural endeavors. This focus has recently been broadened as American and Chinese
scholars have gained access to the large number of archives remaining in China. In
addition to doing research in multiple archives in China and the U.S., as much as possible,
I have supplemented the documents written by missionaries with Chinese sources.

15 Gael Graham, *Gender, Culture, and Christianity: American Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880-

There is no dearth of material concerning Matilda Thurston. She was a prolific letter-writer, and her hundreds of letters to family members and friends, as well as published articles and college correspondence, provide a wealth of information important to understanding her life. She was also the co-author of a book about Ginling published in 1955, a monograph in the series on the Christian colleges. To gain a better perspective on how others viewed her and the college, I also consulted correspondence and reports from the college administrative organs as well as documents written by Ginling students and teachers. Possibly just as important as the copious material available on Thurston is the fact that she was very outspoken and usually made it clear where she stood on an issue.

Likely due to a tragic family background, Wu Yifang, on the other hand, did not like to talk about herself and was “somewhat loath to give personal history.”\textsuperscript{17} She refused to even meet with an American author who once wanted to write the story of her life, and she asked Ginling’s New York office to provide only the factual outlines of her career for publicity purposes.\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, according to her Chinese biographer, she burned her collected diaries, correspondence and the like during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{19} Perhaps even more importantly, in contrast to her blunt predecessor, Wu Yifang was more likely to keep her opinions to herself, emphasize the positive, and to downplay in particular any event she believed reflected poorly on China or the Chinese.

\textsuperscript{17} Matilda Thurston to Rebecca [Griest], 16 March 1937, Box 6, Folder 6.13, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{18} Mrs. Mills to Miss Ewing, 23 May 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2742, YDS.

\textsuperscript{19} Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 153-154.
Gaining an understanding of Wu is thus a more difficult task. Her correspondence on behalf of the college forms the bulk of materials still extant. Keeping in mind that she might not have been completely candid in college correspondence—although she was personal friends with at least one staff member in the college office in New York, it should not be forgotten that without funding from the U.S., Ginling would have been forced to close—I have balanced these sources with other documents such as personal correspondence and speeches as well as contemporary accounts and recollections of Wu Yifang herself and her former students, friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

The college motto "Abundant Life" was chosen by Ginling's faculty and its first class.20 The reference is to the Bible, verse John 10:10—"I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly." Both Ginling presidents interpreted this passage to refer to service to Christ and to humanity, but Matilda Thurston emphasized the former and Wu Yifang the latter. Differently put, Thurston focused on evangelization and Wu on the betterment of society. I also propose to use "Abundant Life" in a broader sense to refer to the rich and varied lives of the two fascinating women—Matilda Thurston, a missionary educator with a long career in China, and Wu Yifang, one of China's first female leaders—who are the subjects of this study.

Map 1. Locations of Ginling College, 1915 to 1951.

Map 2. Former sites, Ginling College, Nanjing.
CHAPTER 1
MATILDA THURSTON AND THE FOUNDING OF
GINLING COLLEGE

A "Call" to the Mission Field

Matilda Smyrell Calder was born in Hartford, Connecticut on May 16, 1875, the first of three children of George Calder, a carpenter from Scotland, and his wife Margery, who hailed from Northern Ireland. Except for a few months when the family moved briefly to North Dakota, Calder spent her childhood and early adulthood in the East. The Calders were Presbyterians, and Matilda joined the church at age thirteen as a “matter of course.”

Attending public schools in Connecticut, Matilda particularly enjoyed her studies. In high school, she became interested in math and the sciences. Her science teacher was a deeply religious woman who convinced the students that there was no conflict between science and religion, a belief which Calder would later seek to instill in her own students.

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1 Copy of Calder’s application for missionary service, 1 February 1900, Matilda Calder Papers, Series C, Folder 1, MHC.

Matilda Calder entered Mount Holyoke College in September 1892 with no intention of going into the mission field, despite the college's tradition of preparing graduates for this work. At 17, she was one of the youngest students in her class. Her sister Helen joined her there two years later.

Calder was actively involved in both social service and religious organizations in her four years at Mt. Holyoke. She helped found a campus YWCA, convinced that "lots more good" could be done through this organization than the branch of the Christian Endeavor that had preceded it. She gave speeches and wrote articles in favor of Prohibition and was appointed a delegate to a Women's Christian Temperance Union convention. Calder often wrote about current events in her letters to her family. In one letter, for example, she wrote that she had joined a club to discuss the "great questions of the day." In 1893, an informal poll showed the majority of Mt. Holyoke students opposed women's suffrage, but Calder was in favor, asking her father how he felt about having a "Women's Rights" daughter.

By her senior year, Calder was also a member of every religious organization listed in the college annual. The Mt. Holyoke curriculum featured frequent classes and discussions on mission work and the college hosted many visiting missionaries.

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3 "Mrs. Lawrence J. Thurston," UBCHEA, RG11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS.
4 Matilda Calder to Helen Calder, 11 October 1893, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 5, MHC.
5 Matilda Calder to Helen Calder, 31 January 1894, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 6, MHC.
6 Matilda Calder to Helen Calder, 27 January 1893, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 2, MHC.
7 Matilda Calder to Family, 21 October 1895, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 10, MHC.
8 "Lamarada," Mt. Holyoke 1897 College Yearbook, MHC.
Descriptions of such meetings were often included in Calder's letters home. She made the decision to become a missionary her senior year. Taking a mission study class on India to broaden her knowledge of the world, one day she suddenly realized that "this great need was a call to me."9 A few months later, in February 1896, Calder joined the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), an organization founded in 1888 to encourage college students to become missionaries. Like the SVM's other members, Calder pledged to dedicate her life to the mission field, hoping to realize the organization's watchword, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation."10 She was one of twenty-four Mt. Holyoke students who joined at that time.11

After graduating from Mt. Holyoke in 1896 with a major in mathematics, Calder taught in schools in Connecticut to gain experience before going overseas. When well-meaning friends tried to tell her that entering the mission field was akin to throwing herself away,12 she ignored them. Calder spent a good portion of 1897 recovering from a bout with typhoid fever. SVM Conferences in Northfield, Massachusetts gave her inspiration and reinforced her conviction to go into mission work. In 1900, at age 25, she made a formal application to become a missionary, secure in her belief that God wanted her in this vocation.13 For her entire life, she remained convinced she had made the right choice.

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9 Matilda Thurston, "Mrs. J. Lawrence Thurston (Matilda S. Calder)," n.d., (1913? written on top), UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS.
10 Calder's Student Volunteer membership card, Matilda Calder Papers, Series C, Folder 1, MHC.
11 Calder's application for missionary service.
12 Matilda Thurston, "Mrs. J. Lawrence Thurston (Matilda S. Calder)."
Calder was preparing to leave for a position in Turkey when she met John Lawrence Thurston at a summer retreat. Thurston, the son of a minister, was an 1898 Yale graduate attending seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. Thurston had played an active role in the formation of the Yale Foreign Missionary Society and was involved in the planning for Yale-in-China mission. Although the two had fallen very much in love, Calder did not want to go back on her word and leave the college in Turkey without a teacher. Since Lawrence would not be going to China until 1902, she arranged with her mission board to serve a two-year term in Turkey.\(^\text{14}\)

Calder returned home to marry Thurston on September 10, 1902. On September 25, Thurston was ordained in his father’s church in Whitinsville, Massachusetts. The couple sailed for China less than a month later with only minimal preparation and the goals of the mission not yet clearly defined. Ironically, Thurston’s doctor had advised him that Turkey was a more suitable climate for him than China, but he declined to act on this advice since the Yale mission had difficulty finding a representative for China work—and he felt “called” to the China field.\(^\text{15}\)

Arriving in China in late 1902, the couple’s first jobs were to learn Chinese and to find a suitable location for the Yale mission. After settling in Beijing, they set out determinedly to do both. Like most of their Western contemporaries living in China,

\(^{13}\) Calder’s application for missionary service. Some Boards set twenty-five as the youngest eligible age for foreign appointments, and this was likely true in Calder’s case—in another document, she mentions “four years of waiting” before she could go. Matilda Thurston, “Mrs. J. Lawrence Thurston (Matilda S. Calder).”

\(^{14}\) Matilda Thurston, “Mrs. J. Lawrence Thurston (Matilda S. Calder).”

Thurston and her husband lived a segregated life, keeping their own lifestyle as much as possible and associating mainly with other Westerners. Matilda Thurston had little contact with Chinese, with the exception of her servants. In a circular letter dated April 1903, Matilda wrote proudly that their new house was built in foreign style and "when you come inside the door you would not be reminded of China in any way."16 She taught the servants to make Western dishes since she and her husband found Chinese food "not very digestible."17

Their was an especially happy marriage. Matilda Thurston often wrote unabashedly about her husband. He was, she declared, "the dearest boy in all the world." She could not imagine how anyone could be happier than they were: "Every day it is better than the last and I don't see that it is likely to be otherwise."18 From her husband's letters, it is clear that he felt the same.19

Most of Matilda Thurston's time went to managing the household. She was quite pleased with her new role as a wife and hoped that she would soon be a mother.20 Impatient that her language training was going slower than her husband's, Matilda took consolation in the fact that Chinese for her would be to use after "being first a good

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16 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 16 April 1903, Box 1, 1.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
17 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 March 1903, Box 1, 1.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
18 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 December 1902, Box 1, 1.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
19 See, for example, John Lawrence Thurston to Matilda Thurston, 15 April 1904, John Lawrence Thurston Papers, RG 493, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections.
20 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 19 September 1903, Box 3, 3.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
wife...and mother.” Her work for some years would likely be “largely in the home and on a small scale,” so it was more important for Lawrence to learn Chinese. 

Thurston still believed that she had a role to play, but it might not be as prominent as her husband’s. She was very much impressed with the importance of the work she and her husband were doing—in her own eyes, she and Lawrence were “the most privileged people.”

I wonder what some of the good people at home who pity me for being a missionary in that awful China would think if they knew how I pitied them because they weren’t—because they were in such little bits of places when they might just as well be in something great, and when in many cases they ought to be...so many people are in little jobs because they couldn’t get the big job they wanted and they couldn’t take the one God wanted them to take.

This quote also illustrates another reason why Matilda Thurston chose the mission field. Looking for a “big job,” as an American woman—even a wife—Thurston had opportunities in the mission field that would have been difficult to attain or denied her at home. 

In 1900, a peasant uprising that targeted Westerners and Chinese Christians—groups attacked mission compounds and ultimately besieged the foreign legation quarters in Beijing—had ended with the intervention of an international military force. In 1902, the memory of this, the “Boxer Uprising,” remained vivid in the minds of many missionaries in Beijing. But Chinese attitudes towards foreigners had changed, Matilda

21 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 23 December 1902, Box 3, 3.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
22 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 April 1903, Box 1, 1.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
23 See Kathleen Lodwick, Educating the Women of Hainan, 5. Lodwick suggests that because of this, the mission field attracted a disproportionate number of the “best and the brightest” American women. See also Jane Hunter, Gospel of Gentility and Gael Graham, Gender, Culture, and Christianity.
Thurston wrote her sister, and most missionaries were optimistic, seeing “the immediate future as one of the most promising times for the Kingdom of God in China that it has seen yet.” It looked that way to Thurston as well. She reported approvingly that foreigners were regarded with respect and were more influential than before. Writing to her college classmates in 1903, Thurston commented, “It is a time of great opportunity, and there is not a place in the world I would rather be in than China.”

In her early China letters, Thurston—again, like the majority of her Western contemporaries—was secure in her assumption of the superiority of Western culture and the Protestant religion. She admitted that the Protestant missionaries had made mistakes in China but blamed the mistrust against Christianity on the Roman Catholics. She was convinced that Westerners had been “too easy” on China in 1900 and criticized the current U.S. policy toward China:

“Frank straightforward methods” are all right at home or with civilized nations but with China or Russia they don’t work. You must bluff them and work in a roundabout way….They need to know it is better to realize our power and our resources before they can be helped in any way by our meekness and humility and a lot of things which they now think are indicators of weakness and inferiority. They are like children and have to be treated as such as with a spoiled child one has to use severe measures at times. I am inclined to think there is another side to the common vision of the Opium Wars and that Great Britain was not doing such a bad thing after all.

It should be noted, however, that Thurston’s feeling of superiority was not limited to Western culture and religion. To a lesser degree, she was also convinced that East

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24 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 23 December 1902, Box 3, 3.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

25 “Class Letter, '96,” 1903, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 13, MHC.

26 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 8 March 1903, Box 1, 1.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

27 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 8 October 1903, Box 1, 1.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
coast Americans were superior to their counterparts in the rest of the nation. She found many of her fellow missionaries “narrow and provincial.” She saw Midwesterners as especially parochial and had a particular dislike for the co-educational colleges and small denominational institutions, mainly in the Midwest, that sent out so many missionaries. She once, for example, described two young Kansans she met on a ship returning to China as “hopeless country specimens.” She also later deprecated most of the missionaries in Changsha as Midwestern and German-American.

Death of Lawrence Thurston

Assuming their life’s work would be in China, the couple bought a lot for a summer home in Lushan, a mountain resort where many missionaries and Western businessmen retreated to escape the hottest months of the year. However, less than a year after their arrival and approximately two weeks before they were to go south to investigate Changsha as a possible location for the Yale mission, Lawrence was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The disease was in the early stages and doctors were confident of a recovery in the U.S. Although leaving China and their work was a great blow for the two, Matilda Thurston was optimistic they would return.

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28 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 4 October 1903, Box 1, 1.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
29 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 17 May 1903, Box 1, 1.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
30 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 November 1906, Box 1, 1.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
31 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 20 February 1907, Box 3, 3.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
32 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 2 August 1903, Box 1, 1.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. At this time, Westerners referred to Lushan as Kuling.
33 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 18 October 1903, Box 1, 1.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Arriving in the U.S. in December 1903, the couple settled in California for Lawrence’s health. Matilda Thurston wrote home, “We are so happy that it seems hardly right but God does not want his children to be unhappy even when things are a little hard.”34 Just when it appeared he was improving, Lawrence Thurston suddenly fell very ill and died. Matilda Thurston was devastated.

Returning to the East coast, Thurston was invited to work for the Student Volunteer Movement. She immediately agreed,35 and for the next two years threw herself into the work, at least partly to escape the pain and loneliness of the death of her husband. She found the work difficult at times, however, because it constantly reminded her of “all that I have lost in being left to live my life without him, after the richness of the four short years he has been in my life.”36

As a traveling secretary for the SVM, Thurston visited colleges, encouraging women to enter the mission field. At Elmira College, for example, she talked to the students about their privileges as Christians and their responsibilities to share those privileges with others, “especially the girls in non-Christian lands whose lives are so poor and base.”37 Thurston, like many of her early twentieth-century colleagues, equated the uplift of women with Christianity. As American women moved out of their traditional

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34 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 18 December 1903, Box 1, 1.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
35 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 12 July 1904, Box 1, 1.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
36 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 July 1904, Box 1, 1.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
37 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 October 1904, Box 1, 1.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
sphere at home, they wanted to spread their newfound freedoms to their sisters overseas.\textsuperscript{38}

Thurston’s visits to coeducational colleges reinforced her poor image of such institutions.\textsuperscript{39} She wrote to her college classmates in 1905 that she had visited 67 schools, but few belonged in the same class as their alma mater, Mt. Holyoke. By this time, she was already planning to return to China.\textsuperscript{40} Feeling that her place was still with the Yale mission, Thurston arranged to go there.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Matilda Thurston at Yale-in-China, 1906-1911}

In the years Thurston was in America, Yale-in-China had moved forward with its plans in Changsha. In fall 1906, Thurston returned to teach in the Yale boys’ middle school and assist with work in the hospital. The money from her husband’s insurance policy had left her financially stable, so she accepted a position for no salary.\textsuperscript{42} She was

\textsuperscript{38} See, for example, discussion in Irwin Hyatt, \textit{Our Ordered Lives Confess}, 66-67.

\textsuperscript{39} See, for example, Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 March 1905, Box 1, 1.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS and Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 9 November 1906, Box 1, 1.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{40} “Class Letter, ’96,” 1905, Matilda Calder Papers, Series A, Folder 13, MHC.

\textsuperscript{41} See a series of letters 1904-1906 from Matilda Thurston to Dr. Reed, John Lawrence Thurston Papers, RG 493, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{42} Thurston received $10,000 in insurance money. See Matilda Thurston to Dr. Reed, 5 July 1904, John Lawrence Thurston Papers, RG 493, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections. She described herself as an “unpaid worker” on a card filled out for the Census of College Women, 1915, Matilda Calder Papers, Series C, Folder 1, MHC.
the only single woman in a small mission group that also included two families and two
single men.\textsuperscript{43}

In general, Hunan was more anti-foreign than other parts of China, and it was not
until 1901—after the Boxer Uprising—that missionaries gained a foothold there.\textsuperscript{44}
Writing home in 1906, Thurston told her family that Hunan was still very much “virgin
soil” for new ideas and a difficult place to work, but, as her husband had said, they did
not come for an “easy job.” She looked forward to the challenge and thought the work
would ultimately bring greater satisfaction.\textsuperscript{45} Thurston remained secure in her belief that
China needed Christianity and hoped to influence the boys in the Yale school.\textsuperscript{46}

Thurston’s greatest hope was that a rapidly changing China would turn to
Christianity in its determination to modernize:

China is certainly stirred from her foundations and one feels there is
movement. It needs direction, however, and there is great inspiration to me
in the thought that we who are in this missionary work are helping to direct it
toward God’s ideal for this great nation, which is blindly groping her way out
of darkness of the past into the light of a new day....The work seems more
than ever a privilege and the opportunities in it are tremendous.\textsuperscript{47}

While at Yale-in-China, Thurston began to form more clearly her ideas about
education. The Chinese traditional system of education and its emphasis on

\textsuperscript{43} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 30 December 1906, Box 1, 1.15, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers,
UTS.

\textsuperscript{44} Kenneth Latourette, \textit{The History of Christian Missions in China} (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 364.

\textsuperscript{45} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 7 January 1907, Box 1, 1.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{46} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 December 1906, Box 1, 1.15, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers,
UTS.

\textsuperscript{47} Matilda Thurston, “Report Letter from Mrs. Thurston,” January 1907, John Lawrence Thurston Papers,
RG 493, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections.
memorization gave students “no chance to develop reasoning power,”\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 April 1907, Box 1, 1.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} while scholars of the old style were “pretty hopeless” in their self-satisfaction. To Thurston, “The hope of China is in the young men in spite of their folly, but they too need to be willing to follow truth whatever it costs, if China is to be saved from herself.”\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 March 1907, Box 1, 1.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} Thurston’s “truth” was entwined in Western ideas and methods as well as Protestant Christianity.

Thurston equated many of China’s problems with Confucian ideology, the underpinning of China’s imperial state. Chinese were not naturally conservative, she suggested—their conservatism was due to the “deadening effect of precedent as enforced in the philosophy and ethics of Confucius.” The West’s progressiveness, on the other hand, “is due largely to Christianity set free in the Reformation.” Thurston believed the Christian movement in China would be its Reformation. She suggested that modern education in both government and mission schools supplied new ideas and ideals to students. Western religion, philosophy, ethics and history along with science were helping to bring about the “doubt of the past” which was necessary for a “confidence in the future as better than the past,” which she believed was a Christian worldview.\footnote{Matilda Thurston, “China’s Break with the Past,” in \textit{Life and Light}, November 1912, in Matilda Calder Papers, Series B, Folder 1, MHC.}

To Thurston, Christianity was thus a force to change China and its people. Teaching medieval European history, she tried to give her students a “better
understanding of the way Christianity helped to mold the wild barbarians into civilized people—confident, it seems, that they would see the parallel with China.

In early twentieth-century China, student unrest at schools was common and Yale-in-China was no exception. Thurston approved of the school's disciplinary system and was glad when some student demands she deemed unreasonable were not met.

We are all anxious that the Yale in China should have a reputation for thorough work and good discipline...So many of the students of China are breaking from the past in what is good as well as in what is bad—losing respect for authority of all kind. Students study a few months in Japan and think they have had a Western education, and come back to China with revolutionary ideas of every sort. The officials ought to thank us for giving an opportunity to get this much-desired Western learning without the students being exposed to the harmful influences.

It did not occur to Thurston—or she refused to recognize—that many Chinese believed Christian educational institutions also exerted "harmful influences."

Despite her belief in the importance of the mission in Changsha, Thurston soon became disenchanted with her work there. In fact, Thurston had discovered—like many other ambitious women who had found the mission field a good outlet for their talents—that she was still stymied by male dominance. Although by the early twentieth century women numbered nearly two-thirds of the Western missionary force in China, men

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51 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 17 April 1909, Box 1, 1.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

52 Matilda Thurston to Dr. Reed, 23 January 1907, RG 493, John Lawrence Thurston Papers, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections.

53 In 1898, single women constituted 26 percent and married women 34 percent of the American Protestant missionary force. By 1919, the numbers for the total Protestant force were 29 percent single women and 33 percent married. Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 277, note 1.
occupied the management positions in overseas missions.\textsuperscript{54} Convinced that her gender precluded her from having any real say in the mission, Thurston complained that the men did not see her “filling any definite place”—although they seemed to find her a “convenient filler of gaps.”\textsuperscript{55}

During her four years at Yale-in-China, Thurston also became increasingly critical of the mission’s management. She complained, for example, about the way the men were handling the details of the building program. If it were a girls’ school, Thurston declared, she would do it herself, since many women in China looked after their own building.\textsuperscript{56} She was later to enjoy the opportunity to oversee the building at Ginling.

Convinced her skills were not being adequately utilized, Thurston felt frustrated and stymied in her career. She also believed that the mission women imposed too much on her to help them with their household work. Thurston wanted to “put first what is my own work and have a vocation.” Men, she observed, had a smoother career path than women, since men did not have to bother with housework or children.\textsuperscript{57} During her time in Changsha, Thurston seems increasingly doubtful she is doing one of the “big” jobs.

Furthermore, Thurston had difficulty getting along with many of her co-workers at the Yale mission, particularly the women. Living for a time with the head of the mission hospital and his wife, she missed being in control of her own home and found the

\textsuperscript{54} In Thurston’s years at the Yale mission, women attended mission meetings, “brought their knitting, and had the privilege of the floor but no vote”—indicating that Thurston had good reason to believe her views were not taken seriously. As quoted in Holden, \textit{Yale-in-China}, 98.

\textsuperscript{55} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 March 1910, Box 1, 1.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{56} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 1 April 1911, Box 1, 1.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{57} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 January 1909, Box 1, 1.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
couple indecisive to the point of "shiftlessness." It is likely that Thurston's uncompromising nature—which in many ways was to stand her in good stead as Ginling's president—contributed to her problem in interacting with the Yale staff. She set very high standards for herself and for the mission. When a couple that was to join the Yale group could not adjust to China and left before coming to Changsha, Thurston took this as a personal affront against Yale-in-China and her husband's legacy. She suggested that Yale mission wives should be carefully examined for "spiritual fitness." Thurston concluded, "a good many people think me a cross between a woman and a man, and would not think I had the heart to sympathize." In fact, Thurston did seem to possess little ability to empathize and was a particularly harsh critic—of herself as well as others.

Besides feeling that her work was of little importance, Thurston often complained of loneliness. In 1909, she wrote, "I find myself craving more and more the expression of love and friendship and the knowledge that I am of some account in the lives of others. I suppose it is the loneliness of my life." Having planned for a life centered around her family, the death of her husband forced her to look elsewhere, but she did not feel fulfilled at Yale-in-China.

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58 See Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 27 January 1907, Box 1, 1.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers; Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 20 February 1907, Box 1, 1.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

59 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 December 1907, Box 1, 1.20, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

60 Matilda Thurston to Brewer [Eddy], 9 January 1908, Box 5, 5.10, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

61 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 14 March 1909, Box 1, 1.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Casting around for another way to use her talents, Thurston turned to women’s work, which to her meant education. Thurston first mentions her hope to do educational work with girls and women in 1907. She began visiting girls’ schools, attempted to make Chinese women friends and considered various options for working with Chinese girls and women. By 1908, she had also come to the conclusion that a male teacher was more effective with boys than a woman. Furthermore, Thurston was convinced that she could do more for a girls’ school than her Chinese counterparts. Upon a visit to a local girls’ school, Thurston commented, “It is most interesting to think of the Chinese doing these things for themselves but it makes one all the more long to help them for there are so many crude things in the management of a school like the one we saw.” By 1909, Thurston was one of a group of women working on curriculum standardization for mission girls’ schools.

Hoping to improve her language skills for future work, Thurston went to Wuchang in fall 1909 where she devoted herself to Chinese study. After returning to Changsha, Thurston wrote openly about leaving Yale-in-China. “I have doubts about it

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62 “Woman’s work” referred to the work done by foreign female missionaries for women and children—in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, foreign men, because of social proprieties, were largely precluded from these tasks, which were thus considered a sphere for women.

63 Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, June 1907, Box 5, 5.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

64 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 12 October 1908, Box 1, 1.24, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

65 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 30 November 1908, Box 1, 1.24, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.


67 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 August 1909, Box 1, 1.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
offering me the place I can do my best work unless the mission undertakes a Girls’ School.”

She had returned to Changsha to teach mathematics when rice riots forced the foreign staff to evacuate in April 1910.

In late 1910, Thurston was back in Changsha teaching a Bible class for Chinese women and trying to arrange other classes. She observed, “The more one sees of Chinese women the more limited their life seems, socially, intellectually and spiritually...I do long to get at the girls and be able to share with them some of the things that make life worth living.” When comparing her life to an old woman in rags she had seen on the street, she commented, “How very little above the place of an animal it has all been!”

In 1911, she considered an offer by the American Episcopal Mission to start a school for the daughters of officials, but was persuaded by the men at Yale-in-China that she was still needed there. She was also offered the vice-principalship of a school for American missionary children in Lushan. The chance to share in the making of an institution appealed to her, she wrote, since she never had such an opportunity in Changsha. When the opening for the school was postponed, however, this avenue was closed.

Feeling an affinity to the Yale mission since her husband was one of its founders, Thurston had returned to Yale-in-China with the intention of spending her life there. Although she remained concerned with the mission and contributed small amounts of

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68 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 March 1910, Box 1, 1.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Emphasis in original.

69 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 25 May 1910, Box 1, 1.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

70 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 9 November 1910, Box 1, 1.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

71 Matilda Thurston to Brewer Eddy, 17 August 1911, Box 5, Folder 5.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
money to its work well into the 1950s, she had decided not to return when she left for furlough in October 1911. Her official reason was that there were no plans to develop work for women. However, her personal letters reveal that in addition, she did not feel she was an integral member of the staff, was frustrated in her career, and could not get along well with some of her colleagues. The feeling was likely mutual—a cryptic comment in a letter to her sister in 1911 indicates she might have worn out her welcome at the Yale mission: “If you want to know how I feel it is about as a woman must feel when her husband has no use for her anymore and is about to get a divorce.”

Leaving for furlough on October 10, 1911, Thurston watched from a steamer in Hankou as fires lit up its twin city, Wuchang, quite unaware that this meant the downfall of the Qing Dynasty. Back in the U.S., in the midst of a busy speaking schedule, she considered tentative offers such as teaching at the University of Nanking and working in the women’s department of Canton Christian College. She was partial to Nanjing since it was an active center of mission work and there were many “nice” people there. Soon, however, she was presented with an offer much more to her liking—heading a pioneer Christian college for women in the Yangtse Valley.

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72 See the series of thank-you letters from Yale-in-China to Matilda Thurston, John Lawrence Thurston Papers, RG 492, Series II, Box 2, Yale University Library, Special Collections.

73 Matilda Thurston, “Mrs. J. Lawrence Thurston (Matilda S. Calder).”

74 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 20 September 1911, Box 3, Folder 3.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

75 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 2.

76 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 3 November 1912, Box 1, 1.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
In traditional China, women were excluded from taking the civil service exam and were expected to stay within the domestic sphere, so a literary education was much less important for girls than for boys. A small percentage of girls, daughters of families with sufficient economic means, might study with their brothers for some years or have their own private tutors. Women of lower classes, like their brothers, might attain literacy specific to certain tasks, such as balancing accounts. In any event, girls received their education in the home; China’s numerous academies and schools were not open to women. In fact, the majority of women probably could not read at all.

The right to establish missions and schools, along with other concessions, was wrested from the Chinese through military force. Western missionaries opened the first girls’ school in Ningbo in 1844, and other missions soon followed suit. For much of the nineteenth century, however, most of these schools had only a handful of pupils, since Chinese had no tradition of public education for girls and mission schools in general were viewed with suspicion. In the last years of the nineteenth century Chinese reformers began opening private schools for girls. The tottering Qing Dynasty abolished the civil service exams and implemented educational reforms in the early twentieth century as part of a desperate bid to keep itself afloat, but none of the regulations of the late Qing or even

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77 South China might have been an exception; some sources indicate that in the nineteenth century, Chinese girls’ schools existed in Guangzhou and other areas of the South. See, for example, Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1983), 114-115.

78 Historian Evelyn Rawski estimates that in the late nineteenth century, only 2 to 10 percent of women were literate, as opposed to 30 to 45 percent of men. Rawski, however, uses a very low definition of literacy—the ability to read a few hundred characters. Evelyn Sakadida Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 140.
the early republic made provision for women’s higher education. Even provisions for elementary and middle schools remained largely on paper, and the vast majority of Chinese girls still had no opportunity to attend school in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the Protestant movement for overseas missions was reaching its height—China was one of the most important destinations for American missionaries—heated policy debates on whether missionaries should run schools and hospitals or stick to pure evangelism had been largely decided in favor of missionaries who placed schools high on their agenda. While the nineteenth-century Christian pioneer schools could claim only the very poor as students, as attitudes toward Western learning slowly changed and Chinese reformers looked to the West for the answers to China’s myriad problems, the schools became increasingly popular. Missionary educators tried to oblige the Chinese by expanding educational work into middle and high schools and finally into higher education.

Despite the growth of these institutions, college-level courses were normally closed to women. In the early twentieth century, however, Western missionaries,

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79 Provision was made for an imperial university—for men only—during the short-lived 1898 reform under the Guangxu emperor. A 1904 decree promulgated a national school system, but schools for girls were not included. The abolition of the civil service exam system in 1905 paved the way for further educational reform. Educational regulations in 1907 included provisions for separate elementary schools and normal schools—for primary school teachers—for girls. In 1912, the fledgling republic adopted an educational system allowing for secondary schools for girls and co-education in primary schools. See Marianne Bastid, *Education Reform in Early Twentieth-Century China*, trans. Paul Bailey (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 1988), 80-81; Charlotte L. Beahan, “In the Public Eye: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China,” in Robert W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds. *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship* (Youngstown, New York: Philo Press, 1981), 215-238; and Hu Hua-ling, *American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking*, 14-15.

particularly women, helped spur the establishment of opportunities for higher education for Chinese women under Christian auspices.

Discussion on establishing a women's mission college began in the early years of the twentieth century. At the 1907 Centenary Conference, Protestant missionaries advocated women's colleges as a part of their educational expansion in China, although they made it clear they thought the "ideal woman to be held before girls and young women in schools is the wife and mother in the home...though other careers are now opening before the women of China, they should be regarded as exceptional." This recommendation for women's colleges was only one in a series of ambitious educational proposals that included seminaries, new high schools and colleges, normal schools and well-equipped medical schools.

In 1908, North China Union Women's College (NCUWC, Huabei xiehe nuzi daxue) in Beijing, funded and administered by Western Christian missionaries, began offering a college course for women. Since none of the government institutions accepted female students, this was the only school in China that offered a degree course, although some of the other Christian colleges also offered female students limited coursework above the high school level.

At Lushan in the summer of 1911, a committee was appointed by the Central China Christian Educational Union to consider the establishment of a union women's

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81 See, for example, "Notes," Chinese Recorder 35 (December 1905): 629-630. This article discusses a Methodist college for women, which likely became Huanan College.


83 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 3.
college in the Yangtse Valley. Missionary work was disrupted in the chaos of the Republican revolution in the fall of 1911, so many Yangtse Valley missionaries took refuge in the international settlement in Shanghai. It is here that discussion began in earnest, as a group of women educators—members of the “Committee on the Proposed Union Woman’s College”—met in the winter of 1911-1912.

Encouraged by the new government’s positive stance toward Western education and convinced this would translate into higher school enrollments, committee members saw a need for educated Christian Chinese women teachers, especially for mission schools. Aware that mission school standards must be improved, missionary educators looked to educated Christian women to do “the quality of work demanded by reconstructed China.” In addition, the educators envisioned the college serving as a model for the Chinese. Pointing out that there were several colleges for men in the Yangtse Valley, but none for women, the committee urged union work for this practically unoccupied field. The founders of Ginling also saw themselves training Christian Chinese women leaders for the new Chinese Republic.

The need to establish a women’s college was made more urgent by the fact that missionary educators were convinced sending Chinese abroad for education was

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84 M.E.P., “A Union Woman’s College for Central China,” Chinese Recorder 43 (May 1912): 312-313. “Union” refers to several mission societies—which were generally denominationally based—pooling resources.

85 “Proposed Yangtse Valley College for Women,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2610, YDS. The article notes that a committee had been meeting for several years and laying plans.

86 “An Appeal For a Union Women’s College For Central China,” 1911, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2965, YDS.

87 Ibid.

88 “Proposed Yangtse Valley College for Women.”
counterproductive. In addition to the considerable expense, students that returned were often “denationalized and utterly unfit for sympathetic service.” While ostensibly this referred to the readjustment necessary upon return, it is also likely that part of “utterly unfit” referred to a discovery overseas—in the U.S., Europe or Japan—that Western learning and Christianity were not inextricably linked, as missionaries like Matilda Thurston liked to believe.

Although the women’s college committee described its members as veteran educators “peculiarly qualified” to know what the demands for women’s higher education in China were and how best to meet them, there were no Chinese on the committee. On furlough in the U.S., Matilda Thurston was not part of this first group of American women educators, but she was in sympathy with their aims.

Five mission Boards—the Northern Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Northern and Southern Methodists and Northern Presbyterians—responded favorably to this committee’s formal appeal, and plans moved forward. In the spring of 1913, Thurston was notified in an unofficial letter that the committee wanted to secure her as the college’s president. Excited about the plan, she told her family that although it had

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89 “An Appeal For a Union Women’s College For Central China.”

90 “Proposed Yangtse Valley College for Women.”

91 The list includes a Dr. Venie J. Lee, but it is unlikely this is a Chinese woman—the Founders are always referred as a group of American women. Furthermore, in 1923, Matilda Thurston suggested that Ginling was “not a thing thought out and planned in some foreign land; it came through those who were thinking about China, and who belonged to this country, although born in a foreign land.” Matilda Thurston, “Dedication of New Ginling Buildings, Historical Sketch,” 31 November 1923, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2976, YDS.

92 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 3-5.
moved forward faster than expected and was still uncertain, she had faith the project would be realized.  

Nanjing, a former Ming Dynasty capital, had been chosen for the site of the college, partly because Sun Yat-sen had designated Nanjing the capital of the new China. With the political chaos of the early Republican years, however, it was not until 1928 that Chiang Kai-shek established the capital there. In the summer of 1913, when Matilda Thurston returned to China under an appointment by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, she found conditions less than encouraging. The troops of loyalist general Zhang Xun, still sporting their Manchu queues, had captured Nanjing and largely destroyed the city with an orgy of violence and looting. Unable to even stop in Nanjing because of the chaos there, Thurston went to her summer home in Lushan, still confident the college would go forward. Unlike her work at Yale-in-China, where Thurston felt marginalized, she was convinced from the beginning that this job was an important one. When she was asked to spend half a year establishing a private school, she refused, since that would be "turning back on a path which has been leading me more surely than any previous one in what I felt to be the direction of my ultimate life work."  

Thurston finally arrived in Nanjing in September 1913, after Zhang's troops had left, hopeful that college work could begin the next year. She immediately discovered a new problem. Her position had yet to be clearly defined, since "some people" thought

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93 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 April 1913, Box 1, 1.31, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.


95 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 14 September 1913, Box 1, 1.33, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
the committee that invited her to Nanjing in April 1913 had exceeded its authority. Her standing was the first member of the faculty appointed, not president.96

In October 1913, at a meeting in Suzhou, the committee determined that since there was sufficient mission support pledged, the permanent Board of Control could be formed.97 Continuing to plan for the college with Board members and chafing under the limitations of her undefined status, Thurston asked the chairman of the committee to bring up the question of her presidency for discussion, with the result that she was appointed president at the first Board of Control meeting on November 13, 1913.98

The college administrative apparatus consisted of a Board of Control in China and the Ginling College Committee in New York. Missions providing funds for the college appointed members to the Board. There were no Chinese members of the first Board—nor was provision made for Chinese membership.99 Taking the term Ginling (Jinling) from an historical name for Nanjing, the founders replaced the cumbersome “Union College for Women in the Yangtse Valley” with Ginling College. In Chinese, they adopted the name Jinling nuzi daxue, or Ginling Women’s College, to distinguish it from the Chinese name of an existing Christian mission institution in Nanjing, the University of Nanking (Jinling daxue).100

96 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 6 October 1913, Box 1, 1.33, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Matilda Thurston to Mr. Speer, 24 August 1914, Box 5, 5.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

97 “Proposed Yangtse Valley College for Women.”

98 Matilda Thurston to Mr. Speer, 24 August 1914, Box 5, 5.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

99 “Proposed Yangtse Valley College for Women.” According to the constitution, each Mission Board was to be represented by three members on the Board of Control, two of whom had to be women experienced in educational work.

100 Thurston and Chester, *Ginling College*, 8-9.
In November 1913, Thurston wrote enthusiastically that there were over a dozen high schools in the Yangtse Valley looking to Ginling to provide further training for graduates, preparing them for positions of responsibility in mission schools and for leadership among Christian women—leadership, Thurston declared, that should increasingly be expected of them. Training Chinese leaders, she pointed out, was essential to making the church indigenous to China. The college would train elite women leaders to help evangelize China, since it was hopeless to try to directly reach all of its masses.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 November 1913, Box 1, 1.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} Thurston argued that there was too much effort being wasted on the “deficient and degraded,” blocking the way for reaching the people who are the “backbone of China” and the “ones through whom China must eventually be reached”—i.e., the educated class.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 18 May 1914, Box 1, 1.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} She suggested that it was especially important to reach educated women, because when women became Christians they were willing to teach others, releasing the foreigners for other work in training leaders.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 1 August 1914, Box 1, 1.37, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

_Toward the College Opening_

Although she was not particularly impressed with the city itself, Thurston’s letters indicate that from the beginning of her time in Nanjing, she was caught up in the excitement of the new college and felt a sense of belonging and a satisfaction in her work.
that she had never had in Changsha. In addition to the controversy over her position as president, however, Thurston also discovered that general opinion was still not all favorable to the establishment of a women’s college in China. Ignoring the doubts of the mostly male detractors, Thurston pushed ahead with plans.

She also noted approvingly that the Board wanted to keep the college apart from existing schools and avoid “entangling alliances” with preparatory school work. A later visit to NCUWC reinforced her impression that Ginling should not have a preparatory department, since it was hard to get a “college attitude toward study” when the majority of students were doing high school or lower work.

By February 1914, Thurston proudly reported that the constitution of the college, most of which she had written herself, was adopted in Shanghai. By the fall of that

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104 See, for example, Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 30 September 1913, Box 1, 1.33, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

105 In 1913, men in some of the missions were skeptical about whether the time had come for college education for women in China. One man asked the founders if there would be twenty-five students in the college in ten years. The women told him they “expected larger things than that.” Matilda Thurston, untitled document, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2976, YDS. Thurston also wrote in 1928 that “Even the opportunity of the woman’s college was secured for Chinese girls against the opposition of a good many men, both Chinese and foreign.” See Matilda Thurston, “Ginling and the University of Nanking,” 8 September 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS. At Thurston’s sixtieth birthday party, a Mrs. Hwang who had been involved in building up a Christian girls’ school also admitted to “the doubtful attitude of many people, including herself, toward higher education for girls.” “First President of Ginling College Honored in Connection with Twentieth Anniversary,” North China Daily News, 9 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11 Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2697, YDS. Finally, in a 1940 letter to Wu Yifang, Thurston refers to a Dr. Paul, who remembered the “early planning, and the doubts of many as to whether the time had really come for beginning a college for women.” Matilda Thurston to Yifang, 26 November 1940, Box 5, 5.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

106 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 1 March 1914, Box 1, 1.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

107 Matilda Thurston, “Personal Report of Mrs. Lawrence Thurston,” August 1915, “Edited Letters,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2854, YDS. Ginling was unique among the Christian colleges in that it had no preparatory department. “Ginling College: A Six-Year Review,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Box 154, Folder 2961, YDS.

108 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 February 1914, Box 1, 1.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

42
year, she was busy attending to details of the college bulletin, revising the constitution, looking for a building to rent, designing a college seal, and deciding on the form of degrees. Board members were insistent that Ginling maintain a higher standard than NCUWC.109

With the college opening set for fall 1915, Thurston made a budget for twenty-five pupils. She thought that the first class might be large, since it would attract women out of school for some time as well as new high school graduates. Thurston had high hopes for the students, whom she thought had the potential to be a “distinct force” in the city as church and Bible class leaders.110

When a search for land for the college proved fruitless—their first choice was a Muslim cemetery that could not be sold to a foreigner, while funds were also insufficient to erect adequate buildings—it was abandoned in favor of renting an official residence. The college would then have an opportunity to grow before a permanent campus was constructed. However, securing a residence also proved difficult. Finding their first choice of a house rented, Thurston and friends frantically searched for a home for the college in spring 1915.111 In April 1915, they finally sealed the deal on a compound with over one hundred rooms belonging to a son of Chinese statesman Li Hongzhang. It was located near the remains of the Ming palace, in what was then the eastern edge of the city—what faculty member Frederica Mead called the best section of Nanjing. Extensive

109 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 December 1914, Box 1, 1.38, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

110 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 29 November 1914, Box 1, 1.38, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

111 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 8 March 1915, Box 2, 2.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
repairs were, however, necessary to restore the residence and convert it for college use.\textsuperscript{112} When Thurston reported the successful renting of the house to her family, she also noted that none of the supporting Boards had sent any money yet. Luckily, some faculty members had private resources and as foreigners, they could buy on credit!\textsuperscript{113}

From the college’s early beginnings, Thurston looked beyond the missionary middle school constituency for students. Amidst all the planning for the first year, she visited private and government schools in the area, talking with principals about the new college.\textsuperscript{114}

Thurston spent 1913-1915 in Nanjing with her time split three ways—teaching at the Presbyterian girls’ school, studying Chinese, and planning for the college. She despairs that her Chinese was not adequate to the task of being a college president.\textsuperscript{115} In fact, despite years of study, Thurston was never able to master Chinese to her satisfaction and had difficulty expressing herself. Being a direct person, she particularly disliked the

\textsuperscript{112} Frederica Mead to Mead Family, n.d., China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Mead Papers, RG 8, Box 140, Folder 4A, YDS; Thurston and Chester, \textit{Ginling College}, 7. Many of the estates in that area were left to caretakers or rented to foreigners, since their Chinese owners preferred the safety of the international settlement in Shanghai in those chaotic years. Untitled document (questions and answers about the college; Matilda Thurston is almost certainly the interviewee), n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2976, YDS.

\textsuperscript{113} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 April 1915, Box 2, 2.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{114} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 28 March 1915, Box 2, 2.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{115} Matilda Thurston, “Personal Report of Mrs. Lawrence Thurston,” August 1915, Box 10, 10.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

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flowery Chinese style.\textsuperscript{116} She once opined that a case could be made for replacing Chinese with Esperanto.\textsuperscript{117}

By summer 1915, the fledgling college was eagerly awaiting its first class of students. Thurston happily reported that Board relationships were very harmonious, and there was growing loyalty for the college among the missions, providing a backing important to its success. To her family, Thurston expressed disappointment that students were slow in registering,\textsuperscript{118} but in a later college publicity pamphlet, after noting that eleven students had registered, she wrote optimistically, "Smith [College] started with fourteen students. Give us forty years to grow. There are more girls in China than in America.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{116} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 March 1916, Box 2, 2.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{117} Matilda Thurston, "The End of the Year (1927)," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

\textsuperscript{118} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 4 June 1915, Box 2, 2.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{119} Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, \textit{Starting a College in China} (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1915), 4.
CHAPTER 2
MISSIONARY EDUCATORS AND PIONEER COLLEGE
WOMEN: GINLING'S FIRST DECADE

A Difficult Beginning

The first college student, Y.T. Zee (Xu Yizhen, 1894-1981) arrived on campus on September 13, 1915. Four days later, on the morning of September 17, 1915, six teachers and eight students attended the opening chapel service; the students bowed respectfully to the teachers who bowed in return. The cavernous hall, capable of holding two hundred seats, was nearly empty\(^1\) and students found themselves wondering if this institution, with its handful of teachers and tiny library, housed in an old official Chinese residence, could really be considered a college.\(^2\) Matilda Thurston, in contrast, was undaunted by the limited facilities and small numbers. Giving the first chapel message, she envisioned the rows of chairs filled with students and Ginling graduates working outside the college.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Liu Gein-chiu (Liu Jianqiu) and others, *The Pioneer* (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1919), 1-3.

\(^2\) Wu Yifang, “Jinnuda sishinian,” (Forty years of Ginling College) reprinted in *Wu Yifang jinian ji*, 102. This article was written in 1983.

\(^3\) Gratia Sharp, Circular letter, 20 November 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2899, Special Collections, YDS. This letter quotes a speech from Wu Yifang, who recalled Thurston’s later comments about that first day.

46

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Both faculty and students found the first months frustrating. With differing customs and dialects, students had trouble understanding each other.\(^4\) Many of them found the coursework, almost entirely in English, exceedingly difficult. Thurston herself showed a surprising lack of sympathy for or understanding of the young pioneers struggling with the essentially foreign curriculum. The girls, she declared, were too easily discouraged. Thurston complained to her family in November 1915 that since they had been “babied,” Ginling instructors were helping them develop more “independence of character.” Some of the girls, she wrote disapprovingly, were “protégés of foreigners” brought up “half foreign in their way of looking at things.”\(^5\) Thurston later recalled that some students “came because they were sent and were anything but enthusiastic over the infant college which lacked so much that only the years could give.” As for the faculty, not one member of the teaching staff had any previous experience teaching college courses in China.\(^6\)

Thurston’s tone soon softened, however, and after the first trying months, she began referring to the students in superlatives. In addition to the significant influence she hoped Ginling graduates would have in spreading the gospel, she was convinced they would be able to do “more than foreigners can ever do for the uplift of the women of China.”\(^7\)

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\(^4\) Liu, *The Pioneer*, 5-8. A year later, for the same reason, some of the freshmen had difficulty understanding the Chinese classics teacher. Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 24 September 1916, Box 2, 2.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^5\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 November 1915, Box 2, 2.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

Early college literature emphasized the picturesque elements of the first campus, but the Li residence had many drawbacks. The first students heartily disliked the college buildings, the overgrown garden, dark rooms, leaky roof, and scant protection against the cold. Biology instructor Cora Reeves noted that there was no need to search for molds and fungi for student work since they grew in abundance on the floor of the chemistry laboratory. When student Yan Lianyun, arriving in 1920, discovered that there was no running water, electricity or central heat, she wondered why her sister, Yan Caiyun, who had entered Ginling in 1917, had not mentioned the living conditions. Yan Caiyun recalled:

To me...it was all a part of getting a college education....Looking back, living under those conditions for four years was an invaluable experience in itself. It prepared us to adapt ourselves to whatever environment we were to find ourselves in and to face up to any challenge with an undaunted response.

The sisters may have exaggerated the hardships—the college employed servants to take care of the more onerous tasks.

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7 "Presbyterian Report—Ginling Mission," 1916, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2966, YDS.

8 Liu, The Pioneer, 5-8; Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 27 January 1916, Box 2, 2.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.


10 Yan Lianyun, interview by author, Tape recording, Shanghai, China, 21 February 2001. See also Yan Lianyun, “Xiuhuaxiang shichide Jinnuda xuesheng shenghuo gaikuang,” (A general description of student life when Ginling was at Xiuhuaxiang) in Yongjiude sinian [Memory Forever], (Nanjing: Jinnuda xiaoyouhui, 1993), 101.


According to Thurston, some of the girls missed a foreign building, but the foreign faculty enjoyed living in the Chinese house.¹³ It had the advantage over foreign-style school buildings, she declared, in its atmosphere “so much more wholesome and simple—at the same time dignified and beautiful.” The foreign style, on the other hand, did nothing to cultivate the students’ taste in architecture.¹⁴ Thurston even suggested that some criticism of the college could be traced to the dislike, mainly by Chinese, of its traditional-style residence. Unmoved by the critics, Thurston was to later insist on Chinese-style buildings for the permanent campus.¹⁵ After significant modifications, students grew to like the old buildings and the grounds.¹⁶

Ginling’s first class was well aware of the fact they and the college were pioneers in women’s education. Their teachers and visitors to the school helped drive home the importance of their performance:

We were called to realize, though unwillingly, the responsibility that fell to our lot. Whether our women were worthy of higher education, and whether Ginling could carry out her aim—such were the questions that we, the first students of Ginling, were to answer, not with words, but with our lives...Realizing our opportunities to be the first ones educated here in China, we desired to make the most of the preparation period and looked forward to

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¹³ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 November 1915, Box 2, 2.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

¹⁴ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 December 1916, Box 2, 2.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

¹⁵ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 21 April 1916, Box 2, 2.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.


49

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the day when we would be privileged to have our share in the big movement.\textsuperscript{17}

As some of China’s few college women, however, students keenly missed contact with colleagues. After a visit from students of the YWCA Physical Training School, then in Shanghai, Wu Yifang observed,

Shut up within the high walls and busy in our studies, we seldom have contact with the outside world. The coming of these girls increased our interest in the other institutions. How we wished that we could find more chance to be related with our fellow students.\textsuperscript{18}

Similar to the first female students in higher educational institutions in America, Ginling’s first classes were very serious about their studies and had a strong sense of purpose. As a member of the first class put it: “As a rule most of the girls are not without earnestness in the pursuit of knowledge and willingness to be of service to our fatherland.”\textsuperscript{19} Many of the students in the first classes had worked for some years to acquire the money needed to continue their education and cherished the opportunity.\textsuperscript{20} Wu Yifang recalled: “Most of us had had teaching experience, and came to college with a serious purpose of securing further training.”\textsuperscript{21} For many, their education did not end at

\textsuperscript{17} Liu, The Pioneer, 22.
\textsuperscript{18} Wu Yifang, “The Visit of the Students of the Physical Training School in Shanghai,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2975, YDS. This school was later relocated to Ginling.
\textsuperscript{19} Dong Nyok-zoe, “Life in Ginling College, Extracts from an article by one of the students,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2966, YDS.
\textsuperscript{20} Yan Lianyun, “Xiuhuaxiang shichide Jinnuda xuesheng shenghuo gaikuang,” 101-105.
\textsuperscript{21} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Harold B. Hoskins, 30 October 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2917, YDS.
Ginling—twenty out of forty-three graduates of the first four classes at Ginling received advanced degrees from institutions of higher education in the United States.\(^{22}\)

It was the first class that helped choose the motto “Abundant Life.” This phrase reflected Thurston’s hope for the institution. Ginling would inspire each student for “a vision of her life lived for others, not for herself—except as the enriching of her own life makes it count for more in the service of Christ.”\(^{23}\) In Matilda Thurston’s vision of higher education, educational and religious goals were intertwined. Noting that the motto’s Chinese translation, *hou sheng*, could also mean “generous living,” Thurston argued, “Surely the two meanings [abundant life and generous living] belong together. When learning or religion attempt to exist as ends in themselves they lose vitality. When they inspire for service they transform the world.”\(^{24}\)

\textit{Wu Yifang as a Ginling Student}

Ginling’s first class was an exceptional group of students. Of the graduating class of five, two became medical doctors, two academic administrators, and one an evangelist. One of their number, Wu Yifang, was to become Ginling’s second president and the college’s most outstanding alumna.

Wu Yifang was born on January 26, 1893 in Wuchang, China, the third of four children. She came from a family of distinguished scholars in steady decline over three

\(^{22}\) Thurston and Chester, \textit{Ginling College}, 22.

\(^{23}\) Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 19 January 1917, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2855, YDS.

\(^{24}\) Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College –The Sixth Year,” 1921, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2968, YDS.
generations. Wu’s great-grandfather was a Hanlin scholar and her grandfather a juren, but Wu’s father passed only the lowest level of the civil service exam, the shengyuan. Finding it difficult to support his family on his meager earnings as a teacher, and with the family wealth long gone, Wu’s father reluctantly purchased a low-level official job with the help of family connections.25

As the custom of footbinding was just beginning to decline at this time, Wu Yifang’s feet were bound and then released when she was a child.26 Like most girls of her era and class, Wu received her early education at home, studying along with her brother from age seven.27 However, new schools of Western learning were opening up in China’s large cities,28 and the two sisters desperately wanted to attend one. Wu Yifang’s older sister, Yifen, was very much interested in the new learning, and from an early age, the two sisters read books and pamphlets advocating reform. Authors included reformer Liang Qichao.29

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25 Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 3-4.

26 Li Zhenkun, interview by author, Nanjing, China, 14 December 2000; Huang Xuechao, “Muxiao yu wo, wo ai muxiao,” (My alma mater educated me, I love my alma mater) in Jinling nuer: The Daughter of Ginling (Nanjing: Ginling College, Nanjing Normal University, 2000), 23. Wu was among 15 percent of Ginling students in the years 1915-1921 who had had their feet at least partially bound. See “Ginling College: A Six-Year Review,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2961, YDS.

27 “Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston),” from biographical notes dictated to Helen Loomis [Wu’s secretary] in 1936, in Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter # 10, page 9-11, April 1956, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS.

28 In some Ginling materials, a maternal uncle is credited with opening one of the earliest schools for girls—if this is the case, it is unclear why the Wu sisters did not attend that school. See, for example, “Story of Life of Dr. Yi-fang Wu, President of Ginling College,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.

29 “Women and World Highways: Wu Yifang of China,” World Call, 1940, in Box 9, 9.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; “Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).”
When a relative brought news of a new-style girls school in Hangzhou, home of their maternal grandmother, the sisters approached their mother and father, but their entreaties fell on deaf ears. The sisters’ mother and maternal grandmother couched their opposition in a belief common at the time—school was inappropriate for girls. According to Wu’s Chinese biographer, permission was forthcoming only when Yifen, desperate to attend school, attempted suicide. In March 1904, fifteen-year-old Yifen and her eleven-year-old younger sister Yifang took an eleven-day journey by sedan chair, houseboat and steamer, to Hangzhou where they entered Hangzhou Girls School. Opened by reform-minded Chinese gentry, Hangzhou Girls School was one of the first private Chinese schools for girls and the first in Zhejiang.

The staff at Hangzhou included a young woman in her thirties who was “alert to current trends of thinking and national affairs” and “taught her girls the meaning of patriotism and the duties of a citizen.” Teachers told the young pupils that China was facing a crisis and was on the verge of being divided, urging them to “study hard,

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30 “Women and World Highways: Wu Yifang of China.”

31 Wu’s Chinese biographer, Zhu Xuepo, identifies this school as Hongdao Girls Academy (Hongdao nüzi xuetang). Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 4. According to Wu Yifang’s own recollection, however, it was Hangzhou Girls School (Hangzhou nü xuexiao). Wu Yifang, “Bashi shengchen ganyan,” (A speech on my eightieth birthday), n.d., MQYF, 11-1, 59, JPA. Hangzhou Girls School was opened by male Chinese reformers in 1904. See Du Xueyuan, Zhongguo nüzi jiaoyu tongshi (A history of women’s education in China) (Guiyang: Guizhou jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 300. (It is referred to as Hangzhou nü xuetang in this book.) Hongdao, on the other hand, was a mission school established by the American Southern Presbyterian Mission. In English, it was also called Hangzhou Girls School. Mary Horton Stuart, mother of missionary educator and future American ambassador to China John Leighton Stuart, was involved in this school. Shaw, American Missionary in China, 13-14. See also Kwok, Chinese Women and Christianity, 126. Some sources indicate that the Wu sisters began school in 1907, but this is unlikely. See “Story of Life of Dr. Yi-fang Wu, President of Ginling College,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.

resolving to save the nation.”33 In 1905, Wu Yifang accompanied a Chinese teacher and other students to a rally protesting the treatment of Chinese workers in the United States and discriminatory American immigration policy. On the way back from the meeting, her teacher linked the poor treatment received by the workers to China’s corruption and weakness.34 The training they received at Hangzhou Girls School made a strong impression on the young schoolgirls. Wu later recalled that they opposed conventional ideas for women, believed in the equality of the sexes, and were convinced that by having a profession they could play a role in the national salvation.35

The sisters’ maternal aunt and their uncle, Chen Shutong, also lived in Hangzhou. Chen, who had served as an elected representative in the short-lived Qing Dynasty assembly,36 began overseeing their studies. Wu’s sister Yifen became convinced that English was essential to a modern course of study because of the close contacts with Western civilization. Since English was not offered in Hangzhou, the sisters moved on to Morning Star Girls School in Shanghai, a Catholic girls school where some relatives studied.37 After one year, the sisters returned to Wuchang to study with a tutor, since the older sister did not like the strict rules and was disappointed with the slow progress in

33 Wu Yifang, “Bashi shengchen ganyan,” (A speech on my eightieth birthday) in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 81. This version of Wu’s speech is different from the draft with the same title in the Jiangsu Archives.

34 “Bashi shengchen ganyan,” JPA.

35 “Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).”

36 Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 21.

37 “Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).” According to Wu’s biographer, it was Chen Shutong that decided the sisters needed to learn English and made the arrangements for them to study in Shanghai. Zhu neglects to mention the fact that most of the schools Wu attended were run by Christian missionaries. Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 9-10.
English. By 1908, however, they were in Suzhou studying at Laura Haygood, a Methodist girls school.\footnote{“Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).”}

In November 1909, the two sisters received an urgent summons to return home, with no accompanying explanation. Arriving in Wuchang, they discovered that their father had been persuaded to use government finances in two business schemes. When these failed and he was asked to account for the funds, he committed suicide. The Wu sisters were forced to leave school. The family eventually moved to Shanghai where Chen Shutong then lived. In 1911, Wu’s beloved elder brother committed suicide, following his father’s example by drowning himself in the river. He was depressed after his college, Qinghua Academy in Beijing, closed temporarily for lack of funds, and he found himself unable to help his family. Wu’s mother, who had been ill for some time, died shortly afterward. Just before passing away, she asked her sister, wife of Chen Shutong, to take in her children.\footnote{Wu Yifang, “Dui xiaoshide xiugai yijian,” (Some opinions on changes to the college history) n.d., MQYF, 11-1, 59, JPA.} When her older sister Yifen hanged herself the night before her mother’s funeral, Wu Yifang lost her three closest relatives within a month.\footnote{Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 13-31.}

At eighteen, Wu was left alone with her nine-year-old sister, Yiquan, and her paternal grandmother. Wu “could see very little meaning or value in life and merely existed for the sake of her grandmother and her younger sister.”\footnote{“Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).”} According to one of Wu’s former students who knew her well, Wu Yifang also contemplated suicide after the deaths of her family members. Chen Shutong, however, impressed upon her her
obligations to family and to society, advising her to finish school and support her family by teaching.\textsuperscript{42} Chen took in the Wu family members, treating them as members of his own family. In the future, Wu Yifang was to often refer to him as “like a father” or simply “father.”\textsuperscript{43}

After a period of mourning, in spring 1913 Wu returned to Hangzhou to study as a special student at Hangzhou Girls School (the mission institution). In 1914, Wu accompanied Chen and his family to Beijing, where he helped her secure a position teaching English at the Beijing Girls Normal School (\textit{Beijing nuzi shifan xuejiao}), a government institution. According to some later biographical notes, Wu at this time began to “feel some value in life for herself” while realizing that “she needed more study in order to be able to help others.” Wu knew about the opening of Ginling College from her former teacher in Hangzhou, Mary Nourse. Nourse, one of Ginling’s original founders who was then teaching at the college, encouraged Wu to continue her education. The opportunity came when Chen Shutong moved back to Shanghai in 1915; Wu entered Ginling as a special student in the winter of 1916.\textsuperscript{44}

Upon her arrival in 1916, Thurston wrote her family that Wu had nice manners and should help give “tone” to the college. Although she had attended mission schools,

\textsuperscript{42} Li Zhenkun, interview by author, Nanjing, China, 14 December 2000.

\textsuperscript{43} See, for example, Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 13 July 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS. Writing to her cousin, she refers to him as younger brother and her aunt and uncle as father and mother. Wu Yifang to Tsen Di-di, 17 October 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

\textsuperscript{44} “Reminiscences of Dr. Wu: Pre-Ginling Biography; Citation (Mrs. Lawrence E. Thurston).”

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Wu did not come from a Christian family nor was she a church member, putting a “new responsibility” on the college and faculty.\(^4\)\(^5\)

One student later recalled that Wu Yifang adopted a “defensive attitude toward Confucius’ teachings and an agnostic attitude toward Christianity.” According to this account, Wu decided to become a Christian when, invited to her friend Y.T. Zee’s home, she was struck by Zee’s mother’s “zeal for life” and the home’s “happy, congenial atmosphere.”\(^4\)\(^6\) In a tribute to Zee in 1981, Wu recalled that Zee’s friendship had made her a different person.

When I entered Ginling, I had suffered deep sorrow from a family tragedy...In Ginling it was Yuh-tsung’s Christian Life and her loving sympathy for me that uplifted me out of self-imposed isolation. Gradually I understood the real meaning of life and learned to aim at a worthy life purpose.\(^4\)\(^7\)

Wu was baptized her junior year at Ginling.\(^4\)\(^8\) She later commented that Christian activities were one of the factors behind her decision to convert. She was impressed by Christians’ “spontaneous expressions, or organized effort in carrying out the Christian

\(^{45}\) Presumably to convert her, since at the time she was the only student that was not a Christian. Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 20 February 1916, Box 2, 2.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{46}\) Li Gwan-yuen, “Ginling Alumnae in Time of Peace—S.C.A.C.W. Meeting,” 19 June 1938, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2790, YDS.


\(^{48}\) Rebecca Giest to Miss Leila Roberts, 10 April 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 141, Folder 2812, YDS. According to Zhu Xuepo, she was baptized in a Baptist church in Shanghai. Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 41-42. According to her entry in the \textit{Biographical Dictionary of Republican China}, however, Wu was a Methodist. Thurston once commented that Wu had little church life and “like most of the Chinese in her group she is critical of the church as it exists here.” Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 April 1935, Box 2, 2.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Thurston is probably correct, since denominational differences in particular were in fact of less concern to most Chinese Christians than to their Western counterparts. See Philip L. Wickeri, \textit{Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement and China’s United Front} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 215-221.
teaching in their lives.” After 1949, when an acquaintance asked her why she was a Christian, Wu spoke in terms of her belief “enhancing her moral spirit.” Wu’s Christian faith must have filled an emotional need after the loss of her family members. It was also a way for her to offer the service urged by her teachers and her uncle Chen Shutong. In the future, she was to continually urge her students into service careers as well—serving the nation, the people, the rural areas, women and children, etc.

This is not to suggest that Wu Yifang did not have a strong personal faith, however. From her college days on, she participated in—or led—a variety of Christian organizations. No contemporary accounts question her sincerity as a Christian, and many praise her talks at chapel services or other venues where religious-oriented speeches were appropriate. Even after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, she was involved in the official church.

Y. T. Zee and Wu Yifang impressed their teachers with both their academic performance and their leadership skills. They led the first class in pushing for more student autonomy, organizing a self-government association to show that students were capable of enforcing dormitory rules and other regulations themselves.

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49 Wu Yifang, “Christians and World Order,” Paper delivered at the triennial meeting of the Women’s Auxiliary to the National Council in Cleveland, Ohio, October 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.

50 Shi Ximin, “Daonian Wu Yifang nushi,” (Mourning Ms. Wu Yifang) in Wu Yifangjinian jì, 141-142.

51 See, for example, Frederica Mead to Elizabeth, 3 November 1918, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Mead Papers, RG 8, Box 140, Folder 17, YDS.

Wu Yifang was chairman of the student's self-government association and the president of her senior class. Contemporary Yan Caiyun recalled that Wu:

...impressed me as being very different from the other girls, some of whom reminded me strongly of my mission school teachers. She was very quiet, poised, and reserved, and was more like the daughter of an old-fashioned family than a pioneer in women's education. I remember her especially as the president of the Student's Self Government and admired the way she conducted the meetings and the beautiful, literary expressions she commanded.

**Student Concern for the National Salvation and Ginling's Early Tradition of Social Service**

In the mid-1910s, warlord governments vied for control of a divided China. Convinced that far-reaching change was necessary to ensure the survival of the nation, the educated class began questioning centuries-old cultural and educational precepts. As educated Chinese women, Ginling students also wanted to do their part for the national salvation. Wu Yifang later recalled aspiring to save the nation through education (dushu jiuguo); her classmates felt the same. A Western teacher at Ginling, leading discussion on gender in the second-year English class in 1916 (most likely Wu Yifang's class) described the girls' preoccupation:

The young students said that "women should help their country as much as men did, that their wisdom, though different from men's, would also be valuable, that they should take an interest in things outside their home, that they should have great opportunity to develop all their different sorts of

53 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 13 October 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

54 Mrs. Hsien Wu (Yan Caiyun), "Contemporary and Friend," Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter # 10, page 12, April 1956, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS.

55 See, for example, Wu Yifang, “Bashi shengchen ganyan,” in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 81.
power, that they should lead a larger life, and most of all, again and again, that they should help their country.\footnote{As quoted in Graham, \textit{Gender, Culture, and Christianity}, 80-81.}

The students' concerns were manifested in many ways. For Christmas 1916, they presented a skit in which an upper class lady (played by Wu Yifang) was asked what she had done for the lower classes. She decides that for Christmas she will do something for the poor instead of giving gifts to her wealthy friends.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 14 January 1917, Box 2, 2.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} In 1918, the four class presidents gave a presentation depicting Ginling women as a light going out to China. Thurston heartily approved of both these presentations, for they showed that students were in agreement with their teachers that as educated Chinese women, they would have an important contribution to make to the new China.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 13 October 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

The students' social concerns extended well beyond performing skits. Like their counterparts in other schools, Ginling students were interested in social service work.\footnote{Even before the May Fourth Movement, students in many cities had begun taking an active interest in social service activities. See Shirley S. Garrett, \textit{Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 133.} Ginling's tradition of social service, developed even further under Wu Yifang's presidency, thus began early in the college's history. In the school's second semester of existence, the students, with the help of two teachers and the matron, started a Sunday School for neighborhood children.\footnote{Liu, \textit{The Pioneer}, 21.} The second year, students, on their own initiative, opened a half-day school for illiterate girls ten to sixteen.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Frederica Mead, 15 January 1917, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2975, YDS.} Students also offered their
services at Sunday Schools, the Women's Social Service League and the YWCA.\textsuperscript{62} By 1921, the half-day school had become a full-day school with a teacher whose salary was paid by the students, who also helped teach. There were also evening classes for college servants.\textsuperscript{63} Social service activities continued and expanded after the 1923 move to the permanent campus, where groups of students and faculty under the direction of faculty member Minnie Vautrin went out regularly to meet and offer assistance to neighbors.\textsuperscript{64}

*Matilda Thurston as President: A Difficult Job*

As president of Ginling, Matilda Thurston faced several crises in the college's early years. In 1917, students, teachers and servants forestalled a disaster by putting out a campus fire with a bucket brigade.\textsuperscript{65} In spring 1918, pneumonic plague broke out in Nanjing. The University of Nanking and government schools closed and sent students home, but Thurston instead averted the danger by confining faculty, students and servants within the college walls. “Life is not monotonous for me whatever else it may be,” she commented dryly.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{62} Liu, *The Pioneer*, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{63} Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College—The Sixth Year.”

\textsuperscript{64} “Report on Ginling College 1923-1924,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2979, YDS.

\textsuperscript{65} Liu, *The Pioneer*, 10.

\textsuperscript{66} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 27 and 30 March 1918, Box 2, 2.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
As Ginling president, Thurston found herself with a broad range of duties. In fall 1918, for example, she was serving as president, treasurer, registrar and instructor. Nevertheless, in February 1919, she admitted to her sister that although she was very busy, she was “thoroughly in love” with her job. In fact, she once compared the college to a new baby that took all her time, which was probably fairly accurate—and indicates that, to her, the college was a kind of surrogate family. Thurston was also very vocal in pointing out that she had a great deal more work than a man in the same position, since she personally had to attend to her own domestic duties—but she never succeeded in convincing her male counterparts she had a legitimate complaint.

Thurston soon faced one of her most vexing problems, staffing, which was to plague the college for its entire existence. It was difficult to find qualified instructors—either Chinese or foreign—to fit the demanding bill of Christians who possessed the educational qualifications to teach college-level courses. The problem was made worse by the low salaries generally offered at mission schools.

Thurston was particularly concerned with the college’s inability to hire good science teachers, since she believed a strong science faculty a necessity. It was, she wrote, a “real grief” to be so weak in the sciences in the college’s beginning years. According to Thurston, the Chinese did not realize “how much they need it and the things

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67 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 13 October 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

68 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 21 February 1919, Box 3, 3.18, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

69 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 17 May 1916, Box 2, 2.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

70 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 August 1915, Box 2, 2.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
that it makes possible, both from the point of view of practical uses and mental
discipline."\textsuperscript{71}

Finding teachers was made more difficult because Thurston did not want to hire
men, especially for the science positions. To her, a Chinese man was not equal to the
task of making the sciences "vital" for Chinese women; furthermore, due to the
"intimacies of the laboratory," a man could not be hired for this type of work.\textsuperscript{72} Thurston
couched her argument in terms of Chinese proprieties, but she was willing on other
occasions to ignore such considerations.\textsuperscript{73} In fact, Thurston had a clear dislike of male
teachers for female students, once opining, "The work of relating Chemistry and Biology
to the problems of every day [sic] life and personal wellbeing [sic] could be much more
effectively done by a woman."\textsuperscript{74}

Although the college started with a large number of foreign faculty, Thurston and
the administrative organs in China and New York agreed they should be replaced by
Chinese as soon as qualified candidates became available. It was, however, difficult to
find Chinese returned students with teaching experience willing to work at Ginling for

\textsuperscript{71} Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 19 January 1917, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842,
YDS.

\textsuperscript{72} Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 4 August 1916, Box 5, 5.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{73} In the early twentieth century, a college for women itself would have run contrary to ideas of proper
place for women in Chinese society. In addition, in 1922, Thurston suggested that guests be seated at
commencement without regard to gender: "Somebody has to begin these things and Christian colleges
seem a safe place in which to experiment cautiously." Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 4 June 1922,
Box 2, 2.20, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{74} Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, "The Higher Education of Chinese Women," \textit{The Educational Review} 8, no. 2
the salary offered, which was lower than that of the foreign faculty.\textsuperscript{75} The first year, Thurston secured a female Chinese returned student, Li Mali, for the faculty,\textsuperscript{76} but Thurston was not happy with her performance. This experience reinforced Thurston’s impression that study abroad at the college level was not good for Chinese students since upon their return they had to readjust—and, as in the case of Li, sometimes returned to China with a prejudice against missionaries.\textsuperscript{77}

Finding Chinese staff in general, but especially the Chinese chair—who would not have spent time abroad—was made even more difficult by Thurston’s poor understanding of Chinese social interaction and etiquette. For example, she once inadvertently signaled to the Chinese classics teacher she wanted him to leave, when she really wanted him to teach more hours. Thurston was annoyed that the teacher did not understand her: “He ought to have learned in five years that we mean what we say and not the opposite and believe people instead of taking the view that ‘all men are liars.”\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} “Report of the Meeting of the Ginling College Committee,” 3 July 1919, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2628, YDS; Unknown Writer [GCC member] to Matilda Thurston, 6 October 1917, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2691, YDS; Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 22 April 1918, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2689, YDS; “Extract From Letter Received From Mrs. Thurston,” 12 July 1923, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2843, YDS. Comparison of Chinese and foreign salaries is difficult. Extant financial records are not complete; furthermore, not only did salaries and the way they were disbursed differ, the perks did as well. Policies also changed over time. Nonetheless, it seems safe to say that foreign staff members were much better compensated than the majority of their Chinese counterparts throughout the college’s history, but particularly in Ginling’s early years. In general, foreign salaries were higher than Chinese; in addition, furlough, travel and other expenses were normally part of the package offered foreign staff, but not Chinese.

\textsuperscript{76} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 13 September 1915, Box 2, 2.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{77} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 25 October 1915, Box 2, 2.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{78} Matilda Thurston, 29 June 1926, “Edited Letters,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2857, YDS.
The lack of staff members at times caused acute problems for the young college. In August 1916, for example, no teachers could be found for Chemistry, Botany, Math or Music. An incoming teacher was assigned to teach German before she arrived in the hope—solely on the basis of her last name—that she would be able to.  

Thurston fretted that the students themselves wanted high-quality instruction and knew if they were getting it. Her concerns were not misplaced. Students were indeed worried about the lack of staff and materials and had serious doubts about the fledgling college. The school’s deficiencies, Wu Yifang remembered nearly seventy years later, strengthened the students’ determination to make their education count. Recalling that the first class challenged their teachers, Zee gave more credit to Matilda Thurston. Faculty and students, Zee recalled, “uncertain about the future, with the poorest equipment possible - caught her [Thurston’s] zeal for Chinese girls to have a college education so that they might function in their own country answering the crying need for teachers in science and humanities.”

In 1917, when students returned from vacation and the expected faculty had not yet arrived, the young pioneers wondered if the college could continue to exist. Luckily, four new teachers arrived over the next two months. One of the new instructors was

79 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 August 1916, Box 2, 2.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

80 Matilda Thurston to Father (George P. Calder), 12 November 1916, Box 4, 4.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.


biology professor Cora Reeves, who was to remain at Ginling until 1941. Students were proud of her Ph.D., the first on the Ginling faculty.84

The formation of a sister-college relationship with Smith College also gave a substantial boost to the college’s cause. When Frederica Mead, a Smith College graduate, joined the faculty of the college as a self-supporting member, Thurston and Mead began rallying support for Ginling at Smith.85 A sister-college relationship was established in 1916. For the next three and a half decades, Smith students and alumnae were to provide a significant portion of the funding for Ginling, sending yearly monetary contributions and presenting the funds for one of the permanent campus’s finest buildings.86

Funds were not the only incentive that the relationship with Smith offered. Unaware of the financial support offered by Smith, just the fact that Ginling had been given collegiate status by the largest women’s college in America was “real encouragement and inspiration” to the students, Wu Yifang later recalled.87 The adoption boosted Thurston’s morale as well. To her, the support of Smith College was “an expression of faith in the future.”88

Thurston’s difficult job was made more complex because of problems of international communication and differing opinions with the administrative board in New

84 Matilda Thurston, Sunday after Thanksgiving 1917, “Edited Letters,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2855, YDS.

85 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 August 1914, Box 1, 1.37, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

86 See “Smith-Ginling History,” UBCHEA, RG 11B, Series II, Box 24B, Folder 332, YDS.

87 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Harold B. Hoskins, 30 October 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2917, YDS.

88 Matilda Thurston to Mrs. Wheeler, 15 May 1951, 70, Ginling College Records, Box 2, Smith College Archives.

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York, the Ginling College Committee (GCC), over various issues. Although Thurston and the GCC agreed in principle on the college's intellectual aims and its religious life, for instance, they often did not see eye to eye on individual faculty appointments.\(^8\)\(^9\) Thurston felt that many of the Western teachers sent out to China had inadequate preparation or were otherwise unsuited to teaching college.\(^9\)\(^0\) The outspoken Thurston was not afraid of telling the GCC they were mistaken, either. In 1921 she blocked a candidate appointment with this cable: “Committee does not begin to appreciate our requirement on the intellectual side.”\(^9\)\(^1\)

In addition, Thurston deemed the GCC overly concerned with doctrinal issues. According to Thurston, in 1920 the Board “frightened off” a candidate for physics by asking if her first purpose in coming to China was to “save souls.” The candidate, feeling that she had to answer in the affirmative, instead told the Board she was not available. “The Ginling girls then had a Chinese man for a teacher who cared less about saving souls than Miss Miller—much less—and knew little about physics. I get very weary sometimes of this pious attitude in Board officials,” complained Thurston.\(^9\)\(^2\) Many years later, Thurston had no objection to a short-term appointment of a Christian Scientist to Ginling, even though she believed Christian Science to be mistaken on issues of creed.\(^9\)\(^3\)

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\(^8\) The GCC was generally in charge of sending out Western missionary educators, while Chinese were hired on the field. A member of the GCC writing to Thurston in 1917 assured her that the Committee agreed with her fully on the need to emphasize spirituality as well as professional ability. Unknown Writer [GCC member] to Matilda Thurston, 6 October 1917.

\(^9\)\(^0\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 25 August 1917, Box 2, 2.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^9\)\(^1\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 July 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^9\)\(^2\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 March 1922, Box 2, 2.19, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^9\)\(^3\) Matilda Thurston to Rebecca [Griest], 30 April 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.

67

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Thurston also found it difficult to cooperate with members of the GCC. In 1921, she put her finger on the likely reason. Complaining that the president's relationship with the GCC was not clearly delineated and that GCC committees did not cooperate or even confer with her, Thurston observed, "There seemed to be some fear of too much power being assumed by the President."94 Thurston continued to butt heads with the GCC throughout her tenure as president—and beyond.

From correspondence among GCC members, it is clear they found Thurston difficult to get along with and felt she exceeded her control. The treasurer in Ginling's New York office, for example, noted that the 1923 expenditure reports for building were incomplete; Thurston, he complained, "takes some liberties in these matters."95 Thurston occasionally made decisions she knew would draw criticism, believing that criticism came with the territory of being president.96 During the building, for instance, she sought approval to exceed the budget limit after she had already done so.97 For her part, Thurston felt the New York office had little appreciation of the needs on the field.98

By the early 1920s, Thurston faced another problem that was to plague the college for the rest of its existence—insufficient funding. Indeed, this 1923 comment from Thurston expresses a sentiment to which Wu Yifang would have heartily agreed: "We on

94 Matilda Thurston, "Ginling College, Nanking, China," 15 April 1921, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2977, YDS.
95 Russell Carter, Treasurer, "Statement of Ginling College Building Funds," 3 January 1923, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2628, YDS.
96 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 24 June 1921, Box 2, 2.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
97 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 July 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
98 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 6 September 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
the field cannot run the college on less than we budget and do honest college work.”

Thurston’s handling of the issue must have caused even more difficulty with the GCC; she told Minnie Vautrin: “Of course my high-handed conduct in getting certain people by indirect means is responsible for our having a deficit in the year 1923-1924, but I am not repentant and I believe that we had to have that deficit and we had to be absolutely up against it in order to bring them to realize the need of an increased income.”

It is also likely that the factors in Thurston’s success—particularly her stubbornness and willingness to push forward—made her difficult to get along with. In 1916, she complained about two visitors from the mission boards: “They regard themselves as supreme authority and do not expect a mere missionary servant to question their right to decide things. My Southern Presbyterian strain and my Congregational bringing up [sic] do not make me bow the knee to arbitrary rulers.”

Thurston’s outspokenness and confrontational attitude apparently led to difficulties with her own staff. She had irreconcilable differences with at least two faculty members, Mary Nourse and Ella Hanawalt. Hanawalt complained about Thurston’s insistence on having her own way, ruthless treatment of those whom she disliked, and her methods. While it is hardly unusual for a college administrator to rub

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99 Matilda Thurston to Mr. Carter, 20 December 1924, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

100 Matilda Thurston to Minnie Vautrin, 20 February 1925, Box 5, 5.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

101 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 December 1916, Box 2, 2.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

102 Ella Hanawalt to Esther Case, 31 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2686, YDS.
a few people the wrong way, in this case, her performance contrasts sharply with Wu Yifang, who managed to gain the sympathy of nearly everyone who worked with her—and yet defied the decision-making administrative organs on occasion.

Students, in any event, seem to have had a favorable impression of their president. Zee, for example, later recalled that Thurston impressed them as a

...lady general in a long dark grey cape over her purple taffeta dress, very genteel and dignified. We were proud of her New England manner and her refined taste for things elegant. She was versatile and could talk on all subjects, scientific, religious, and philosophical...103

The May Fourth Movement

As the time for Ginling’s first commencement approached, Thurston wrote proudly that the college was very fortunate to have these girls as the vanguard of its graduates. The seniors all had jobs lined up months before graduation and there was a long list of places requesting graduates.104

By spring 1919, just five students remained in the senior class. But as plans were underway for the pioneer commencement, China’s major cities were rocked with student unrest. Students in Nanjing’s schools, following the example of their counterparts in Beijing—who took to the streets on May 4 to protest the unfair terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the government’s foreign policy, and to call attention to China’s plight under imperialism—were going on strike. Ginling students explained their desire to participate: “First, we wished to strengthen the united force of the student movement by adding our

103 “A Tribute to Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, The First President of Ginling College, by Mrs. W.S. New, delivered at Wellesley Hills, Mass., Congregational Church, April 28, 1958.”

104 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 March 1919, Box 2, 2.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
share, and, secondly, we wanted to utilize the time for social service and for arousing the mass during this crisis."\textsuperscript{105} The seniors refused to consider a suggestion from their fellow students that they forego participation in order to complete graduation requirements.\textsuperscript{106}

Matilda Thurston was faced with a dilemma. She had stayed in China for an extra year after her furlough was due, partly to see Ginling’s first class through.\textsuperscript{107} Not having a graduating class would reflect poorly on Ginling and make the upcoming campaign for building funds difficult. Nevertheless, she did not stand in the students’ way. Zee later told historian Jane Hunter that although there was tension at first between the Western faculty and the students at Ginling, the faculty ultimately gave “sympathetic support...respected our proposals and trusted us.”\textsuperscript{108} In Ginling College, co-authored by Thurston, the activities were described as “on the whole constructive.”\textsuperscript{109} Reflecting twenty years later on the first commencement, Wu said, “we always remember Mrs.

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\textsuperscript{105} Liu, The Pioneer, 33.

\textsuperscript{106} Wu Yifang, “Jinnuda sishinian,” 113.

\textsuperscript{107} Georgia G. Chester, “Mrs. Chester Writes of Chinese ‘Strike.‘” Caldwell Progress, in UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2720, YDS. In this letter, written on June 14, Georgia Chester (mother of faculty member Ruth Chester) indicated that most of the missionaries supported the student movement.

\textsuperscript{108} Hunter, Gospel of Gentility, 301, quoting personal letter from Zee, 26 July 1978. Kwok Pui-lan, Chinese Women and Christianity, 134, suggests that Matilda Thurston opposed Ginling students’ participation in the May Fourth demonstrations. Although no letters from Thurston are extant from this time period that directly discuss the movement, other contemporary accounts and recollections of participants indicate that Thurston and other teachers ultimately supported the students, although they opposed virtually all of the other student demonstrations over the next thirty years. In fact, the students believed this to be an issue that did not concern their teachers. Georgia Chester was asked to accompany student representatives (as chaperone) to a meeting of Nanjing schools to discuss the strike; students wanted Chester partly because she did not speak Chinese and thus would not know what was going on. Georgia G. Chester, “Mrs. Chester Writes of Chinese ‘Strike.’”

\textsuperscript{109} Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 23.
Thurston's greatness in facing an almost complete disappointment after four years' hard work."110

Ginling students quickly organized a social service campaign, dividing themselves into six groups—lecturing, industrial, popular education, survey, music and art.111 They went out to make surveys of neighboring families and give lectures, plays and presentations on topics such as morality, patriotism, education and hygiene to local women and children.112

After two weeks, the students decided that the national emergency was so great it took precedence over examinations and commencement. They requested that exams be put off until the fall, with seniors finishing their coursework in the summer.113 The faculty agreed to their request and was just preparing to leave (as a general rule, foreign faculty did not stay in Nanjing in the summer heat) when the situation changed.114 The students, learning that the strike's aims had been partially realized with the resignation of three pro-Japanese government officials, voted to resume classes and finish the year's work. Seniors scrambled to meet requirements for graduation.115 Thurston was proud

110 "From President Wu Yi-fang," 22 July 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2601, YDS. See also "Jinnuda sishinian," 112-114.


112 Georgia G. Chester, "Mrs. Chester Writes of Chinese 'Strike.'" See also Wu Yifang, "Zaimeiguo x-ci Jinndaxiaoyou shuangzhou nian zuotan huiide jianghua," (A speech for the xth biannual meeting of Ginling alumnae in America), 1981, MQYF, 11-1, 59, JPA.


114 Georgia G. Chester, "Mrs. Chester Writes of Chinese 'Strike.'"

that the girls did such a good job, and unlike most of the men’s colleges, where exams were put off until fall, Ginling students finished their work—proof, Thurston declared, that college women were “steadier and more earnest” than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{116}

In front of a small Commencement audience—most of Nanjing’s schools were closed—Thurston spoke about the graduates’ responsibilities. “Our purpose today is to set apart these our first graduates, not to special privileges and honors which shall lift them up above their sisters in China, but to special service, as heralds of the dawn of a new day, as messengers of the good news of the Kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{117}

These five graduates—the first women to receive a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college in China\textsuperscript{118}—certainly agreed with Thurston that they were called to special service. Yet their emphasis was different from their president’s. In their farewell speech, they spoke of “clouds” of “National obligation, social obligation, college obligation, and family obligation” facing the class of 1919.\textsuperscript{119} Infused as they were with nationalist purpose, they still did not forget traditional obligations to the family; it is also clear that they felt a new sense of duty to their college and to society.

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\textsuperscript{116} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 29 June 1919, Box 2, 2.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{117} “A Pioneer Commencement.”

\textsuperscript{118} Ginling was accredited in the U.S., first granting degrees under the University of Nanking’s charter with the University of the State of New York and then with its own independent charter. See Thurston and Chester, \textit{Ginling College}, 21-22. Some Ginling promotional materials claim that Ginling graduated the first women with a bachelor’s degree in China, but in fact, North China Union Women’s College awarded four women diplomas in 1909, after they completed a four-year course. Harris, “American Missions, Chinese Realities,” 91. Huanan Women’s College, a Methodist institution, was established in 1914, but a four-year course was not offered until 1917. See William Fenn, \textit{Christian Higher Education in Changing China, 1880-1950} (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1976), 67-70.

\textsuperscript{119} Liu, \textit{The Pioneer}, 36.
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Significantly, however, nowhere in this mix is a mention of Christian evangelism. Indeed, Thurston’s hope to instill in her students “a missionary spirit and a vision of the world won for Christ” was to be largely unfulfilled. Few of Thurston’s students shared her vision of the church leading China’s reconstruction, or agreed with her assertion that Christianity was China’s “only hope.” The service record of Ginling graduates shows few evangelists. Many graduates, however, worked in Christian institutions such as mission schools, Christian colleges and the YWCA.

*Ginling’s Curriculum*

Ginling’s founders had envisioned a high-grade institution offering work in the Liberal Arts, Sciences, Medicine, Music, Kindergarten, Domestic Science and Teacher’s Training. Their hopes for a full medical course were never realized, although some students took advantage of a pre-medical curriculum. Expecting that over half the students would go into teaching, Thurston pushed for a strong department of education. Instead of offering a major in education, however, students selected a specific field and

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120 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 13 October 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

121 “Ginling College: Report of the President 1916-1918,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2961, YDS.

122 A 1947 Ginling brochure indicates that of 698 living graduates, only 11 were engaged in religious work. The largest number, 237, was involved in education, either as administrators or teachers. “Ginling College,” April 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2973, YDS.

123 “Tentative Constitution For the Proposed Women’s College in the Yangtse Valley, China,” 1913 handwritten on top, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2589, YDS.

124 “Excerpts from Mrs. Thurston’s Letter to Miss Bender,” 4 October 1918, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS; Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 September 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

74
took courses in that department as well as practice teaching. Specializations in home economics and child welfare were not added until the 1940s.

The curriculum in the early years was simple; the first Ginling students could specialize in either Arts or Sciences. Ginling's basic curriculum was similar to a program at an American liberal arts college—entrance requirements included Chinese, English, Math, Science, History and Religion.125

Although the Chinese course comprised one-fourth of the work required for the diploma,126 the majority of classes in Ginling's early years were taught in English. Noting that most Chinese interested in higher education wanted to learn English, Matilda Thurston argued that English had a place in the curriculum of mission schools, although it should not be the sole language used.

It is the only door open into the whole realm of ideas which the world outside of China possesses. It has all the value in an education which the classical and modern languages have in our system. We are not educating the mass of the people in China. We ought to be educating the men and women who are to be the leaders in the Christian Church; and to keep in touch with the world they live in our educated people need English....We should have more students, and students of a better class, if we made more of English.

Thurston pointed out that nearly all collegiate work in China, even in government universities, was done in English. In many subjects, textbooks and collateral work in Chinese simply did not exist.127

125 "Minutes of Board of Control of Ginling College," 16-17 November 1914, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2611, YDS. Chinese history was not a prerequisite; the requirements in History and Religion refer to Western history and Christianity.

126 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, "Ginling College," The Educational Review 10, no. 3 (July 1918): 244.

127 Matilda Thurston, "Personal Report of Mrs. Lawrence Thurston," August 1915, Box 10, 10.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Thurston found designing the Chinese course particularly problematic. Even Chinese educators could offer few suggestions for a college course of study in Chinese; there was no precedent since there were no Chinese women in government universities.\textsuperscript{128} Thurston did, however, feel that it was essential for students to continue studying Chinese and to be able to express themselves in “good modern Chinese” in all their subjects. The college’s first year, Thurston was disappointed when the two Chinese women on the faculty preferred to teach in English. She conceded, however, that substantial coursework in English was essential if Ginling was to attract students who wanted to study in America.\textsuperscript{129}

There is some indication that Ginling, at least in its early years, was not entirely successful in ensuring that its students could function in good Chinese. Although Wu Yifang spoke excellent Mandarin, she apparently wrote English better than Chinese. Wu, for example, once asked an embassy official to read over a draft of an important document she had written in Chinese,\textsuperscript{130} indicating she did not have confidence in her ability to write formal Chinese. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of Wu’s (pre-1949) surviving letters, articles and speeches were written in English, including many

\textsuperscript{128} In its early years, courses in NCUWC were conducted in Chinese and it is unclear why Thurston did not consider that example—or that of the male-only government universities.

\textsuperscript{129} One instructor argued that the students needed to know the English terms, especially if they wanted to continue their study abroad. Li Mali, the returned student who taught chemistry and geometry, did not know the Chinese technical terms. Thurston argued that the fact Li also wrote poorly in her native language was a compelling reason for college work to be done in Chinese. Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 May 1919, Box 2, 2.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{130} Wu Yifang to Minister Liu Chieh, 1 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2732, YDS.
letters to her "best friend" Y.T. Zee and other Ginling alumnae, students, relatives and friends. Zee also wrote to Wu and others in English.

Because students were uneven in preparation, the college began giving bilingual entrance examinations in 1920. Nevertheless, inadequate preparation in English was to cause difficulties for faculty and students at various times in the college's history.

Ginling's founders had not all been in agreement about the type of education to offer Chinese women. Methodist missionary educator Laura White wrote in 1911:

> College education of an American young man is unsuited to the Chinese girl; the need in our College is to set the standard of womanly ideals for the new China. Our students need to obtain visions of the loveliness that may be built into the Woman's Kingdom of Home.

Matilda Thurston, however, did not think much of White's emphasis on the domestic sphere, deriding her as a supporter of "mother-craft" rather than higher education for women. In 1914, White, then a member of Ginling's Board of Control, advocated "vocational" as opposed to "academic" training for the college—a position on which, according to Thurston, she stood alone on the Board and did not even command the support of her fellow Methodists.

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131 Two alumnae, Li Zhenkun and Huang Xuhan, confirmed that Wu Yifang's written English was better than her Chinese. Li suspected that Wu even thought in English; nevertheless, she never mixed the two languages together. Li Zhenkun, interview by author, Tape recording, Nanjing, China, 5 February 2001; Huang Xuhan, telephone interview by author, Nanjing, China, 8 February 2001.

132 "Minutes of Board of Control of Ginling College," 9-10 January 1920, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2611, YDS.

133 Laura White, "A Union Women's College," *Chinese Recorder* 42 (November 1911): 646.


135 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 1 March 1914, Box 1, 1.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Thurston's opposition to White does not mean she thought women should receive the same education as men. Although there were no domestic science courses at Ginling in its early years, its curriculum still differed from the men's colleges. A 1915 college bulletin listed a course called *Bacteria, Yeasts and Moulds in the Home*\(^\text{136}\); a later report mentions *Household Biology*.\(^\text{137}\) Alongside *Introduction to Inorganic Chemistry* in Ginling's small 1922 library were *Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning* and *A Textbook of Sanitary and Applied Chemistry*—neither likely to have been on offer at men's colleges.\(^\text{138}\) Other missionary educators apparently agreed that courses of this type should be offered; in 1917, Thurston wrote that at a recent meeting, "there was reference to what was expected of Ginling College in giving girls practical training as homemakers, along the lines of Domestic Science and Household Sanitation and such things." Thurston did not want to admit that since she could not fill the science positions, she had not been able to find anyone to teach even simple chemistry.\(^\text{139}\)

Thurston also couched her argument in favor of a quality science education for Ginling students in references to the domestic sphere. These subjects would "mean so much for the homes of China if educated women took them up."\(^\text{140}\) A strong science

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\(^{136}\) "Bulletin of Ginling College," Announcement 1915, UBCHEA, RG11, Series IV, Box 128, Folder 2632, YDS.

\(^{137}\) "Ginling College: A Six-Year Review."

\(^{138}\) "Accession List of Ginling College Library 1922," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 129, Folder 2644, YDS.

\(^{139}\) Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 2 February 1917, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS.

\(^{140}\) Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 19 January 1917, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS. Or as historian Gael Graham suggests, she may have felt the need to couch her argument in this way to justify women's study of the sciences. Graham, however, argues that Thurston had to justify the

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faculty was important for preparing students for teaching and medicine; furthermore, the sciences had “very practical uses in every day life and uses which China very much needs.”

A decade later, worried about Ginling retaining its autonomy, Thurston more forcefully articulated her thoughts on women’s education. Discussing cooperation between Ginling and its neighboring Christian institution, the University of Nanking, in advanced coursework, Thurston said, “the interests of men and women students are not the same, and in my humble opinion should not be the same.” In chemistry, for instance, Nanking would likely stress industrial and agricultural chemistry, while Ginling would likely “find the interest in the direction of household chemistry and physiological chemistry.”

In a 1916 article, Thurston suggested evangelism, education, home, literary and medical work as fields for women. The aim of higher education, Thurston argued, should be to instill “ideas which shall work certain changes in the home, the city, the church, and the nation...to train for leadership in all lines of life into which women can enter.”

In the U.S., women’s higher education in its early days had been criticized for making women unfit for home life, a perception which Thurston strenuously denied:

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141 “From Mrs. Lawrence Thurston,” 18 May 191? (year illegible), UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2842, YDS.

142 Matilda Thurston, “Notes on the Correlated Program,” 1930, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

If a smaller proportion of educated women marry it may not always be the woman’s fault. Men who prefer superiority of position to comradeship in marriage may not choose the college trained woman, but she is not averse to marriage or unfitted for home life by her education. If Chinese girls...give some years of service as teachers before entering upon the duties of home life, are apparently loath to have engagements made for them which would limit their personal liberty we must not conclude that education has made them despise home life and its duties. If a small number of women should choose not to marry in order to serve their day and generation as teachers, or nurses, or physicians, or social workers, no great danger to society would result.  

A larger degree of economic independence for women was to be desired, not feared, Thurston concluded. Thurston stops short of advocating that men compete with women—most women would marry and their education should help prepare them for their work in the household, where they, like Thurston herself, would be expected to sublimate their own career to their husbands. Even though she had supported women’s suffrage and higher education, and complained about not being taken seriously by the men of her mission, at this time, Thurston does not take this one step further and look for a greatly increased sphere for women.

The Changing Environment for Women’s Higher Education in China

In the second decade of the twentieth century, opportunities for Chinese women to study above the high school level broadened. After the Chinese government approved co-education, government and Christian universities one after another began accepting

144 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “The Higher Education of Chinese Women,” 98. In fact, in Ginling’s early years, a low marriage rate engendered criticism of the institution. In 1927, only 16 percent of alumnae were married. See “Present Occupations of Ginling Alumnae,” Ginling College Magazine 4/2 (June 1928): 31. Marriage rates increased over the years, however, and by 1942, Wu observed that the college “should not be blamed any more for producing old maids.” Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston, 17 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS. Patterns in the early years of the Christian women’s colleges in China were similar to those of the early years of higher education in the U.S.—a higher percentage of educated women, when compared to the general population, married later or not at all. For statistics in America, see Barbara Soloman, In the Company of Educated Women, 31 and 119-122.
women. With the exception of normal schools, there were no all-female institutions of higher education funded and administered by Chinese.

The missionary educators founding Ginling in the second decade of the twentieth century had faced the question of whether higher education for Chinese women was needed. In less than a decade, this had been answered in the affirmative. But after the May Fourth Movement, with a tide of co-education sweeping through China, by the 1920s, the women of Ginling found themselves trying to prove that a separate institution for women was necessary. Their task was likely made worse by the fact that in the years after World War I, the desirability of female-only colleges had come into question in America.¹⁴⁵

Matilda Thurston remained firm in her opposition to co-education. In 1921, noting that Shanghai Baptist College was taking female students, she remarked caustically, “The men are so pleased with themselves for admitting women to the superior advantages of a man’s college! They don’t seem to have the faintest idea of what the girls are missing who are with them compared to what girls get at Ginling or Yenching.”¹⁴⁶ Thurston argued that Ginling offered what the government universities could not give and its courses were “better suited to the special needs of women students than can be offered even in Christian co-educational colleges where first thought must inevitably be for their men students.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Reasons for the questioning included changing social mores for college students as well as new attitudes toward female sexuality. See Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Alma Mater.

¹⁴⁶ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 17 December 1921, Box 2, 2.18, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. By this time, North China Union Women’s College had become Yenching Women’s College.

¹⁴⁷ Matilda Thurston, “Ginling College,” September 1921, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2977, YDS.
A year later, observing that Yenching Women’s College had become subordinate to the men’s college, Thurston indicated her bitter opposition to a similar merger of Ginling and the University of Nanking. She also gave another reason for her antipathy to coeducation: “I’m suspicious of the influence of men through co-education when it must mean, as it will in China for years, a predominance of men teaching women....Men need to be taught by women as much as women need to be taught by men.”

Many women echoed Thurston’s sentiments—men slighted women’s concerns, were more concerned with the gains for the men that co-education brought, and were insufficiently concerned with the interests and development of female students. Ginling’s second president also strongly supported women’s colleges for these and other reasons.

Wu Yifang’s Early Career

Thurston was proud of the entire first class, but her highest praise was reserved for Wu Yifang, the “strongest student in the class.” Wu was asked to remain at Ginling to assist in science courses, help with Chinese-language promotional materials, and act as official interpreter. The proffered salary was not large. Ginling, Thurston argued, should take a stand for “missionary standards” in teachers’ salaries because government salaries were “absolutely out of proportion to the scale of living of the people,” and it would be

148 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 3 December 1922, Box 3, 3.21, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

149 See, for example, “Report of the Deputation from the Federation of Woman’s Boards of Foreign Missions and of the Conference Held at Shanghai, China, January 2-8 1920,” page 31, Missions/Missionaries: China, Folder 7, MHC.
impossible to implement a system of popular education on such a basis. According to Thurston, while Wu’s margin would be less than the foreign faculty’s, because of lower expenses, she would have as much as someone in a similar position in America. The low salary was not an indication that Thurston thought less of Wu. In fact, Thurston considered Wu the equal of any returned student with a B.A. degree and thought the opportunity would also be to her benefit.¹⁵⁰

Wu declined to remain at Ginling. Zee later explained that while the faculty had tried to steer students toward careers where they were needed—Thurston concentrating on providing science and religion teachers for Christian secondary schools, Vautrin pointing to rural work and Reeves to medical professionals and Ph.D.s—at the same time, they wanted the students to accept a lower scale of salary, since the work was “from the heart.” Zee and Wu both took positions at government schools with high salaries; according to Zee, both had family obligations and they did not think it fair to work only on a service level.¹⁵¹ In fact, Thurston’s bid to get teachers to work for lower wages was

¹⁵⁰ Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 7 February 1919, UBCHEA, RG 11, Box 143, Folder 2843, YDS.

¹⁵¹ “Answers to Questions from Jane Hunter,” 26 July 1978, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Y.T. Zee New Papers, RG 8, Box 147, YDS. There is no mention that Zee was offered a job upon graduation, although in 1920, the Board of Control recommended that both Wu and Zee be given the opportunity for graduate study, with the understanding they might later come back to teach at Ginling. Frederica Mead to Mead Family, 11 January 1920, Mead Papers, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, RG 8, Box 140, Folder 17, YDS. Matilda Thurston had a different recollection—according to her, Wu Yifang accepted Ginling’s offer, but the college released her when she was offered a position in Beijing, since “her family wanted her to accept.” Although Wu might have said this to save face, it would also not be inconsistent with her personality to want to take a lower-paid mission school position. Matilda Thurston to Eva [Macmillan], 3 February 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.
opposed by the GCC in New York, which by 1920 was arguing that Chinese teachers should be paid on a “commercial basis.”

Wu Yifang accepted a position as head of the English Department at the National Beijing Women’s Higher Normal School (Guoli Beijing nuzi shifan xuexiao). Previously the Beijing Girls Normal School—Wu had taught there before attending Ginling—it had been raised to collegiate level in 1919. By 1921, the largest group of Chinese women above middle school, 250 students, was at this institution. Students, who usually had a lower normal school education, came from all parts of China. They received free board and tuition while being trained as middle and high school teachers. Wu was later joined there by Zee. Wu and Zee soon discovered, however, that the more attractive pay scale in government institutions did not guarantee that wages would be paid. In 1921, they and other teachers from government schools went out on strike, demanding several months arrears in pay and urging the government to make regular grants to schools and reduce military expenditures.

An American who knew Wu at this time later recalled that she insisted on high academic standards. In an age when the concepts of academic credit and advancement were new to Chinese education, Wu Yifang was “unmoved by opposition and even

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152 “Minutes of Ginling College Committee,” 13 December 1920, UBCHEA, RG11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2591, YDS.

153 “Ginling College: A Six-Year Review”; Matilda Calder Thurston to Calder Family, 2 October 1921, Box 2, 2.18, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

154 Matilda Calder Thurston to Calder Family, 10 May 1921, Box 2, 2.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
threats to her safety." Wu, Zee, and the head of the department of physical education, Chen Yongsheng, stayed at the living quarters for female teachers in a traditional Chinese courtyard in Shifuma Street. Chen later recalled that the three were very busy with their work, but it is unlikely that Wu would have missed the heady atmosphere of intellectual ferment in Beijing following the May Fourth demonstrations, as intellectuals debated over topics ranging from literary reform to political change. Anti-Christian sentiment was also on the rise. In addition, many prominent Chinese intellectuals including Li Dazhao taught courses at the college, and well-known Westerners such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell gave lectures on the campus.

In 1922, Wu and Zee acted as interpreters and hostesses for Dr. Mary E. Wooley, president of Mt. Holyoke College, who was in China with an educational commission studying China's Christian schools. It is likely that their jobs were arranged by Matilda Thurston, who was also on the commission. Impressed with the young women, Wooley helped arrange for Wu Yifang to receive a Barbour scholarship to further her studies at the University of Michigan. Three out of five graduates in the first class at

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155 Mrs. T.D. Macmillan, “Visitor to America,” Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter # 10, April 1956, page 11, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS.


157 “Story of Life of Dr. Yi-Fang Wu, President of Ginling College,” n.d, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.


159 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 35.

160 “Highlights, Mrs. Waysung New, Class of 1919,” Ginling Alumnae Association, Report of the Biennial Reunion, 11-13 April 1969, page 6, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2961, YDS. Fifty years later, Zee recalled Wooley asking them what she could do for them in America. Zee urged her to get Wu
Ginling received this scholarship for "Oriental" women; the other two received medical degrees from Michigan. Wu was to spend six years in Ann Arbor, earning master's and doctoral degrees. The opportunity was a rare one; in 1924, there were only 108 female Chinese students in America.\textsuperscript{161}

In America, in addition to her academic work, Wu also became involved with Chinese student organizations. In 1924-1925, she was the president of the Chinese Christian Association in North America, and from 1925-1926, the vice-president of the Chinese Student Alliance in the United States.\textsuperscript{162} She also found time to write a rebuttal in the University of Michigan student newspaper when the visiting Australian prime minister opined that China was uncivilized and citizens from other Asian nations should emigrate there to transform it.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Thurston's Changing Views}

After several years in China, Matilda Thurston's perception of China and attitudes toward culture and race slowly began to change. She began to question the superiority of

\textsuperscript{161} Sun Shiyue, \textit{Zhongguo jindai nuzi liuxueshi} (A history of Chinese women studying overseas in the modern era) (Beijing: Zhongguo heping chubanshe, 1995), 149. This book contains contradictory statistics—with no accompanying explanation—concerning the number of women studying in America in various years, etc. See pages 136, 148-149.

\textsuperscript{162} “Biographical Material on Wu Yi-fang,” 22 October 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.

\textsuperscript{163} Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 51-52.
aspects of Western civilization, although the following comment from 1907 suggests that she was perhaps not quite as open-minded as she thought. After an argument with a man about the relative superiority of the Chinese and the Anglo-Saxon, she observed, “He loudly proclaims his belief in the inherent superiority of all white men....He seems to me in this attitude of mind more like a Chinaman than like an enlightened American, for the Chinaman is sure that he is better than anyone else.”

Thurston’s assumptions about race were challenged when she met Chinese boys from Hawaii; to her surprise, they were “regular American boys in the spirit”—they wore Western dress and were “altogether modern.” In 1909, she wrote approvingly of a Chinese man she knew, who made her think of “Kipling’s line, ‘There is neither East nor West.’ He is so much both that he is at home in either.” She later commented that this same man was “what we can expect when the fine young men of China have a chance to know Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord.” To Thurston, who hoped to play some role in bringing East and West together, the gap was mainly a question of religion.

After her return to China in 1913, Thurston’s comments on China had begun to temper as she began to see common points—“East and West are a good deal alike after all.” By 1921, Thurston was trying to persuade people “not to think other people

164 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 20 January 1907, Box 1, 1.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
165 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 30 September 1908, Box 1, 1.24, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
166 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 14 March 1909, Box 1, 1.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
167 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 August 1909, Box 1, 1.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
168 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 3 October 1913, Box 1, 1.33, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

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'queer' because they eat or dress differently.”¹⁶⁹ In 1926, pondering problems of the Western system of justice, she said, “There are many good ideas in the Chinese way, of dealing out 'justice' while you wait 'settled by compromise and without recourse to law.’”¹⁷⁰ China seems unreasonable in many of her positions to the Western diplomatic legal mind, Thurston suggested, but added, “Her way of thinking may be just as reasonable as ours if we could understand it.”¹⁷¹

Thurston also became increasingly sensitive to Chinese opinion. Noting that students and alumnae would believe certain promotional materials misrepresented China, she commented, “The growing sensitivities on the part of the educated Chinese is something which we must constantly keep in mind.”¹⁷²

Finally, Matilda Thurston, who had strongly supported the Allied war effort in World War I, became a pacifist in 1923.¹⁷³ This altered some of her attitudes and perceptions toward events taking place in China. For instance, her attitude towards American diplomatic efforts changed greatly. By 1926, she was hopeful that a “better mind will come into our diplomacy; less of the legalistic and more of the humanistic

¹⁶⁹ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 10 July 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

¹⁷⁰ Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, August 1926, Box 3, 3.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

¹⁷¹ Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 2 February 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2592, YDS.

¹⁷² Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 3 April 1923, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2843, YDS.

¹⁷³ It is unclear what precipitated the change, but Thurston several times recalled the year as 1923. See, for example, Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 May 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
spirit; less of dependence upon force and more use of the spiritual forces of peace and goodwill.”

The College in the Early 1920s

While Ginling students had joined the May Fourth demonstrations, the campus was more likely to remain quiet when student-led protests disrupted other educational institutions in Nanjing and throughout the country. On May 30, 1925, British-led police in Shanghai fired on unarmed demonstrators in the International Settlement, killing eleven protestors. Known as the May Thirtieth Incident, this event also occasioned widespread anti-foreign, nationalistic protests. Many schools were forced to close, but Ginling finished the school year after students briefly participated in the protests. The faculty—both Chinese and foreign—generally discouraged this type of student activism, although students were not prevented from participating. In fact, faculty—expressing sentiments that Wu Yifang would later echo—usually assumed that students were pressured to join by outside forces, and left to their own devices would choose different ways to show their patriotism.

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174 Matilda Thurston, Untitled document, 1926, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2980, YDS.

175 “Extracts from Letters of Miss Vautrin, Dean, Ginling College,” 7 June 1925, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2979, YDS.

176 Kwok, Chinese Women and Christianity, 134, implies that only the missionary teachers opposed the girls protesting on the street, but at Ginling, Chinese faculty—in particular the alumnae faculty—were in agreement; they tried to channel the students' patriotic energies elsewhere, or at least to other ways of protest. For example, Vautrin noted the influence of two alumnae teachers during the May Thirtieth demonstrations. “Extracts from Letters of Miss Vautrin, Dean, Ginling College,” 7 June 1925.

177 When Ginling students joined a one-day demonstration in December 1919, the faculty suspected that the students had been pressured to join by some of the more “hot headed” students. Frederica Mead to Mead Family, 14 December 1919, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Mead 89
By 1918, with four classes of students, Thurston's expectation that Ginling would have over fifty girls was fulfilled with fifty-three, and the Li residence was uncomfortably crowded.\(^{178}\) Her original hopes to begin building a permanent campus in 1918 had to be postponed because of the difficulty raising funds during the world war,\(^{179}\) but eventually Thurston returned to the States in November 1919 to spend nearly two years fundraising. Ultimately a large joint campaign for women's colleges in China, India and Japan, matching funds from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund, and special gifts, including $50,000 from the Smith College Alumnae, were secured, totaling approximately $600,000 \(^{180}\) for Ginling, more than had originally been expected.\(^{181}\)

Responsibility for the building program added new duties for the busy college president, prompting Thurston to comment, "I'm sure very few college presidents, and quite certainly no women in America, would have to carry the load that is on me in connection with the new buildings."\(^{182}\) Despite such complaints, it is clear from her correspondence that Thurston particularly enjoyed the building work.\(^{183}\)


\(^{179}\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 23 November 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{180}\) Thurston, *Ginling College*, 28-29.

\(^{181}\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 19 February 1921, Box 2, 2.15, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{182}\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 7 March 1923, Box 2, 2.22, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{183}\) Matilda Thurston to Mr. Carter, 26 May 1923, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2843, YDS.
During her years in China, Matilda Thurston had gradually gained an appreciation of some of its architectural traditions and had begun examining various types of Chinese architecture with the permanent college campus in mind.\textsuperscript{184} Thurston was prepared to do battle with the many people—both Chinese and Westerners—that advocated Western-style buildings. In 1916, arguing that many Western buildings in China were poor examples of architecture and practical construction, Thurston declared that Ginling should help “stem the tide of unthinking imitation of things Western.”\textsuperscript{185} Adapting the old Chinese style to modern uses, Thurston mused in 1918, just might be a part of the missionary work in China.\textsuperscript{186}

Ultimately, Thurston’s argument carried the day. The architect chosen was American Henry Murphy, who had an office in Shanghai. Murphy had already designed the new Yale-in-China campus as well as buildings at Fukien Christian University and Qinghua University; at the time, he was also being considered for the Yenching University commission. Thurston highly approved of his blending of Chinese architectural styles with modern Western building materials and practices.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{184} See, for example, Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 22 April 1915, Box 2, 2.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{185} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 14 November 1915, Box 3, 3.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{186} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 8 September 1918, Box 2, 2.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Opposition to Chinese-style buildings was rooted variously in a lack of appreciation of the Chinese architectural tradition, a desire for a “modern” look, and cost. (Western-style buildings were cheaper to construct.)

\textsuperscript{187} In addition to designing Ginling, Yenching, and other Christian college campuses as well as many other buildings in China, Murphy later served as an architectural adviser to the Nationalist government and played an important role in the planning of its new capital, Nanjing. See Jeffrey Cody, \textit{Building in China: Henry K. Murphy’s “Adaptive Architecture,” 1914-1935} (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2001).
Supervising such a difficult project was no small task, and in the course of the work, Thurston negotiated a maze of details—arguing with the architect, overseeing the removal of graves and the building of a road, ensuring papers were in order, waiting for the errant land buyer to reappear, etc. Again, Thurston's poor understanding of Chinese custom made her work more difficult; she was, for example, annoyed when the work was held up waiting for good fengshui, an important detail of building in China.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 3 July and 6 September 1921, Box 2, 2.17, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; “Greetings from Ginling,” 1 March 1922, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2978, YDS.} Getting the money, she complained, was the “simplest thing in the whole business of building in China.”\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 24 June 1921, Box 2, 2.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.} Despite the difficulties, Ginling moved to its permanent campus in 1923. Always one to stand on ideals, Thurston insisted that the college pay an extra $10,000 to ensure the laborers did not work on Sundays.\footnote{Matilda Thurston, “To the Members of the Board of Control,” 9 July 1921, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2628, YDS. Thurston’s argument apparently carried the day, since the extra $10,000 was paid. Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 15 December 1922, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2628, YDS.}

Thurston was greatly satisfied with the end result. Nevertheless, the beautiful buildings, constructed in a modified Ming Dynasty palace style, gave the impression of wealth and privilege and thus at times proved a disservice to the students.\footnote{For example, when Professor Mary Treudley and her sociology students left the campus in 1927 on a field trip, the rickshaw coolies told inquirers they were “the princesses of the Squash Market (the name of one of the streets which bound the campus), going slumming.” Mary Treudley, “At Work in a Social Laboratory,” 1 December 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2863, YDS.} Students
and faculty alike took exception to the criticism, arguing that it was undeserved and that there was no high living at Ginling.\textsuperscript{192}

The move to the new campus helped ensure the college’s further growth. By 1925, Ginling enrolled 135 students.\textsuperscript{193} The process of Sinification had also begun. The first Chinese joined the Board of Control in 1919.\textsuperscript{194} In 1924, there were three Chinese Board members, all alumnae.\textsuperscript{195} In addition, the college added Chinese faculty. By 1926, there were eight Chinese women and seven Chinese men on a staff totaling thirty-three.\textsuperscript{196}

The majority of college courses continued to be taught in English. In fact, although the number of courses taught in Chinese using Chinese-language teaching materials increased throughout the college’s history, English continued to be essential in many departments, with texts and reference books, classes and exams in English.\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{192} See, for example, Chao Chang Siao-sung, “A Brief Sketch of Ginling College,” \textit{Ginling Bulletin}, Taiwan, 1966 (?), UBCHEA, RG 11B, Series II, Box 24B, Folder 330, YDS, and Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 15 October 1933, Box 2, 2.33, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{193} Thurston and Chester, \textit{Ginling College}, 22.

\textsuperscript{194} “Minutes of Board of Control of Ginling College,” 9-10 January 1919, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2611, YDS.

\textsuperscript{195} “Minutes of the Board of Control of Ginling College,” 31 October 1924, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2612, YDS.

\textsuperscript{196} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 12 September 1926, Box 2, 2.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

history student recalled that even in the late 1940s, because so much English was used at Ginling, many graduates, regardless of their major, went on to teach it.\textsuperscript{198}

By the mid-1920s, Thurston was proud of Ginling’s growth and the fact that its alumnae had already established themselves in jobs in China and in graduate study overseas and was optimistic about the college’s future. She did not, however, comprehend and was largely oblivious to the rising tide of Chinese nationalism—a force that was giving impetus to a movement to consolidate educational authority in the hands of Chinese, radically altering Matilda Thurston’s relationship with Ginling College.

\textsuperscript{198} Guo Zhien, “Guanyu dangnian lishixi qingkuangde huiyi,” (Recollections of the history department in those years) in Yongjiude sinian, 141.
CHAPTER 3
THE FIRST DECADE OF CHINESE ADMINISTRATION:
1927-1937

Rising Chinese Nationalism and Devolution to Chinese Administration

By the late nineteenth century, missionaries had recognized that in order to expand their work, the church in China and Christian institutions had to become Sinicized, and Chinese should move into leadership positions. Progress on Sinification and devolution to Chinese leadership varied among organizations, however. At Ginling and most of the other Protestant Christian colleges, few inroads had been made even by the mid-1920s. In 1925, Matilda Thurston and all the other college presidents were Westerners, and the college boards were composed largely of Western missionaries.¹ In 1927, the Christian colleges were to undergo a tremendous transformation.

As early as 1918, various warlord governments, responding to rising nationalism, anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment, began the process of bringing foreign-operated schools under government supervision by adopting regulations for private schools. In November 1925, the Ministry of Education of the Beijing government issued rules for the registration of educational institutions founded by foreigners, requiring that one of the two top administrative officers and a majority on the board of control be Chinese.

¹ Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 197.
Moreover, an institution’s main purpose could not be the propagation of religion. Since there was already general agreement among Western missionaries that Chinese should take controlling roles in Christian institutions, the requirement of a Chinese administrative officer generated little controversy. Making religious instruction and attendance at services voluntary, however, engendered significant debate.2

Although mandatory religious services were unpopular with students and faculty alike at Ginling,3 Matilda Thurston opposed their elimination, arguing that neither the state nor the church should control education; schools should be subject only to educational standards.4 Thurston, who was not about to give up her position, favored hiring a Chinese vice-president to satisfy the requirement for an administrative officer. She wanted a woman for the position, but argued that finding a suitable candidate would be difficult since there was a dearth of college-educated Chinese women—and, in her mind, Chinese had an aversion to administrative responsibility.5

As early as December 1925, Ginling’s Board in China began urging missions to appoint Chinese representatives;6 by April 1926, it was agreed a Chinese vice-president

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3 George Loos, business manager at Ginling from 1925-1927, wrote in February 1927 that the students and faculty had thought “for some time” that mandatory religious services should be eliminated regardless of changes in the political situation. George W. Loos to Ginlingers, 2 January 1927, Box 9, 9.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

4 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 3 January 1926, Box 2, Folder 2.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

5 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 28 April 1926, Box 3, 3.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

6 “Meeting of Executive Committee,” 12 December 1925, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2616, YDS.
should be hired. By early 1927 the Chinese nationalist movement had become increasingly strident, and the southern armies under Chiang Kai-shek were moving northward in a push to put China back under the control of a central government. The Board’s Executive Committee responded by pushing for immediate changes, urging that missions appoint members to the Board to ensure a Chinese majority. The Committee also recommended alumna Phoebe Hoh (Hao Yingqing) for vice-president. While both actions “would be taken in the normal course of events,” wrote the secretary, they were “made more urgent because of the rapid development of nationalist sentiment and the demand for immediate readjustments in harmony with that sentiment.”

The faculty, the Board and the GCC in New York were in agreement that Ginling should conform as soon as possible to government regulations requiring a Chinese majority on the Board. Matilda Thurston, however, argued for caution, noting that reports from different areas were inconsistent. Responsible parties should be prepared for various contingencies, but not act in haste. Misjudging the depth of change sweeping China and the strength of nationalist sentiment, Thurston pointed out that registration had been a topic of discussion in East China schools for ten years. The most recent changes, she suggested, had been pushed by the Communists. Thurston did,

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7 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 28 April 1926, Box 3, 3.25, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

8 Edwin Marx to Members of the Board of Control of Ginling College, 11 February 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2595, YDS.

9 “Minutes of the Annual Meeting, Ginling College Committee,” 15 January 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2592, YDS.

10 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 8 January 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

11 “Meeting of Faculty to Discuss the Problem of Government Registration,” 15 March 1926, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2617, YDS.

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however, support Hoh, a 1920 Ginling graduate and the first alumna to return to teach at her alma mater, for vice-president.\textsuperscript{12} The changes were still being discussed when the soldiers of the Nationalist Northern Expedition arrived in Nanjing in spring 1927.

\textit{March 1927: The Nanjing Incident}

By early 1927, Nanjing residents were tensely awaiting the arrival of the southern troops. In January, Thurston wrote,

Life in China these days is full of things one would like to escape if it were right to run away. For me it would be deserting on the eve of battle and that I cannot do...[the] air is full of a kind of feeling that something is going to happen and that it will not make life any simpler than it is now.\textsuperscript{13}

Nevertheless, confident the college would stay open, Thurston sent word for Ruth Chester, on furlough, to return for fall 1927.\textsuperscript{14} Winter semester at Ginling started on time, but Thurston remained worried. Many area girls’ schools urged students to return home.

As Chiang Kai-shek’s armies pushed northward in their quest to reunite China under a central government, there was a series of anti-foreign incidents, and mission work was disrupted in many areas. Nevertheless, even after foreign communities in Hankou and Hunan evacuated in early 1927, Matilda Thurston continued to issue reassuring statements. Ginling, she wrote in one, was considered a “progressive institution” by many outsiders and would likely adjust better than other schools to the

\textsuperscript{12} "To Members of Board of Control," 15 February 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

\textsuperscript{13} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 1 January 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{14} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 31 January 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
new government. As usual suggesting that there were inherent gender differences between men and women, Thurston added, "Girls' schools fare better than boys' schools, are much less turbulent—girls are more civilized than boys." 15

By the week of March 20, faculty member Emily Case reported airplanes frequently scouting the Nanjing area, cannonading at night, and soldiers charging through the city. The previous week, 62 out of 103 students at a student-called meeting had voted to stop work for three weeks. In response to this "request," the faculty told the students they could leave if they wanted and make up their work later, but staff would stay on and classes continue. The majority of students remained. 16 Although foreign women and children had been advised to evacuate, only one Western faculty member left.

Ninety students and twenty-four faculty members—including fifteen Westerners—along with some practice school students, college servants and refugees were on the campus on March 24 when southern soldiers entered Nanjing. The Ginling group had been convinced the danger would be over when the Nationalist troops arrived. To their surprise, that was when the trouble began.

That morning, "Ginlingers" were shocked to learn that Vice-President John E. Williams of the University of Nanking had been killed by a southern soldier in a robbery and other foreigners had been shot at and robbed. In fact, these were not isolated incidents, although the Ginling faculty did not know this until later. Several Western

15 Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 2 February 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2592, YDS.

16 Emily Case to Case Family, 30 March 1927, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Emily Case Mills Papers, RG 8, Box 266, Folder 1, YDS.
men were killed and others injured; the American, British and Japanese consulates were attacked and looted by Nationalist troops.  

Alarmed by the news, the Western faculty hid while the Chinese teachers and students—with the occasional help of a student’s brother who was a military officer—deflected one threatening group of soldiers after another, who brandished guns and knives and screamed slogans like “Kill the Foreigners” and even “Shoot the Students.” One particularly threatening group demanding foreigners was led on a wild goose chase around the buildings as Chinese students and faculty feigned incomprehension of the soldiers’ Hunan dialect. In the end, none of the Ginling group was injured, although once soldiers were stopped at the last moment from entering the faculty house, where the foreign faculty was hiding in the attic.

Cowering in the attic with the rest of Ginling’s foreign staff, Emily Case considered the irony. Before that day, the foreign faculty had spent all their time worried about the college, the Chinese faculty and the students—but in the end, their lives depended on the people they had hoped to protect. Matilda Thurston remained particularly grateful to the Ginling group for the protection they had provided, recognizing that the foreign staff owed them a big debt, perhaps their lives.

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18 “Liu En-lan Autobiography,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2682, YDS; Liu Enlan, “A Review of the First Month,” April 1927, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Emily Case Mills Papers, RG 8, Box 266, Folder 2, YDS; Phoebe Hoh’s Questionnaire for Christian College Alumni, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2681, YDS.

19 Emily Case (?) to unknown recipient, n.d., in China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Emily Case Mills Papers, RG 8, Box 266, Folder 1, YDS.

20 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, April 1927, Box 3, 3.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
The Chinese faculty and students eventually persuaded Ginling's Western faculty to leave for the University of Nanking, providing an escort consisting of faculty, students, an officer and looting soldiers turned escort. There, they joined other Nanjing missionaries, who had just been relieved of their possessions by another group of soldiers.\footnote{Thurston and Chester, \textit{Ginling College}, 61.} The next day, the group made their way to foreign vessels waiting on the river. To aid their escape, American and British gunboats fired salvoes, killing several Chinese.\footnote{Spence, 352.} Despite the gravity of the situation, Thurston had time to complain that, as usual, a group of men had made all the plans and expected the rest to follow along.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 20 April 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

The violence in Nanjing, which came to be known as the "Nanjing Incident," precipitated the mass departure of missionaries from China. Fearing more trouble as Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition marched onward, five thousand of the eight thousand Protestant missionaries in China left the country. The majority of those that remained took shelter in Shanghai or other coastal cities, where they could expect some protection from their own governments. Only five hundred remained in interior China.\footnote{Latourette, \textit{History of Christian Missions in China}, 820.} It was a significant setback for Protestant missions in China; in fact, the numbers of Christian missionaries in China never recovered to the 1925 levels.\footnote{James Thomson, \textit{While China Faced West: American Reformers in Nationalist China, 1928-1937} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 35-36.}
For Matilda Thurston, the events of March 1927 changed her life. As she told her sister: “For us it was the end of the world—of our world.”26 But she was even more shaken by subsequent events than she was in being forced to leave Nanjing on a gunboat, since this was to be the end of her presidency as well.

After the evacuation of the foreign faculty, a group of Chinese teachers, students and alumnae, realizing that Ginling’s buildings would be requisitioned by the military if they remained unoccupied, sprang into action. Led by alumna Liu Jianqiu of Ginling’s first class, they ran the college administration and hired teachers to conduct limited coursework, thwarting three attempts to take possession of the buildings.27

Intent on proving Ginling’s worth, the students and faculty tried to establish good relations with the military and Kuomintang (KMT) representatives. In early April, for example, the students prepared a reception for the military officers in the city, giving a presentation on Ginling’s history and what it had done for Chinese women.28 One student explained why the students and faculty were so intent on ensuring the college’s continuance. They believed that

...as educated citizens of China, we ought to provide a place for our other sisters to get an education...For the sake of patriotism and our love for our fellow sisters, we would pledge our lives for the life of Ginling—not for Ginling [itself], but for the Chinese Nation.29

26 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 12 January 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Emphasis in original.

27 “Liu En-lan Autobiography.”

28 Liu Enlan, “A Review of the First Month.”

With the situation in Nanjing complex and fluid, the Ginling group suddenly discovered they had naively befriended the left-leaning elements in the KMT, the ultimate losers in an intra-party struggle then unfolding. As one person recalled: “Our delegates worked faithfully at their office every day until all the people there were threatened with ropes to be captured. Fortunately, our girls escaped and we realized our foolishness.”

In mid-April, Nanjing was again threatened by Northern troops. Many students left for home, but classes continued despite the cannonading in the distance. In September, bodies of soldiers dead from a cholera outbreak lined the road, but faculty member Liu Enlan remained optimistic that the college could open when the trains began running. She was not disappointed; Ginling opened on time in fall 1927, with an enrollment of nearly one hundred. The opening date was set for September 23, even though the return of the foreign faculty was not certain until September 19. Eventually, eight foreign faculty members defied American consular advice and accepted the

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30 “Gleanings from Ginling Letters,” 28 April 1927. The writer is apparently referring to a bloody purge of Chinese Communists in April 1927.


32 Matilda Thurston to Isabel Thurston, 8 November 1927, Box 4, 4.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

33 “Liu En-lan Autobiography.”

34 Matilda Thurston to Alice Butler, 7 January 1928, Box 6, 6.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
invitation of the Chinese administrative committee to return to Nanjing. Matilda Thurston was not asked to return with this group.

_Electing a Chinese President_

The Nationalist government’s registration regulations proved to be even stricter than previous rules, beginning with a requirement for a Chinese president. When it became clear that the Chinese government intended to enforce these requirements—and forgoing registration would put students at a disadvantage—a majority of Ginling’s Board agreed to comply and moved quickly to satisfy regulations. A May 4 Board of Control meeting constituted a new executive committee with a Chinese majority. The committee boasted three alumnae members, including two members of the class of 1919, Liu and Zee. Members immediately agreed on the necessity of electing a Chinese president and decided it would be better if the candidate were an alumna and familiar with the beginnings of Ginling and its ideals.

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35 Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 30 September 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

36 According to Thurston, with the atmosphere still tense, the Chinese staff did not want foreigners associated with administration to return. Matilda Thurston, “Edited Letters,” 2 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2857, YDS.

37 The new government regulations regarding higher education were not just aimed at colleges with mission or foreign connections. All institutions were required to apply for accreditation; schools that could not meet the government’s financial, academic and organizational requirements were not allowed to continue as colleges. The new measures ensured increased government control over education—control that had been lacking in the chaotic political environment after the fall of the Qing Dynasty. See Yeh Wen-hsin, *The Alienated Academy and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1990), chapter five.

38 Untitled report, 20 May 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2616, YDS.

39 Matilda Thurston, “Edited Letters,” 20 May 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2857, YDS.
Matilda Thurston may have supported Phoebe Hoh, the previous candidate for vice-president.\(^{40}\) It is unlikely, however, that Thurston greatly influenced the decision-making process—her letters indicate she felt she could do nothing.\(^{41}\) Zee may have been a candidate, but since she was married and involved with her husband’s orthopedic hospital, it would have been impossible for her to accept the responsibility.\(^{42}\) In any event, attention quickly turned to Wu Yifang, who was finishing her graduate degree in biology at the University of Michigan.

In a Board of Control correspondence vote on Wu’s election in the summer of 1927, one Chinese member refused to pass judgment, arguing that appointing a Chinese to the presidency “simply for the sake of being Chinese” might produce “unsatisfactory results.” He recommended hiring Wu as vice-president first. A Western member of the Board argued that a Chinese majority on the Board and a Chinese president were necessary only if the Chinese could finance the college. He suggested waiting for new requirements to be formally issued by the government. Eighteen out of twenty responses, however, approved Wu’s appointment, most with no objection. Some respondents

\(^{40}\) Mary Treudley to Rebecca Griest, 13 January 1931, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2863, YDS. In this letter, there is an oblique reference to Thurston wanting to make Hoh president and “the rest of us” unwilling. Ginling alumna Hu Xiuyin also states that Thurston supported Hoh, while Cora Reeves supported Wu Yifang. See Hu Xiuyin, “Huainian Wu xiaozhang,” (Cherishing the memory of President Wu) in *Wu Yifang jinian jì*, 160.

\(^{41}\) For example, Thurston later wrote, “I feel that fear and not faith had decided many things and I have been powerless.” See Matilda Thurston to Alice Butler, 7 January 1928, Box 6, 6.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{42}\) Although this is not mentioned elsewhere, Yan Lianyun recalled Zee being a candidate. Yan Lianyun, interview by author, Tape recording, Shanghai, China, 21 February 2001. Since the Board meeting to choose a Chinese president was held in Yan’s home, her recollection is of particular interest. See also Li Baozhen, “Ai Muxiao zhishen zhichangde Yan Lianyun,” (Yan Lianyun—she has loved her alma mater the deepest and the longest) in *Jinling nuer*, 37.
commented favorably on her qualifications. Four people qualified their vote by explaining that circumstances demanded a Chinese president.\(^4\)

The Board secretary explained that this important action had to be handled in a “very summary fashion,” but the majority of the Board believed they were following the “only course” open to college authorities. Wu Yifang, the “most eligible candidate” available, had been selected for her record as a student, qualities of leadership, and understanding of the traditions and ideals of the college. She possessed the “fullest confidence” of the faculty and alumnae who knew her.\(^4\) Ratifying the summer correspondence vote, the Board elected Wu president at its November 1927 meeting.\(^5\)

Thurston was appalled. Calling the decision a “piece of panic psychology,” Thurston argued that Board members had not considered what was best for the college. Communist influence, she charged, had swayed the Board to take for granted the need for a Chinese president. Thurston envisioned both a Chinese and a foreigner associated with administration, on an equal basis, since Ginling still needed a foreigner in administration to help deal with the American and missionary constituencies and to help with finances.\(^6\)

\(^{43}\) “Votes of the Members of the Board of Control on Election of Miss Wu as President of Ginling College,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS.

\(^{44}\) Edwin Marx to Miss Elizabeth Bender, 20 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.

\(^{45}\) “Minutes of Board of Control Meeting, 28-29 November 1927,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2612, YDS.

\(^{46}\) Matilda Thurston to Alice Butler, 7 January 1928, Box 6, 6.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Yenching University’s president, John Leighton Stuart, made similar arguments and managed to remain in de facto control into the 1940s—despite the appointment of successive Chinese chancellors. The son of China missionaries, Stuart was a professor at Nanking Union Theological Seminary before becoming president of Yenching in 1919. He served as U.S. ambassador to China from 1946 to 1949. See Shaw, An American Missionary in China.
Regardless of whether she was to remain president, Matilda Thurston did not want to leave Ginling. She established a Ginling office in Shanghai and worked from there. Although she had offered her resignation along with the other Westerners on the faculty, the Board in China did not accept it, pending discussion of a new relationship with the college.\textsuperscript{47} The New York-based GCC, however, assumed that Thurston should resign her position and leave the college before the new Chinese president arrived, writing bluntly to Thurston, “If you act as most of the other presidents have done you will leave China so as to make it easier for her to stand on her own feet and give her more face and also to prove that we are not holding back with one hand what we give with the other.”\textsuperscript{48} Despite their attempt to write a sympathetic letter,\textsuperscript{49} Thurston was shocked and deeply offended: “I feel as if I could understand a loyal minister of the Emperor who had been commanded to commit hari-kari [sic].”\textsuperscript{50}

Seeming to forget that her relationship with the GCC had long been acrimonious, Thurston wondered if opinions of foreign faculty critical of her administration had made their way to the GCC, helping explain its position. It was, Thurston tersely replied, “the exception and not the rule for the former president to withdraw.”\textsuperscript{51} She ignored the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Edwin Marx to Miss Bender, 22 September 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.
\item Miss Hodge to Mrs. Thurston, 8 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2710, YDS.
\item Miss Elizabeth Bender to Miss Margaret Hodge, 30 September 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2710, YDS.
\item Matilda Thurston, “Edited Letters,” 10 November 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2857, YDS.
\item Matilda Thurston to Alice Butler, 7 January 1928, Box 6, 6.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
GCC's advice, determined to remain at Ginling in whatever capacity was offered her, to help Wu Yifang "carry a load which had been more than I could carry alone." When the GCC argued that a child does better when out from under the eye of the parent, Thurston shot back, "My personal experience made me argue quite differently, for I was inspired and not at all repressed by my father who from the time I was sixteen treated me as an equal; and I thought that I could do the same in relation to my grown up daughter."52

Thurston was especially hurt that the New York office did not trust her to "do the right thing."53 Members of the GCC were not the only persons to question whether Thurston should remain at Ginling, however. Alice Frame of Yenching also counseled that Wu might not be able to really strike out on her own if Thurston, her former teacher, were there. Frame recommended leaving for a couple of years—if Thurston were eventually needed back, she would be in an even stronger position.54

Thurston’s criticism was not reserved for the GCC; she was critical of the entire process of devolution: "All the Boards are letting missionaries down more or less and trying to save their reputations for being up to date in responding to the new demands for 'Chinese leadership.'"55 Ironically, Thurston seems to have forgotten the words she had written in a 1922 report:

We have all along accepted the idea that we are in China to prepare the way for an independent Chinese Church which shall in the end be sufficient to the task of winning China for Christ. But we let go very unwillingly in our

52 Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 30 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS. Emphasis in original.
53 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 5 February 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
54 Alice Frame to Tilda (Matilda Thurston), 15 November 1927, Box 5, 5.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
55 Matilda Thurston to Isabel Thurston, 7 January 1928, Box 4, 4.15, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

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station and mission organizations, and we are very slow to accept a new method of work in place of the old and tried methods with which we began.\textsuperscript{56}

Apparently, accepting this ideal and accepting her own replacement—and leaving the job she loved so dearly—were two different things.

Thurston felt the New York office did not appreciate how difficult it would be to turn over her heavy workload to Wu Yifang, who was inexperienced in administration.\textsuperscript{57} Being an administrator, Thurston argued, is a “thankless job...Between the devil (the Boards) and the deep sea (the Chinese critics) you are all the time under fire.” In her mind, the job would be even more difficult for Wu Yifang as a Chinese lacking her contacts with Christian leaders.\textsuperscript{58} As for a required Chinese majority on the Board, Thurston argued that the Chinese were not interested in the routine Board business and that foreigners really did all the work, sometimes overly deferring to the often inexperienced Chinese.\textsuperscript{59}

One of Thurston’s major arguments against the appointment of Wu—or any other Chinese—to the presidency and a switch from Western to Chinese administration was that few Chinese had the experience to do the work. It apparently did not occur to her that she and her husband had come to China with no experience, expecting to set up Yale-in-China. Lawrence Thurston had just been ordained when they left America. Wu

\textsuperscript{56} Matilda Thurston, “Education Commission,” 13 March 1922, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2978, YDS.

\textsuperscript{57} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 4 December 1927, Box 3, Folder 3.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{58} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 19 February 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{59} Matilda Thurston to Anna, 15 December 1927, Box 5, 5.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Yifang, a Chinese with a doctorate and experience teaching college students, was
certainly better qualified than Thurston had been in 1913. Clearly, Thurston did not
want to leave the college and the students that had taken all of her energy for over a
decade—and that held such an important place in her heart. As she wrote her sister-in-
law, "Something in me will die when this passes out of my life."  

Nor was she willing to leave China. Most Nanjing missionaries—their schools
and residences looted and destroyed after the Nationalists took the city—returned to the
U.S., but Thurston, her optimism somewhat diminished, remained in Shanghai, hopeful
Ginling would reopen. She also worked to keep as many of the foreign Ginling group
together as possible for return to Nanjing. She found the year following the Nanjing
Incident particularly difficult. She was in a "situation of considerable embarrassment"
since she was no longer officially president, but was expected to perform duties related to
the presidency and the treasurership. In one of the "hardest personal situations,"
Thurston chafed in Shanghai for months, since there was fear Ginling would come under
criticism if she went back.  

Despite anti-foreign sentiment, however, the faculty and students invited Thurston
to come to Commencement and hand out the diplomas. In October she attended
Founder’s Day celebrations. It was, Thurston wrote, "a real home coming after the

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60 As was pointed out in Ginling College, because of her teaching experience in Beijing, Wu also had
important contacts with government schools. Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 78.

61 Matilda Thurston to Isabel Thurston, 8 November 1927, Box 4, 4.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers,
UTS.

62 Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 30 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder
2845, YDS.

63 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 64.
months of exile." After another visit in January 1928, she noted that visits to the
campus were bittersweet; despite the warm welcome, there was a "sense of coming in
instead of belonging and a restless feeling all the time about the future.""65

Thurston finally returned to the campus to live in February 1928. Although she
enjoyed leading chapel services and teaching a Bible class,66 she felt unnecessary and
awkward in her official position—her duties remained undefined and much of the
president's work was handled by committees.67

A Reluctant Administrator: Wu Yifang Accepts the Presidency

Wu Yifang had long been considered for a position in the Biology Department at
Ginling and had planned a career in teaching and research. She was in Minneapolis
representing China at a convention of the Methodist Women Foreign Missionary Society
when she was informed about the offer of the Ginling presidency.68 In the midst of
writing her Ph.D. dissertation, Wu was divided on whether to accept. She wrote to Miss
Bender of the GCC:

...I learned of the possibility of being called to fill an important position
during this transition period, and I had to face the fact that I am not the least
bit prepared for such a task. I never expected to go into administrative work

64 Matilda Thurston to Isabel Thurston, 8 November 1927, Box 4, 4.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
65 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 6 January 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
66 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 4 March 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
67 Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 30 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS.
68 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 17 November 1927, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. See also Mrs. Charles K. Roys to Matilda Thurston, n.d., Box 5, 5.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
and always wanted to teach along my own line of Biology. I thought over the situation carefully and told Mrs. New frankly that even if circumstances should turn out to be such that I ought—duty toward Ginling—to accept the position, it will be just temporary, only for this sudden and short period of transition. If conditions should become such that no great change is necessary, or if the Board of Control should succeed in finding some other person for the position, I would be only too glad to serve G.C. as a teaching faculty.\textsuperscript{69}

Even allowing for Wu's innate modesty, and for considerations of politeness for a Chinese woman in the 1920s, it seems that she had grave considerations about taking the position. The thought of returning to head her alma mater, with many of her teachers still there, must have been daunting. On the other hand, the offer—an opportunity she had not previously considered—must also have been tempting to a determined young woman like Wu Yifang. Couching her response in terms of helping the college, she offered to return without finishing her degree. The offer was considered briefly in the tense atmosphere after the Nanjing Incident, but then Wu was advised to finish her work.\textsuperscript{70}

Both the New York office and Thurston expressed concern that Wu would decline the position,\textsuperscript{71} and GCC members' fear of embarrassing and somehow losing Wu\textsuperscript{72} at least partially explains the acrimonious exchange with Thurston over her resignation. In a further letter to Bender, Wu hedged:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{69} Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, received 17 September 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{70} Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 30 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS.

\textsuperscript{71} Miss Elizabeth Bender to Miss Margaret Hodge, 14 December 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2710, YDS; Matilda Thurston to Rebecca [Griest], December 1927, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{72} See, for example, Untitled report, 22 September 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS; New York Office to Mr. Marx, 3 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.
\end{quote}
My accepting the presidency is only a probability which depends upon how conditions should turn out by the time I return. My attitude is by no means what you termed "sacrifice", but I do admit I have been greatly moved by what the girls have done in Ginling thus far, and I only wish to follow them and do my share in answering to urgent calls. So, I used, I remember, the word "duty". If I had looked upon the possible offer as a position for work, I would not have considered it at all. 73

Despite any misgivings she might have had, Wu moved forward to accept her new role. She was formally elected president at the GCC meeting in Atlantic City on January 13, 1928 74—with the understanding that she could “reconsider at any time that conditions seem to warrant such action.” 75

To prepare herself for her new position, before returning to China in 1928, Wu went to visit women’s colleges on the East coast, meeting with top officials and visiting classes. 76 Joining the GCC for a meeting, Wu charmed committee members: “Miss Wu’s ability, discernment, courage and devotion were evident, and with it all there was marked and genuine modesty. She won the whole-hearted confidence of the Ginling College Committee.” 77 Noting that Wu seemed to have made an excellent impression on everyone. Thurston wrote sourly, “Miss Bender says that she has won their love, admiration, and confidence which gives her a big advantage over me from the start, for they have never shown me that I had any one of these.” 78

73 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 8 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS.
74 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 19 February 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
75 Elizabeth Bender, “Executive Session Action,” 13 January 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2592, YDS.
76 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 9 February 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS.
77 Elizabeth Bender to Edwin Marx, 24 February 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.
78 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 19 February 1928, Box 3, 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Wu praised the spirit of the mission boards as they placed administration into Chinese hands, especially since the financial support still lay with America. Noting that Ginling would have to close its doors if American support should be withdrawn, Wu wrote,

I would not ask for Chinese administration, but since the sudden changes produced situations now existing, I will step into the work and keep serving the interest of Ginling as my only goal. It is, and will always be, far from my mind to consider for a minute such idea as that we have now secured the control, we must keep it in Chinese hands. The wonderful record of Christian cooperation of the past year will never permit any prejudices to come up because of the racial differences. What we want is only that Ginling continues to train Christian leaders and to develop for greater service to humanity; whoever holds the rein makes no difference to us [alumnae].

Wu stressed that except for requirements regarding proportion of Chinese to foreigners, personnel choices should be made only on the basis of qualifications. 79

Thurston’s animosity was certainly not directed at her replacement—Thurston, a demanding taskmaster, thought very highly of Wu Yifang. Thurston clearly did not believe that remaining at Ginling would cause any problems for Wu. Wu’s feelings on the matter, however, are more difficult to ascertain. In the U.S., when asked directly, Wu said that while Thurston could help her greatly, she had come to believe it would be easier to make the transition to a Chinese president if Thurston were temporarily not there. 80 According to Thurston, however, Zee agreed with her that “influences”—i.e.,

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79 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 29 May 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS. Emphasis in the original.

80 Mrs. Charles K. Roys to Matilda Thurston, n.d., Box 5, 5.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

114
criticism of her administration—had led Wu to exaggerate the difficulties.\textsuperscript{81} In fact, both Zee and Wu seemed to have given different people vastly different impressions.

Wu Yifang found the decision about Thurston difficult to make. She emphasized that she could work with Thurston in whatever capacity was decided by the Board’s special committee set up to determine the issue. Her own share in the decision, Wu said, would be guided only by the interest of Ginling. Wu wrote:

\begin{quote}
How I wish I could be spared this delicate function! Worse yet is a statement in some communication from Ginling to the effect that the question was to be decided by the future president. The natural course open to me is to ask her to stay in Ginling, not only because I would not for anything like to hurt her feelings, but also because of my incompetence and I will need her help. But before I follow this line of least resistance, my duty to the office of president demands me to disregard the personal and to consider the problem from the viewpoint of the institution, and therefore I cannot say anything before consulting the faculty, alumnae and students. When there is this conflict between personal and institutional interest, how we wish we could discard the latter and attend only to the former.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Meanwhile, the news that Thurston might leave when the new president arrived generated an outpouring on the part of Chinese students, faculty and alumnae, who suggested that she remain to help. One letter, for example, asked Thurston to be patient and eventually return to Ginling. “How could we bear to think of your going to leave us? We are sincerely hoping that you will listen to the cry of your promising babies at home, and endure still long for her dear sake.”\textsuperscript{83} Thurston was touched by the “spontaneous

\textsuperscript{81} Matilda Thurston to Alice Butler, 7 January 1928, Box 6, 6.1, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{82} Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 29 May 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2896, YDS. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{83} The Student Body of Ginling College to Matilda Thurston, 3 June 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2986, YDS.
expression” in letters from the students, which helped assuage the pain felt by the GCC’s slight.84

The GCC expected Thurston to take leave as soon as convenient after Wu reached Nanjing.85 When they discovered that Thurston might stay until January 1929, the New York office became concerned that Wu Yifang would refuse the presidency. Nor were they convinced that the outpouring of feeling on the part of Chinese faculty, students and alumnae was genuine. Exasperated, one member wrote:

Are we not under a tacit agreement with Miss Wu to give her a free hand during her first year in China? The question seems to be how we can do it under the circumstances without making Mrs. Thurston “lose face.” To cause her this embarrassment would create a bad situation and bring censure on the Ginling College committee from the Chinese, who, whatever their inward desire may be, are loyal to her.86

The Board in China ultimately decided that Thurston should remain after Wu returned to assist her, then take leave.87 In November 1928, the committee appointed to determine Thurston’s relation to the college recommended that after her furlough, she should return to Ginling to teach, prepare publicity, maintain contacts with foreign friends, and serve as Western adviser and member of the building committee, thus deciding the issue.88

84 Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 24 May 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

85 Elizabeth Bender to Edwin Marx, 23 March 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.

86 Miss Elizabeth Bender to Miss Margaret Hodge, 23 May 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2710, YDS.

87 Edwin Marx to Elizabeth Bender, 1 December 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2868, YDS.

88 “Minutes of Ginling College Board of Control,” 1-2 December 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2613, YDS
At least two faculty members, Minnie Vautrin and Ruth Chester, praised Thurston for remaining. Noting that Thurston’s “heart is in Ginling more than anyone’s,” Chester wrote she had come to admire her “even more for the big way in which she has gone steadily on with her work in a situation which would have made many people give up.” Chester thought Wu would need the first president’s help as she took over her new responsibilities. Vautrin also pointed out how hard the two years had been for Thurston, who more that anyone else identified with Ginling’s life and future. She suggested that Chinese opinion on the issue—unlike the GCC, she believed the sentiment genuine—should not be disregarded.

She cannot picture herself apart from the college and its problems, and those days of exile in Shanghai, and the past weeks alone in Kuling [Lushan] when the work here was going on without her have been days of bitterness of spirit and intense loneliness....I am sure that the large majority of alumnae feel that she has a place in the next decade of the college, and I personally feel that way too, although there are difficulties in the relationship. To force her to sever her relationship with the college is to injure certain traditions in the Chinese people which I believe are more vital and worth maintaining than mere efficiency.

Challenges to the New President

Wu Yifang returned to China in June 1928. Her first thought was of China’s modernization effort. She told the Ginling office in New York, “I found many things changed and changing in China. In some I am disappointed but there is plenty of bright signs to urge one do [sic] his or her best during this most important period of

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89 Ruth Chester to Miss Bender, 4 September 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2723, YDS.

90 Minnie Vautrin to Ginling Alumnae, n.d., [November 1934 is handwritten on top; that is clearly incorrect], UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2874, YDS.
reconstruction."\(^9\) Wu, Thurston was pleased to discover, had changed little: "She is the same quiet, well poised courteous person, quite unspoiled by her six years in America."\(^9\)

Visiting Ginling for the first time, Wu was touched when her former teacher, Cora Reeves, presented her with a box of Ginling keys. Writing to the Ginling office in New York, Wu pledged to do her share "in joining this force for the great work of ours."\(^9\) She immediately began working to secure cooperation. At a Board meeting, for example, she emphasized the importance of unity—notwithstanding the varieties of personalities, experiences and organizations combined in conducting Ginling, the bond common to all was the "Christian motive and spirit."\(^9\)

When Wu Yifang arrived, Thurston left the campus to give the new president some space and remained away when college opened in September. Returning to the campus in mid-October 1928, Thurston wrote home that it was "a joy" to work with Wu Yifang and treasurer Elsie Priest.\(^9\) Thurston remained convinced that Wu had no problem with her staying at Ginling.\(^9\)

Wu Yifang officially became president of Ginling—and the first Chinese woman to head a college—on July 1, 1928, but was not formally inaugurated as president until November 3. Recalling that event over a half-century later, a 1932 graduate could still

\(^9\) Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 23 June 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2897, YDS.

\(^9\) Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 3 June 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^9\) Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 6 August 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2897, YDS.

\(^9\) "Board of Control Minutes," 4 July 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2613, YDS.

\(^9\) Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 November 1928, Box 2, Folder 2.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^9\) Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 21 October 1928, Box 3, 3.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
clearly see her sitting on the platform with all the other dignitaries and remembered the pride that the students felt in their “young pretty president.” Her voice trembled a bit, but Wu’s inauguration speech was “beautiful and moving” nonetheless.\(^9^7\) One account remembers applause—even tears on the part of many students—when Thurston handed Wu “the golden key.”\(^9^8\) Alumna Hu Xiuyin recalled that she idolized Wu from the time she saw her give her inauguration speech.\(^9^9\)

Reluctantly, Matilda Thurston recognized that students and alumnae could identify better with Wu Yifang. After a Ginling banquet for Wu with alumnae and former students in Shanghai, Thurston wrote, “I feel sure she [Wu] is going to stir real loyalty and enthusiasm in the Ginling group. It is perfectly natural to feel that she is theirs in a way no foreigner can be. They feel the barrier more than we do, I am sure.” Ginling girls, Thurston added, were her “spiritual daughters” and she doubted that American girls could be any dearer.\(^1^0^0\)

From the beginning of her tenure, Wu’s evaluations were all outstanding. Wu, Vautrin wrote in October 1928, was getting along splendidly. “More and more I am coming to have respect for and confidence in her judgment and ability. Always dignified,

\(^{9^7}\) Dzo Ging-ru, “As President – The Thirties,” Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter # 10, page 12-14, April 1956, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS.

\(^{9^8}\) Cheng Chiming, “Wu Yifang xiaozhang jieguo jinyaoshi,” (President Wu takes the gold key) in Yongjiude siniart, 19. Cheng is probably referring to the seals of office. Alumna Huang Xuhan also recalled that she felt great pride when Wu became president. Huang Xuhan, interview by author, Tape recording, Nanjing, China, 2 January 2001.

\(^{9^9}\) Hu Xiuyin, “Huainian Wu xiaozhang,” 159. On the other hand, Hu also recalled that some students did not think much of the speech that Wu gave; Hu defended her, pointing out that Wu had been abroad for years and had rarely used Chinese. This is the only negative reference out of dozens to Wu’s public speaking.

\(^{1^0^0}\) Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 3 June 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
always thoughtful she meets every problem bravely and manages it well. I think she has already won the confidence of her faculty." Chester agreed with Vautrin that Wu had the loyalty and cooperation of the whole group. Seeming to have forgotten she did not believe Wu or anyone else capable of taking over, by late 1928, Thurston was conveying her satisfaction in Wu Yifang: "my heart," she wrote, "is at rest about Ginling."

Wu once noted that when she left America, a professor's wife commented that she seemed so American, but when she returned to China, her uncle said she had not changed at all. This may have explained part of her success as an administrator of a joint American-Chinese undertaking—she was at home in both cultures. Wu was generally more successful than Thurston in her interaction with both Chinese and Western staff.

While Thurston was blunt and often confrontational, Wu's tack was much different, centering on harmony and compromise.

Wu Yifang had been president of Ginling less than a month when she faced her first crisis—a general wanted to commandeer the campus as temporary headquarters for

101 Minnie Vautrin to Miss Bender, 22 October 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2873, YDS.

102 Ruth Chester to Miss Bender, 4 September 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2723, YDS. It is perhaps significant that both Vautrin and Chester made these comments in letters to Elizabeth Bender of the GCC. Previously, at least one GCC member had confidentially expressed concern that Wu Yifang, as a Chinese, would have trouble with Chinese faculty and students—opining that the Chinese, with their characteristics of "jealousy and intrigue," often made their leaders' jobs difficult. Margaret E. Hodge to Miss Elizabeth Bender, 18 January 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2710, YDS.

103 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 25 November 1928, Box 3, 3.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

104 "Speech by Dr. Wu Yi-fang at the Ginling Luncheon," Ginling Annual Meeting, 7 May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2922, YDS.

105 Wu's tenure was not without difficulties. On one occasion, for example, Wu caused a problem when she did not make it clear to a Western staff member she was not invited to return. Wu Yifang to Mrs. MacMillan, 7 January 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2910, YDS.
Shanxi warlord Yan Xishan. Wu handled the crisis by relying on connections, sending a telegram to Zee to ask her husband to speak with the foreign minister.

Wu also took up the task of registration, an undertaking made difficult by continuously shifting government regulations. Thurston did not favor registration, but was resigned that the new administration would push forward: “A Chinese majority will always favor the things which are required by the government for in their present mood, they are first Nationalists and then Christians.”

As late as mid-1929, some missionaries continued to maintain that registration was not necessary or desirable. One commented: “The trouble is that Ginling does not know her own mind whether she exists for the Christian Cause or for secular education in China.” Such opinions were increasingly in the minority, however. Registration became more imperative as the country was unified, and it became clear that graduates from unregistered schools would not be recognized on the same level as graduates from government universities. By late 1929, alumnae and students were expressing concern that Ginling had not registered, and most missionary educators were urging registration.

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106 According to Thurston’s later recollection, Ginling’s buildings were first choice because they were the best in the city. Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 20 February 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.

107 Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 21 July 1928, Box 6, Folder 6.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

108 Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 2 December 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

109 John W. Wood to Dr. Robert E. Speer, 19 June 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2805, YDS.

110 Minnie Vautrin to Friends, 5 December 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2873, YDS. Wu Yifang later suggested that declining to register would seriously affect Ginling’s enrollment——
Under the Nationalist government, the purpose of an educational institution could not be the propagation of religion. The Christian Colleges thus had to rephrase their statements of purpose. The responses of Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang to this necessity illustrate basic differences in the way the two approached their work. Thurston opposed submitting a statement that did not accurately represent the college’s Christian purpose:

The attempt to standardize statements of purpose eliminating all individualities and leaving a mere form of words which will satisfy a confessed atheist like Tsai Yen Pei [Cai Yuanpei, then Minister of Education] is, in my opinion, a serious compromise of Christian conviction. Chancellor Tsai would like to divorce religion and education. Personally, I would much rather have the Ginling documents presented with a frank statement of our Christian purpose in our own words...even if we were turned down on the first application...I should be better satisfied in such a document as this to eliminate everything but the declaration of our intention to maintain high educational standards than with this watered down attempt to state a Christian purpose.111

Meeting with Ministry of Education officials in April 1929, Wu Yifang ascertained that although Ginling’s Christian character could be retained in spirit, the government would not accept its original statement of purpose indicating that Ginling is a Christian institution. Wu argued that submitting the original statement would “prejudice the authorities against us for being stubborn.” She implied that submitting an alternative statement was, simply, the Chinese way of doing things:

....the Board and the Ginling College Committee have approved, in general, the principle of registration and that we should show a willingness to conform to the regulations of the Government of the country in which the

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111 Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 16 August 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2613, YDS.

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institution is established....Personally, I do not consider using the alternative statement of purpose a compromise, although I should have preferred the clearly stated original one. I think that I understand fairly both the Western and Eastern mind and fully appreciate the difference between their conceptions of the importance of stating literally what one intends to do. The point we should fight is, it seems to me, any interference by the authorities with the actual maintenance of the Christian character of the institution.112

After two years of effort on the part of Wu Yifang, Ginling was finally registered in December 1930. Since it did not have enough departments to meet government standards for a university (daxue), it became a college (xueyuan).113

Cooperation not Coeducation: Tensions Between Ginling and the University of Nanking

The advent of co-education had called into question the need for women's colleges in China; women's colleges were also being scrutinized in America. At the same time, Protestant missionary educators, concerned they had overextended themselves in higher education in China and lacking financial resources to maintain all the Christian institutions at a high standard, were making attempts to strengthen institutions by concentration, consolidation and cooperation. At Ginling, the women saw such proposals as further attempts to take away their autonomy, since Ginling was often asked to cooperate or even merge with its neighbor, the University of Nanking.

The University of Nanking was established in 1910, the result of a series of mergers of existing Christian educational institutions in Nanjing. Headed by Arthur J. Bowen until 1927, the University of Nanking eventually became one of the largest and

112 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 2 May 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2953, YDS.

113 Its new Chinese name was Jinling nei wenli xueyuan (literally, Ginling Women's College of Arts and Sciences). In English, it remained Ginling College.
most well known of the Christian colleges. Ginling's permanent location had actually been chosen partly because proximity to the University of Nanking would facilitate cooperation.\textsuperscript{114} With the advent of co-education, however, the women at Ginling immediately felt pressure for a closer relationship than they had envisioned. Tensions between the two colleges began in 1923 when Ginling arrived at its new campus\textsuperscript{115} and generally worsened throughout the 1920s.

Thurston, who had never thought highly of co-education, blamed the poor relationship to the designs that the University—particularly its male Chinese staff and students—had on Ginling. In 1927, for example, when Thurston was not asked to return with the other foreign faculty, she and Ruth Chester suspected that Chinese men at the University of Nanking were trying to prevent the foreign administrators from returning partly in the hope of absorbing Ginling students.\textsuperscript{116} In 1928, when students from Ginling danced with British sailors while on board a British cruiser for a reception, students and faculty alike were publicly castigated by male students at the University. Thurston again laid the blame for the furor squarely on the University men.\textsuperscript{117}

Not surprisingly, Thurston harshly criticized a 1928 plan for greater cooperation between Ginling and the University of Nanking—part of a correlated program for the

\textsuperscript{114} Matilda Thurston to Wu Yifang, 13 March 1930, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{115} Matilda Thurston, “Ginling and the University of Nanking,” 8 September 1928, RG11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS.

\textsuperscript{116} Matilda Thurston, “Edited Letters,” 2 October 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2857, YDS.

Christian colleges—referring to it as “the product almost entirely of the male mind which stresses organization and financial efficiency and proceeds by a steam roller process over the feeble effort of women to modify the program.” Thurston also noted that the women at Yenching were very unhappy with the results of the merger there.\textsuperscript{118}

In co-education, Thurston opined, the men’s needs are put first. Conversely, Ginling offered courses specifically tailored to female students:

There is need for a place where women can “work out their own solutions to various problems of life unhampered by the domination of masculine authority and points of view”; or, as one of our Chinese women faculty members put it, “without being bothered by men.” Our curriculum is very carefully worked out from the point of view of the needs of women and the problems which they will meet after graduation. Our students are less insistent than men on early specializations and purely utilitarian courses and are satisfied with a broad preparation for life.\textsuperscript{119}

Ginling was prepared to cooperate with the University of Nanking on the basis of equality, Thurston declared—but added that advanced courses at Ginling would probably not fit the men. Nothing less than co-education would satisfy the men at the University, but that would not be to the advantage of Ginling women:

They [revolutionary students] desired to break down the barriers of social regulation and have women share in political and other movements, always in proper subordination to men....They make a certain demand for co-operation; but always it seems to be a desire to have women fall in line with their program, attend their movies, take part in their social entertainment and enliven their dull lives.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118} Matilda Thurston to Miss Hodge, 6 September 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2845, YDS.

\textsuperscript{119} “Ginling College Annual Report, 1927-1928,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2963, YDS.

\textsuperscript{120} Matilda Thurston, “Ginling and the University of Nanking.” Emphasis in original.

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According to Thurston, the University men, who were often married, came from government schools, were not Christians and were thus more radical, while Ginling girls were single and not particularly interested in romance. In addition, Ginling students were Christians from mission schools, and they lived on campus.

The boys resent the girls’ independence and refusal to fall in behind them in their student activities, political and otherwise. They think the girls are under the domination of their foreign teachers, and give them no credit for having opinions of their own on social and political questions. They want western freedom without regard to western proprieties.

The girls, on the other hand, were naturally conservative in social matters, had much more regard for family ideals and better appreciated the finer things in Chinese culture. At the same time, they were not “narrowly nationalistic” and appreciated the best things in Western culture.\(^{121}\)

Thurston expressed concern that Chinese returned students did not understand the contributions of the women’s colleges in Britain and America, seeing them as “a kind of ultra conservative device for keeping men and women separate.”\(^ {122}\) She did not admit or was not aware that the need for women’s colleges was being questioned in America by this time. Zee agreed that Ginling was a hard sell:

It is not easy to arouse public interest for Ginling, because we have coeducation Colleges where modern girls love to go...Merely speaking of our being the only standard women’s college, is not much of an appeal, we create, instead, a kind of antagonism—One very popular Social Leader (woman) made a remark about Ginling in her speech saying that, “We do not want our girls to be developed in such a narrow and conventional way as Ginling is doing.”

\(^{121}\) Ibid.

\(^{122}\) Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 17 September 1933, Box 3, 3.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Zee suggested that Wu Yifang should be the “chief magician to wave her magic wand” in generating support for Ginling in China and helping the public understand its purpose.\footnote{Mrs. New to Miss Griest, 31 December 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2790, YDS.}

Thurston also opposed centralization and concentration of the colleges in general. In response to a 1931 education commission’s recommendation for central planning among Christian higher educational institutions in China, Thurston argued for the importance of personal and institutional values and compared a centralized authority to the papacy: “I do not think the world can be saved by organization. Foolish saints did more than the Papacy to keep the life of the Church healthy and to make the Church an influence in the life of Europe.”\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 9 March 1934, Box 3, 3.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

Wu Yifang seems to have been more receptive to the idea of closer cooperation, but she also wanted to ensure that Ginling would retain its autonomy. In response to a proposed East China Federated University,\footnote{Part of an ambitious proposal to correlate the colleges, this “centralized-federated” university was to have a main center in Shanghai and a secondary one in Nanjing. The plan encountered strong opposition from the institutions in East China. Fenn, Christian Higher Education in Changing China, 178-179.} Wu suggested that Ginling would be willing to move to a new site either as a four-year or a two-year college—but only if the other institutions on the campus did not admit women.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Dr. Chester, 24 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.} Little progress was made on this and other plans for correlation.
Wu agreed with Thurston that cooperation with the University of Nanking could only be on an equal basis. Without a mutual exchange, Wu noted, Ginling might become either a junior college in standards or the women's department of the University. Wu also used this issue to pressure the Board for more funding, noting that higher salaries were necessary to retain the strong faculty to ensure mutual exchange.127

While noting that some of the University faculty were not very interested in cooperating—except to get more students and prevent their smaller classes from being closed out—one Ginling faculty member suggested that the poor spirit of cooperation between the two institutions was partly attributable to Ginlingers' independence. She pointed out that Minnie Vautrin and Liu Enlan did not want to change Ginling's schedule to fit in with the University's. Since the men had to take military training, it was unlikely University students would elect Ginling classes.128

Although there was increased cooperation between the two institutions in courses by the early 1930s, it seems to have been pushed by financial concerns and the need to make sure that Ginling students got essential advanced coursework.129 Cooperation with the University had mixed results—in 1937, Wu Yifang observed that while it was helpful in academic work, there did not seem to be any financial savings.130 Tensions between

127 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 18 February 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

128 Cora Reeves to Rebecca [Griest], 24 October and 13 December 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2807, YDS.

129 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 13 February 1930, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 18 February 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

130 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, January 1937, [First Page Missing], UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2910, YDS.
the University of Nanking and Ginling eased somewhat by the mid-1930s, but the issue of cooperation and amalgamation was to reemerge in the 1940s, rekindling the tense relationship.

**Moderating Student Activism**

Ginling students of the 1920s and 1930s harbored similar hopes for reform as their May Fourth predecessors and were just as concerned with national salvation. The girls participating in the 1933 National Athletic meet, for example, “almost unanimously expressed the opinion that the chief value of the meet was that it showed people that they must ‘make their bodies strong to save China.’”

That year, a Class Day song stated, “We are the students who wish to be Reformers all of Society.”

In the late 1920s and 1930s, as Chiang Kai-shek’s government struggled to complete the reunification of China under one central government and the nation faced increasing Japanese aggression, students often joined in protest activities. Ginling faculty and administration were well aware that students faced enormous outside pressure to join in parades and strikes. Yet Wu Yifang, despite her own involvement in the May Fourth Movement, was surprisingly unsupportive of students’ protest activities as an administrator, and tried to steer her students’ patriotic energies in other directions.

In May 1928, Chiang Kai-shek’s Northern Expedition force clashed briefly with Japanese troops in Jinan, setting off a wave of student protests. Although most of the

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131 Esther Tappert, Circular letter, 24 November 1933, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 3, 3.31, YDS.

132 “Class Day Program 1933,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 129, Folder 2643, YDS.
schools in Nanjing took the week off, Ginling continued with classes. According to Thurston, the male students at the University of Nanking were—as usual—aggravating the situation, demanding that Ginling students follow their lead. When the Ginling students did not comply, their loyalty as Chinese citizens was called into question. Thurston observed that despite the terrific strain, the students had “kept their own course,” expressing their patriotism and indignation in a “sane and constructive” way.²³³ Apparently, the faculty kept a close watch on student activities. In one incident in 1929, Wu Yifang and faculty member Liu Enlan went with students to a meeting—and brought them back to the campus when trouble seemed to be brewing.²³⁴

After the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in September 1931, outraged groups of students flocked to Nanjing to join their counterparts there in petitioning the government to resist Japanese aggression with military action.²³⁵ In the weeks following, Ginling women were also caught up in the wave of patriotic fervor. Ginling joined other Nanjing schools in an “Anti-Japanese National Salvation Association”; students participated in parades, attended lectures and learned first aid.²³⁶

By December, the government had to call in troops to help disperse the demonstrators, estimated at over thirty thousand.²³⁷ The protests had turned stridently

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²³³ Faculty and students’ constructive activities included writing statements describing the situation in Jinan to groups overseas, which Thurston sent on. Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 May 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

²³⁴ Minnie Vautrin to Friends, 4 January 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2873, YDS.

²³⁵ Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 327.

²³⁶ Eva Spicer to Friends, 18 July 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS; Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 4 December 1931, Box 5, 5.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

anti-government in addition to anti-Japanese. Although Nanjing students, in an effort to pressure the government, went on strike for weeks, Ginling women joined only briefly, putting their patriotic energies instead to tasks such as helping tabulate a flood survey.\footnote{Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 21 December 1931, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, 2.24, YDS; Eva Spicer to Friends, 18 July 1932.}

Ginling's location on the outskirts of town and the fact that staff managed to deflect requests from female students to stay on the campus made the college's non-involvement easier.\footnote{Eva Spicer to Friends, 18 July 1932.}

The faculty and administration were pleased with the students' stand. While praising their decision, Thurston admitted, however, that not all students had agreed with this course of action, and probably a "large minority" was in favor of demonstrations and petitions.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 22 January 1932, Box 6, Folder 6.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

On a couple of occasions, President Wu and the college policy came under attack on the college bulletin board.\footnote{"Extracts from Letters from Miss Jane Thomas (Now Mrs. Gordon Bowles) to Her Mother and Father, Mr. and Mrs. W.K. Thomas," 16 December 1931, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2711, YDS.}

Wu Yifang herself suggested that Ginling students had shown they knew when to stop. She opposed the protestors' tactics, since they were antagonistic to the government. Students, she argued, should not demand military action when the government had turned to the League of Nations for help.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 4 December 1931. Wu was part of the educational group who met with the League Commission in Nanjing. Spicer had the impression "she did not think the interview a very fruitful one." Eva Spicer to Friends, 18 July 1932; Wu later recalled that she had harbored false hopes that the
Writing to Ginling's New York office about the situation on campus, Wu Yifang explained that at general assemblies, the faculty stand was to "state frankly our opinion but never to urge the students to adopt our suggestions." Students were divided on whether they should join demonstrations.

However, whenever they decided to go, they took it seriously, and personally I expressed my hope that they would put meaning into whatever they did. I told them very frankly that the thing I dreaded the most through such activities was they follow the form without giving their whole heart to it. For the building up of Christian character and the training of honest citizenship, I felt strongly we should guard against becoming hypocrites, and wherever we could we put in some constructive work.

For example, in the inspection of Japanese goods, they decided to appeal to merchants to promote Chinese-made goods instead of conducting searches for Japanese-made items.\textsuperscript{143}

Despite Wu's suggestion that she and the faculty did not try to push the students in any direction, it is clear they did their best to exert influence. British faculty member Eva Spicer observed that Wu was working to help students think through their actions and not do anything unless they saw meaning in it.\textsuperscript{144} Wu noted the difficulty in trying to channel the students' patriotism:

At the beginning, we were anxious to do things for immediate result; gradually as we were made to realize the hard fact that this occupation could not be settled soon, we have been turning our attention to some of the fundamental things which we Chinese should endeavor to do for the upbuilding of a strong country within...We take up problems of things we could actually start here in the college among students in the practice of our high ideals of loyalty, cooperation, self-sacrifice, etc. These are intangible and much harder to do than to join a demonstration parade so we cannot hope to see favorable results soon...I have found out that as soon as they went into

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\textsuperscript{143} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 4 December 1931.

\textsuperscript{144} Eva Spicer to Friends, 18 July 1932.
the thing seriously and put in some honest thinking, they learned from the experience and were able to see the values of more permanent nature.\textsuperscript{145}

The foreign staff members were unanimous in their praise of Wu's handling of this and similar situations. Thurston credited Wu's "thoroughly Christian lead" for turning the student strikes and demonstrations to quiet study, first aid classes and helping in the flood survey.\textsuperscript{146} Wu Yifang's secretary, Jane Thomas, described Wu guiding the students in her "quiet, tactful, inspiring Christian way." According to Thomas, Wu was counseling not only Ginling students, but also the Chinese and foreign faculty, visitors and other heads of educational institutions in Nanjing. The stress had taken its toll, however. Wu, Thomas wrote in December, was terribly worried and "looks like a ghost."\textsuperscript{147}

Recalling the situation at Ginling in the early 1930s, former faculty member Abigail Hofsommer explained that Wu had worked to make students understand that "a government must have loyal support even when it does not do everything just as exactly as one would like." Wu also helped convince the students their education would be of ultimate value to them in their desire to serve their country.\textsuperscript{148}

When the fighting with Japan spread briefly to Shanghai in January 1932, the college administration postponed the opening of the winter term, then decided to begin

\textsuperscript{145} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 4 December 1931.

\textsuperscript{146} Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, "Nanking Station Report, 1931-1932," page 23, Ginling College Records, Folder 4, MHC.

\textsuperscript{147} "Extracts from Letters from Miss Jane Thomas (Now Mrs. Gordon Bowles) to Her Mother and Father, Mr. and Mrs. W.K. Thomas," 16 December 1931.

\textsuperscript{148} "Abigail Hofsommer's Answers to Questions, Ginling College, 1931-1936," 1 October 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 137, Folder 2755, YDS.
courses, asking parents to accept responsibility for sending their daughters to Nanjing. Wu wrote,

For the girls on campus we also explained our position, that is, while the faculty will try to take care of them in case of emergency, we can not guarantee security and they should make up their own minds. But I uncousciously [sic] hinted that for the sake of Ginling and as citizens, for our own country we better remain and carry some work.\textsuperscript{149}

Alumna Huang Xuhan remembered an incident from 1932 that illustrates how Wu guided the students. One morning, there was a rumor that Japanese troops had landed in Shanghai and had entered Wuchang and Nanjing. One parent even sent a telegram telling his daughter to come home. Wu told the students they could go home, but their absences would be considered unexcused. After determining that the rumors had no basis in fact, Wu chastised students at an assembly:

Recall for a minute your recent trip to check for Japanese goods on the street and your participation in anti-Japanese parades, shouting “Down with Japanese Imperialism.” Now, however, when you haven’t seen even a trace of the enemy, you’re stricken with panic and want to run off home. Could it be that your patriotic behavior is limited to shouting a few slogans on the street? Are you forgetting the nation as you think about saving your own skins?...How can you not feel ashamed? Patriotism is not just talk—it has to be translated into action.

Hearing these words, the students, suitably shamed, hung their heads. That night, Huang remembered that there was an especially large number of students at the library and it was quieter than usual.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{149} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 19 February 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2901, YDS.

\textsuperscript{150} Huang Xuhan, “Wo Suojingzhongde lauxiaozhang Wu Yifang.” (My revered college president, Wu Yifang) Zhongguo flm, 15 November 1983, in MQYF, 08-1, 57, JPA. A similar incident—or perhaps Huang’s memory is faulty, and this is the same one—was described in 1931. When rumors were flying that Japan had captured Shanghai and would soon be in Nanjing, Wu called a general assembly, reporting
Wu apparently did not forbid students from joining in protest activities, but rather relied on her powers of persuasion. A former student leader recalled:

Whenever we brought a problem to her for advice, Dr. Wu never told us what to do or not to do. She would always help us see the problem from different angles and explore all the possible solutions, and then she would leave us free to make our own decision.\textsuperscript{151}

Further Japanese aggression in north China occasioned mass anti-Japanese student demonstrations in China again in December 1935. Ginling students did not participate—deciding, Thurston declared, that “to go on with the regular work was as patriotic to parade, and agitate against a Government whose difficulties were increased by such signs of distrust on the part of the students.”\textsuperscript{152} The faculty debated if Ginling, like the University of Nanking, should set examinations ahead and close early. The Ministry of Education indicated that schools should send students home unless their administrative authorities were willing to assume responsibility for students’ actions. Wu Yifang decided that Ginling students could be counted on not to demonstrate, and the college remained open.\textsuperscript{153}

Describing the student unrest, Wu Yifang noted, “When a large number of young people is involved there is always the possibility of some radical leaders swinging them too far.” That had been the case with Shanghai students who came to the capital to

\textsuperscript{151} Dzo Ging-ru, “As President – The Thirties.”

\textsuperscript{152} Matilda Thurston, “Ginling College 1935-1936,” 16 July 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS; Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 27 December 1935, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 3, 3.47, YDS.

\textsuperscript{153} Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 14 January 1936, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 3, 3.48, YDS.
present petitions to the government. Wu praised the response of Ginling students—
despite their concern over the national situation,

…the officers of the Student Association are very sensible and responsible,
so they decided whatever they do to express their patriotic sentiment they
should not interrupt the regular college work. At the same time we have tried
to show the students how to give actual help to others who are in great need.

Students were, for example, helping raise money for flood relief.\textsuperscript{154}

Although Wu Yifang and Matilda Thurston both opposed student radicalism,
Thurston seems to have disapproved more strenuously.\textsuperscript{155} Thurston thought poorly of the
manifestations of the Chinese nationalist movement in general and student protests in
particular. As she commented on the Manchurian situation, “The whole student agitation
seems to me to work for emotional attitudes rather than calm thought. Emotion on the
right lines is dynamic; on the wrong lines it is destructive.”\textsuperscript{156} Students, she suggested,
were “puppets of politicians.”\textsuperscript{157}

Wu Yifang—and many of her counterparts among Chinese Christian women—
promoted gradual reform and social service.\textsuperscript{158} In general, Wu and the Ginling faculty

\textsuperscript{154} Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 28 December 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906,
YDS.

\textsuperscript{155} One former student would argue differently. She recalled that the year after the Mukden Incident, the
student body was petitioning for a day off to participate in a demonstration and parade, but Dr. Wu turned
them down until Thurston intervened. The student claimed she overheard Thurston tell Wu, “This is your
country.” “Except from Alice Wei’s letter to Mrs. New,” 4 January 1974, China Records Project
Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Emily Case Mills Papers, RG 8, Box 267, Folder 16, YDS.
Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{156} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 11 November 1931, Box 2, 2.32, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers,
UTS.

\textsuperscript{157} Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Nanking Station Report, 1931-1932,” page 2.

\textsuperscript{158} For a discussion of how Chinese Christian women approached social change, see Kwok Pui-lan,
\textit{Chinese Women and Christianity}, 103.
were largely successful in moderating student responses to China's national predicament in the late 1920s and 1930s, even though their suggestions stood in sharp contrast to the sweeping and immediate social change supported by radical groups. Although there was a general trend toward the left among Chinese intellectuals and students from the 1920s onward, Ginling was little affected until the postwar period.

The Christian colleges were often involved with local and national governments or private groups in social service and reconstruction projects, and college administrators tried to channel the patriotic sentiment of students into this work. At Ginling, Thurston noted, all forms of social service were praised and included in the schedule, and the "college work itself was felt to be a big part of the reconstruction program." Partly as a result of the emphasis on social service, Ginling expanded such programs in the 1930s and students showed an increased interest in the work. In fall 1934, for example, Ginling's neighborhood social service work was enlarged when a new community center was opened with money raised by Ginling students. YWCA activities included a day school, a Sunday School, a bathhouse, a clinic, a mission in

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160 Matilda Thurston, "Replies to Questions—up to July 2, 1936," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS.

161 Ruth Chester to Friends, 3 January 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2723, YDS.

162 "Letter from Miss Esther E. Tappert," Christmas 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2988, YDS.

137
Students also helped provide warm garments for soldiers and make first aid packages.\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{Wu Yifang’s Increasing Involvement Outside the College}

Soon after becoming president of Ginling, Wu Yifang began to find herself in demand for many activities at home and abroad. As early as 1929, she admitted that an upcoming conference left her with such a busy schedule that she had “little time left to real thinking and planning for Ginling herself.”\textsuperscript{165} This problem was to worsen as Wu’s outside activities multiplied throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. Yet largely because of this outside activity, Wu began building a solid reputation at home and abroad. By the early 1940s, she was so well known among certain groups in America that she was sometimes referred to as the second most important woman in China, behind Soong Mei-ling (Madame Chiang Kai-shek).\textsuperscript{166}

Wu Yifang often represented China or Chinese women overseas at international conferences. In fall 1929, she went to Japan as a delegate to a conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, a YMCA-sponsored forum promoting dialogue among Pacific Rim nations. In 1933, when she received an invitation to represent China at the International

\textsuperscript{163} Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 28 October 1934, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 3, 3.38, YDS.

\textsuperscript{164} Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 18 March 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

\textsuperscript{165} Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 20 September 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2898, YDS.

\textsuperscript{166} See, for example, Florence Kirk to Mr. Evans, 1 July 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2763, YDS and Mrs. Macmillan to Dean Alice Lloyd, 3 February 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2783, YDS.
Women's Congress in Chicago, Wu wrote with characteristic humility, "Although I myself was not prepared to give any good presentation, it seemed such a special privilege for a Chinese woman to be particularly invited from China."\(^{167}\) Thurston agreed that despite the extra work for the college, it was an honor for Wu, and "we were ready to make sacrifice in order that Chinese women might be so splendidly represented at this gathering in Chicago."\(^{168}\)

While in America, Wu spoke at the evening general session on the same program as two internationally famous women, Dame Rachel Crowdy and Jane Addams. That summer, she attended another Institute of Pacific Relations conference in Banff, Canada.\(^{169}\) After speaking at a succession of Canadian women's clubs, Wu returned to the U.S. to join an interdenominational missionary campaign. She visited thirty-three cities and spoke over two hundred times; in addition, she found time to meet with church groups and Smith College clubs.\(^{170}\)

Wu Yifang also became involved in many Christian organizations in China. In education, in 1934 alone, her positions included president of the East China Christian Educational Association, the chairman of the executive committee of the China Christian Educational Association, and board member of various East China middle schools.\(^{171}\) She was also involved in China's National Christian Council (NCC). Boasting many

\(^{167}\) Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 13 June 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

\(^{168}\) Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 16 July 1933, Box 3, 3.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{169}\) Wu Yifang to Ginling Sisters, 22 August 1933, Box 9, 9.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^{170}\) "Ginling College Report for 1933-1934," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2963, YDS.

\(^{171}\) "From the Board of Founders of Ginling College to All Former Members of the Staff of the College," n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 137, Folder 2752, YDS.
capable missionaries and Chinese Christians in its ranks, it served as a coordinating body for various Protestant churches, helping give direction to the Protestant movement in China. Although many of China’s Christian organizations were dominated by foreigners, from the NCC’s establishment, Chinese constituted the majority.172

In 1928, Wu Yifang accepted a member’s invitation to attend an NCC meeting, hoping to learn more about the Christian movement in China.173 That year, Thurston recalled, Wu also made a big impression at the NCC when she interpreted an address.174 By 1929, Wu was a vice-chairman of this organization.175 In May 1935, she was elected to her first term as chairman.176 Although Wu suggested that the office was more honorary than substantive,177 Matilda Thurston was enthusiastic that Wu had become the first woman to chair a National Christian Council. “When China changes,” Thurston observed, “she moves fast.”178

In fact, Wu may have been chosen for the position partly because she was a Chinese woman. From its inception, the NCC had a Chinese woman on the staff, and

172 Latourette, *History of Christian Missions in China*, 796-798. According to Latourette, the NCC came under fire for its “alleged espousal of modernism” and its attention to social service.” Many conservatives were distrustful of this organization since its action was “usually representative of moderately radical Chinese Christian opinion.” Latourette’s discussion ends in 1926.

173 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 18 October 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2897, YDS.

174 Matilda Thurston, “Edited Letters,” 5 November 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2860, YDS.

175 “Ginling College,” October 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2981, YDS.

176 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 2 August 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.

177 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 8 August 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.

178 Matilda Thurston to Mrs. Macmillan, 8 May 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS.

140
Chinese women were active on its standing committees as early as 1925. At the tenth meeting of the NCC in spring 1935, only eight out of 112 delegates were female. This was a record low, and the Council resolved to enlarge the number.

If the hope was to make a good impression, at least one visiting Japanese Christian was swayed. When Miss Kawai, the former YWCA national secretary, joined several Japanese Christians on a visit to China in 1937, one of her reasons for coming was to meet with Wu Yifang, chairman of the Chinese NCC. When Wu was re-elected NCC chairman in Shanghai in 1937, Kawai was suitably impressed with the “sight when bishops and leaders from all over China rose to pay their respects to Dr. Wu.”

In April 1936, Wu agreed to attend a meeting of the International Missionary Council in London the next month. Prominent Christian John Mott, the chairman of the Council, requested her presence after another Chinese Christian was unable to attend. Since the Council was planning a meeting in China, Chinese representation was essential. Mott also had another reason for inviting Wu: “Moreover, we wish to integrate more thoroughly the women of the world with this coming gathering and the presence and collaboration of Dr. Wu would help greatly to this end.”

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181 “Japan in China—The Right Way—The Wrong Way/Letters from Catherine Sutherland of Ginling College, Nanking, China,” 16 May 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2833, YDS.

182 Matilda Calder Thurston to Helen Calder, April 1936, Box 3, 3.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Florence Tyler to Miss Hodge, 17 April 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2789, YDS.

183 John R. Mott to Miss Tyler, 20 April 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2789, YDS.
In London, Wu helped make preliminary plans for a world conference in Hangzhou, China in 1938. Wu and the other Chinese delegate, Chester C.S. Miao (Miao Qiusheng), nixed the idea of Kowloon as the venue, since that would give the impression the meeting was being held under British protection.\(^\text{184}\)

While in Europe, Wu visited universities in Britain and attended meetings of various Christian organizations. After one conference, she noted approvingly that the group was considering issues of church and state, church and community, the Christian attitude toward war and peace, education as a tool of the government, etc. “Christians need to give very real study to crystallize our thinking and to meet the challenging conditions of the world today,” Wu commented.\(^\text{185}\)

Wu also visited a “highly regimented” Berlin\(^\text{186}\) during the Olympic Games, meeting with the group of official observers from China, several of whom were associated with Ginling’s department of physical education. On her return to the U.S.—she had made the trip to Europe via America—she became the first woman to speak at the Naval War College. She also represented Ginling at the Harvard Tercentary.\(^\text{187}\)

Wu’s frequent absences were problematic for the staff left behind. Although the experienced Thurston was sometimes left in charge of the administrative committee,\(^\text{188}\) it

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\(^{184}\) Wu Yifang, “Report of President on Trip May-November 1936,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2909, YDS; “Report of Dr. Wu’s European Trip – 1936,” 5 October 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2909, YDS. Due to the Sino-Japanese conflict, this event was held in India.


\(^{186}\) Wu Yifang, Circular letter, 17 October 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2909, YDS.

\(^{187}\) Wu Yifang to Friends, n.d. [Fall 1936 handwritten on top], UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2908, YDS.

\(^{188}\) Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 20 December 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2846, YDS.
remained difficult to get anything done without the president on campus. Faculty member Esther Tappert commented that things settled down immediately after Wu returned from a trip, since she was able to make authoritative decisions: “There isn’t a long committee action with no one daring to cast a deciding vote.”^189^  

Despite some early misgivings about Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership,^190^ Wu Yifang later strongly supported Chiang and became good friends with his wife, Soong Mei-ling. From the early 1930s, Wu began receiving invitations for social events at the Chiang residence.^191^ At a 1931 dinner at the Chiang’s in honor of a Briton from the League of Nations, for example, Thurston sat at Chiang Kai-shek’s right and Wu at his left. Wu and Thurston were even sent home in the presidential car.^192^ At an important educational conference to discuss government policy with students and educators in 1936, Wu, representing Ginling, sat at the high table next to Chiang.^193^ In June 1934, Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling accepted an invitation from Wu to attend a baccalaureate service at Ginling; Chiang gave a short talk.  

In December 1936, warlord Zhang Xueliang kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in an effort to force the generalissimo to form a united front with the Chinese Communists.
against the Japanese. Hearing the news, Wu Yifang went immediately to see Soong Mei-ling. The gay programs planned for the holidays were canceled and the faculty advised to have “another type of Christmas.” When Chiang was released, Wu personally informed the faculty and the students.\(^{194}\) According to one faculty member, Wu Yifang took Chiang’s capture “so personally that it was almost impossible for her to carry on other work.”\(^{195}\)

Wu nevertheless indicated that she tried hard not to let people in China know that Soong Mei-ling was “quite intimate” as a friend, since educational institutions should be independent—and since she did not want people approaching her asking for favors of Soong. This did not stop her from mentioning it in the U.S.,\(^{196}\) where their cordial relationship was well known. When the Associated Boards wanted to invite Soong Mei-ling to speak, for example, they contacted Wu Yifang as an intermediary.\(^{197}\) Organizations occasionally sounded out Wu on Soong’s opinion.\(^{198}\)

Through Soong Mei-ling, Wu also became involved in organizations promoting Chinese women. In 1936, Soong, chairman of the Committee on Women’s Work of the New Life Movement, appointed Wu Yifang vice-chairman.\(^{199}\)

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\(^{194}\) Cora Reeves to Rebecca [Griest], 26 December 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2807, YDS.

\(^{195}\) Mereb Mossman to Rebecca Griest, 8 August 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2786, YDS.

\(^{196}\) Wu Yifang to Rebecca [Griest], 14 October 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2909, YDS.

\(^{197}\) B. Garside (?) to Miss Wu, 25 February 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2910, YDS.

\(^{198}\) See, for example, Wynn Fairfield to Wu Yifang, 16 April 1941 and 29 May 1941, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA; F. Dickinson to Dr. Wu, 29 October 1938, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.
Through her various activities, in the period of a few short years, Wu became well known and highly respected in groups in China and the U.S. One important reason is that she made a very favorable impression on nearly everyone she met, partly because of her extraordinary speaking gifts. Writer Bing Xin, for example, recalled how impressed she was with a speech by Wu Yifang at North China Union Women’s College in 1919. Frederica Mead called a speech that Wu gave “masterly.” While Matilda Thurston struggled even with written speeches, Wu was by all accounts an excellent extemporaneous speaker.

**Facing Financial Crises**

Although the budget deficit that Matilda Thurston had faced for five years was temporarily eliminated before Wu Yifang came into office, the college soon faced further financial difficulties. As early as 1929, Wu was warning that in the event of a further cut in funding, Ginling might drop to junior college level. Ginling, Wu

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199 Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 14 March 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2907, YDS.

200 Bing Xin, “Yidaide chonggao nuxing—jinian Wu Yifang xiansheng,” (A great woman of her generation—in commemoration of Wu Yifang) in *Wu Yifang jinian ji*, 140.

201 Mrs. Walter G. Hiltner [Frederica Mead] to unknown recipient, 19 October 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2781, YDS.

202 For example, she once gave an excellent baccalaureate address at the practice school when the invited speaker failed to come. Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 28 October 1937, Box 9, 9.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

203 Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 21 July 1928, Box 6, Folder 6.3, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

204 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 13 March 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2898, YDS.

205 Wu Yifang to Miss Sandberg, 28 November 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2898, YDS. This observation was made on several occasions. According to a plea to former faculty, since Ginling had never expanded far beyond the necessary courses for a B.A. degree, cutting departments would
emphasized, had a “significant place in the education of women.” To maintain standards and attract students with a strong curriculum, an increase in annual income was essential.206

Instead, the college income continued to decline. With the Depression in the U.S. in the 1930s, some of the cooperating Boards at Ginling were forced to make cuts in their annual appropriations. Describing financial cutting as “the most painful job,” 207 in 1934 Wu oversaw a budget reduction for administration, operations, library and departmental equipment. Cuts could not come out of budget for instruction, she explained, since standards had to be maintained to keep students—and salaries were already lower than other Christian institutions.208

In the early 1930s, the finance committee of the GCC asked field authorities to consider hiring more Chinese faculty, since Western faculty were more expensive when the travel and furlough expenses were considered.209 Balking at this suggestion on principle—she wanted to be able to hire the best people, regardless of race—Wu also pointed out that the low salaries were the reason that Ginling had not been able to build

jeopardize its senior college rank in both China and America. “From the Board of Founders of Ginling College to All Former Members of the Staff of the College.”

206 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 21 March 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2898, YDS.

207 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 18 February 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2904, YDS.

208 Wu Yifang to Members of the Ginling College Committee, 22 March 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2904, YDS.

209 “Minutes of the Joint Committee Executive and Finance Committees, Ginling College Committee,” 5 June 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2595, YDS.
up a strong Chinese staff. Furthermore, in contrast to government jobs and most mission colleges, Ginling paid women less than men.\textsuperscript{210}

Salary differentials also caused a problem when categorizing Chinese-American staff members. Since salaries and perks were different for Chinese and foreign faculty, when considering Ettie Chin—a Chinese-American woman who had never been to China—for a position, Wu wondered what to do, since Chin’s home was in America, but she wanted to be fair to the other Chinese.\textsuperscript{211} Wu suggested Chinese with American citizenship should be considered “half-way between the Chinese faculty and the missionary staff.”\textsuperscript{212}

Wu’s difficulties hiring and retaining staff began as early as 1929.\textsuperscript{213} The problem continually worsened into the early 1930s. In 1931, Esther Tappert noted that in August, several courses still lacked instructors. Even taking into account that government salaries were often months in arrears, Tappert observed, Ginling salaries did not match up.\textsuperscript{214} Thurston found it “something of a comfort” that Wu had as much trouble as she had in finding and keeping Chinese staff members.\textsuperscript{215}

\textsuperscript{210} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 24 July 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2904, YDS. According to Liu Enlan, salaries were not the only sticking point for Chinese women faculty. Liu complained that women faculty in mission colleges had more work to do than men faculty in government or mission colleges. Expected to oversee extra-curricular activities, women instructors, Liu complained, were “on duty from morning to night” and had to “look after the students as mothers care for their children.” See “Liu En-lan Autobiography.”

\textsuperscript{211} Wu Yifang to Miss Priest, 5 June 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

\textsuperscript{212} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

\textsuperscript{213} Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 6 June 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2898, YDS.

\textsuperscript{214} Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 24 August 1931, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Folder 2.22, YDS.
Thurston, who had originally opposed having men on Ginling’s faculty, conceded that those hired in 1927 seemed to be fitting in and loyal to Ginling ideals.\textsuperscript{216} That apparently did not stop her from meddling with Western appointments; in 1931, Tappert wrote that Thurston, afraid of the “evil influence” of a young foreign man on the faculty, had made sure one was not considered.\textsuperscript{217}

While exhorting the Christian spirit of service among alumnae and students,\textsuperscript{218} Wu sharply disagreed with Thurston’s belief that Christian institutions should depend on it to keep salaries low. Members of the faculty, she argued, were not at Ginling for what they could get, but because “they believe in the institution and are interested in the cause of Christian education.” To a certain extent, Wu added, even the Chinese members of the staff had a “somewhat missionary spirit.”\textsuperscript{219}

The financial difficulties became so serious that one member of the New York Board warned in 1935 that Wu’s burden had brought her “near the breaking point.”\textsuperscript{220} By 1936, fluctuations in currency values and a drop in contributions had led to a decrease in

\textsuperscript{215} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 17 September 1933, Box 3, 3.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{216} Matilda Thurston to Isabel Thurston, 8 November 1927, Box 4, 4.14, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{217} Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 24 August 1931.

\textsuperscript{218} See, for example, “A Letter from President Yi-fang Wu, Ginling College,” July 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2971, YDS.

\textsuperscript{219} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 30 November 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2905, YDS.

\textsuperscript{220} Miss Hodge to Mrs. MacMillan, 30 September 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 146, Folder 2885, YDS.
the value of American gifts of almost 60 percent. Wu may even have considered leaving
the college because of the financial situation.\textsuperscript{221}

As the college finances wavered, Wu turned towards emphasizing specific majors.
As early as 1932, she initiated a curriculum study to “consider the purposes of Ginling
College and how to meet the needs of Chinese women of the present day.”\textsuperscript{222} In 1935,
Wu suggested that if further cuts were necessary, time was needed for a study of the
program to determine the special fields of study where the alumnae were most needed
and where Ginling could “give the most in the training of Christian women.”\textsuperscript{223}

Few decisions on specialization were made before the beginning of the Sino-
Japanese War, although Wu did recommend in 1935 that Ginling should be training rural
and social service workers to meet the increased demand. Ginling’s strongest asset, she
argued, lay in its

...cultivation of the real spirit of service among the students. Upon this
foundation if we could only have academic facilities to equip the students
with the necessary technique Ginling would be able to send out women well
qualified for the work both in ability and in spirit.

Ginling alumnae, Wu added, felt that the “strong asset of Ginling is the college life and a
spirit of service, yet we fail in furnishing a strong academic program.”\textsuperscript{224} In another

\textsuperscript{221} Eva MacMillan in the New York office, for example, was under the impression that Ginling had almost
lost its president and the college’s senior college standing because of a lack of financial support. Eva
Macmillan, “Introduction to the Motion Picture ‘It Happened at Ginling’ as shows at the Lydia
Mendelssohn Theatre, December 2, 1936,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2977, YDS.

\textsuperscript{222} Wu Yifang to Sisters, December 1932, Box 9, 9.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{223} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 22 March 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.

\textsuperscript{224} “Report of President to Ginling Board of Directors,” 2 March 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box
155, Folder 2964, YDS.
report, Wu explained that the only expansion was in Music, a “natural line for emphasis” in a women’s college and a department in which students were increasing every year.225

At least one faculty member did not think Ginling was doing enough to train rural workers. Ginling, Cora Reeves suggested, was

...tagging along far behind what we should have been doing if we are to be even in let alone leading in a great vigorous part of China’s New Life Movement, i.e. Rural Reconstruction. We are not so far behind in music. The little ladies like to be genteel.226

Despite its financial difficulties, Ginling continued to grow into the 1930s. By 1935, the dormitories were crowded and students had to be turned away or allowed to live at home.227 Sinicization also continued apace. By 1931, Chinese faculty composed 70% of the total.228 In 1936, half the college work was done in Chinese.229

By 1936, financial supporters abroad had expanded to seven mission groups plus Smith College. Income from Chinese sources carried nearly half the budget.230 One bright spot in the financial situation was that after registration, Ginling was eligible for grants from the Chinese government. Although Thurston opposed government subsidies,

225 Wu Yifang, “To Members of the Ginling College Committee,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2593, YDS.

226 Cora Reeves to Rebecca [Griest], 24 October 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 1807, YDS. Emphasis in original.

227 Wu Yifang to Miss Bender, 5 October 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.


229 “A Letter from President Yi-fang Wu, Ginling College,” July 1936.

230 “Ginling College, 1936-1937 Budget,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2607, YDS. The following were listed as “Chinese sources”: student fees (37 percent), Chinese government grants (8 percent), gain in exchange rate (3 percent), rent (1 percent) and alumnae gift (1 percent). With the gain in exchange listed as a Chinese source, the college was able to claim that half the budget was raised in China. See, for example, Eva Macmillan, “Introduction to the Motion Picture ‘It Happened at Ginling’ as shows at the Lydia Mendelsohn Theatre, December 2, 1936.”
fearing political entanglements and attempts at control,²³¹ Wu reported no government interference after receiving a grant in 1934-1935.²³²

Matilda Thurston: A View on China's Problems

Matilda Thurston was slow to realize the changes taking place in China, and her descriptions of the nationalist movement were often most unflattering:

Don't you see the sleepy child waking up a little out of touch and hitting out at everybody who tries to reason with him! It's not a bad figure at all for China. She is at times most unreasonable. She doesn't see the difficulties the other nations are facing because of her civil war.²³³

Thurston did not fully understand and had little patience for Chinese nationalism. Misjudging the depth of nationalist feeling in China, like many other foreigners, Thurston suggested that Russian Communism was behind the 1920s “propaganda”²³⁴ against imperialism and capitalism, Britain and the U.S., etc. In fact, Thurston was ill-disposed toward nationalism in general, once commenting, “I have never had any faith in Nationalism—Chinese or American. I consider it a modern form of idolatry, along with H.G. Wells. When it is built on hate and the spirit of retaliation it cannot issue in good.”²³⁵ At least part of her antipathy was centered on the fact that nationalist impulses

²³¹ Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 9 March 1934, Box 3, 3.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
²³² “Report of President to Ginling Board of Directors,” 2 March 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2964, YDS.
²³³ Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 31 January 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Emphasis in original.
²³⁴ Matilda Thurston to Will Calder, 15 May 1927, Box 4, 4.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
²³⁵ Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 20 August 1927, Box 2, Folder 2.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Emphasis in original.
fueled the movement to put mission schools under the control of the central government—the demand that administration immediately be in Chinese hands, she complained, was "beheading" Christian schools in a nation sorely needing education.\textsuperscript{236}

Despite these sentiments, Thurston believed herself sympathetic to Chinese hopes for a new national and international order.

I want China to be all that the most ideal Nationalist wants, free and equal in her relations to other nations. I want her poor people to be free of the curse of militarism and able to live on a higher level. I want education to be widespread, real education, not propaganda. I want China to share in all the best we have, and that means, of course, her inheritance in Jesus Christ. I am sure all these will come more quickly if she will put away hate and resentment and let the friendly Christian people of other countries work with her to attain her desired ends.\textsuperscript{237}

As seen from the above quote, Thurston also believed that China needed the help of the West to fashion a new state. This comment on the college helps explain her views: "Ginling was planned in the faith that China need lose nothing that was good in her own culture, although she may again be enriched by new ideas of truth and good, quickened into new life, as in the days of the Tang dynasty, by contact with other cultures."\textsuperscript{238} It therefore annoyed Thurston that Chinese did not realize they needed the West and were often unwilling to accept "help." The Chinese, she complained, "haven't yet grasped the inner meaning of our culture, and do not fully realize their need of us."\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{236} Matilda Thurston to Anna, 15 December 1927, Box 5, 5.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{237} Matilda Thurston to unknown recipient, 20 August 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2844, YDS.

\textsuperscript{238} Matilda Thurston in \textit{Ginling College Magazine}, 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 153, Folder 2955, YDS.

\textsuperscript{239} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 5 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
Thurston’s attitudes had changed greatly from 1900, when she expressed approval of Britain’s Opium War actions, but on some issues, she remained divided. At times she decried gunboats and foreign concessions and proclaimed that she was prepared to take the risk of living in China without extraterritoriality or military protection. At other times, she was less sure. Evacuating Nanjing in March 1927, Thurston spent a night on the U.S. flagship *Isabel*. She mused, “There are worse things than gunboats in a situation like this. And yet one wonders how much the gunboats are to blame for some of it.” She told her sister in 1928 that despite being a pacifist, she could “see the excuse” for gunboats and British troops in Shanghai and Japanese troops in Qingdao—although the Japanese forces in Jinan were a bit of a stretch.

Thurston had held anti-Japanese sentiments in the 1910s and clearly sympathized with China in the 1940s. In the years after her 1923 decision to become a pacifist, however, her views on the conflict between China and Japan were quite different. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Thurston saw little distinction between the actions of the Japanese militarists and China’s nationalists. Vacationing in Japan in 1927, Thurston wrote,

I must confess to finding rest in the sense of security which Japan gives after the chaos of China. Mrs. New [Zee] wrote back from Tokyo, ‘After all one wonders if there is not something good in an imperialistic government.’...I wonder if China will do as well in thirty years in bringing order and a fair degree of freedom from poverty...I don’t approve of militarism or imperialism, but the worst militarism I have seen was in Nanking on March 25, and the sins both of militarism and imperialism are staining the good

240 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 8 June 1927, Box 3, 3.27, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

241 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 26 March 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

242 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 May 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
name of China’s Nationalists quite as much as Japan’s ‘Imperialists.’ The only consistent critics of militarism should be out and out pacifists, and they have no right to condone China and blame Britain and Japan.\textsuperscript{243}

She suggested that Japan needed Manchuria more than China and could manage it better. “China,” Thurston observed, “is rather down-in-the-manger-ish about some of her territory to which her claim is ‘imperialistic’ as much as Japan’s hold on Korea.”\textsuperscript{244} After the Japanese occupied Manchuria, Thurston wrote that while Japan would suffer for its actions, China’s present predicament was “part of her punishment” for her wrong attitudes toward foreign nations, including Japan.\textsuperscript{245} She even suggested that it would have been better for China to have acceded to Japan’s “Twenty-one Demands” in 1915. Not seeming to understand that the concessions demanded by the Japanese were humiliating to China, she called the Twenty-one Demands “a piece of internationalism that might have been worth trying” and declared that she would like to see a “coming together on a basis of fair cooperation of leaders of the two countries.”\textsuperscript{246}

As a pacifist, Thurston was also disappointed in the response of Chinese Christians to the pull of nationalism. She was pained to find that they believed China had been “dealt with unjustly by Christian nations” and was thus “fully justified in retaliating.”\textsuperscript{247} In 1932, Thurston hoped that Ginling students would not answer Madame

\textsuperscript{243} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 20 August 1927, Box 2, Folder 2.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{244} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 23 June 1928, Box 3, Folder 3.28, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{245} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 20 November 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{246} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 23 September 1934, Box 3, 3.37, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{247} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 8 January 1927, Box 3, 3.26, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. 154
Sun Yat-sen’s (Soong Ching-ling) call for nurses in Shanghai’s war hospitals: “I have so little heart in any form of war activities, even medical, that I’m not keen about their being drawn to it...The whole thing makes me sick...I don’t want either side to win.”

Although Thurston believed that turning the other cheek was the “only way to finally disarm Japan,” she recognized her views would be difficult for Chinese to accept. “Being a pacifist doesn’t make you popular in China these days,” she conceded.

Thurston was chairman of the Nanjing branch of the interfaith peace organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, in 1934. Not surprising, the organization was comprised largely of foreigners.

The situation in China is one which calls for Christian thinking on the subject of war, but it is a situation in which foreigners seem powerless to do very much...the effort is being made in all sorts of ways to develop the military spirit. I am convinced that it is a mistake; that China might much better devote her limited resources to building up other things than armies and navies and fighting planes, and that it would be wiser tactics to send loads of grain into communist territory than to organize campaigns to exterminate communists. I believe that General Chiang is honestly trying to do reconstructive work in the territory which he has taken over from communist control, and I am also quite sure that the communist program does not build up anything.

When considering Thurston’s discussion of China’s predicament, it should be noted that she was also quick to criticize her own country and countrymen or other nations. She once described a Western female acquaintance as a “somewhat backward mind that can go only so far and no further, but apparently happy contented little person

248 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 1 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
249 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 6 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
250 Matilda Thurston, Personal report, 9 January 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS. Thurston later noted that a few members of the Chinese faculty belonged to the Fellowship of Reconciliation but were not very active. Matilda Thurston, “Replies to Questions—up to July 2, 1936.”
who can be useful at home.” She continued to write disparagingly of “provincial”—i.e., Midwestern—Americans, and complained about having to conform to “their” standards.\textsuperscript{251} Even the American minister to China, Nelson T. Johnson, did not escape her criticism: “If he’s the best we can do then I’m sorry for our own future in diplomacy.” Her dislike of Johnson stemmed at least partly from one of her common complaints—he seemed to have little respect for women.\textsuperscript{252}

Indeed, by the 1930s, Thurston had also become increasingly critical of male dominance. She was a very vocal critic of American evacuation policy, for instance, since the general procedure was for women, children and men not engaged in important work to be ordered out first. The U.S. government, Thurston argued, should “issue its advice in Twentieth Century language” and refer instead to “all women with children, and all men and women not engaged in important work.”

Our work is just as important as the work of a Standard Oil Man’s or the work of a man teacher or evangelist. And when it comes to a real crisis, as in 1917, women get through it quite as well as men and are just as useful. In war women took risks pretty well up to the battle line and I’m sure most missionary women left to their own decision would stay on the job. By doing so they help to stabilize the whole situation. People watch us to see what we do and when we run they run and the bottom drops out a little more than it would. Men are not a bit wiser than women when it comes to having an intuition as to what is the right thing to do.\textsuperscript{253}

\textsuperscript{251} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 August 1933, Box 3, 3.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{252} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 30 November 1930, Box 3, 3.31, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Thurston also on occasion questioned the judgment of American diplomats in China, arguing, for example, that missionaries had a better grasp of the Chinese situation than business or diplomatic groups and should be consulted more often. Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 2 February 1927, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2592, YDS.

\textsuperscript{253} Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 7 April 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Emphasis in original.
She also complained about discrimination against women in Christian organizations. Foreign women, Thurston argued, had never been fairly represented in Christian organizations in China, despite the fact they made up two-thirds of the missionary force.\(^{254}\) She later suggested that church history had shown that women often had the right ideas. If the men in power had heeded the reform advice of Catharine of Sienna, for example, the Reformation would have been unnecessary.\(^{255}\)

Such comments indicate that Thurston's attitude toward women's roles had changed over the years. In her younger years, and even as Ginling's president in the 1910s, she did not advocate that women go beyond the limited sphere of domestic or professional work acceptable for women in early twentieth-century America. Over the years, however, she had apparently come to believe that women were just as capable as men and could take their place beside men in practically any endeavor.

**Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang: Their Working Relationship**

After the arrival of the new president, Thurston remained at Ginling, helping with administrative work, until early 1929. She pondered retirement, writing her sister that she might move in with her instead of returning to China after furlough. She wanted to "get free" of schools and institutional life, and adjusting to her new relationship with the college would be "more repression" than would be good for her. Thurston quickly added, however, that she was needed for another term at Ginling, and observed, "When one has

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254 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 5 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Thurston pointed out that there were no foreign women on the executive committee of the NCC, although the group of thirty included ten foreign men and two Chinese women.

255 Matilda Thurston, Untitled document, 1935 stamped on top, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS.

157
lived over twenty-five years in a country it seems like home and the friends of a lifetime are apt to be there rather than in your native land.\textsuperscript{256}

Returning to the U.S. for a furlough, Thurston spent several months resting in California on doctor's orders. She wrote to Wu Yifang in May 1930, inquiring what she could do for the college and asking frankly if her return would make things difficult.\textsuperscript{257}

In her response, Wu left the decision to Thurston, but paved the way for her to return:

\begin{quote}
I feel the same as you do about your returning to Ginling. I know there will be adjustments that will have to be made by both of us, but when we have both faced that necessity frankly we certainly should be able to cooperate. Concerning the adjustment between ourselves I have no fear at all, but for the smooth running of the college we both need to think of the relationship of the faculty group as a whole. If we all keep this in mind and are ready to make sacrifices, there should be no trouble.\textsuperscript{258}
\end{quote}

If Wu Yifang had any reservations about working with Thurston, she kept them to herself. Wu told the New York office that she was happy to welcome Thurston back to Ginling and to learn from her experience.\textsuperscript{259}

At least on the surface, the two had a good working relationship. Huang Xuhan, who studied at Ginling from 1928-1932 and later served as alumnae secretary,
remembered the two working well together. Zee enthused that their post-1928 relationship "worked out beautifully."

In general, Thurston was full of praise for the college’s most famous daughter. She was, for example, a “most ideal representative of the product of Christian higher education in China.” Disagreements were apparently small; the only mention comes in personal letters to Thurston’s family and friends. Wu was a self-admitted procrastinator, and Thurston was annoyed, for example, when she left details to the last minute.

In one letter to her sister, however, Thurston made serious criticisms of Wu Yifang. Piqued that she was not asked to do more at the college, she criticized Wu and other young Chinese administrators as being more autocratic than their predecessors. According to Thurston, there was “far more democracy in administration” under her tenure. Wu insisted on doing everything and trusted other Chinese even less than Thurston had. She also suspected that Wu and other Chinese harbored an unconscious sense of their own superiority that was as strong as that of the Westerners. Although Wu had fewer faults than other returned students, her viewpoint was nonetheless that of a “Chinese aristocrat.” Thurston believed this was because Wu had only been a Christian

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260 Huang Xuhan, interview by author, Tape recording, Nanjing, China, 2 January 2001.


262 Matilda Thurston to Miss Tyler, 21 September 1933, Box 6, Folder 6.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

263 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 9 February 1929, Box 3, 3.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
for fourteen years, which was not long enough to “break down all the barriers which old
instincts or race & culture have built.”

In fact, Wu Yifang wielded more power than Thurston ever had. Chinese
government regulations gave power to the president that had originally rested with the
Board. The appointment of officers and instructors, for example, was now under the
purview of the president. For Wu’s part, she declared the responsibility “too heavy.”

Former faculty member Martha Hackett suggested another reason for Wu’s heavy
burdens; Wu took too much on herself because she had not learned to delegate work.
Regardless of the reason, faculty members agreed that Wu was indispensable. Mereb
Mossman once noted that Wu was the “absolutely essential force” in every aspect of the
college—she coordinated everything and handled matters with the government. Wu at
least gave the impression, however, of wanting consensus, and often asked for advice
from the college’s administrative organs in her letters, in contrast to Thurston.

Thurston believed she had made the right decision in remaining, and Wu Yifang’s
attitude toward her had not changed. Wu continued to ask Thurston to remain at
Ginling and would not admit to any difficulties in the relationship. She told the New
York office in 1933: “I was rather surprised at the question raised in connection with Mrs.

264 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 31 May 1932, Box 3, Folder 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers,
UTS.

265 Wu Yifang to Members of the Ginling College Committee, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124,
Folder 2593, YDS.

266 Martha Hackett to Rebecca Griest, 11 April 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 137, Folder 2753,
YDS.

267 Mereb Mossman to Miss Hodge, 9 September 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder
2785, YDS.

268 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 5 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

160
Thurston. There is a problem but I have not thought it serious at all." According to treasurer Elsie Priest, Wu was troubled that questions were being raised about the relationship between the two. Priest did not believe that there were any serious difficulties: "There are petty things, trying incidents, but probably nothing of any importance these days." The Board in New York seems to have had the most questions. The only specific problem Wu mentioned was that Thurston's students in the religion course had difficulty following her.

Faculty member Mereb Mossman praised both the women, noting that while the change had been a difficult one for Thurston, she had made a sincere effort to fit into the new scheme, and Wu had been "wonderful" in helping her do so. Ginlingers, Mossman added, felt Wu had been "almost a saint" in the way she worked with Thurston during the years following 1927.

Wu Yifang seems to have inspired a confidence that few people could match; the staff all turned to her and respected her judgment in a crisis. In 1929, for example, Eva Spicer, trusting Wu's judgment, ignored evacuation orders from the British consul. In 1932, when hostilities broke out in Shanghai and Wu was not on the campus, Spicer

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269 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 2 July 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

270 Elsie Priest to Miss Hodge, 4 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2804, YDS.

271 For example, the recipient of one of Wu's letters wrote the comment "Does not worry over our attitude about Mrs. Thurston" on it—likely a reference to Thurston's being acting treasurer at that time. Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 24 July 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2904, YDS.

272 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2903, YDS.

273 Mereb Mossman to Miss Hodge, 9 September 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2785, YDS.

274 Eva Spicer to Mr. Hawkins, 14 March 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2695, YDS.
commented “we felt rather lost, as we had come to depend on her very much,” and none of the Chinese staff could take over.\textsuperscript{275} Jane Thomas felt uneasy and thought everyone was worried that Wu had not returned.\textsuperscript{276} When Wu finally arrived, Spicer remarked “we were very glad indeed to see her, and now feel ready to face anything.”\textsuperscript{277}

On the latter occasion, Thurston was on campus as a member of the advisory committee, but clearly her counsel did not rank with Wu’s. Providing some insight as to why this was the case, Spicer noted that Thurston, “doesn’t believe in believing anything she hears which is bad, until it has been doubly or trebly confirmed.” To Thurston, Spicer added, believing nothing was a way to keep calm and stop the spread of rumors. Spicer doubted that her tactics succeeded, however, since she went too far and as a result, people disregarded her opinion. Thurston had actually caused trouble on the advisory committee because she refused to believe the news culled by a fellow member.\textsuperscript{278} Since Thurston always projected a calm demeanor, during a crisis in 1931, Jane Thomas was somewhat alarmed to discover that Thurston was taking the situation seriously.\textsuperscript{279}

At first, Thurston indicated she was happy with her new role at Ginling and liked her work running the foreign faculty residence and teaching.\textsuperscript{280} She declared herself glad

\textsuperscript{275} Eva Spicer, “Copy of Letter to her Mother,” 3 February 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS.

\textsuperscript{276} “Extracts from Letters from Miss Jane Thomas (Now Mrs. Gordon Bowles) to Her Mother and Father, Mr. and Mrs. W.K. Thomas,” 29 January 1931 to 2 February 1932.

\textsuperscript{277} Eva Spicer, “Copy of Letter to her Mother,” 3 February 1932.

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{279} “Extracts from Letters from Miss Jane Thomas (Now Mrs. Gordon Bowles) to Her Mother and Father, Mr. and Mrs. W.K. Thomas,” 29 January 1931 to 2 February 1932.

\textsuperscript{280} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 19 September 1930, Box 2, 2.31, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
to be free from administrative duties. With more free time, she could be involved in more off-campus events, such as the Nanjing Women's Club.281

As time went on, however, Thurston, as at Changsha decades earlier, began to feel that her talents were not being adequately used. By late 1931 Thurston no longer seemed satisfied with her main job of faculty housekeeper and missed having contact with students.282 In early 1932, Thurston told her sister that she was needed for a few years more, but she did not “get the satisfaction I might get out of my work.” Furthermore, she missed attending the intercollegiate and interdenominational conferences she used to attend by virtue of her office.283

She also began to feel she was “getting nothing worthwhile done.”284 Her job remained ill-defined, and she complained about not knowing what was expected of her.285 Despite Wu Yifang’s suggestion that she could learn from the first president, Thurston found she was rarely called upon to offer real assistance:

Since I came back in 1930 my work has been varied. Being Adviser seems to mean being ready to help when help is needed; very seldom does it mean giving advice, telling somebody what to do. It does mean that I have no regular schedule of duties and many days are filled with other things than those I plan to do, for I have to fit my plans into other people’s schedules.286

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281 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 4 October 1930, Box 2, 2.31, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. In this letter, Thurston writes that she had been elected chairman of the social service section of this organization, which was open to all English-speaking women in Nanjing.

282 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 5 December 1931, Box 2, 2.32, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

283 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 5 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

284 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 31 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

285 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 12 November 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

286 Matilda Thurston, Untitled document, 1935 stamped on top.
Thurston also complained about the Ginling group's lack of intellectuality: "I get terribly bored at times by the talk at our own table. I see why in the monasteries they had a rule of silence or listened to reading at the table. We have several people who rattle on in loud talk on trivial topics." Thurston was good friends with writer Pearl Buck and particularly liked their "very stimulating" intellectual exchange.

Thurston suggested that she had to stay at least until the buildings were finished, since Wu Yifang, like most women, was "not ready yet to handle that kind of work." In summer 1932, Thurston, as chairman of the building committee, and Wu signed a contract for the two buildings that would complete the academic quadrangle. There would be "no question" of her usefulness to the college for the next year, Thurston wrote, and the building would be a full-time job. Despite the fact that a month later, Thurston again wrote her sister that she was considering retiring early—musing that it might be a good idea to let a younger group "take up the burden and enter into the honors of leadership"—there is no indication that she seriously considered leaving Ginling.

At times Thurston revealed how dear Ginling was to her heart, indicating more clearly why she did not want to leave. Referring to a letter from a former student,

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287 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 14 January 1934, Box 3, 3.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

288 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 17 September 1933, Box 3, 3.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. At this time, Matilda Thurston and Pearl Buck were both (Northern) Presbyterian educational missionaries, although Buck later broke with the missionary group in a public, acrimonious split. Pearl Buck and her husband, John Lossing Buck, both taught at the University of Nanking. The two later divorced.

289 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 31 March 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

290 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 3 July 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

291 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 24 August 1932, Box 3, 3.34, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

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Thurston commented, "It is worth all I have given of myself to have a group of girls like this one scattered over China and passing on what they have received at Ginling." ²⁹²

In 1935, Ginling alumnae planned a surprise celebration of Thurston's sixtieth birthday in connection with Ginling's twentieth anniversary.²⁹³ Elsie Priest described Thurston as being "deeply touched" by the party for her birthday and the establishment of a scholarship in her name. Her sister was there to share her happiness, but Thurston was worried about her sister-in-law, who was very ill in a local hospital.²⁹⁴

In 1935, Thurston began making plans for a furlough, again proclaiming she did not know if she would return.²⁹⁵ She left with her sister in July 1936, joining a group traveling to Europe via Siberia. The sisters traveled on the continent in Europe and in Britain, meeting Wu Yifang in London in August. They left for the States at the end of October. Thurston called the trip "wonderful," observing that she had not had such "freedom and recreation" since Ginling began.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 25 November 1928, Box 3, 3.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

²⁹³ "First President of Ginling College Honored in Connection with Twentieth Anniversary," North China Daily News, 9 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2847, YDS.

²⁹⁴ Elsie Priest to Miss Hodge, 4 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2804, YDS. Isabel Thurston died shortly afterwards.

²⁹⁵ Matilda Calder Thurston to Helen Calder, 3 January 1935, Box 3, 3.38, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Elsie Priest to Miss Hodge, 4 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2804, YDS.

²⁹⁶ Matilda Thurston, Circular letter, 25 November 1936, Box 6, 6.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

165
Two Blows: A Family Tragedy and the National Crisis

In addition to the college's financial problems, Wu Yifang was greatly affected by two events in the 1930s: the loss of her sister and China's worsening political situation. Wu Yifang's sister Yiquan—her only surviving immediate family member—was nine years younger than Yifang. Yiquan was a Ginling graduate who had also studied abroad at the University of Michigan, although she did not receive a degree. Matilda Thurston described Yiquan as a quiet young woman who walled herself off from other people. Unlike her sister, Yiquan was not a Christian. The two sisters had often lived apart. Thurston suggested that Yiquan, who was not nearly as capable as her sister, had an inferiority complex since her older sister was so successful, but that Yifang felt she owed her sister something. According to Thurston, Yiquan did not approve of Yifang staying at Ginling, when she could have earned a much higher salary elsewhere; Yiquan herself had worked for several years in Manila, earning more money than her sister.

In August 1933, when Wu Yifang was in America, Wu Yiquan withdrew $1000 from her bank account and disappeared. Thurston was afraid that Yiquan would follow the example of her other family members and end her own life. Wu Yifang hesitated about whether to return home, finally deciding to do so. Back in China, Wu began an extensive search for her sister. On a faint clue, she spent several weeks in Manila, Java.

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297 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 1 January and 13 May 1934, Box 3, 3.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Matilda Thurston to Miss Tyler, 2 May 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2846, YDS.

298 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 11 January 1934, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2904, YDS. It is unclear how much Wu knew about her sister's disappearance before she returned home. The above letter contains an oblique reference that "if I had stayed I could not have stood the strain both physically and mentally" which most likely refers to the disappearance of her sister. Wu's biographer, however, states that Wu was not told about her sister until she returned. Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 77.

166
and other parts of Southeast Asia. Returning home, Wu continued the search, but she never found any trace of Yiquan.

The loss of her sister hit Wu Yifang very hard. She went into a temporary depression and even considered leaving the college. By March, however, she reported that she had "come out somewhat of my depression" and would "sum up my strength to carry on the college work." She later told the Board in New York that, worried her resignation would reflect poorly on the college when it faced "serious financial and other difficulties," she had decided to stay. Writing in November, Elsie Priest reported that Wu seemed to be doing better physically than in the spring. Priest believed that Wu had realized how the college needed her because of her position in official circles.

In addition to the loss of her sister, Wu Yifang was deeply affected by the Japanese aggression of the 1930s. When participants at an Institute of Pacific Relations conference indicated they thought Manchuria would be returned to China eventually—after the latter had a strong government—Wu commented, "How I wish for our own sake that our people would endeavor more sacrificially to establish and support a strong and

\[\text{299 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 May 1934, Box 3, 3.36, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}\]

\[\text{300 According to Wu's biographer, she asked the Soviet ambassador to investigate the possibility that Yiquan had gone to the Soviet Union, checked Buddhist nunneries, etc. Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 78-79.}\]

\[\text{301 Eva Spicer to Rebecca Griest, 27 January 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS; Matilda Thurston to Mrs. MacMillan, 30 November 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 131, Folder 2675, YDS; Deng Yuzhi, "Nanwangde suiyue," (Unforgettable years) in Jinling nuer, 31.}\]

\[\text{302 Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 22 March 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.}\]

\[\text{303 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Received 15 May 1935 stamped on top, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.}\]

\[\text{304 Elsie Priest to Miss Hodge, 4 November 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2804, YDS.}\]
unified government!"\textsuperscript{305} Thurston once suggested that Wu was under a lot of strain because, due to her experience in the Institute of Pacific Relations, she understood both the Japanese and the Chinese views of the Manchurian question.\textsuperscript{306} On this issue, Thurston may be mistaken, however, since Wu Yifang never wrote anything sympathetic to the Japanese view. She was nonetheless as likely to ascribe the situation to China's weakness as Japan's aggression.

Wu wrote in 1932 that while she had confidence in the future of Ginling, she did not see a way out of the national crisis if Japan "maintains her present psychology" and there was no "real penitent awakening" among Chinese.\textsuperscript{307} After Japan took over Manchuria and fighting raged in Shanghai, Wu admitted, "during certain intervals I was in utter despair and became much hardened."\textsuperscript{308} She told the New York office in 1932, "It is pretty hard to keep up one's spirit when one's nation is in such crisis."\textsuperscript{309} By the end of 1935, Wu wrote that she was so distressed over the national situation she was tired and depressed, negatively affecting her work for the college.\textsuperscript{310} Wu did suggest, however, that her Christian faith had helped her endure the strain.\textsuperscript{311}

\textsuperscript{305} Wu Yifang to Ginling Sisters, 22 August 1933, Box 9, 9.8, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{306} Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 29 September 1931, Box 2, Folder 2.32, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{307} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 19 February 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2901, YDS.

\textsuperscript{308} Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 8 April 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2901, YDS.

\textsuperscript{309} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 8 August 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2901, YDS.

\textsuperscript{310} Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 27 December 1935, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2906, YDS.

\textsuperscript{311} Rebecca Griest to Leila Roberts, 10 April 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 141, Folder 2812, YDS.
Despite Thurston’s hope that Wu Yifang, too, might become a pacifist, Wu became increasingly convinced that China had to provide a military response. In 1933, Wu wrote that as a Chinese, she wished the army would provide stubborn resistance, but was afraid that Japanese military supremacy would render the attempt fruitless.\textsuperscript{312} Recognizing that the KMT-Communist internal fighting benefited Japan, Wu commented, “Why...people just can not forget themselves in my country? This is the thing that hurts one most.”\textsuperscript{313} In 1936, former Ginling faculty member Harriet Cogswell Meyer was surprised when Wu Yifang told her that China must fight.\textsuperscript{314}

\textsuperscript{312} Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 18 February 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2902, YDS.

\textsuperscript{313} Wu Yifang to Miss Tyler, 9 June 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2907, YDS.

\textsuperscript{314} Harriet Cogswell Meyer to Kay, 5 January 1936, Harriet Cogswell Meyer Papers, Box 7, Folder 18, MHC.
CHAPTER 4
A REFUGEE COLLEGE: GINLING IN CHENGDU, 1937-1945

The Beginning of the Sino-Japanese War and the Fall of Nanjing

In July 1937, a skirmish between Chinese and Japanese soldiers at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing precipitated a national crisis. Two weeks after the incident, Wu Yifang wrote former faculty member Rebecca Griest that she was "really discouraged about the future," but still held out hopes for an "unexpected" turn for the better.¹ The Japanese, Wu explained a week later, were using the "old combination" of military force and intrigue, taking advantage of China's weak point—selfishness—and playing officials off against each other. China could either accept another puppet state in the north or begin a "life and death struggle through warfare." Despite the war sentiment and the preparations that had been made, Wu remained doubtful the Chinese had the military and economic means to win.²

Over the summer, the fighting escalated into full-scale warfare, the beginning of the eight-year Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). When the Ministry of Education instructed universities in Nanjing not to open, Ginling suggested that freshman and

¹ Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 24 July 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.
² Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 31 July 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.
sophomores enter institutions as guest students while juniors and seniors group in centers with their major professors.\(^3\) Arrangements were made for Ginling units in Shanghai, Wuchang and Chengdu. On the campus in Nanjing, the college deflected requests for the use of the buildings to keep them in reserve for civilian relief efforts.\(^4\)

In response to the national crisis, Wu Yifang became involved in various types of war work, particularly the Chinese Women’s Association for War Relief (Zhongguo funu weilao ziwei kangzhan jiangshi zonghui) led by Soong Mei-ling, which raised funds for relief work for soldiers at the front. Wu played an important role in this organization from its first meeting on August 1,\(^5\) chairing endless rounds of meetings, delivering speeches and fundraising while serving as treasurer and “keeper of jewelry contributed.” Indeed, Wu spent so much time working with this group that Minnie Vautrin, worried she constantly looked exhausted, urged her to rest.\(^6\) Wu and other Ginling alumnae also contributed time and money to a Christian organization concerned with war relief for women and children.\(^7\)

In August, the campus experienced its first air raid. Vautrin ordered everyone to the basement, where Wu told the fifteen girls present “we need not be frightened, nor

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\(^3\) “Letters from President Wu to Ginling College Faculty,” 6 September 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

\(^4\) Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 1 October 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^5\) Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 31 July 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.

\(^6\) Minnie Vautrin, diary entries, 10 August and 18 September 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2698, YDS; Wu Yifang to New York Office, 1 October 1937, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^7\) Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 4 November 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

171
careless in seeking adventure.”

That month, as raids continued, Wu wrote, “I am not a pacifist, but I abhor the dreadful destruction of warfare. How soon or how far away is the day of Christ’s way?”

Wu’s spirits fluctuated with the changes in the war situation. Vautrin noted, for example, that Wu’s “tenseness and bitter feelings” in late July had turned to a “calm assurance and buoyancy” and preparation for the worst by August. She was, Vautrin declared, a “great and fearless general.”

Wu, who was also working with Soong Mei-ling to disseminate information on the conflict overseas, expressed displeasure with the reaction of foreign organizations and governments to China’s predicament. According to Vautrin, she was “deeply disappointed” in the attitude taken by the American pacifist societies. Their proposals would play into Japan’s hands, weakening China, by keeping her from getting weapons while Japan made her own. Wu also thought that the evacuation of the American Embassy was an unfriendly act—and just what Japan wanted. Noting that Japanese businessmen were making plans to exploit China’s resources, when writing to American

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8 Wu Yifang to Dr. Reeves and Esther Tappert, 15 August 1937, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 7, 7.113, YDS.
9 Wu Yifang to Rebecca Griest, 19 August 1937, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.
10 Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 29 August 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Sutherland was similarly impressed and also used the term “fearless.” Catherine Sutherland to Ginling Friends, 3 September 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2761, YDS.
11 Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 23 September 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
12 Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 18 September 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
13 Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 20 September 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
friends, Wu made a plea to American investors not to invest in Japanese enterprises.\textsuperscript{14} Wu was hopeful there would be strong international reaction to Japan’s actions and that people would voluntarily boycott Japanese goods. She declined two invitations to go overseas to speak on the situation in China, convinced the work at home was more important.\textsuperscript{15}

In November, Vautrin described Wu as “fearfully tired and blue and heartsick”—because of the war news and a Board decision to leave Ginling’s equipment in Nanjing.\textsuperscript{16} On one particularly low day, Wu wrote her former teacher Cora Reeves: “I have suffered so much mentally and emotionally during the last two weeks that I cannot...think clearly and plan carefully for the College.” She added, “You are right that defeat never comes unless spirit breaks, but I fear our spirit has broken.”\textsuperscript{17} Despite these occasional feelings of despair, Wu pressed gamely on with her work. “Difficulties test foundations, whether they are of sand or solid rock,” Minnie Vautrin observed—concluding that Wu Yifang was “solid rock through and through.”\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Mrs. Thurston and Miss Griest, 21 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

\textsuperscript{15} Wu Yifang to Members of the Board of Founders of Ginling College, 23 October 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

\textsuperscript{16} Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 18 November 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2698, YDS.

\textsuperscript{17} “For the Ginling College Board of Founders and Faculty,” letter from Wu Yifang to Cora Reeves, 27 November 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

\textsuperscript{18} Minnie Vautrin to Friends, 24 November 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2875, YDS.
Vautrin and Sutherland refused American embassy advice to leave Nanjing before the expected Japanese offensive, but they and the New York office repeatedly urged Wu Yifang to go. Sutherland eventually went to the Ginling center in Wuchang while Vautrin stayed in Nanjing. Finally agreeing to leave, Wu appointed a college emergency committee with Vautrin as chairman. By this time, Vautrin described her as "exhausted both physically and spiritually." Some missionaries suggested that Ginling, like Yenching in Beijing, should reopen under the Japanese occupation, but Wu declared she was too "unbending and forthright" to remain in Nanjing under the Japanese.

Wu Yifang boarded a British commercial vessel in Nanjing on December 1. The boat, loading cargo, did not leave until the third. Wu was greatly disturbed at having to leave the capital; she later referred to "running away" from Nanjing as "the most agonizing experience I had." Several years later, Wu recalled:

...as soon as we got on the boat you could not help having the deepest sense of pain, leaving your own college, leaving the capital of your country which was threatened or sure to fall within a few days. I wanted to go back. That was the experience I felt the most...On the boat I did not have any peace thinking of the small committee left behind to take charge, and thinking of all

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19 Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 20 September 1937, Box 9, 9.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

20 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 20 November 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

21 Minnie Vautrin to Mrs. Thurston and Rebecca [Griest], 2 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2991, YDS.

22 Wu Yifang to Miss Margaret E. Hodge and Rebecca Griest, 4 December 1937, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

23 Wu Yifang to Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Griest, 9 December 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS. In post-1949 speeches, Wu also described leaving Nanjing as "the most painful moment of her life"—but the emphasis was on how she felt escaping danger on a foreign boat while Japanese planes swirled overhead, bombing the defenseless Chinese on shore. See, for example, Wu Yifang, "Lianluo youyan," (A message to friends) 8 March 1974 and "Guanyu guoji xingshide jianghuagao," (A draft of a speech on the international situation) n.d., MQYF, 11-I, 59, JPA.
the large number of people who could not get away, thinking that the occupation was to last for some time. I could not help asking myself "Am I just going to escape from physical danger?" After earnest prayer the only conclusion I could come to was that were it possible to travel I would go back to help those who could not leave the city.24

Wu had gotten out of Nanjing just in time; shipping on that part of the Yangtse River came virtually to a halt shortly after.25 On her way to visit Ginling’s unit in Wuchang, Wu reconsidered her position on reopening the college in Nanjing: "By the end of my boat journey I was quite convinced that running into the interior is not the only course open. As a Christian College we should consider that probably right in Nanking under changed political conditions, we are needed more than elsewhere." With government colleges unable to open, missionaries and Chinese Christians might serve as an indirect check on the Japanese and an encouragement to the people of Nanjing. In fact, Wu concluded, perhaps it was a duty to return.

...as a Christian Chinese, I think there is a call to follow the hard course and to build up personalities under different circumstances...we Christians should turn toward the region where others won’t go, and where because of the selfish office seekers and the unthinking masses, the need for a few thinking people may be much greater. I for one am ready to go when and if the college is to start work.26

Wu wrote to President John Leighton Stuart of Yenching for advice.27 Stuart suggested reopening Ginling in its own buildings and carrying on as normally as possible.28

24 "Dr. Wu’s Talk at the Annual Dinner," May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2922, YDS.
25 Eva Spicer to Friends, 17 January 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS.
26 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Mrs. Thurston and Miss Griest, 14 December 1937, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
27 Wu Yifang to Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Griest, 9 December 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.
For Christmas 1937, Sutherland and seven students decorated Ginling’s drab hostel in Wuchang with red paper and a Christmas tree; the group ate oranges and peanut candy and sang Christmas carols with their president.\textsuperscript{29} Wu Yifang later recalled that, preoccupied with the news from Nanjing and the decision regarding the unit in Wuchang, she was “simply not there.”\textsuperscript{30} She left for Chongqing and Chengdu in early January.\textsuperscript{31}

At the Ginling campus in Nanjing, Minnie Vautrin had already begun readying Ginling buildings to shelter neighborhood women and children when a group in Nanjing, comprised mainly of Westerners, established a 3.8-square-kilometer Nanjing “safety zone” for refugees. The Ginling campus, which fell within the zone’s borders, was designated a refugee camp for women and children; Vautrin set to work preparing the campus to receive as many as 2,750 refugees. To deter Japanese soldiers from entering the campus, American flags were set up.\textsuperscript{32}

The first women and children, many displaced from their homes by Chinese preparations to defend the city, arrived at Ginling on December 8. As the Japanese attack continued unabated, the number of refugees at Ginling rose, reaching three hundred on December 9. On December 12, General Tang Shengzhi, charged with defending the city, abruptly left Nanjing; an extremely disorderly retreat followed. The next day, Japanese

\textsuperscript{28} “Letter from President Stuart of Yenching University to President Wu of Ginling College,” 13 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.

\textsuperscript{29} “Letters Received From Catherine Sutherland, Wuchang,” 26 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2833, YDS.

\textsuperscript{30} Wu Yifang to Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Griest, 9 December 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

\textsuperscript{31} Eva Spicer to Friends, 17 January 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS.

\textsuperscript{32} Hu Hua-ling, \textit{American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking}, 71-74.
forces entered Nanjing unopposed, engaging in an orgy of violence including widespread rape, looting, arson and killing. The chaos, referred to as the "Rape of Nanjing," lasted for several weeks.33

At Ginling, refugees streamed onto the campus. On December 11, they numbered 850; by December 16, the number had risen to four thousand. This was already more than Vautrin thought Ginling could handle, but she did not turn away the women that begged her to take them in. Ignoring the American flags and American Embassy proclamations that Ginling was American property, Japanese soldiers entered the campus to search for Chinese soldiers, loot, and rape refugee women. Since the presence of Westerners often served as a deterrent to the Japanese, Vautrin found herself running from one end of the campus to another to face down soldiers, unable to get any rest. She reported various incidents to the Japanese Embassy, but the official documents provided by the Japanese consul did not stop the soldiers from committing crimes on campus, either. Nonetheless, the female refugees were much safer on the Ginling campus than in the city, and thousands more arrived. Vautrin personally led some to another refugee center at the University of Nanking (also within the safety zone's boundaries); nevertheless, there were soon about ten thousand women and children crowded onto the Ginling campus.34


34 Hu Hua-ling, American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking, 89-98. Vautrin was not sure how many refugees were on campus; the number ten thousand seems to be a best guess. See Minnie Vautrin, diary entries, 21-27 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series, IV, Box 134, Folder 2698, YDS.
On December 18, Vautrin wrote in her diary, “All the days seem alike now—filled with stories of tragedies such as I have never heard before. From early morning crowds of women and girls and children come streaming in—with horror written on their faces.”\textsuperscript{35} Three days later, after a trip outside the safety zone, Vautrin called Nanjing the “saddest sight I ever hope to see.” She described buses and cars overturned in the streets, dead bodies “here and there,” discarded soldiers’ clothes laying everywhere, and every house and shop looted and many burned.\textsuperscript{36}

In January 1938, the women on the Ginling campus began returning home, but since the situation was still dangerous, the campus continued to house refugees for the next few months. By the end of January, there were still five thousand refugees at Ginling. The Japanese ordered all refugees to return home, but when groups of women pleaded with Vautrin to allow them to stay, she refused to turn them out. At the same time, she began compiling lists of missing Chinese men—relatives of the refugee women—to present to the Japanese authorities in an attempt to locate some of them. In addition, she managed to find funds for supplementary nutrition for the refugees and also started various classes for them. Even after the Nanjing refugee camps were closed at the end of May, several hundred young women stayed on at Ginling.\textsuperscript{37}

In September 1938, the Nanjing campus reopened as an educational institution, but its new curriculum hardly resembled the pre-war years. In addition to experimental

\textsuperscript{35} Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 18 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series, IV, Box 134, Folder 2698, YDS.

\textsuperscript{36} Minnie Vautrin, diary entry, 21 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series, IV, Box 134, Folder 2698, YDS. As Vautrin makes clear in her diary, both Japanese soldiers and ordinary Chinese participated in the looting.

\textsuperscript{37} Hu Hua-ling, \textit{American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking}, 99-116.
secondary education classes, it offered a homemaking-industrial course to teach a limited number of women new skills to make a living. With the campus full of students, Vautrin refused a request by the Japanese military to house soldiers.38

After hearing of the atrocities committed by Japanese troops in Nanjing, Wu Yifang was particularly anxious for the Chinese staff on the campus, especially for the college servants whom she had personally persuaded to remain, sure their fears of the Japanese were misguided.39 With the brutal Japanese occupation of Nanjing, Wu also realized the college could not reopen there.

Despite a continuous string of Japanese victories, after leaving Nanjing, Wu gradually became more confident about the ultimate outcome of the war, writing in April 1938:

I am convinced by the doings of the Japanese militarists themselves that their ways will not last and encouraged by the valiant efforts of many of our own people. But at the same time, I am convinced that if my people are to come out unconquered and with a new life, we have to do a great deal more, especially to get rid of selfishness.40

Convinced of the "ultimate triumph of right over might," Wu suggested that democratic nations, particularly the United States, should participate in an economic boycott against Japan to prevent another world war.41 On this issue, Matilda Thurston

39 “Letter from Dr. Yi-fang Wu," 15 January 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.
40 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston, 1 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.
41 “Letter from Dr. Wu," 28 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2992, YDS.
echoed her thoughts—she also believed that “right will win in the long run” and supported an embargo against Japan.42

*Considering Curriculum Change*

With the outbreak of war, Ginling’s president joined other Chinese educators in debating the type of education appropriate for wartime and considering drastic curriculum changes. After leaving Nanjing, Wu Yifang began having “revolutionary ideas” about education and discovered that many Ginling colleagues were in agreement.43

Ginlingers first considered setting up a separate establishment in an interior town in Sichuan or Hunan. Wu was initially enthusiastic about this possibility, wondering if the “strong characters” that China so sorely needed might be better cultivated this way. However, she realized that without books and science equipment—left behind in Nanjing—this would be particularly difficult. In addition, the Canadian Mission building in the town originally considered was not immediately available.44

Ultimately, Wu declined to change the college program significantly. Ginling, she decided, would join West China Union University in Chengdu, at the same time opening an experimental center in the country where students could go to “get close to the life of the masses.” While emphasizing that this move enabled Ginling to cooperate

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42 Matilda Thurston, “Ginling—Dispersed but not Dispirited,” 1 March 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.

43 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 16 April 1938, Box 5, 5.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

44 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Mrs. Thurston and Miss Griest, 7 February 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS; “For the Ginling College Board of Founders and Faculty,” letter from Wu Yifang to Cora Reeves, 27 November 1937.
with other Christian colleges, Wu also suggested that the staff was not up to the task of creating a new program.\textsuperscript{45} The decision was a difficult one:

For China during her life-and-death struggle there must be special needs which a Christian institution like Ginling ought to be able to meet. And we should be ashamed of our own callousness and inertia if we are not spurred by such tremendous misery to do more than in normal times. Miss Vautrin’s work, on the one hand, and the need for strong personalities in all lines on the other, make me very uncomfortable to be just following conventional lines of education. However, I am clear about my own limitations, and no special programme can be carried out without enthusiastic and whole-hearted workers.\textsuperscript{46}

Although Wu favored adapting the curriculum to war needs, Matilda Thurston, on the other hand, suggested there was “the need of a change of study in times of stress giving greater emphasis to arts and letters and studies which would give outlet for spiritual expression.”\textsuperscript{47}

In the end, plans to effect curriculum change were largely vexed by the Ministry of Education, which sought to enforce a standard curriculum on all higher educational institutions. Instead of presiding over a new program, Wu Yifang joined a host of educators expressing concern about new rigid curriculum requirements.\textsuperscript{48} Thwarted in efforts to modify the college curriculum, Ginling tried to add a more practical emphasis

\textsuperscript{45} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 16 April 1938, Box 5, 5.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. Despite the similarity to Communist terminology, Wu is merely referring to a rural service center.

\textsuperscript{46} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston and Miss Griest, 25 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2994, YDS.

\textsuperscript{47} “Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Founders – Ginling College,” 5 May 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2600, YDS.

\textsuperscript{48} “President’s Report to the Board of Directors,” 29 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2620, YDS.
with a special one-month freshman program in 1938 and by continuing its tradition of social service work.

*A Refugee College: Ginling in Chengdu*

As conditions deteriorated in Wuchang with the threat of Japanese attack, the Ginling center there was disbanded in late 1937. With the exception of some Physical Education students, the Ginling unit in Shanghai was discontinued in 1938, since students there could study at other institutions and the city was becoming increasingly dangerous.⁴⁹

A small Chengdu unit of Ginling had started with a handful of students and biology professor Cora Reeves, who was visiting Sichuan when the war started. They were joined by the main college group, and in fall 1938, Ginling reopened in Chengdu with 90 students. It joined the University of Nanking and a refugee institution from Jinan, Shantung Christian University,⁵⁰ on the campus of the host college, West China Union University. In 1942, Yenching also relocated to Chengdu.

In the early war years, maintaining academic standards was particularly difficult. In 1938, Eva Spicer admitted that although educators were doing their best under the trying circumstances, some students were getting “rather a hit and miss kind of

⁴⁹ For a discussion on how Shanghai was becoming dangerous, see “Excerpts from letters from President Wu Yi-fang,” 1 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS. That reason was not given in the official explanation of why the unit was discontinued. See Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 3 May 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.

⁵⁰ Shantung Christian University was also known by its Chinese name, Cheloo University (*Qilu daxue*).
education.\textsuperscript{51} In Chengdu, the campus was overcrowded and class materials difficult to acquire.\textsuperscript{52} There were almost no periodicals, and reference books inadequate, with thirty or more students waiting for one book.\textsuperscript{53} Chester's makeshift chemistry laboratory, with neither gas nor water, reminded her of the conditions in Ginling's early years.\textsuperscript{54}

Ginling, like the other Christian colleges, found itself fighting a losing battle to maintain prewar admissions standards.\textsuperscript{55} The level of students fluctuated with the number of Sichuan students enrolled, likely because of the inferior quality of Sichuan middle schools. English standards were particularly difficult to maintain.\textsuperscript{56}

In Chengdu, Wu Yifang and other administrators found themselves with a host of new problems. Air raids, for example, were common in the first years on the Chengdu campus. When interruptions to classes became too disruptive, the class schedule was changed to accommodate them.\textsuperscript{57} Due to the air raids, in 1939, the colleges considered

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\textsuperscript{51} "Excerpts from Letters from Eva Spicer," 20 February 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS.

\textsuperscript{52} "Copy of Letter to Miss Griest, Written by Florence Kirk in Chengtu," 1 November 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2762, YDS.

\textsuperscript{53} "Minutes of the Annual Meeting, Ginling Board of Founders," 5 June 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2600, YDS.

\textsuperscript{54} Ruth Chester to Friends, Christmas Circular letter, 6 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2725, YDS.

\textsuperscript{55} Lutz, \textit{China and the Christian Colleges}, 381.

\textsuperscript{56} In 1942, Ruth Chester complained about the poor preparation of students, especially in English. She attributed this to the fact that 108 out of 159 students were from Sichuan. See [Ruth Chester] to Tilda Dear [Matilda Thurston], 9 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS. In 1944, Wu Yifang reported that the new students were better in preparation, likely due to the large number from east, north and south China. Wu Yifang to Sisters in America, 15 April 1944, Box 9, 9.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. By 1944-1945, most of the students were from outside Sichuan; a third did not even have relatives in Free China. Wu Yifang to Friends, 30 December 1944, Box 9, 9.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\textsuperscript{57} Florence Kirk to Mr. Evans, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2763, YDS.
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moving, but decided to stay on at West China, arguing that the campus was outside city walls and therefore less vulnerable to attack or damage from fires started by bombs.\(^{58}\)

Not long after making the decision to stay, on June 11, 1939, the campus was hit in a large raid on Chengdu. The damage would have been extensive—and Ginling’s buildings destroyed—if three of the six bombs had not turned out to be duds.\(^{59}\) Many of the wounded were brought to the West China campus for medical treatment,\(^{60}\) where Ginling students did their part to help. One student remembered President Wu personally visiting and comforting students helping the victims.\(^{61}\) Wu was gratified to “see how the Ginling family were calm and did our share in giving relief to the wounded.”\(^{62}\) In 1941, air raids interrupted both Baccalaureate and Commencement.\(^{63}\)

Despite the difficult conditions, judging from her letters, Wu Yifang’s pessimism of the 1930s had largely dissipated by the early 1940s. One acquaintance described Wu in 1940 as being on the whole in good health and happy with her work—which contrasted from the past few years, when she was “very depressed, feeling that she would

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\(^{58}\) Wu Yifang to Mrs. Rhead, 31 May 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2810, YDS.


\(^{60}\) Thurston and Chester, *Ginling College*, 116.

\(^{61}\) Shen Pu, “Nanwangde suiyue,” (Unforgettable years) in *Jinling nuer*, 172.

\(^{62}\) “Letter to Miss Florence G. Tyler from President Wu Yi-fang,” 5 September 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

\(^{63}\) “The following news of the field is taken from Dr. Wu’s latest letter to the Ginling office,” 2 July 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2998, YDS.
have to give the whole thing up.\footnote{“Dr. Lobenstine’s Talk,” 3 April 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2776, YDS.} In fact, this optimistic comment, written even as the Japanese were advancing in 1944, is fairly typical of Wu’s attitude in the 1940s:

One thing I can assure you is that in spite of serious difficulties since the cutting of the international road, the Chinese determination to resist will never be shaken. I still do not think the Japanese can ever hope to reach Kunming. But even if they do, the college will carry on here.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 13 May 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.}

\textit{“Going Ahead Till You Are Stopped”—Matilda Thurston’s Last Years in China}

Returning to America for a furlough in 1936, Matilda Thurston took up promotional work for Ginling. As if there had never been any question, she soon expressed a desire to return to China. However, Thurston was approaching sixty-five, and no retirement age had been determined for Ginling. Writing to Wu Yifang, she noted that as a Presbyterian missionary, she could serve until age seventy. Conceding that that might not be wise policy for an educational institution, Thurston pointed out that Mt. Holyoke had a provision for retired faculty members to remain on the campus and carry out various tasks.\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Yifang, 10 February 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.}

Thurston continued with fundraising and publicity work for Ginling and China after the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War. The conflict in no way diminished her zeal to return: “One just has to plan to go on in a world like this and not be afraid to take risks.”\footnote{Matilda Thurston to Mr. Evans, 8 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.}
Thurston correctly suspected that some members of the Board in New York opposed her return. In fact, they unsuccessfully tried to force her retirement.68 Wu Yifang, however, indicated as early as December 1937 that she was counting on Thurston’s return.69 Wu’s letters give the impression that she was motivated partly by obligation and concern for Thurston. Wu wrote in April 1938 that as for Thurston, it would be “much simpler not to raise any question but to let her return as she wishes.” Wu reminded the New York office, “She built up the College and it is only fair for her to complete her years of service before retiring.” The college, Wu recommended, should make an exception for the first president and pay the travel costs for Thurston to return for three years before she retired.70

A few months later, Wu told the Board that she felt strongly it was important for the College to have Thurston finish her work in China and to write Ginling’s history. She also mentioned it would “mean much” to Thurston to return and meet with graduates and friends in Nanjing and Shanghai.71 Wu only raised one concern—she thought the men in Chengdu’s other educational institutions might have difficulty understanding and working with Thurston.72

68 Matilda Thurston to Minnie Vautrin, 3 November 1938, Box 5, 5.2, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. The Board apparently deleted the action from the official minutes, so Thurston could not be sure. Sallie Lou MacKinnon to Miss Tyler, 13 May 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2782, YDS; Miss Griest to Miss Tyler, 10 May 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 137, Folder 2752, YDS.

69 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Mrs. Thurston and Miss Griest, 21 December 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS.

70 “A letter from Dr. Yi-fang Wu to Miss Griest,” 15 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS. Three years was normally too short a period to pay travel costs both ways.

71 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 24 October 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2606, YDS.

72 “Letter written by President Wu,” 3 April 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2994, YDS. Wu added that the men in other institutions had no difficulty working with Ruth Chester.
Ultimately, Wu asked her to return first to Shanghai as a step toward either Chengdu or Nanjing. Thurston decided on Nanjing, feeling she could contribute more there than in a new place. Typically, Thurston continued to see educational work in Nanjing as an opportunity to enlarge the Christian influence in the years ahead.

Shrugging off suggestions that she would not be happy in Nanjing under Japanese rule, Thurston sailed in February 1939. Arriving in Shanghai, she first spent five weeks getting in touch with the one hundred plus alumnae in that city. Meeting socially with Ginling girls in Shanghai, she was convinced she was where she belonged. A comment about the few foreign women teachers still on the job helps explain Thurston’s reason for returning: “They all feel they are serving China by keeping the schools alive—and they are.”

By the time of Thurston’s return in April 1939, the situation in Nanjing had stabilized. The Ginling campus boasted a five-year middle school, a nursery school, a neighborhood day school, and a one-year homecraft course for women. Thurston was

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73 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 October 1938, Box 3, 3.42, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
74 Matilda Thurston, Christmas Circular letter, 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.
75 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 13 November 1938, Box 3, 3.42, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
76 See, for example, “Letter from Miss Anna Moffett to Mrs. Lawrence Thurston,” 25 November 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2996, YDS.
77 Matilda Thurston, “Return to Nanking, 1939,” 28 July 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2849, YDS.
78 Matilda Thurston to Calder Family, 17 March 1939, Box 2, 2.35, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
79 Matilda Thurston, “Ginling in Nanking: Personal Report of Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, 1939,” December 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2849, YDS.
unimpressed with occupied Nanjing—“Emptiness and drabness are the outstanding impressions,” she wrote. Nanjing’s population was about half that of 1936, and Thurston’s friends and acquaintances—with their connections to public life, education or business—were gone. Nevertheless, she was convinced that the need for the Christian message and Christian service remained.80

Thurston found life in Nanjing peaceful, even a “bit dull.”81 Nonetheless, she wrote Wu Yifang that although life was not as interesting as in 1935 or 1936, “yet I feel what we are doing is important and helping to prepare for a happier future.”82 Celebrating her sixty-fifth birthday in May 1940, Thurston crowed, “I’m not retiring gracefully today, or tomorrow. I still seem to be able to help.”83

As the war broadened, Thurston struggled with her pacifist ideas. Gone were her hopes for Sino-Japanese cooperation.

As to victory, I find my desire more negative than positive. I want the invader and the one who began it to lose. I don’t pray about it except in a general way of continuing to desire a world quite different from the one we live in now, and free from any desire to return to the status quo ante. And I have a decided preference for one kind of victory rather than another, if there is to be any victory. Victory can be a very ugly thing.84

After Thurston’s return, Minnie Vautrin, who had postponed her furlough to direct the emergency operations in Nanjing, began showing signs of mental instability.

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80 Matilda Thurston, “Return to Nanking, 1939.”

81 Matilda Thurston to Eva, 18 August 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2849, YDS.

82 Matilda Thurston to Dr. Wu, 19 April 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2849, YDS.

83 Matilda Thurston to Eva [MacMillan], 17 May 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2877, YDS.

84 “Extracts from a letter from Mrs. Lawrence Thurston Written September 17-22, 1941, on the Nanking Campus of Ginling College,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.
By May 1940, she had to be sent home, placing more administrative responsibilities on Thurston’s shoulders; Thurston also continued with treasurer’s work, led chapel services and taught in the campus middle school.85

Thurston’s personality seems to have changed little. Returning from a holiday in Hong Kong and the Philippines, she surprised her colleagues by her early return. Her comment: “I believe in going ahead till you are stopped.”86

Nor did she want to leave when Americans were advised to evacuate in October 1940.87 Pondering the consular advice, Thurston recalled her evacuation experiences in 1910 and 1927, deciding that she would “rather be a refugee than an evacuee.” If it became necessary to leave, she decided, at her age, she would go home rather than to Chengdu, as Wu Yifang suggested. Thurston told her sister she informed the consulate: “I am in the group of ‘persons (men, they say) whose continued presence is urgently required’ for the present, and that I want advice from my mission before making any plans.”88 As she had probably expected, the Presbyterian Board advised women to stay

85 See Hu Hua-ling, American Goddess at the Rape of Nanking. Tragically, Vautrin did not fully recover from her bout with mental illness; she committed suicide in May 1941. Vautrin’s friends and colleagues believed her demise was connected to the tremendous stress of trying to protect the refugee women and children during the worst of the Japanese excesses. Wu Yifang declared, “She gave herself in service to others; and her death...was as much a war casualty as if she had died at the front.” Wu Yifang, “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series VI, Box 127, Folder 2620, YDS.

86 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 15 October 1939, Box 3, 3.45, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

87 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 23 October 1940, Box 5, 5.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. The consular advice was for all Americans in China but was not taken seriously in Chengdu. Ruth Chester to Friends, 24 November 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2725, YDS.

88 Matilda Thurston to Helen Calder, 12-20 October 1940, Box 3, 3.47, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
on the job with the men. The consul, Thurston observed, thought they were not cooperating with their government. \[89\]

Nearly a year later, in October 1941, Thurston described a Nanjing depleted by another evacuation of mothers and children. Again, she had no intention of leaving: "We who remain are here because, like the Christians in the Second Century Epistle to Diognetus, we help to 'hold the world together', waiting, and hoping, for a day of deliverance." \[90\]

By December 1941, it was clear the Japanese were preparing something, although the group in Nanjing had no idea what it was. "We are," Thurston suggested, "like a ship sailing in a thick fog and cannot see far ahead." She refused to make preparations to leave, worried about the psychological effect it would have on others. \[91\] When Japanese soldiers entered the campus early on December 8 and began inspecting the property, Thurston tried to send a note to the American Embassy, but discovered the embassy was surrounded, as was the University of Nanking. Typically, Thurston was skeptical of reports that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. \[92\]

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war on Japan, British, Americans and other enemy alien Westerners in occupied China were interned by the Japanese. Unlike the harsh internment of Westerners in many other parts of China, in

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\[89\] Matilda Thurston to Eva [MacMillan], 26 December 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2849, YDS.

\[90\] Matilda Thurston, "Ginling in Nanking," 11 October 1941, Box 6, 6.21, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\[91\] Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, "Ginling College," 6 December 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.

\[92\] Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, "Ginling College," 8 December 1941.
Nanjing, Thurston and the others were only put under a loose house arrest. Confined to the campus and her activities restricted, Thurston wrote,

I am taking some personal satisfaction in the situation. All along I've said that no one could know what or when things might blow up. I have also said that one need not expect the worst, that there was a fair chance we might be treated decently and not concentrated or roughly handled. And I am spared the very painful process of deciding to go to keep the gallant men from staying to protect me, or staying against all advice which would have been very difficult. Here we are all caught and making the best of it.93

With nothing to do, Thurston soon found the days “long and leisurely.” Chinese guests came to visit her, but she did not attend the faculty prayer meeting. “I want to give no excuse to my keepers that I fail to keep the rules I promised to keep. A promise is a promise even when one is not quite free I making it.”94 Later her house arrest was further relaxed.95

Classes continued on the Ginling campus. In February, it appeared that the buildings were to be commandeered for an officers' training school of the Wang Jingwei regime.96 This time the danger was averted by the “concentrated effort” of the Chinese committee in charge, with the support of two Japanese groups. Angling for help, Thurston told a Japanese woman “in the worst confusions of China’s disorders...Chinese

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93 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 10 December 1941.

94 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 11 December 1941.

95 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 18 December 1941.

96 According to Thurston, this group—like Yan Xishan’s underling in 1928—wanted Ginling partly because it had the “best buildings” in the city. Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 20 February 1942. Wang Jingwei, who had formerly held high positions in the KMT and in Chiang Kai-shek’s government, from 1940 headed a puppet regime in Nanjing that collaborated with the Japanese.
young women with no official status or powerful influence had been able to persuade their soldiers to respect the college.”

News of a repatriation plan in March was for Thurston “the biggest upsetting” since the beginning of the war. Arguing that “staying would still help to hold things together,” she declined to leave—until she discovered that the Japanese were not actually offering a choice, and staying would make things even more difficult for the Chinese group. Thurston objected to leaving since it would be permanent, she did not want to sail on an enemy boat, and restrictions on baggage made it impossible for her to take some of her most precious possessions. Feeling she had signed her own “death sentence,” she finally agreed to leave; each delay in the date was a “reprieve.” Farewell parties were not allowed, but when the group finally left on June 11, groups of girls and teachers stood around to see them off. Among many other things, Thurston left six hundred books from her precious personal collection in the library.

Bids to use the college buildings were deflected in the first half of 1941, but discussion to change the academic program to conform to approved Japanese schools for women proved fruitless. Citing the school’s connection with Ginling in Chengdu, its foreign “color”—in other words, its white Western associations—and a reputation for anti-Japanese activity, the Japanese decided to close the school. Thurston was relieved, declaring that the strain of Japanese interference had been too great—in addition to increasing pressure to change its color and repudiate “Anglo-Saxon” influence and ideas.


98 Mrs. Lawrence Thurston, “Ginling College,” 10 May 1942.

99 Matilda Thurston, “Ginling in Nanking: 1941-1942 Report.”
the Japanese had imposed restrictions on religious teaching and services and arrested some Ginling students. Classes ended on June 15.\textsuperscript{100}

Four days later, Ginling’s buildings were occupied by the Japanese military.\textsuperscript{101} This time, the efforts to save the campus had backfired. By the end of the war, the damage to Ginling’s buildings and the loss of equipment was much more extensive than at the University of Nanking, most likely because Ginling’s buildings were occupied by the military while the University of Nanking became the site for the officers’ training school under the Wang Jingwei regime.\textsuperscript{102}

Wu Yifang felt an “acute sense of pain and loss” upon learning that the buildings had been occupied.\textsuperscript{103} With a heavy heart, Wu wrote to Thurston to tell her that items were being sold and books weighed.\textsuperscript{104} Thurston was also disheartened by the news from the Nanjing campus, but tried not to think about what she could have done differently. “I prayed then, and I continue to pray, ‘O Lord, hold their hands from destruction and hinder them in their undertaking!’ ”\textsuperscript{105}

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\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} “Excerpts from a Letter from Dr. Wu Yi Fang to Mrs. Mills,” 13 February 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.
\textsuperscript{103} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 9 October 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2917, YDS.
\textsuperscript{104} “Excerpts from a letter from Dr. Wu Yi-fang to Mrs. Lawrence Thurston,” 21 November 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.
\textsuperscript{105} Matilda Thurston to Ruth [Chester], 7 January 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2851, YDS.
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Thurston returned to the U.S. on the *Gripsholm*, a repatriation ship, along with American diplomats.\(^{106}\) Looking for a way to help the cause in the U.S., Thurston spoke to groups about China and Ginling. Her heart, she declared, was “still in China.”\(^{107}\) When Wu Yifang visited the States, Thurston wrote that she hoped to see her—“She is in the inner circle of my Ginling daughters, and life for me still centers there.”\(^{108}\)

Thurston moved in with her sister Helen, who had never married. In addition to her pension, Thurston had income from her husband’s life insurance and money from her father’s and sister-in-law’s estates. She continued to make generous contributions to organizations and individuals alike.

*Emphases for a Women’s College: Course Additions and Social Service at Ginling*

Ginling continued its tradition of social service in Chengdu. In a closely related development, new programs such as a rural service station, a department of home economics and a childcare welfare training program were established. These programs, partly a result of wartime conditions, were also in accordance with the government’s wartime educational policies. For example, students receiving aid from the Ministry of Education—by 1942, about half of Ginling’s students were receiving relief funds—were expected to do service work in return. At Ginling, students gave three hours a week to

\(^{106}\) Matilda Thurston to Cornelia Mills, 7 December 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.

\(^{107}\) Matilda Thurston to Cornelia Mills, 25 August 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2851, YDS.

\(^{108}\) Matilda Thurston to Cornelia Mills, n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2852, YDS.
the college or neighborhood work. Later, students initiated their own projects, raising funds for gifts to soldiers at the front, for example, or surveying soldiers' families. Students also joined summer projects, working in rural service, war orphanages, etc. For the majority of students, Wu Yifang wrote approvingly in 1942, summer vacation was no longer a time to play, but a time to earn money or give service.

Although China's cities had made great strides toward modernization in the early decades of the twentieth century, the country's rural areas, where the majority of Chinese lived, lagged far behind in development. A variety of factors, including population increase, the political and economic chaos of the early Republican period, the worldwide depression, and Japanese aggression, had combined to make the lives of rural dwellers even more difficult. They often lived in dire poverty. The bleak situation in the countryside—and its potential to be used by the Communists—drew considerable attention to rural problems. In the 1930s, the national government, along with provincial and local governments and private individuals such as James Yen (Yan Yangchu) and Liang Shuming, began piecemeal rural reconstruction programs. Some of the projects were funded by overseas agencies, including mission boards and the Rockefeller Foundation. Missionary groups in China and the Christian colleges joined in such programs; Wu Yifang hoped to get Ginling involved in this work.

109 "Part of letter from Dr. Wu to Mrs. Way-sung New," 6 April 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

110 "Report to the Board of Founders of Ginling College," 23 April 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS.

111 "From a Letter From Florence Kirk," 18 February 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2764, YDS.

112 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 9 October 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2917, YDS.
In a 1936 circular letter, Wu wrote that Ginling’s task was to train women “of ability, of character, and with a Christian conception of service”—workers that were in great demand in China’s reconstruction program. She continued to look for opportunities for Ginling to fulfill this purpose throughout the 1930s and 1940s. To that end, she strongly promoted the establishment of a rural service station near Chengdu. Her push for Ginling’s involvement in rural work was linked to her idea of service, the support of the government for such work, and the fact she thought this was a way for Ginling, as a women’s college, to find a niche.

Wu had begun considering rural work for Ginling in the mid-1930s. Her perception of its importance was reinforced at a May 1938 conference in Hankou promoting women’s work under the New Life Movement, and a subsequent conversation with James Yen. Yen indicated he was in favor of Ginling training women for rural service, since his association had not developed any program especially for women. Thus convinced of the need, Wu began to make plans for a rural service station. A center was eventually established in spring 1939, offering educational, health and industrial work among rural women and children.

113 Wu Yifang, Circular letter to Friends, Fall 1936 handwritten on top, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2908, YDS.

114 “Excerpts from Letters from President Wu Yi-fang,” 27 May and 6 June 1938, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

115 Eva Spicer, “Ginling’s Wartime Odyssey,” Summer 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2998, YDS; Wu Yifang, “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946. The first rural service station was closed down due to transportation difficulties and living costs and another opened nearer to Chengdu in 1944. Wu Yifang to Wu Suen-i, 3 February 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2918, YDS; Ruth Chester, “Report to Board of Directors in Chengtu For Period of Dr. Wu’s Absence—Mar. 1943-Mar. 1944,” 1 April 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2620, YDS.

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Wu also tried to dovetail Ginling’s programs with the government’s. The Sichuan provincial government, for example, had also urged the expansion of rural service activities. When the Ministry of Education was promoting adult education, Wu worked to get Ginling students involved in this and other types of community extension work. Adult education, Wu commented, was “a field of service which a Christian women’s college ought to be doing seriously.”

Sociology had become increasingly popular at Ginling; by the late 1930s, it boasted the college’s largest number of majors. Wu Yifang strongly supported strengthening and expanding the sociology department—it was, she argued, one of the departments a Christian women’s college must develop, pointing to the increased demand for social workers with the establishment of new government programs, and suggesting that female students were “well fitted” to go into the field of sociology.

Seeing an opportunity for Ginling to play a leadership role in the field of social work, Wu tried to persuade American Mereb Mossman, who had taught sociology at

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116 “Finance Committee Minutes,” 3 November 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2604, YDS.

117 “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946; “From President Wu to Mereb Mossman,” 15 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.


119 Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 15 March 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

120 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Sears, 4 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.

121 Wu Yifang to Chu Yoh-an, 20 May 1941, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.
Ginling from 1930-1937, to return.\textsuperscript{122} Her letters to Mossman help explain Wu's thoughts on sociology and social work and the role she envisioned for Ginling.

In November 1939, Wu invited Mossman to return after Ginling was back on its home campus. Wu noted that discussions had already begun when Ginling was in Nanjing on the fields that a women's college should emphasize. There was, Wu argued, a "real lack of women well-trained academically and technically and with a real spirit of service." Soong Mei-ling needed college women to supervise rural service projects and Ginling should train women to meet this ever-growing need. Finally, Wu suggested that if Ginling did not get started training workers, the Agricultural College of the University of Nanking might be forced to develop this line "to meet the urgent need."\textsuperscript{123}

Wu told Mossman in January 1940 that she believed Ginling could play a role in training women to work with rural families. James Yen's group was not doing enough in this area. Furthermore, "in a large institution the main emphasis is bound to be placed on the training of men workers" for various jobs.\textsuperscript{124}

In April 1940, Wu asked Mossman to return that year, not waiting for the war to end. Wu wanted to offer a special training course for supervisors for women workers under the Women's Committee of the New Life Movement for Soong Mei-ling. Ginling had made some progress in its rural work, Wu fretted, but in the meanwhile, "men's organizations are going ahead." In addition to Yen's college of rural reconstruction and

\textsuperscript{122} "Report of the Personnel Committee of the Ginling Board of Founders," 15 May 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2606, YDS.

\textsuperscript{123} "From President Wu to Mereb Mossman," 15 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

\textsuperscript{124} Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 20 January 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2788, YDS.
the training in rural work offered by the Sichuan government, the Agricultural College of
the University of Nanking had applied for government funds to give a training course to
college women doing rural work. This move

...shows clearly that the Agricultural College paid no attention to the feeble efforts we were making for serving the rural home and did not even consult us in the least before they thought of this plan of training college women....The need for well-trained women for rural work is urgent. We are too slow in taking up the challenge, and the men's institutions see the opportunities and go ahead with programs, even if they do not know how to carry them out. Quite often it weighs very heavily on my conscience whenever I realize that Ginling, as a women's college, is not taking up the responsibility as she ought to in this war time, particularly in meeting definite fields of work for which college women should be trained.125

This comment indicates that institutional rivalry was also an impetus for pushing the work. In fact, Wu had originally hoped for collaboration with Nanking's Agricultural College.126

By 1939, Wu had identified sociology, music and physical education as fields for Ginling to emphasize. A department of home economics was also to be established. Wu explained that in Nanjing, despite the arguments of men, the college had not established this department because the correlated program among the Christian colleges had assigned the work to Yenching, but the wartime situation had created a need for home economics in West China.127

125 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 1 April 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

126 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 17 February 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS. Apparently the enthusiasm for collaboration was not reciprocated. As early as 1936, Cora Reeves noted that [John Lossing] Buck at the Agricultural College once told her Ginling girls were "ladies" and would not be able to do rural work. Cora Reeves to Rebecca [Griest], 24 October 1936.

127 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Dr. Lobenstine, Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Griest, 8 May 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2913, YDS. In 1937, Wu wrote that while men often wondered why Ginling did not have a department of home economics, they did not understand that making the program of
Wu envisioned Ginling’s department of home economics with an emphasis on service in rural homes, serving a need for “women workers who have received proper training for rural work and who also have executive ability and a real Christian spirit of service” and ensuring that Ginling’s department would have a different emphasis than Yenching’s.\(^{128}\) Wu explained that the Home Economics department would train students as teachers in middle schools, dieticians in hospitals, and rural reconstruction workers for rural homes, who would concentrate on nutrition, childcare and hygiene. Home Economics, Wu also noted, was being promoted by the provincial educational commission and some officials in the Ministry of Education.\(^{129}\) Wu later suggested that Ginling’s Home Economics department could “pioneer” in training in institutional management.\(^{130}\)

Starting the new major in Home Economics at Ginling proved difficult, however. There were few well-trained women to take charge of the department and students the first year showed little interest.\(^{131}\) Nonetheless, despite the slow start, this department, established in September 1940, quickly proved very popular; by 1941, it boasted the third

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\(^{128}\) Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 17 February 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

\(^{129}\) Wu Yifang to Lung Hsiao-yun, 21 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2938, YDS.

\(^{130}\) Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 22 February 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

\(^{131}\) Wu Yifang to Wu Suen-i, 27 September 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.

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largest number of majors, after Sociology and English. By 1948, it had become the second-most popular major.

Wu also hoped to further the rural work by sending Ginling personnel overseas for advanced training. In 1942, she urged a Ph.D. candidate to choose a dissertation topic that would fit into China’s needs. Recommending rural education, Wu pointed to the importance of rural reconstruction to China’s larger reconstruction. In China’s efforts to establish a “really democratic government,” popular education for the “masses in the rural regions” was important. When alumna Zhu Jiaofang went to the U.S. to study in the early 1940s, Wu suggested that she do census-related research and thus master a skill sorely needed in China.

Wu Yifang also deemed training child welfare workers a task “very appropriate” for a women’s college. She originally envisioned short courses, but during the war years, the matter was settled in favor of a college course. The five-universities child welfare training program was inaugurated in Chengdu in 1943, with Wu as chairman of the program committee.

132 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 12 April 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2918, YDS.
133 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 February 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.
134 Wu Yifang to Mereb Mossman, 25 January 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 144, Folder 2866, YDS.
135 Wu Yifang to Li Mei-yun, 9 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2769, YDS.
136 Zhu Jiaofang, “He xiaozhang zaiyiqide (The days spent in the company of President Wu) in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 165.
137 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 13 May 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.
138 Few students elected to take the courses, however, since the Ministry of Education did not approve a major in child welfare, so they had to complete a sociology major while taking extra courses in child welfare. Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 115.
Urging "character development" at Ginling, Wu Yifang and her friend Y.T. Zee also considered a counseling project.

We have often said that the Christian universities pioneered in the early years and this is the time for us to face the new conditions and find out what are the special fields where we may still be the pioneers. While character development has always been the aim of Christian Education, it is actually more and more neglected, as the institutions grow bigger and bigger. At the same time, the desperate need of persons of integrity in the community has made the Ministry of Education pay attention to character development. Yet, we all know, the Minister's project of tutors will never achieve its object. It is here that I see a challenge for a small institution as Ginling to take up...

In connection with this project, Wu recommended opening a six-year middle school, arguing that character development was particularly important in the adolescent years.139 As a part of the counseling program, Wu envisioned a department of personnel guidance, which would first counsel students and later expand to training students as counselors in middle schools, thus implementing "our Christian emphasis of developing the whole person in our schools."140 Ginling did start a counseling program—the first of its kind in China, Wu Yifang was quick to point out—in 1948, but it was discontinued in 1949 with the change in government.141

To Wu Yifang, religion was an important factor in character development. At a chapel service in the late 1940s, she explained to freshmen why a religious program was included in their training program:

139 Wu Yifang to Ruth [Chester], 9 September 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

140 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 5 January 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

141 Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 30 January 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS; Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 141.
...the desire of the College was not only to provide opportunities for developing good health and technical training, but also to give some attention to the soul so that the whole personality may be developed. No matter what you do...there is a spirit within you that directs you. It is not true that when you have education, you do not need religion. We must learn something about Christianity even if it is not our faith because the western world was built on Christianity, and we must know about the world we live in...we must pay attention to the training of the unseen part of ourselves and not only to our classroom education. If service is the aim of our lives, then we will be able to give better service if we have this inner strength to draw upon...142

Wu Yifang’s interpretation of the college motto, “Abundant Life,” was similar to Thurston’s, but she sometimes omitted the service for Christ Thurston thought inherent in the passage. As alumna Huang Xuhan recalled Wu explaining: “The goal of life is not just to live for oneself, but to use one’s intelligence and ability to help others and benefit society. This is not only beneficial to others; one’s own life is enriched as a result.”143

Outside the college, Wu expressed similar sentiments, and was quick to encourage people to serve larger interests. She was once quoted as saying, “The individual who builds up his own self-expression and self-development is not contributing his best to the world. It is not enough to advance his own interests. He must work for the good of all people.”144 In a 1943 speech concerning the postwar world, Wu suggested that groups should not be narrowly concerned with their own interests, “for the good of a community or a country as a whole, a bigger and higher goal should be followed. Even though it

142 Helen Plaum, “Ginling College Newsletter,” n.d., (received July 1947 written on top), UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2801, YDS.

143 Huang Xuhan, “Nanwangde Jinling suiyue,” (Memorable years at Ginling) in Jinling muer, 99; Huang Xuhan, “Wo suojingzhong de lauxiaozhang Wu Yifang.”

may involve sacrifice in applying Jesus’ principle in all our relationships, it is His way, and the very method to attain peace for all.”

With her emphasis on molding individuals, Wu also stressed the “family atmosphere” of the college. Wu wrote in 1942 that despite the crowded conditions and limited facilities, she thought Ginling should be proud it could still give girls a “comfortable family atmosphere.” A student arriving in 1942 remembered Wu welcoming the new Ginling daughters at a party, telling them that Ginling was a school of higher education—and a big happy family.

Wu Yifang as an Administrator and as a Person

Wu Yifang was a successful administrator who made a positive impression on almost everyone she worked with; students and colleagues alike recalled her example decades later. Wu’s coworkers observed that she was cautious in making decisions and conservative in taking action. She was also exceptionally modest and frugal. She

145 Wu Yifang, “Christians and World Order,” Paper given at triennial meeting of the Women’s Auxiliary to the National Council in Cleveland, Ohio, October 1943, in UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2704, YDS.

146 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 13 May 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

147 Ji Ruilan, “Wo ai Jinnuda, wo ai Wu xiaozhang,” (I love Ginling College, I love President Wu) in Jinling nuer, 221.

148 Minnie Vautrin to Friends, 5 December 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2873, YDS; Cora Reeves to Rebecca Grist, 10 October 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2808, YDS.

149 Wu’s explanation of why she was chosen to give a report at the first meeting of the Chinese Women’s Association for War Relief is typical: “I speak loudly and in good Mandarin.” Wu Yifang to Miss Grist, 31 July 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2848, YDS.
taught by example. Graduates recalled, for instance, that she lived and ate like everyone else while at West China Union University."^{150}

Ever concerned with salary issues and fairness, while in the U.S. in 1933, Wu, hesitant about accepting salary when others were carrying her work in China, asked that nothing be done until policies were established for Chinese members of faculty on leave of absence."^{151} Wu told the Board in 1941 that she did not want her own salary to go higher than $30 over a female professors’ salary."^{152}

Wu was also unfailingly generous to her coworkers and the college. She generally turned over her salary from special sources such as speaking engagements to Ginling—in 1942, Wu observed, the college had made money on her!"^{153} In 1943, Wu told the government she would accept only traveling expenses for her trip to the U.S. When salary checks were sent to her anyway, she returned them to the Chinese Embassy."^{154} In the hospital in 1945, Wu’s thoughts typically turned to the health of staff in Chengdu, and she insisted that her salary be used for their supplemental nutrition."^{155}

Furthermore, although Wu Yifang sometimes used her connections to ask for special help

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150 See, for example, Zhang Sufang, “Wu xiaozhang fengfan changcun,” (President Wu, an enduring role-model) in *Yongjiude sinian*, 21-23.

151 “Minutes of the Finance Committee of Ginling College Committee,” 21 September 1933, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 124, Folder 2595, YDS.

152 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 28 April 1941, Box 5, 5.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

153 “Statement from Dr. Wu,” Annual Meeting, Ginling Board of Founders, 7 May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2999, YDS.

154 Wu Yifang to Minister Liu Chieh, 18 June 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2732, YDS.

155 New York Office to Ruth Chester, 1 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS; Wu Yifang to Ruth Chester, 16 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS.
for the college from people such as Soong Mei-ling or Minister of Education Hang Liwu,\textsuperscript{156} she never did so for personal gain.

Wu had an exceptionally good memory and always remembered students' names and their backgrounds.\textsuperscript{157} She was also solicitous of individual students. Discovering that one member of a student group leaving for the rural service station in 1939 did not have a raincoat, Wu loaned her own.\textsuperscript{158} A student from northern China recalled that when she had trouble eating the food in Chengdu, Wu made sure that she had northern food for her bowl.\textsuperscript{159} Wu also made sure that students got good medical treatment, paying the hospital bills if necessary.\textsuperscript{160} Wu's concern for students and others connected with Ginling continued well after the college was closed. In the midst of the Cultural Revolution, Wu asked Yan Lianyun to help her sell her mother's jewelry for funds for the school's former matron.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{156} See, for example, Wu Yifang to Dr. Hang Liwu, 13 July 1942, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

\textsuperscript{157} See, for example, Huang Xuhan, “Jingrende jiyi, zhongshende guanhuai,” (A startling memory, lifetime concern) in Yongjiude sinian, 24-25; Zhu Jiaofang, “Liji gen liren—zai Jinnuyuan shizhoulian qingjuzhjiangdang jianghua,” (After establishing oneself, one should then help others to do so—a speech at the tenth anniversary celebration of Ginling College) in Jinling nuer: The Daughter of Ginling (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University, Ginling College, 2000), 14.

\textsuperscript{158} “Quotations from Student Diaries, Summer Service 1939,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3008, YDS

\textsuperscript{159} Lu Weiting, “Huainian women jingaide Wu xiaozhang,” (Cherishing the memory of our esteemed President Wu) in Jinling nuer: The Daughter of Ginling, 129.


Getting up very early one Sunday to leave the Chengdu campus, one student was surprised to find President Wu cleaning the corridor. Students offered to help, but Wu told them to go and have a good time. Since she had a rare free Sunday, she wanted to do something. In fact, Wu was ever busy and made use of every available moment of time. She did not waste even the time while her food was cooling, and she could be seen writing letters or having a conference in a bomb shelter during an air raid.

Yan Caiyun recalled that Wu’s last letter to her was written at the post office as she waited in line to mail some packages. Yan suggested that the incident illustrated some of Wu’s outstanding qualities of “giving generously of her time and energy to be of service to others,” and “putting to good use every available moment of her time.” Yan concluded that these traits might well have been “one of the secrets of her being able to accomplish so much for her country as well as for Ginling.”

Wu also understood well the importance of appearances. One important piece of Ginling publicity was a letter to Elizabeth Morrow, the mother-in-law of aviator Charles Lindbergh and a strong Ginling supporter, written during an air raid. When a scholarship donor wanted to receive correspondence from the recipient, Wu noted they

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163 Peng Hongfu described Wu working while her food cooled in Chengdu. Peng Hongfu, interview by author, Tape recording, Beijing, China, 16 February 2001; Wu Yifang to Board of Founders, 16 October 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS; Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 20 May 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

164 Mrs. Hsien Wu (Yan Caiyun), “Contemporary and Friend,” Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter #10, page 12, April 1956, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS.

165 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Morrow, 5 October 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2972, YDS.
would have to choose someone who would “make a good showing” through her letters.\textsuperscript{166} Wu once talked a senior out of going to Japan on a student delegation, suggesting she stay on campus to prepare for the senior performance night instead, pointing out that many guests and parents come to the event.\textsuperscript{167} Esther Tappert suspected that Wu had hired Louise Shoup, who came from a wealthy family, mainly because of her “promotional value” to Ginling.\textsuperscript{168}

In 1932, when hostilities broke out in Shanghai and Wu was off campus, she finally arrived without any luggage, but looking “as tidy as ever.”\textsuperscript{169} Harriet Cogswell Meyer commented that Wu, serving as maid of honor at a wedding, looked like a “Princess out of a painting…such dignity.”\textsuperscript{170} In fact, Wu’s neat and dignified image was very carefully cultivated. Students remember Wu being very particular about how she—and they—looked. When one student bought a pair of red trousers, for example, Wu counseled her that female college students should be concerned with appearances and

\textsuperscript{166} Wu Yifang to Dr. Djang, 2 August 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2737, YDS.

\textsuperscript{167} Gan Biyuan, “Yinian Wu xiaozhang Yifangshi,” (Remembering President Wu, my teacher Yifang) in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 163.

\textsuperscript{168} Esther Tappert to Tappert Family, 2 September 1936, China Records Project, Esther Tappert Mortensen Papers, RG 21, Box 4, 4.52, YDS. Lending credence to Tappert’s suspicion is Shoup’s own personal statement on application to teach at Ginling—she admitted that she was divorced and had attended church only occasionally in the last eight years. Shoup’s Statement, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 133, Folder 2694, YDS. On the other hand, Wu was more lenient than Thurston about the behavior of teachers. In the early 1930s, noting that the social activities of modern women did not fit in very well with strict missionary standards, she commented, “But times have changed, and I think even the Ginling family may stand a reasonable amount.” She suggested getting some faculty houses off campus. Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 8 January 1931, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 147, Folder 2900, YDS.

\textsuperscript{169} Eva Spicer, “Copy of Letter to her Mother,” 3 February 1932, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2827, YDS.

\textsuperscript{170} Harriet Meyer to Katharine, 27 June 1930, Harriet Cogswell Meyer Papers, Series A, Box 1, Folder 5, MHC.
dress with appropriate seriousness. Cora Reeves observed in 1936 that Wu seemed worried about the impression of a campus poultry project: "Dr. Wu seemed rather wary of this place for gentlewomen having flies around a hen-coop."

Wu’s correspondence with alumnae indicates that she was concerned with them as individuals—and she wanted to make sure they made a good impression. In January 1945, for example, she inquired why two graduates were leaving their jobs. If it was because they did not like the work, she hoped they would reconsider: "When our graduates go out to take up work, it is most important that they fulfill their obligations." Wu wrote to another new graduate in 1944 stressing the importance of the first alumna employed by an organization to do a good job, since it had an impact on the chances of those that followed her. At least one student was convinced by Wu’s admonitions, replying, “I promise to try to be all you want.”

Wu Yifang’s secretary, recalling that Wu did not want to use anything from the 1927 Nanjing Incident at Ginling in publicity, observed that Wu was “always very sensitive about any reflection on China or any emphasizing of occurrences which might be constructed as derogatory to the Chinese.” This fact may be key to understanding

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171 Kong Baoding, “Wu xiaozhang dui wode jiaoyu he guanhuai shi wo zhongshengnanwang.” (I will always remember the lessons I learned from President Wu and the solicitude she showed me) in Jinling nuer: The Daughter of Ginling, 123.

172 Cora Reeves to Rebecca Griest, 5 April 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2807, YDS.

173 Wu Yifang to Hu Kwang-yung and Gieh-yu, 3 January 1945, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.

174 Wu Yifang to Hsun-yu Ming-i (Xianyu Mingyi), 8 May 1944, RG 668, Folder 35, SNA.

175 Minnie Huan Yu to Dr. Wu, 8 June 1944, RG 668, Folder 87, SNA.

176 Gratia Sharp to Mrs. MacMillan, 2 February 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 141, Folder 2815, YDS.
Wu's reluctance to discuss the worst aspects of China's problems and even her later decision to gloss over her difficulties during the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{177} Always one to emphasize the constructive, Wu was particularly disinclined to criticize the government and opposed any action that made it look bad. For example, in 1929, she did not want Western faculty members to leave the campus—at least partly, Spicer suspected, because it would indicate a lack of confidence in the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{178}

Wu had an excellent relationship with the Board in New York and was able to get her way on occasion without ruining relationships, in contrast with her predecessor. The tug-of-war over music teacher Catherine Sutherland is one example.

In fall 1940, Sutherland was set to return to China after furlough. In what was likely the first time the Board in New York decided in opposition to Wu,\textsuperscript{179} it chose to send Sutherland to Nanjing over Chengdu's recommendation.\textsuperscript{180} Wu was going to acquiesce since another faculty member was to be sent to Chengdu, but then changed her mind when Thurston indicated Sutherland was not needed in Nanjing. The tone in Wu's letters on this issue—and many others—is apologetic and unassertive, in sharp contrast to Thurston's bluntness.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{177} For example, she told a British visitor that "she had not suffered hardships in the critical days of the Cultural Revolution" when in fact she suffered considerable hardship. Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter, Spring 1973, page 22, China Records Projects Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Emily Case Mills Papers, RG 8, Box 268, Folder 22, YDS. See also Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 171-173. For Wu's Cultural Revolution experiences, see Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, chapter 10.

\textsuperscript{178} Eva Spicer to Mr. Hawkins, 14 March 1929, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 134, Folder 2695, YDS.

\textsuperscript{179} Rebecca Griest to Mr. Evans, 24 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2878, YDS.

\textsuperscript{180} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 22 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.

\textsuperscript{181} Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 17 August 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.
Observing that there was apparently no ruling at Ginling on who held the final authority in the assignment of Western staff, Wu pointed out that in the case of mission workers, assignment is decided by the administration in the field, not the home board—thus implying that the power rested with her. After declaring that she was not “making an issue of that point,” Wu added, “The only important thing is to place her where she can serve Ginling best and give her best to Ginling.” Wu then overrode the judgment of the Board in New York and asked Sutherland to come to Chengdu. Reluctantly, the Board, while still believing its decision to be correct, yielded authority to Wu. Wu used an irregular procedure to appoint a faculty member in at least one other case.

The Sutherland incident also illustrates the difficulty in communication and understanding conditions in Nanjing, Chengdu and New York. Since letters often went astray, Wu was not always sure just what the New York office knew about the situation in China.

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182 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 23 August 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.

183 “Executive Committee Meeting,” 19 September 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2603, YDS.

184 Wu personally wrote to engage an English teacher in 1941, despite the fact that the Board had declined to appoint her the year before. The Board was displeased, but despite the irregular procedure—western faculty were first cleared through the New York office—it did not intervene. Rebecca Griest to Friends (Miss Margaret Hodge, Mr. C.A. Evans, Mrs. Charles H. Sears, Miss Florence G. Tyler), 8 August 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 146, Folder 2882, YDS; Florence Tyler to Rebecca Griest, 11 August 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 146, Folder 2882, YDS.

185 In addition, Sutherland thought it better for the disagreement to remain between her and the Board in the U.S. than between Chinese and Americans. It is possible that the Board in New York also wanted to avoid this type of friction and was thus reluctant to interfere. Catharine Sutherland to Miss Hodge, Miss Griest and Mrs. Macmillan, 5 September 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2834, YDS.
Y.T. Zee told historian Jane Hunter that Ginling's entire first class made a vow not to marry. Zee was the only one of the five that did, but there is no other mention of this vow. When asked why she never married, Wu pointed to the many obstacles. First, her family's status and the fact she was a woman with a Ph.D. and a college president made it difficult to find a suitable partner. Furthermore, due to her own reserve, opportunities were lost. Finally, with her devotion to her work, her personal life was cast aside. Writer Chen Hengzhe once suggested that Wu Yifang was one of the female leaders that had sacrificed marriage for devotion to her own demanding field—for only by remaining unmarried could a woman "hope to fulfill the requirements of such exacting leadership."

By the 1940s, Wu's reputation was drawing students to Ginling. One Ginling student listed the fact that Wu—whom "all students in China admire...as a leader"—was president, as her first reason for choosing Ginling. Many other students took pride in their president's accomplishments, especially her role in overseas conferences. Parents also thought highly of Wu. One former student remembered that her parents wanted her

187 Shi Ximin, “Daonian Wu Yifang nushi,” (Mourning Ms. Wu Yifang) in *Wu Yifang jinian ji*, 142. Wu's single life was apparently not due to lack of well-meaning friends trying to set her up, however. Alumna Huang Xuechao recalled that as late as the 1940s, there was an attempt to match Wu Yifang with her widowed father. Huang Xuechao, interview by author, Beijing, China, 19 February 2001.
189 Helen Plaum, “Miss Chen-I (Grace Chen),” 25 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series VI, Box 125, Folder 2717, YDS.
190 See, for example, Xianyu Mingyi to President Wu, 23 April 1944, RG 668, Folder 87, SNA; Zeng Xinghua, “Wu xiaozhang zai wode xinzong,” (President Wu is in my heart) in *Jinling nu'er: The Daughter of Ginling*, 131-132.
to be like outstanding women such as Soong Ching-ling or Wu Yifang; her mother wanted her to go to Ginling to study under Wu.\textsuperscript{191}

\textit{Ginling in Chengdu: The Later Years}

Wu Yifang’s initial concerns that due to limited finances, there would be few families able to send their girls to college proved unfounded.\textsuperscript{192} Enrollments at Ginling—and in Chinese higher educational institutions in general—expanded greatly during the war. By fall semester 1942, Ginling’s enrollment had reached a record high.\textsuperscript{193} Numbers continued to rise, and by fall 1945, Ginling in Chengdu enrolled 350 students.\textsuperscript{194}

In Chengdu, Wu continued to face daunting financial difficulties. Inflation was a particular concern. The five Christian college presidents in Chengdu found themselves discussing rice and subsidies at nearly every meeting.\textsuperscript{195} The ever-rising prices—by the end of June 1944 they were 560 times that of 1938—undermined morale on campus. As one observer noted, “A community thus weighed down by its sense of economic

\textsuperscript{191} Zheng Pu, “Jinnudade hua piandikai,” (The flowers of Ginling have opened all over) in \textit{Jinling nuer}, 394.

\textsuperscript{192} “Letter from President Yi-fang Wu,” 25 March 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2993, YDS.

\textsuperscript{193} Ruth Chester to Friends, 1 November 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2726, YDS.

\textsuperscript{194} Wu Yifang, “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946.

\textsuperscript{195} Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Members of the Board, 1 April 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.
insecurity will not for the most part be one in which moral and religious enthusiasm is at a high pitch.”

In summer 1944, when American bombers began making raids on Japan, Manchuria and Taiwan from airfields in Free China, the Japanese struck back with a major offensive, code-named “Ichigo.” In campaigns over the summer and fall, large portions of Chinese territory from Henan to Guizhou fell under the onslaught. Even the wartime capital, Chongqing, appeared to be in danger. In Chengdu, Wu Yifang found herself reminded of 1937. This time, however, there was no thought of moving—not only was there no place to go, it would be impossible to secure transportation. In the end, the group decided only to make sure they were not caught without sufficient cash, as Yenching had been in 1941.

In Chengdu, Wu Yifang continued to try to channel students’ energies away from student activism into their studies or social service activities. Students later recalled their president telling them that by studying hard, they were doing their part to resist the Japanese and save the nation.

Although there is little mention of student protests in the early Chengdu years, students became restless with the turn for the worse at the front in 1944. Wanting to do something directly for the war effort, they questioned remaining at their studies. One

196 News Letter, 11 September 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2829, YDS. Declining morale was not isolated to Ginling—it was common at colleges by the end of the war. Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 379.

197 Wu Yifang to Friends, 30 December 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.

198 Xianyu Mingyi, “Muxiao he lauxiaozhang, yinxian liuzai woxinshang yinxian liuzai wo shenshang,” (My alma mater and my president, their impression remains in my heart, their influence remains in me) in Yongjiude sinian, 32; Wu Bingheng, “Jinling de zhongzi, zaiTainan shenggen, chengzhang,” (A Ginling seed that took root and grew to maturity in Tainan) in Jinling muer, 244; Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 84.
chemistry student asked her president why Ginling could not suspend the regular chemistry courses and give instruction on poison gas and explosives instead. Seeing the students' distress, and not wishing "to kill their genuine desire to help the country by merely pouring cold water on their ideas," the faculty began organizing war-related extracurricular activities for the students, including training in first aid and nurse's aides in conjunction with the Peking Union Medical College nursing school. Their quick action, Wu suggested, helped ensure that Ginling students retained confidence in the faculty.

Two weeks after the courses began, however, two incidents again brought student unrest to the surface. First, on November 8, several Chengdu middle-school students were injured in an altercation with the police. Enraged, students in Chengdu petitioned the governor to punish those responsible for the incident. At Ginling, the faculty, with Wu Yifang's blessing, tried to put out the fire.

Ginling faculty, Wu explained to the New York office, worked to guide the students away from protests and toward activities of "real service to the country." Observing that Ginling girls in Chengdu were "more difficult to handle" than in Nanjing, Wu attributed the change to the fact that Ginling was sharing a campus and that the girls had boyfriends in other institutions. The middle school incident, Wu told Zee, was

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199 Wu Yifang to Friends, 30 December 1944.

200 Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 1 and 6 December, 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2925, YDS; Wu Yifang to Friends, 30 December 1944; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 November 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.

201 Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 1 and 6 December 1944.

202 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 November 1944.

215
occasioned by dissatisfied politicians intent on taking advantage of the "mob psychology of young people." Ginling students, she suggested, had been made aware of this fact and would hopefully not be so easily aroused in the future. Wu herself was able to do little about the situation since her doctor had ordered bed rest for nephritis. Stuck in bed, Wu chafed over the military situation and the student trouble.

After the furor had died down over the middle school incident, a call from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek for educated youth to join the military caused new unrest. According to Wu Yifang:

Instead of quietly volunteering, they were stirring up to hold meetings and to prepare for parades, and to request the drafting of the whole student body. Some students had the childish idea that if they volunteered, why should the rest stay behind studying – but the majority were again used by political agitators to create incidents or to discredit the Government, if it should not be ready to draft the whole student body, as they were to petition for.

The college administrators again worked to quiet the students down; one response was a halfhearted proposal to the Ministry of Education for a modified college curriculum. In spite of the trouble, Wu Yifang was gratified to see that many Ginling students were “expressing their desire to serve the country in the right direction” and wanted to answer Chiang’s call for volunteers.

203 Wu Yifang to Yuh-tsung, 15 November 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2925, YDS.

204 Wu Yifang to Dr. Hang Liwu, 12 December 1944, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

205 The presidents sent a proposal to the Ministry of Education to shorten the college curriculum to three years. Wu Yifang to Mr. Earle H. Ballou, 4 December 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2925, YDS. Wu Yifang, who clearly did not think much of the proposal, wrote to Minister Hang Liwu to clarify it, informing him it was in response to the tense situation on campus. Wu Yifang to Dr. Hang Liwu, 12 December 1944.

206 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 November 1944.

216
Although Ginling students were quick to volunteer for various types of war work, opportunities rarely materialized. Chiang Kai-shek's call, for example, originally proposed several programs for women, but in the end only the one in nursing was actually begun. That program, however, was poorly designed and took months to set up. Since its leader was also not well known, only two Ginling students joined.207

Therefore, although Wu Yifang wanted to direct her students away from activism and toward the “right kind” of activity to aid the war effort, she was partly stymied by poorly articulated government policy and poorly managed programs.208 At least one other opportunity was lost due to the war situation. In late 1944, seven faculty members and seventy students offered their services when United China Relief asked for volunteers to go to Guizhou to help rescue children from the front, but the majority never left because of further fierce fighting in that area.209

Ginlingers were more successful offering their services in another type of war work when an American airbase was established near Chengdu in 1944. Some faculty, staff and students, interrupting their college work, went to work as recreation directors and clerical staff. The decision to work on the base was a difficult one since the girls faced censure from the conservative local gentry, who, Wu observed, could not “conceive the idea of girls from good families going to work in an army camp.” The decision called

207 “Report to the Board of Founders of Ginling College,” 23 April 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS; Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 121.

208 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 November 1944; Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 1 and 6 December 1944; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 13 March 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS.

209 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 November 1944; Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 1 and 6 December 1944.
for much "deliberation and courage." Nonetheless, Ginling's administration supported the girls' decision. Wu Yifang argued:

First, as Chinese college girls they should take part in more direct war work as college women in America and England. Secondly, the American service men stationed in China have not had the chance to know educated Chinese women. In fact, on the contrary, some of them have come into contact with the worst type of girls. \(^{210}\)

This type of war work also created new jobs for Ginling graduates; some went to work for the American Office of War Information, the British Ministry of Information or the American air base. \(^{211}\)

Although Wu did not mention it in her letters, the nearby base apparently created a new set of problems for the campus. A September 1944 newsletter letter described the rules to govern interaction between soldiers and Ginling college women. Tête-à-têtes, for example, were to be avoided, and students were not to dance. \(^{212}\) One student at the time later recalled that the soldiers' dances and drinking caused trouble at Ginling; for safety, the students walked home in pairs at night. \(^{213}\)

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\(^{210}\) "Report to the Board of Founders of Ginling College," 23 April 1945; Wu Yifang to Mr. Earle H. Ballou, 4 December 1944. Previously, Wu had praised the work of American women in groups such as the Waves and Waacs, who released men for other duties. "Summary of Speech by Dr. Yi-Fang Wu Recorded July 31, 1943 For Office of War Information, New Yor [sic], N.Y., My Impressions in America," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

\(^{211}\) "Report to the Board of Founders of Ginling College," 23 April 1945.

\(^{212}\) News Letter, 11 September 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2829, YDS.

\(^{213}\) Mei Ruolan, "Cong Chengdu dao Nanjing—wo zai Jinnuda xuexi siniande huigu he ganxiang," (From Chengdu to Nanjing—reflecting on my four years study at Ginling College) in Jinling muer: The Daughter of Ginling, 42.
Competing Demands for Time

With China at war, Wu Yifang found herself involved in even more outside activities and found it increasingly difficult to balance the college work with other competing demands for her time. She participated in many activities at the personal invitation of Soong Mei-ling, who often asked her to help with the organization and presiding. In 1938, for example, she participated in a conference of women leaders in Lushan promoting women’s work under the auspices of the New Life Movement. On this occasion and many others, Wu felt she could not decline.\(^\text{214}\) In addition to the Chinese Women’s Association for War Relief, Wu also had important positions in the Women’s Committee of the New Life Movement\(^\text{215}\) and the National Association for the Children of the War Areas (zhanshi ertong baoyuhui), both also headed by Soong.\(^\text{216}\) Wu’s constant participation prompted Zee to comment, “Almost 50% of her time and energy is taken by our Government and Madame Chiang, although she feels that she is compelled to do it, and she owes 100% allegiance to Ginling.”\(^\text{217}\) Nevertheless, although Wu Yifang lent her help to Soong Mei-ling in many projects, in 1939 she apparently refused an offer to work with her full time.\(^\text{218}\)

\(^\text{214}\) “Excerpts from Letters from President Wu Yi-fang,” 10 May 1938, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

\(^\text{215}\) Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 86.

\(^\text{216}\) Wu Yifang to Mrs. MacMillan, 29 September 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

\(^\text{217}\) Y.T. Zee New to Mrs. Macmillan, 9 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2790, YDS.

\(^\text{218}\) Wu told Thurston that Soong Mei-ling “asked me to take up some work while I knew I could not so I declined.” Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 26 September 1939, Box 5, 5.4, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. A Christian educator also suggested that Wu had “held herself aloof from an invitation of Madame Chiang Kai-shek to join her in her work. Ginling is her main interest.” “Dr. Lobenstine’s Talk.”
Wu Yifang continued her close relationship with Soong and was a frequent visitor to her home. Catherine Sutherland suggested that their shared Christian faith deepened their friendship—they had a relationship “in which it is possible for them to share in seeking deep spiritual inspiration as they work together in the national program.”

In addition to her activities in women’s organizations, Wu was in demand as a speaker and often had a heavy schedule of engagements with audiences that included Christian, educational and government-sponsored groups such as the New Life Movement. Struggling whether to accept or decline the many demands that came her way, Wu found herself wondering if it was “wise to spread too thin and to accomplish nothing.”

In 1938, as chairman of the National Christian Council of China, Wu was asked to head the Chinese delegation to the International Missionary Conference in Madras. Considerations for the college almost held her back, but in the end she was persuaded to go, making the decision four days before her departure.

Out of an estimated 450 delegates from seventy countries, there were only about eighty female delegates. China’s delegation, the Conference’s second largest,

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219 “Board of Founders – Annual Meeting,” 15 May 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2600, YDS.

220 “Letter from Dr. Yi-fang Wu,” 21 February 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.

221 “Excerpts from Letters from President Wu Yi-fang,” 6 June 1938, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

222 “General News from Chengtu,” 4 October 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston, Miss Griest and Miss Chester, 24 November 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2912, YDS.

223 Eva Spicer to Friends, 7 March 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2828, YDS.

220

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consisted of forty-nine members, both Chinese Christians and missionaries. Of the thirty-two Chinese Christians, only four were Chinese women. In Madras, Christian leaders John Mott and William Paton “persuaded” Wu to lead one of the conference’s sixteen sections—the only woman to serve as chair. The Chinese NCC also appointed Wu to be one of its two representatives on the Committee of the International Missionary Council. At the end of the conference, Wu was elected one of two women vice-chairmen of the International Missionary Council for the next six-year term.\textsuperscript{226} Wu also attributed the last honor to Mott.\textsuperscript{227}

Gender had originally played a role in the selection of Wu Yifang as chair of China’s NCC. Similarly, the following comments indicate she was chosen to lead the Chinese delegation to Madras partly because she was a Chinese woman. Educator Earl Cressy indicated that Wu was chosen “(1) because of her ability, (2) because she could do the work, (3) because it was desired to demonstrate to the Far East the position of women in China.” Through Wu Yifang, Cressy suggested, “Ginling is making a contribution to the position of women and the thinking about women in the whole Far East.” Cressy believed that Wu’s role had the desired effect, since there was amazement in Japan that a

\textsuperscript{224} Eva Spicer, Report, 14 January 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2828, YDS.


\textsuperscript{226} “Women and World Highways: Wu Yifang of China,” \textit{World Call}, 1940, in Box 9, 9.16, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 30 January 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2913, YDS.

\textsuperscript{227} Wu Yifang to Mr. Lovenstine, 11 February 1939, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.
woman headed the Christian Council of China and was leading the China delegation to Madras.228

Praising Wu’s performance at the Conference, one prominent Christian wrote:

It was, as far as I know, the first occasion history records when the headship of a national delegation at a world convention has been entrusted to a woman. How striking that this step should be taken not by a country of the West where woman’s struggle for opportunity dates from the Greeks, but by an Oriental people whose emancipation of womanhood can be dated by decades. How inevitable that it should occur at a Christian conference. How appropriate that the distinction should fall to a Christian woman.229

These comments suggest that Wu’s position as head of the delegation was at least partly engineered by Western Christians who wanted to effect social change and show the commitment of Christian groups to women’s participation.

In any event, Wu made an excellent presiding officer. At least one Christian educator praised Wu’s performance as chairman of the section on “Church and Education.”230 Wu herself wrote proudly that she had heard the Chinese delegation “made a very good impression, were said to be well prepared, and...gave a valuable contribution to the Conference.” Although Wu’s Chinese biographer writes that she used the opportunity to tell other delegates about the Sino-Japanese War and bolster support for China, her contemporary account indicates that is unlikely: “It seems that our

228 “Minutes of the Annual Meeting, Ginling Board of Founders,” 5 June 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2600, YDS. Emphasis in original. Wu later indicated that until Pearl Harbor, business was conducted in Shanghai, and she was only the “nominal” chairman of the NCC. “Excerpts from a letter written by Dr. Wu to Dr. Reeves,” 14 February 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

229 Comment by Professor Henry P. Van Dusen, at bottom of article by Abigail Hofsommer, “Ginling Looks West,” in World Outlook, March 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 157, Folder 2985, YDS. Emphasis in original.

230 Ibid.
friendliness with the Japanese delegation made a great impression, and many people said we were 'magnanimous.'²³¹

During the trip, Wu and Eva Spicer, also a delegate to the Conference, took the opportunity to visit schools in India.²³² Along the way, Wu found time to meet with Ginling alumnae in Kunming, Hong Kong, Singapore and Manila. Returning to Sichuan, she joined a three-day all-Sichuan post-Madras conference.²³³ One participant said that Wu's report at this conference "was like opening wide windows through which we saw the whole world and its need."²³⁴

Wu had returned to the campus in Chengdu for only two weeks when she left for Chongqing to attend meetings.²³⁵ Commenting on Wu's activities and the constant meetings she had to attend, faculty member Florence Kirk concluded, "And all the time we want her here badly."²³⁶ In fact, Wu was away from the campus so much in 1938 and the beginning of 1939—staying only a few weeks each time before leaving again—that in mid-1939 West China faculty jokingly asked her where and when she would be going next.²³⁷ At least one person observed that alumnae and students were "not happy" with the president's frequent absences.²³⁸

²³¹ Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 30 January 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2913, YDS; Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 88.
²³² Eva Spicer, Report, 14 January 1938.
²³³ Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 30 January 1939.
²³⁵ Eva Spicer to Friends, 7 March 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2828, YDS.
²³⁶ Florence Kirk to Miss Griest, 14 January 1938, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2762, YDS. Emphasis in original.
²³⁷ Wu Yifang to Mrs. Rhead, 31 May 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2810, YDS.
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Due to meetings in Chongqing, Wu missed the opening of the college in 1939, and was back in Chengdu for only a week when Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling came to town. Wu’s time was taken up in meetings and conferences with Soong and local women’s organizations. Soong Mei-ling also joined a party at Ginling, giving an “impromptu and inspiring talk” to the students, telling them that Ginling should be training 1500 women instead of 150. She also asked Wu for more Ginling graduates for rural service.239

After Pearl Harbor, with Shanghai cut off, Wu found herself even busier with meetings as National Christian organizations set up emergency committees in Chengdu and Chongqing.240 In addition, the YWCA general secretary, arguing that the first chairman when moving into the interior should be known in North and East China, also persuaded Wu Yifang to take the chairmanship of the National YWCA for a year.241

Often exhausted from all her activities, Wu frequently fretted that she was giving the college short shrift. When she left for a vacation in 1942, one colleague observed:

She is terribly tired and partly for that reason is also discouraged. There are reasons enough for discouragement, but they wouldn’t get her down so badly if she weren’t so tired and so constantly torn by too many claims. It is still the old problem of too many outside claims on her time and strength so that she cannot give to the college the time and thought she should and then things don’t go just right and it worries her, etc...But she is amazing in the

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238 “Dr. Lobenstine’s Talk.”

239 “Letter from President Wu Yi-fang,” 23 October 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

240 Wu Yifang to Miss Calder, 30 January 1942, Box 9, 9.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

241 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 8 January 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.
way she sticks on and doesn’t actually get sick and break down...She seems on the verge of collapse all the time, but she doesn’t collapse.242

Not wanting to leave China, Wu declined suggestions to do promotional work in America in summer 1939243 and a Twenty-fifth Anniversary endowment campaign in 1941.244 For the latter, Wu persuaded Zee to go in her stead.245

In April 1943, Wu Yifang was one of six prominent educators sent to the U.S. by the Chinese government to study the international situation and postwar reconstruction.246 Included in the assignment was fostering better understanding among the Allies and drumming up support for China in the U.S. As Wu put it, “A call came from the Government asking me to make this trip to renew contacts with old friends and to make additional friends for China.”247

While in the U.S., for her official work, she collected articles and reports on education and met with college presidents and professors. She and other members of the study group worked to give groups a more accurate assessment of China's war efforts, countering both overestimates and pessimistic predictions. In addition, Wu was kept

242 Ruth Chester (?) to Tilda Dear [Matilda Thurston], 9 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS.

243 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, Dr. Lobenstine, Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Griest, 8 May 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2913, YDS.

244 Wu Yifang to Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, 27 September 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 145, Folder 2878, YDS; Wu Yifang to Miss Calder, 15 August 1941, Box 9, 9.10, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

245 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 25 March 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2918, YDS.

246 Mrs. Mills to Friends, 9 June 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2922, YDS. The group consisted of Wu Yifang, James Yen, Gui Zhiyan and Chen Yuan of National Wuhan University, Wu Jingchao from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Li Zhuomin of Nankai University.

247 “Statement from Dr. Wu,” 7 May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2999, YDS.

225
busy meeting with various Christian organizations and giving speeches. She also found time to pick up an honorary Doctor of Laws from Smith College. When a doctor advised rest for low hemoglobin, Wu conceded that she needed it, since she found it difficult to concentrate and was easily distracted. It was to be three months, however, before she was able to take the time off, spending August in a lodge in the Poconos.

Wu continued with her busy schedule of official activities and college business throughout fall 1943. In December 1943, she was invited to the White House for lunch with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whom she described as “informal and cordial.” Wu gave Mrs. Roosevelt a piece of embroidery from Ginling students. When Dean Zhang Xianglan became ill in Chengdu, Wu, who was supposed to stay until February, canceled her engagements and began the trip back in January 1944.

One example of the competing demands on Wu’s time was the dilemma she faced in 1943 when she was asked to join a Chinese delegation to Britain, intended as a response to a British parliamentarian group’s visit. Chiang Kai-shek wanted Wu Yifang on the delegation, but Wu insisted she had important meetings to attend in

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248 Wu Yifang to Members of the Executive Committee, Ginling College, 5 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

249 Wu Yifang to Family, 19 May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2922, YDS.

250 Wu Yifang to Ruth [Chester], 9 September 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

251 Wu Yifang to Members of the Executive Committee, Ginling College, 2 November 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

252 Wu Yifang to Jane [Thomas], 13 December 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2711, YDS.

253 Wu Yifang to Dr. Chester, 19 November 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

254 "Statement from Dr. Wu," 7 May 1943.

226
America, would be able to accomplish more in the U.S. where she had better connections—and that she was not "political-minded."  Wu, in fact, had another consideration. She was worried that various aspects of Chinese politics would be difficult to explain.

Wu changed her mind about declining the invitation, however, when she learned she had been appointed head of the Women’s Division of the Youth Corps. Since she "certainly would not wish" to accept that appointment, and she did not want to refuse both "government calls," she agreed to go to Britain. Ultimately, however, due to difficulties with her schedule, Wu was excused from joining the delegation.

Returning to Chengdu from her U.S. visit, Wu began a bruising speaking schedule along with her regular duties. She found it difficult to refuse to speak:

Because of my knowledge of American ways and the present condition there, I should tell those that do not know anything about such things how to meet our friends. I cannot help being attracted to do my bit in promoting mutual understanding and satisfactory cooperation.

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255 "Translation of Cable Received in Washington June 22," "Background," and "Copy of Letter from British Embassy," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 2922, YDS.

256 Wu Yifang to Dr. Sze-ming Sze, 29 June 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2732, YDS.

257 Wu Yifang to Members of the Executive Committee, Ginling College, 5 July 1943. Wu explained in another letter that she did not want to accept the appointment because a previous head resigned "because it was all under the management of the men's division and she hardly had authority to say anything about it." Wu Yifang to Dr. Djang Hsiang-lan (Zhang Xianglan), 7 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 2737, YDS.

258 Wu Yifang to Paul and Harriet [Meyer], 13 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2782, YDS.

259 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Members of the Board, 1 April 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.

227
To that end, Wu gave twenty-six talks in March 1944. As an excellent speaker, Wu was often asked to speak at various functions. When U.S. Vice-President Henry Wallace came to Chengdu in June 1944, Wu Yifang was asked to propose a toast.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 27 July 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.} By all accounts an excellent presiding officer, Wu was also often called upon to take charge of meetings.

While the college was benefited by Wu’s links with outside organizations, on the flip side, her absences made it difficult to get college business done. Illustrating the importance of Wu’s presence, when she was in bed with kidney trouble for several weeks in 1944, committee meetings, conferences, individual talks and even a Board Executive Committee meeting took place in her room.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Friends, 30 December 1944, Box 9, 9.11, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

As early as 1936, Zee suggested that Ginling should train someone as acting president to step in when Wu was away. Arguing that Ginling needed to produce more leaders like Wu, Zee concluded,

> I often laugh when I learn that the buildings are to stand for 300 years and yet policy and administrative leadership are not provided for over 3 years ahead. What’s the use of maintaining a group of buildings without insuring the transmissibility of leadership in administration?\footnote{Mrs. New to Miss Griest, 31 December 1936, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 139, Folder 2790, YDS.}

The college and the Board recognized that Wu’s outside activities interfered seriously with her administrative duties and discussed various options for administrative help for Wu—hiring a vice-president or a dean, etc.—but the problem was never fully
resolved, although a rearrangement of administrative duties in 1939 helped ease it.\(^{263}\) Wu Yifang also tried to reduce the number of activities she was involved in; for example, on several occasions, she tried unsuccessfully to resign as chairman of the NCC.\(^{264}\) Nevertheless, she remained busy with outside activities until after the end of the war.

**Vexing Issues of Salary and Staffing**

Wu continued to push for strengthening the Ginling faculty, but with their low salaries, Christian institutions like Ginling had trouble recruiting and keeping staff. It is not surprising that Ginling could not attract good candidates; by 1942, the salary of Ginling faculty was lower than middle school teachers, although Ginling teachers also received various subsidies.\(^{265}\)

The personnel problem, Wu declared in April 1941, was often the “most difficult and discouraging problem to face.”\(^{266}\) In the later war years, the problem became more acute since Chinese students in America had trouble returning and additional American faculty could not be sent out. Largely frustrated in efforts to get faculty, Wu could only

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\(^{263}\) "Letter from President Wu Yi-fang to Miss Griest," 10 November 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2914, YDS.

\(^{264}\) Wu Yifang to Bishop W.Y. Chen, 2 November 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS; "Extract from Dr. Wu's letter to Mrs. New," 6 February 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

\(^{265}\) Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Mr. Evans, 17 March 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

\(^{266}\) Wu Yifang to Miss Griest, 21 April 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2918, YDS.
counsel that it was very important to have "reinforcements" ready to come at the end of the war.\footnote{267}

In addition, increased marriage rates added to the difficulty, since women faculty often left after marriage. Complaining to Matilda Thurston, Wu also noted that although the college was hiring men, they were "not exactly the type that we would like to have as active Christian men on the faculty."\footnote{268} Treasurer Elsie Priest, however, suspected that it was the college's own fault it did not find good men for the faculty. Ginling, with its many "strong-minded women," did not treat men well and led them to believe they had no place or part to play at the college.\footnote{269}

Wu made constant appeals to the Board in New York to find the funds necessary to carry on the college work. The following is typical:

...if Ginling is meeting a need and has a place as the only union college for women in the whole program of Christian Higher Education in China. If the answer is in the affirmative because of her record, then the budget is necessary in order to maintain the standard and give the adequate training. I meet with constant calls for Ginling graduates in various kinds of women's work and it is a challenge for us to carry on...\footnote{270}

\footnote{267} "Letter from Dr. Wu to Mrs. W. Plumer Mills," 29 July 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.

\footnote{268} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston, 17 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 2850, YDS. As for marriage rates among alumnae—many teaching staff were alumnae—Wu reported a few months later that the rate had increased from 25 percent in 1936 to 33 percent in spring 1942, which she attributed to a general trend of increased marriages during wartime. Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 19 January 1943, Box 5, 5.5, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. As far as an "active Christian man," Wu told such a candidate in 1945 that she hoped he would lead the other men to take an active role in extra-curricular activities and after his marriage, his home would be a "family center" for student groups, especially Christian fellowship. Wu Yifang to Edwin Sih-Ung Kwoh, 13 December 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2767, YDS.

\footnote{269} "Letter from Miss Elsie M. Priest, Chengtu, Szechuan to Miss Rebecca W. Griest," 13 August 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2804, YDS.

\footnote{270} Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 12 April 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2918, YDS.
Salary differentials continued to pose difficulties. In general, salaries of the foreign staff remained higher than Chinese staff.271 Indeed, since foreign faculty were paid in gold, by 1940, with an increase in exchange rates, their salary was eight times that of a Chinese woman professor with a Ph.D. degree. The Board in New York and some of the Western faculty themselves, increasingly uncomfortable with the rise in exchange, called for action to equalize salaries. Wu Yifang, however, suggested caution. While agreeing in principle that salaries should be equal, Wu pointed to the difference in living standards and other obligations, the fact that exchange rates were impossible to predict, and the difficulty of equalizing salaries when Chinese salaries could not be raised immediately. She suggested that instead, the college should try to help Chinese faculty by adding perks like sabbatical leave and retirement benefits; meanwhile, the foreign group could voluntarily do something with their present actual income.272 At least two Western faculty, Chester and Sutherland, returned a portion of their salary to the college treasury.

Wu even suggested that the Chinese faculty were not all that concerned with the difference.

I have always thought that one strong point of our Ginling faculty is the spirit of oneness without distinction of the foreign and Chinese. Recently my own impression was strengthened through conversations with some

271 A surviving salary list from 1937-1938, for example, indicates that all of the foreign female professors received a higher salary than Wu Yifang. The highest salary, however, was budgeted to the chair of the Mathematics/Physics department, followed by one of the professors in the Chinese department—likely indicating that these positions were hard to fill and/or occupied by men. (As in Ginling’s early years, a comparison of the compensation received by Chinese and foreigners is difficult because of considerable differences not only in salaries but also in perks.) See “Details of salary list for 1937-1938,” 6 July 1937, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2911, YDS. This was the budgeted amount only; due to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, salaries were greatly reduced.

272 Wu Yifang to Miss Hodge, 7 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.
Chinese members of our faculty. These people have not sensed any indication of dissatisfaction or complaint because our foreign group are getting the benefit of exchange. We should all be thankful for this spirit and we administrators should not do anything to call attention to the matter of money.273

Foreigners were not immune to the rampant inflation in Free China, however. By fall 1942, they were spending 70 percent of their salaries for board, service and laundry, and the college was recommending a salary increase.274

In addition to differences in Western and Chinese salaries, married male faculty members were originally paid more than women of the same rank. In 1940, the Board in China approved equal salaries,275 but the policy was not put into effect until 1942. Noting that the women faculty had felt a women's institution was "not treating them fairly"—especially since men's institutions and government offices paid women and men the same—Wu expressed relief at the news.276 The same year, some faculty members continued to complain, however, that men were being treated better than women—namely, that the college provided housing subsidies for men who chose to live off

273 "From Dr. Wu in Chungking," 15 April 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

274 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 11 October 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.

275 "Board of Directors Executive Committee in Chengtu, Ginling College," 25 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2621, YDS.

276 The main problem seems to have been the allocation of special commodity grants—an important part of salary in the war years—which had favored men with families. On at least one occasion, Wu had unsuccessful pressed for extra consideration for single teachers, many of whom had family obligations of their own. "Letter from Dr. Wu to Mrs. W. Plumer Mills," 29 July 1942.
campus, while the same option was not available to women. Wu Yifang suggested that in fact, women were better compensated than men.\footnote{Suggestions of faculty to President Wu, November 1942, and her response, 21 December 1942, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.}

\textit{Wu Yifang's Views on China's Future and the Postwar World}

In spring 1938, Wu began her involvement in another type of work outside the college when she was appointed a delegate to China's first People's Political Council (PPC). With only ten women in a body of two hundred, Wu felt she could not refuse.\footnote{"Excerpts from Letters from President Wu Yi-fang," 25 June 1938, Box 9, 9.9, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

In 1941, Wu Yifang was elected to the five-person PPC Presidium. She explained that in addition to Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Boling, three other places were for minor political parties. When the Communists declined to participate, a place was then given to a woman member, and Wu Yifang was chosen. "The thing that amused me as well as annoyed me was the undue praise given to my ability in presiding." Wu told a Ginling alumna in the U.S. "It appeared as if the men never expected a woman to be able to have a clear head about parliamentary procedure, and to preside at a large gathering."\footnote{Wu Yifang to Dju Djuoh-fang (Zhu Jiaofang), 5 August 1941, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA. The fact that Wu was not a member of a political party was also likely important. She told Thurston in 1944 that she was chosen to preside for that reason. Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 20 December 1944, Box 5, 5.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.}

Zhu Xuepo notes that local newspapers deemed her the best presiding officer. When emotions ran high, Wu Yifang was able to calm the group.\footnote{Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 89-90.} A reporter who covered the PPC later recalled why she was such a successful chairperson: she was

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capable, hard-working, familiar with the democratic process, dealt with the motions in a closely reasoned and well-argued fashion, and got right to the point.²⁸¹

Wu Yifang hoped for democratic political reform and she believed that the PPC was a step in the right direction. In 1942, for example, Wu wrote enthusiastically about the recent meeting:

There was a fine spirit among the members, both in support of the government, and in frank discussion of the various problems. While such a council is not a real legislature...I feel that it is serving a good purpose. The members coming from the various parts of the country, and representing different professions, bringing the peoples' opinion to the Central Government, and in return we hear of the policies and actual accomplishments of the governmental departments. We also consider it a privilege to hear from the Generalissimo himself, and we cannot help to be impressed by his great personality and leadership.²⁸²

In a 1943 speech in America, Wu suggested that the PPC had made three contributions to the “democratic way of life”: it served as a “training laboratory for a really representative legislature,” provided an opportunity for leaders from around the country to meet each other and get to know government leaders, and members were able to report on conditions and opinions from around the country.²⁸³

The fall 1944 meeting of the PPC, Wu wrote, was the best she had attended. She noted that the Council tackled important questions like better pay for civil servants and armed forces, corruption and multi-party cooperation. To Wu, the most important

²⁸¹ Shi Ximin, “Daonian Wu Yifang nushi.”

²⁸² Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 17 November 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.

²⁸³ “Education for Democracy in Wartime China,” 14 June 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2922, YDS.
achievement was the frank interchange of opinions between members and government representatives.

From newspaper reports you must have heard that this session of the P.P.C. was more active than earlier ones. Actually, it was because of the serious condition of the military situation that all the people were concerned and expressed themselves more frankly than the formal Chinese courtesy would have approved. However, it was a splendid meeting, and in spite of criticisms of the present condition, there was still support of the present Government, and the earnest desire to help in improving the present condition. The Government representatives also showed splendid spirit in making reports, and in answering all sorts of questions fired at them by the members of the P.P.C. I was much encouraged and felt that the Assembly was gradually becoming similar to a real assembly of people's representatives.284

Speaking at a World Christianity Meeting in Detroit, Wu depicted a bright future for China, Christianity and the Christian Colleges:

In order to contribute her share as a worthy member of the United Nations, China desires first to strengthen and develop herself as a modern nation. In the enlarged program of development there will be increased need for well-qualified men and women. Furthermore the colossal task of rehabilitation after so many years of war will necessitate leadership not only with technical knowledge but also with genuine Christian ideals. This is a strategic time for Christian colleges and universities to provide more and stronger leaders both missionary and Chinese. As Christians who already have a sense of fellowship in Christ which is beyond racial or nationalistic lines, we have a special responsibility in the efforts toward planning a new world by the different nations to see that Christ's way of life is given consideration as a basis not only for individual lives but for all human relationships.285

Impressed with the interest she found in postwar planning and in securing a just and durable peace, Wu suggested that the United Nations could serve as a foundation for

284 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 17 October 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3000, YDS.
the realization of the Chinese ideal of "world brotherhood." Christians, she further elaborated in another speech, had to strengthen their faith in world order. Declaring that China's major religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism—were traditionally tolerant, Wu pointed to the importance of the Confucian precepts of tolerance and moderation for the postwar brotherhood of nations:

Golden mean teaches us not go to the extreme. It further teaches us "to find the central clue to our moral being which unites us to the universal order." When we think about the construction of a world order, we realize what a tremendous task it is. The various cultures and nations have, in their aspirations, developed different beliefs, different convictions, different goals. In the process of bringing them together, the principle of finding a central clue may offer a working basis for progress.

The "central clue," Wu suggested, is the "moral purpose of God in the destiny of mankind." 287

Speaking on a more secular topic, Wu de-强调化 religion but still argued that East and West needed to work together and complement each other in order for the postwar order to be effective. The "ethical philosophy" of the East and the "practical realization" of the West were meeting in common cause—"On this solid foundation we are confident of the establishment of a just and durable peace." 288 Wu also had high hopes for Ginling's role in the postwar world:

The demand for leadership is terrific, and yet we are convinced that if we try our best, in the College under Christian auspices, we shall be able to send out strong women to fill some of these needs...Over there we have been trying to do a little in the training of Chinese women and we feel that we have done

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286 "Summary of Speech by Dr. Yi-Fang Wu Recorded July 31, 1943 For Office of War Information, New Yor [sic], N.Y., My Impressions in America."

287 Wu Yifang, "Christians and World Order," Paper given at triennial meeting of the Women's Auxiliary to the National Council in Cleveland, Ohio, October 1943.

288 "Education for Democracy in Wartime China."
very little; but in God's plan, even this little will mean something in bringing
Christian ideals into the building up of the post-war world and in establishing
international peace and justice.289

Wu's comments on a "splendid" 1946 commencement address given by the Indian
agent-general further illustrate her belief that China would play an important role in the
new world order:

He closed with a remarkable challenge to China – that China with her
cultural heritage, in facing the post-war world, may make a unique
contribution by developing a way of life midway between capitalism and
communism, between collectivism and individualism [sic], between
materialism and spiritualism, and so become the centre of enlightened
civilization. What a challenge this is! And at a time when China has been
exhausted by the war. I am reminded of what the sage, Mencius, said: "Thus,
when heaven is about to confer a great task on any man, it first exercises his
mind with sufferings, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body
to hunger, and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his
undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature,
and supplies his incompetencies [sic]."

Despite the difficulties that lay ahead—rebuilding, industrialization, and change to a
constitutional government—Wu wrote, "if we do have sufficient vision, courage and
persistence to come through this period of fiery trial, we may be able to contribute
something to a better world order."290

Convinced that educational work would help determine the direction of China's
development, in a speech on "Education for Democracy in Wartime China," Wu
explained that Chinese were working to prepare themselves, through education and self-
discipline, for the task of building a "strong and enduring democracy – a democracy
which will cooperate with the great American people and other freedom-loving nations in

289 "Speech by Dr. Wu Yi-feng at the Ginling Luncheon," 7 May 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box
148, Folder 2922, YDS.

290 Wu Yifang to Friends, 16 April 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

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establishing a greater degree of security and freedom and opportunity for all.” Thus China was maintaining educational institutions at all costs. Wu argued that through education, the government was raising the cultural level of the people, training personnel for reconstruction, and educating the country for democracy. To that end, technical subjects should not overshadow a liberal education. Quoting Edgar Snow and Hu Shi, Wu argued that democracy was workable in China despite the lack of a formal set-up.291

In another speech, representing the Christian Colleges in China in a talk for the Associated Boards, Wu addressed concerns about academic freedom in China. Despite her own worries about the new Ministry of Education regulations—she later suggested that the Ministry’s attempts to raise standards through standardization of programs was a process “tending to endanger academic freedom”292—Wu told this audience that the Ministry was pushing for higher standards and that “definite plans and definite organization” were necessary during the war years to get the whole nation behind the “gigantic struggle for our own existence.” Wu also reassured her audience that Chiang Kai-shek would not become a dictator and would implement a constitutional republic after the war. She told them that the Communist Party, which had its own army, appointed its own officials and belonged to the Third Socialist International, could not become just another minor political party. Civil war was impossible, however, since the

291 “Education for Democracy in Wartime China.” This speech was given at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. on “United Nations Today and Tomorrow,” an important segment of a lecture series on China. When the committee failed to secure Soong Mei-ling and Dr. T.V. Soong, they then turned to the Chinese Study Group that was in America, who elected James Yen and Wu Yifang as their representatives. Wu Yifang to Ruth [Chester], 9 September 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

292 Wu Yifang to Dr. Frank P. Graham, 15 January 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2924, YDS.
national army was vastly superior to the Communists, and the radical communist ideology would hardly prove popular even among young people impatient for change.\textsuperscript{293}

\textit{The Training of Women for Leadership: The Struggle for an Independent Postwar Ginling}

In the 1940s, there were further attempts to strengthen and better coordinate Christian higher educational institutions in China. On the issue of women’s education, Wu Yifang found herself locking horns with two prominent Christian educators, William Fenn and Earl Cressy, who both favored coeducation.

Since Cressy had long promoted closer affiliations and cooperation between institutions, Wu Yifang was not surprised by a report he authored in 1940 presenting a negative view of Ginling. She suspected he would push for amalgamation with the University of Nanking.\textsuperscript{294}

Wu argued that implementing Cressy’s correlated program among Christian universities, in particular a better joint program of advanced classes, would be difficult. Ginling, Wu insisted, supported the principle of cooperation, but at the same time wished to maintain its academic standards and its “special emphasis on the training of young women.” She also took issue with Cressy’s implication that Ginling’s standards were low. Ginling, Wu implied, had a higher academic standard than the other colleges on the West China Union campus.\textsuperscript{295}

\textsuperscript{293} “Dr. Wu’s Talk at the Annual Dinner.”

\textsuperscript{294} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 22 June 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2916, YDS.

\textsuperscript{295} Wu Yifang to Yuh-tsung, 25 May 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.
Wu Yifang believed that female leaders could be best cultivated in a women's college. At Ginling, she argued, female students had opportunities for leadership—taking charge of student government and extra-curricular activities, for example—unavailable to them in a large co-educational institution.\textsuperscript{296} In Chengdu, Wu proudly observed that when female students were involved in joint activities, Ginling students always took the lead.\textsuperscript{297} Wu told a supporter in 1947 that, when compared with their counterparts from co-educational institutions, a much larger percentage of Ginling graduates had done prominent work in their professions or as volunteers.\textsuperscript{298}

The question of correlation and cooperation was nothing new, but Wu thought the problems were exacerbated with the issue of financing in the postwar period and an "emphasis on efficiency" in the U.S. and in China. The men's universities, Wu suggested, thought it a waste of resources to run a separate college for women—if female students were "swallowed" by a big university, there would be no need for Ginling's comparatively large budget. Wu countered that Ginling's small size was to its advantage in dealing with students as individuals and developing the whole person—part of the Christian ideal—which could only be done with small numbers.\textsuperscript{299}

To members of the Associated Boards, Wu offered the same two alternatives she had raised in relation to the proposed correlated program of the late 1920s—either

\textsuperscript{296} "Dr. Lobenstine’s Talk"; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 20 October 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.

\textsuperscript{297} Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Mr. Evans, 17 March 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

\textsuperscript{298} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 20 October 1947.

\textsuperscript{299} Wu Yifang to Yu-tsung, 10 August 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2921, YDS.
Ginling should become a university, or, participating in a correlated program, it should relocate to a new site and its counterpart would not admit women. While in the U.S. in 1943, Wu was encouraged to find that many individuals at the Associated Boards and on Ginling's Board remained in favor of a separate institution for women. In New York, one Ginling Board member told Wu to go ahead and strengthen the faculty—then, even if there should be postwar changes, Ginling would have its "own cards to show."\textsuperscript{300}

Despite criticism of Ginling in Cressy's report, Wu said that they were proud of the type of students they had at Ginling.

It has been shown that, because of the chances we have given the students to develop their personalities as a whole, in extra-curricular activities and taking responsibilities, they are more serious-minded and are trained not to be pushing and seeking for themselves, but to be quietly doing their own work and duties faithfully.

She gave the following example. In May 1941, the Ministry of Education issued orders requiring a special graduation exam. When Chengdu students called for a strike, two Ginling student representatives helped defuse the situation by postponing a decision. Wu recalled that the students' move had occasioned praise in the newspaper; the Ministry of Education "showed appreciation" for the help in avoiding an awkward situation by increasing Ginling's grant.\textsuperscript{301}

Regarding a recommendation for maximum coordination of educational programs, Wu told the Board in New York that because of government regulations, there was now little difference in the academic programs of the University of Nanking and Ginling—except that Ginling emphasized courses particularly designed for women.

\textsuperscript{300} Wu Yifang to Dr. Chester, 24 July 1943, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923, YDS.

\textsuperscript{301} "Speech by Dr. Wu Yi-fang at the Ginling Luncheon," 7 May 1943.
Echoing Matilda Thurston's argument that there would be a difference between men's and women's higher education, Wu noted, "In science, for instance, men are more interested in chemical engineering and agriculture, while women are inclined to choose physiology and bio-chemistry." Women, she added, "are naturally interested in music and home economics."^{302}

Wu suggested that in the coordination plan, size had not been adequately considered. If autonomous small colleges approximately the same size formed a university—as was the case in Toronto and Oxford, the two models often touted for correlation—each could make a "distinct contribution." That would not be the case if a small college [Ginling] and a large university [University of Nanking] were coordinated. In fact, noted Wu, when the women's colleges were combined at Yenching, West China Union University and Cheloo, they lost their identity in the larger entity, which essentially became coeducational institutions.\(^{303}\)

Ginling, Wu declared, would make its "most effective contribution to the educational program in China" as a separate unit. She suggested that Ginling become a university by adding a College of Education—if Ginling had university standing, "real cooperation" with the University of Nanking would be possible. Referring to the special contributions of Christian education—"the training of teachers in the humanities, the

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^{302} "Minutes of Meeting, Board of Founders, Ginling College," 28 June 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2602, YDS.

^{303} Ibid.
encouraging of a spirit of international cooperation, and the development of character and loyalty”—Wu argued that Ginling had made a credible showing in all. 304

In spring 1943, Christian educators, looking to the postwar world, established planning committees in Britain, China and the U.S. to once again consider better coordination among the Christian colleges in China. Included in the latter two were discussions on the education of women and independent women’s colleges. The discussions engendered uncertainty over the future of these colleges, negatively affecting morale at Ginling. 305

The planning committees issued their reports in 1945. The American Planning Committee recommended that Ginling maintain its identity and autonomy, coordinating wherever possible with the University of Nanking. 306 The Chinese Planning Commission, however, suggested that Ginling become the women’s college of the University of Nanking, retaining its own budget as an administrative unit of the University. It would offer majors only in Music, Home Economics-Euthenics, Physical Education and Social Service. Other majors would take their courses at the University of Nanking but reside in the Ginling dormitories. If this arrangement was unacceptable to either institution, the Commission recommended that Ginling remain a college of arts and sciences with an enrollment not to exceed 250, offering only the above courses. These recommendations were not accepted at the Council of Higher Education meeting where

304 Ibid.

305 “Future Plans for Ginling,” 28 November 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2609, YDS.

306 Wu Yifang to Sisters [alumnae in U.S.], 31 December 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3001, YDS.
they were presented, however. Instead, the Council appointed a commission to continue studying the issue of women's education in China. This commission, considering the recommendations from both planning committees, later recommended that Ginling should "retain its identity and such autonomy as it wishes to retain."307

Wu harshly criticized the China Planning Commission's suggestions. To her, the report, authored by William Fenn, showed a "complete lack of understanding of women's education"; therefore, there would be no basis of understanding necessary for cooperation. Wu also noted that in China's university organization, the commission's suggestion of maintaining a small autonomous unit within a university was nearly impossible.308

Wu maintained that Ginling should remain independent, cooperating voluntarily in educational programs and facilities with the University of Nanking. Such cooperation would be difficult to implement, however, since rumors of amalgamation had led to bad feeling between the two colleges. The American Planning Committee's Report, Wu observed, indicated that proposals for the individual institutions must keep in mind an overall plan which took into account the needs of China, the needs of the Christian Movement, and the Chinese government's educational policies. Ginling, Wu argued, was addressing all of these. Ginling was helping meet China's "desperate need for the training of women leadership with a Christian spirit of service." This leadership

307 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 1 November 1945, Box 5, 5.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Wu Yifang to Sisters, 31 December 1945; "Statement on Future Plans for Ginling by Dr. Wu," 28 November 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

308 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills and Mrs. New, 5 January 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS. It appears that William Fenn never did recognize Wu's argument. In his 1976 book on the Christian colleges, he treats the women's colleges as an aside and does not acknowledge the gender problems inherent in cooperation between institutions such as Ginling and the University of Nanking. He also implied that the women at Yenching were happy with the merger there. Fenn, Christian Higher Education in Changing China, 68-70 and 174-181.
consisted of a combination of "splendid academic preparation, professional attitude toward work, mature attitude toward marriage and the spirit of Christian service."

Agreeing with the sentiment that "leadership cannot be developed by mass production," Wu suggested that this was especially true for Chinese women,

...in the sense that they are modest and have to be given the optimum environment in order to develop both passive and active abilities. In the state of women’s movements in China now, there is a critical need of women to give increasingly substantial contribution both to professions and, as citizens, to the community. It seems to me that the Christian movement will be answering a call if a separate woman’s college can be maintained to provide a center for the favorable training for the leadership necessary to meet the day.

As for the needs of the Christian movement as a whole, Ginling could serve "as a center for international cooperation among women and a demonstration of international teamwork in teaching as well as in administration.” Finally, regarding the Chinese government’s educational policies, Wu was optimistic that despite the trend toward standardization of China’s educational system, Ginling, as the only independent women’s college, would be more likely to secure government permission to experiment than a big university.309

Wu also suggested that Ginling could secure wider support in the U.S. and China if it remained an independent college for women rather than a unit of a larger university.

Furthermore, the environment of the Christian Colleges provided good opportunity for

309 “Statement on Future Plans for Ginling by Dr. Wu.” In arguing for Ginling’s contribution as an independent women’s college, Wu had the support of many women connected to Ginling. Hearing of the proposed amalgamation, the faculty, students, alumnae and other supporters rallied to the college, writing letters in its support that echoed Wu Yifang’s arguments. See, for example, Group of Ginling Alumnae on College Faculty to Mrs. Mills, 21 September 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727. Another letter notes that women would lose out on opportunities in faculty and administration in a coeducational setting. See “Comments from Ginling College, Chengtu, on the Report of the Chinese Planning Commission for Christian Higher Education in China.” Received in New York 28 November 1945, Box 9, 9.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS. It is unclear why Wu does not refer to the other independent women’s college, Huanan in Fujian.
“character-building” and the “development of the whole personality,” which relied largely on close contact between faculty and students.310

The attempts for better cooperation and coordination were largely unsuccessful and no decision was made before the Communist takeover in 1949. With the mandate for Ginling to continue as an independent women’s college, Wu looked toward the college’s future. In 1946, discussing the return to Nanjing, she suggested strengthening English, Sociology, Music, Biology, Chemistry and Home Economics and establishing a nursery school in connection with Sociology and Home Economics as in Chengdu, to reach homes and train students in child welfare. In addition to the regular curriculum, Wu hoped to maintain and expand extension work through a rural service station and re-establishing Ginling’s neighborhood center. Through these programs, the college should “do its part in helping the common masses to become more intelligent citizens,” essential as China moved to a democratic government. Wu also thought that Ginling, as a college for women, should participate in women’s activities at the local and the national level. Hoping that Ginling would develop into a center for international cooperation among women leaders, Wu presented to Wellesley and Smith a project of inviting faculty to Ginling for sabbatical leave.311

A plan to unify the trustee boards of the Chinese Christian colleges in the early 1940s also caused Wu “grave concern” that Ginling’s interest would be lost in a large group, especially one made up largely of representatives of men’s or co-educational

310 “Future Plans for Ginling,” in “Minutes of First Meeting Ginling College Committee of the United Board for Christian Colleges in China,” 28 November 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2609, YDS.

311 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 5 January 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.
colleges. She conceded, however, that as a union institution, Ginling should not stand by itself when other Christian institutions favored greater cooperation. Probably more importantly, she realized that financially, Ginling might not be able to maintain high academic standards with its own board. In 1945, the boards of six of the Protestant colleges, including Ginling, were merged, forming the United Board for Christian Colleges in China. Five other Christian college boards joined later.

While in New York in 1943, Wu suggested that one or two prominent educators be sent out to make an objective study of Christian higher education in order to formulate postwar plans. A year later, she added Christian higher education for women as one of the topics of consideration.

Now when I start thinkin [sic] about the future of Christian education, I naturally think of it for men and for women. When men do the planning, however, they quite often think of the men and take for granted that women will come in to receive the same benefits. Some may think that with the addition of such subjects as music and home economic [sic] women's education is well taken care of. Yet when we think of the best training for women we must admit that whether they are to be trained in a big coeducational institution or in a separate woman's college, the question deserves study and careful planning by those who are qualified.

Suggesting that a prominent female educator be sent for the task, Wu commented, "At this time, when a thorough study is needed, it will depend upon the women

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312 “Board of Founders Ginling College, Adjourned Meeting,” 27 May 1941, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2601, YDS.

313 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Thurston, letter fragment, 9 June 1941, RG 668, Folder 35, SNA.

314 Fenn, Christian Higher Education in Changing China, 182.
themselves to give the time and thinking to this problem and then present the conclusions when the whole question of Christian education is to be considered.\textsuperscript{315}

Indeed, Wu Yifang had increasingly come to believe that women had to be more involved in affairs that concerned them. In a letter to an alumna, she commented, “I have learned in recent years that we women have to fight for the privilege and opportunities for women. We should at the same time prove worthy of the privileges.”\textsuperscript{316} Expressing regret that a women’s government organization was eliminated in Jiangxi, Wu wrote, “This shows to me that we women should pay more attention to the developments in the governmental set-up. There certainly is a great deal more that we must do before proper measures may be taken to safeguard the interests of women.”\textsuperscript{317}

Commenting on a Ministry of Education suggestion that government middle schools establish separate units for girls, Wu wrote,

The general impression is that many people think that education for women has failed because they have not produced good home-makers. From our stand, we have to see the possible danger of a “back to the kitchen” tendency here in China when women have not yet been educated enough and have taken enough interest in professions or community activities. It seems to me that we have the responsibility of setting the right attitude on what a college education should do and this can be done only by institutions that have been especially established by women.\textsuperscript{318}

Quick to point out the changes to the position of women in the new China, Wu also noted that the new status posed a challenge. In a 1934 newsletter, she was quoted as

\textsuperscript{315} Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 10 August 1944, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2925, YDS. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{316} Wu Yifang to Miss Du Lung-yuen, 2 March 1942, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

\textsuperscript{317} Wu Yifang to Miss [Du Lung-yuen], 10 November 1942, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

\textsuperscript{318} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 19 January 1943.
saying that the position of women in the new China is equal politically, legally, and economically to men. She asked, “If we accept all these rights, are we intellectually ready to make a contribution to the community? Will we use our rights as opportunities for giving our best to others?”319

Featured prominently in a publicity pamphlet is this quote from Wu Yifang: “If a Chinese woman is well trained and qualified, she may compete equally with men for any position from the highest government office down. Only as women become educated can we expect them to step into their places as leaders.”320 Wu told one of Ginling’s last classes that there was no difference between male and female, and that women should rely on their own abilities to establish themselves in society.321 She reminded 1947 graduates that they were 1/2000 (the one Chinese woman out of two thousand with a college education).322

Despite these sentiments, Wu’s assertion that a Christian women’s college should offer special programs for training female rural workers, teachers for home economics, child welfare workers and her suggestion that Ginling focus on a few programs may have served to channel Ginling students into jobs specifically for women. But it is unclear if Wu actually envisioned a Christian women’s college training women that worked with other women and children, or if this was merely a byproduct of Ginling having to prove its worth as an independent college for women. Indeed, it would be ironic if Wu Yifang,

319 Ginling Newsletter, February 1934, Box 9, 9.29, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
320 “Ginling College Primer,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2973, YDS.
321 Dai Aiyun and Shen Yunfen, “Cuoduo suiyue nainerwei,” (Thought-provoking days of the past) in Jinling muer, 391.

249
whose own life was a sequence of significant “firsts” and “onlies”—the first woman chairman of the NCC, the only woman on the PPC Presidium, the only woman in the Chinese delegation to the San Francisco Conference, etc.—steered her own students toward “women’s work.” Wu’s stance, like Thurston’s, may be partly attributable to the fact that Ginling, from the advent of co-education, had to justify its existence—and separate courses especially suitable for women students may have been an argument of which Chinese and foreign supporters of the college could approve.

Both Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang agreed that Ginling’s purpose was to cultivate female leaders, but their emphasis was different. Thurston envisioned Ginling supplying Christian women leaders to further the Christian work. Wu emphasized the “Christian spirit of service,” but this could be put to use for both secular and religious goals. Wu was more concerned with cultivating personalities and producing graduates that would serve China and its people. Indeed, she once suggested that female rural workers in Sichuan resembled “the missionaries of the older days,” indicating she saw the two as similar, if not the same.323

Speaking to the Ginling Board, Wu noted the increase in women in higher educational institutions, arguing more women were seeking education in wartime because they had “stepped out of their homes and taken their real share in the national effort.”324

323 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Macmillan, 17 February 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2915, YDS.

324 “Speech by Dr. Wu Yi-fang at the Ginling Luncheon.”
She also praised the various wartime efforts of Chinese women in an essay, *Women in the War*, and a speech on “Women in Wartime China.”

Wu apparently agreed with Thurston that there are inherent gender differences between men and women. When the secretary of Chengdu’s Christian Student Movement said that Ginling students showed more interest in topics of war and peace than other groups, for example, Wu commented that this indicated “that by nature women are deeply concerned with such values as the preservation of human life.”

**Chinese Delegate to the San Francisco Conference**

From April-June 1945, delegates from fifty nations met in San Francisco to draw up the United Nations charter. Wu Yifang was the only woman on the nine-member Chinese delegation led by Premier T.V. Soong.

Learning in early March 1945 that she was selected for the delegation, Wu made an unsuccessful attempt to decline for health considerations—she had been ill with kidney trouble for months—and because she had college business to attend to. Wu expressed concern that she had been chosen just because the government wanted a

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325 Wu Yifang, “Women in the War,” reprinted in the *Chinese Recorder* 71 (June 1940): 369-373. This was Wu’s chapter in the book *China Rediscovers Her West*. Although Wu Yifang was listed as co-editor, Eva Spicer actually did the editing for the book—Wu lent her name and agreed to write a chapter. Eva Spicer, General Letter, 17 January 1940, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 142, Folder 2828, YDS.

326 “Excerpts From An Address By Dr. Yi-Fang Wu On ‘Women in Wartime China,’ ” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2923. YDS.

327 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Morrow, 5 October 1940.
woman on the delegation, but added that she was told that her status as a member of the PPC Presidium was also a factor.328

Despite attempts to safeguard her health, there was little hope that Wu would not be overtaxed. The Conference opened on April 25, and she was soon involved in a busy round of social and promotional engagements.329 By June 1945, she had received 142 invitations to dinners, luncheons, cocktails, talks, radio broadcasts, and visits to schools. She gave twenty-four talks, eleven broadcasts, fourteen interviews and five press conferences, in addition to the regular Conference work.330 Wu also found time to accept honorary degrees from Mills College and the University of Southern California. Zee and another Ginling graduate, Zhu Jiaofang, as well as former faculty member Ettie Chin, served as her aides.331

Recalling the Conference years later, Wu Yifang complained that the Chinese delegation had been slighted. Instead of having its own position, it merely followed the U.S. lead. America's delegates did not even bother to have discussions with their Chinese counterparts.332 Wu's comments were one element in lengthy diatribes against

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328 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 24 March 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS; Wu Yifang to Sisters [alumnae in U.S.], 22 June 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS; Elsie M. Priest to Mr. Evans, 27 March 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3001, YDS.

329 "Schedule of Events—April 25 to May 13, for Wu Yifang, Delegate to the United Nations on International Organization, 1945," UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS.

330 Wu Yifang to Sisters, 22 June 1945.

331 Zhu Jiaofang, "He xiaozhang zaixichide rizili," (The days spent in the company of President Wu) in Wu Yifang jin ia n ji, 165-166.

the U.S., common in Chinese speeches and articles in the early 1970s, and should thus be put in this context. Nevertheless, although her impressions might have been exaggerated, someone as concerned about the international situation and as hopeful for a strong postwar role for China as Wu Yifang could not but have been disappointed.

In contemporary documents, however, she made no such complaints. Instead, she continued to put pressure on China:

The Security Council has given much power to the Big Five; yet they are to assume the responsibility of keeping peace. China as one of the “Five” must build up herself, develop a strong democracy and industrialize in order to support our moral stand on respecting international law and justice. I see a great future for our country, but it depends upon how our government and people will respond.\[^333\]

After the signing of the U.N. charter on June 26, Wu hurried off to New York for college business. She was one of several members of the Chinese delegation invited by British statesman and San Francisco Conference delegate Lord Halifax to visit England on their way back to China,\[^334\] but a consultation with a doctor in New York for a gynecological problem resulted in a strong recommendation for surgery. Reluctantly, she declined the invitation to England and pushed back her return to China.\[^335\]

Her recovery set back by complications, Wu spent nearly four weeks in the hospital.\[^336\] She was therefore lying in bed recuperating in New York City when she

\[^333\] Wu Yifang to Sisters, 22 June 1945.

\[^334\] Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 4 June 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS.

\[^335\] Ginling New York Office to Ruth Chester, 20 July 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS.

\[^336\] New York Office to Ruth Chester, 1 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS; Wu Yifang to Ruth Chester, 16 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS.
heard about the Japanese surrender. Excited, she and Zee frequently sat up late at night discussing the future. Wu wrote to Chengdu, “How I wish I were on my way homeward! At last the long-expected V-J Day is here, yet when it actually came we seemed to be unprepared for it.”

Leaving New York for a rest in the countryside in Massachusetts, Wu’s thoughts continued to turn to the problems faced by China and Ginling. By October, Wu had returned to New York for an operation on her nose requiring a further hospital stay and had begun working. She wrote to colleagues in China, “I have been so anxious to be back in Chengtu, and even more to be in Nanking. In fact, I have dreamed several times of traveling on the Yangtze River boat.” She wanted especially to return to Ginling in time for the college’s thirtieth anniversary celebration on November 25, but it was not until January 1946 that she was able to arrange air transport back.

Upon her return, Wu found a host of difficulties facing the college and the nation. Elizabeth Morrow had once written Wu, “I appreciate more than ever your gift for controlling and guiding young spirits in a hard world.” However, as the triumph of

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337 Wu Yifang to Ruth Chester, 16 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2727, YDS; See also “Buochi mieguo daibiao zai 26jie liendashang zhizao liangge zhongguode huangmiao guiji,” (A rebuttal to the American delegate’s crafty scheme to create two Chinas at the 26th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations) n.d., MQYF, 11-1, 59, JPA; “Guanyu guoji xingshide jianghuagao,” (A draft of a speech on the international situation), MQYF, 11-1, 59, JPA.

338 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 31 August 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

339 Wu Yifang to Family, 9 October 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

340 Wu Yifang to Mr. Tsui, 5 October 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2927, YDS.

341 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 31 January 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

342 “Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Founder of Ginling College,” article “Dr. Lobenstine’s Departure for China,” 27 September 1939, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 125, Folder 2600, YDS.
victory turned to despair when civil war broke out between the Communists and the Nationalists, Wu found the task of channeling student unrest away from political activism increasing difficult—and finally, impossible.
CHAPTER 5
CONTROLLING AND GUIDING YOUNG SPIRITS IN A HARD WORLD: POSTWAR GINLING

Ginling College Reopens in Nanjing

The Japanese armies on the Chinese mainland surrendered to the Chinese government on September 9, 1945. Since Ginling in Nanjing had been used as an enemy command from June 1942 until the surrender, the campus was first taken over by the Chinese military and used as a camp for disarmed Japanese soldiers. The Japanese had already stripped the campus of most of its valuables, but the Chinese army managed to do some looting of its own after it took possession of the buildings.1

Receiving formal instructions from the campus in Chengdu, Ginling faculty and staff living near Nanjing went to see the Chinese commanding general, who turned over the campus to them. The Ginlingers promptly started a middle school on campus to prevent the buildings from being taken over by other organizations.2 The damage to the inside of the college buildings was extensive, but Wu Yifang was glad they were still

1 “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series VI, Box 127, Folder 2620, YDS; “Thirty Years/1915-1945/Ginling,” UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 156, Folder 2973, YDS; “Excerpt from a letter from Mrs. S.F. Tsen to Mrs. Thurston,” 24 November 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3001, YDS

2 “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946.
standing; she had told a reporter in 1945 she expected there would be “nothing remaining.”

Although the refugee colleges in Free China all hoped for an immediate return home, overtaxed transportation facilities made this impossible. Discovering that it would not be allocated space on river boats until fall 1946, Ginling elected to find its own transportation. The college ended spring semester 1946 early to allow for the move. Groups of students and faculty set off on journeys that usually took seventeen or eighteen days in a combination of truck and rail transport. The faculty executive committee, in addition to carrying on the coursework, made most of the plans for the return trip to Nanjing, since Wu Yifang was in the U.S.

Eva Spicer was one of the few that expressed reservations about returning so early to Nanjing, noting that winter living conditions would be much harder there than they had ever been in Chengdu, with prices higher and food scarcer. Spicer realized, however, that psychologically, it would be difficult to keep the group in Chengdu for long. The following sentiments of Ruth Chester were probably more typical: “After so many long years of waiting, it is good to be starting on something which has permanence, instead of dragging along with what was supposed to be temporary, but which lasted on and on.”

3 Wu Yifang to Sisters, 31 December 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3001, YDS.

4 W.W. Reid, “Ginling: Golden Heights of China,” Arkansas Methodist, 8 March 1945, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2926, YDS.

5 Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 132-135.

6 “From a Letter From Eva Spicer,” 16 May 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3002, YDS.

7 Ruth Chester to Friends, 7 October 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3002, YDS.
Returning to China, Wu Yifang first visited Nanjing and Ginling, experiencing "mixed feelings of pain and joy." The landscape and the city wall remained the same, but there were clear signs of war and occupation, including a Shinto temple on a local mountain. Back in Chengdu, watching the loading of the first truck of students and faculty to Nanjing, Wu recalled a "vivid picture of a similar scene in September 1938, on the same spot" as a vehicle was unloaded at the end of a journey.\(^8\)

On the badly damaged campus, many students slept on the floors for months until bunk-beds arrived. Like many of China's higher educational institutions after the war, Ginling was badly understaffed and there were severe shortages. Although many of the books that had been sold to used bookstores were recovered, none of them were usable science books.\(^9\) The chemistry department began the new school year with no equipment,\(^10\) and the physics department had no equipment for the entire first year.\(^11\) Casualties also included pianos, furniture, the electric engine, the gas plant, and the heating system. Nevertheless, Ginling was one of the first rehabilitated refugee colleges to open for the fall term, albeit somewhat later than normal.\(^12\)

With high inflation and financial uncertainty adding burdens for the college and for individuals, Ginling continued to find it difficult to hire and retain faculty.\(^13\) Wu

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\(^8\) Wu Yifang to Friends, 16 April 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS.

\(^9\) Wu Yifang to Mr. Evans, 19 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2070, YDS.

\(^10\) Florence Kirk to Friends of Ginling, 23 August 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 138, Folder 2765, YDS.

\(^11\) Helen Plaum to Mrs. Bixon, 1 October 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3003, YDS.

\(^12\) "Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College," 9 November 1946.

\(^13\) "Ginling College Committee, UBCCC," 14 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2609, YDS.
Yifang renewed her pleas to the New York Board that salaries had to be increased to recruit and keep good staff, but was largely unsuccessful in making salaries competitive. The financial situation was exacerbated by a fall in exchange—by 1947, at official rates, the U.S. dollar had only about 15 percent of its prewar purchasing power, creating a particular problem for educational institutions like Ginling, which relied largely on funds from the U.S. Despite the dire economic problems, Wu resisted suggestions to significantly reduce staff or cut the program, arguing on the basis of keeping up morale—and from a practical concern that the college had already been running on a minimum basis for years.

Wu explained to the New York office that the college did not want to raise tuition and fees too high, since they did not want to put the prices beyond what many families, especially Christians and professional people, could pay: “we do not want to become merely a college for rich girls, but should serve middle class people who are really the backbone of any community.” By 1948, with no choice but to raise fees, Ginling began offering scholarships to help stem the tide of Christian families sending their children to

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14 Wu Yifang to Mr. Evans, 5 March 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2069, YDS.
15 Eva Spicer (writing for Wu) to Mrs. Mills, 11 July 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2929, YDS; Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 19 September 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2929, YDS.
16 Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 404.
17 Ruth Chester to Cornelia [Mills], 6 May 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 135, Folder 2729, YDS.
18 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 26 April 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.
19 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 20 July 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2929, YDS.

259
less expensive government schools. Wu commented, "It seems to me it is an important policy for Ginling to give more attention to securing potential Christian leaders from among the best graduates from Christian Middle Schools."\textsuperscript{20}

As in Chengdu, the economic situation made it increasingly difficult for academic administrators to do their jobs. Spicer noted how difficult it was for Wu and other administrators to concentrate on education when the economic problems of administration played such an important role.\textsuperscript{21} This can clearly be seen in Wu's following description:

There are always the day-to-day problems to be solved, such as securing rice from the government supply bureau, or figuring the subsidy to the faculty according to the constantly changing index of living, or racing with time to build a very necessary new dormitory before the prices rise again.\textsuperscript{22}

Wu's secretary suggested that Wu spent "many a sleepless night" worrying about student fees and faculty salaries but she somehow managed to carry the burdens with "courage and good nature and even humor."\textsuperscript{23}

Despite the precarious economic situation and a volatile political environment as China spiraled toward civil war, enrollments in institutions of higher education continued to increase after the war.\textsuperscript{24} In 1947, with 440 students enrolled, the college dormitories—

\textsuperscript{20} Wu Yifang, "The Opening of the Fall Term, Ginling College 1948," RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2073, YDS.

\textsuperscript{21} Eva Spicer, "Return and Rehabilitation of Ginling College," n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 158, Folder 3002, YDS.

\textsuperscript{22} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 20 October 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.

\textsuperscript{23} Helen Plaum to Mrs. Mills, 16 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2801, YDS.

built to house 200 students—were overflowing. 25 Academic year 1948-1949 began with Ginling’s highest-ever enrollment, 482. 26 In addition, that year, with the re-establishment of the Department of Education, Ginling reclaimed the title daxue. 27

Wu Yifang’s Views On Communism and China’s Political Situation

Although Wu Yifang had herself considered returning to reopen the college under the Japanese, her thoughts had changed considerably during the war. Writing to Zee about the fall of Hong Kong in 1942, for example, she observed that the rich were now suffering: “For some of them I have no sympathy because they should have come to this part of the country.” 28 By the return to Nanjing, Wu was expressing her hearty approval of citizens who had refused to work for the puppet government or teach in its universities. 29

Gravely concerned about China’s future, after VJ-Day, Wu’s thoughts turned immediately to the nation’s difficulties, especially “the Communist problem.” It was unlikely there would be a KMT-CCP settlement, Wu complained to Matilda Thurston in

25 “Minutes of Board of Directors,” 8 November 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 127, Folder 2620, YDS.

26 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2074, YDS.

27 Wu Yifang, “Report of the President, Ginling College,” November 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155, Folder 2964, YDS. This distinction was particularly important since xueyuan graduates sometimes received lower salaries or were otherwise discriminated against. “Report to Board of Directors of Ginling College,” 9 November 1946.

28 Wu Yifang to Yuh-Tsung, 7 January 1942, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 148, Folder 2920, YDS.

1945, because “neither side is big and patriotic enough to put aside self-interest in seeking power and to work together for the sole national cause.”\textsuperscript{30} This comment indicates that her confidence in Chiang Kai-shek’s government had been shaken. Nevertheless, she was not yet ready to turn to what increasingly appeared to be the only other alternative, the Communists.

Deeply suspicious of the Communists, Wu Yifang hoped that Chiang Kai-shek would undertake drastic reform.

\ldots the Communists cannot really be for the good of the people because they have as their sole objective setting up a system of their own ideology.\ldots The real problem is how to muster all the liberal elements in the government and outside so that they may have some say in establishing policies and setting up reforms. By this time, the people know enough about the ways of the Communists, and would be willing to support the government if they could find there was a willingness to give more consideration to the welfare of the people.\textsuperscript{31}

In April 1948, discussing the military campaign, Wu suggested that the aim of the Communists was “more for plunder than to take and hold a city.”\textsuperscript{32} As for the Communist success in gaining adherents, Wu continued to insist it was not the ideology itself that appealed to people, arguing in one letter that it was “continual poverty and skillful propaganda” that turned the common people to the Communists.\textsuperscript{33}

Her suspicion of the Communists did not mean that she supported military action, however. Writing to a fellow Barbour scholar in 1947, Wu expressed hope that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 3 September 1945, Box 5, 5.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 6 February 1946, Box 5, 5.6, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 1 April 1948, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 15 November 1948, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\end{itemize}

262
central government would be reorganized, leading to the "cessation of fighting and the opening of negotiations again with the Communists."34

In confidential letters, Wu also became more critical of Chiang’s government. In mid-1947, Wu noted that Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were not amenable to points of view different from their own. Wu had met with American Ambassador John Leighton Stuart, urging the U.S. to pressure the Generalissimo.

The world, indeed, is too small and too complicated for us to view the struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communists in China as a problem in itself. Actually I have met Chinese friends who regret the general attitude of Americans in encouraging or at least being too friendly to the Communists during the past few years. We don’t need to go over the past, but we have to face the facts now and seek for a way out for the future, and it has to come from America.

Wu believed that Chiang could alter his policies, if not from "higher principle," then from practical necessity. "The important question is whether he can be led to make the change in time to save the whole situation, and I believe pressure from America will count the most in producing any change."35

Wu Yifang was apparently among those people whose advice Chiang refused to take. When protesting students clashed with police in Nanjing on May 20, 1947, Wu recommended to Chiang that the chief of police be transferred. Enraged, the Generalissimo told her that the schools could not be maintained if the Communists were not driven out.36 Actually, after Ginling’s return to Nanjing, there is little mention of Wu

34 Wu Yifang to E.K. Janaki, 25 March 1947, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.
35 Wu Yifang to Dr. Robert J. McMullen, 24 July 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2071, YDS.

263
meeting with Soong Meiling or spending time at her home, suggesting that the relationship was not as close as it had been. Indeed, Wu’s comments regarding Soong in the late 1940s are not very complimentary. In a particularly harsh criticism in 1949, Wu referred to her as “ambitious and over self-confident” as well as “so far away from the people” she was incapable of presenting their point of view to her husband.37

Hoping for democratic change and reform from within the government, in 1948, Wu was glad to report that the National Assembly had elected Li Zongren as vice-president, signifying that the “clique” within the KMT was not able to control the voting. It was, Wu wrote, a

...very good lesson to those who wanted to use constitutional government as a window dressing only and still control everything from behind the scenes. It is only such concrete cases of the exercise of the people’s opinion which can gradually modify the age-old attitude of managing things from above.38

In May 1948, Wu expressed hope that the new premier would be able to secure some “capable and liberal men” for the cabinet, ready to implement change.39

Ultimately, the KMT did not make sufficient reform efforts to save itself, and throughout 1948-1949 the Communist forces gained rapidly. Despite her misgivings, by spring 1949, with a Communist victory imminent, Wu remained hopeful for the future of China and of Ginling College:

...the rapid spread of Communism in China is due not so much to the appeal of Marxism itself as to the decay of traditional culture and complications in the international situation. On top of the revolutionary and evolutionary

37 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 29 February 1949, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

38 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 30 April 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2072, YDS. Wu is likely referring to the fact that Li Zongren was Chiang’s rival; the vote indicated Chiang had lost some of his control over the KMT.

39 Wu Yifang to Ettie Chin, 27 May 1948, 70, Ginling College Records, Box 3, Smith College Archives.
changes of the last fifty years, the government has disappointed the people since VJ Day by its inefficiency and corruption. For the future of the country, there has to evolve a new code of living. While we realize that a school is closely affected by the political and social environments, we still think that as a Christian college we should try our best to cultivate the positive qualities in future citizens and we do not want to evade the inevitable change but we must try to practice our Christian living.40

In a letter to Thurston, Wu wondered, “Now the serious question comes: are the Chinese Communists to follow the pattern in Russia or will they be really Chinese and be moderate and liberal. Personally I fear that it will be neither but something between.” Wu was hopeful that the “fundamental Chinese pattern will gradually overcome the superimposed alien system.”41

Fewer Outside Activities

When Wu Yifang returned to China in 1946, she was presented with an opportunity to head the Ministry of Education, which she declined.42 She also made an effort to decline invitations and resign from organizations, including the National Christian Council, in order to concentrate on college affairs, but was only partially successful.43 She was, for example, elected Chairman of the Board of a new

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40 Wu Yifang to Friends, 5 March 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2932, YDS.

41 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 29 February 1949.

42 Wu told the New York office that it was just a rumor she had been approached, but Chinese sources indicate Madame Chiang personally sounded her out on the appointment. In any case, Wu was not interested. “Excerpts from a Letter from Dr. Wu Yi Fang to Mrs. Mills,” 13 February 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2928, YDS; Liu Enlan, Zhang Quanping, Ji Derong, Peng Hongfu, “Wu Yifang he Jinlingmuda,” (Wu Yifang and Ginling College) Xinhua ribao, 24 December 1984, MQYF, 08-1, 57, JPA; Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 99-100.

43 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 6 February 1946; Helen Plaum to Mrs. Mills, 16 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 140, Folder 2801, YDS.
organization, the China Child Welfare Service. 44 She was also appointed to the Advisory Board of the United States Education Foundation in China, the organization set to administer funds provided under the Fulbright Bill, 45 and served as one of two vice-chairman of the China Committee of UNESCO. 46 She continued to be in demand as a speaker. 47

By early 1946, Wu was insisting she wanted to withdraw from participation in "political gatherings." 48 She was nonetheless persuaded to serve on the Presidium of another PPC meeting in Chongqing in March 1946. She had tried to send her regrets but was urged to reconsider by the general-secretary, who suggested that, with important questions to discuss, it would help to have a presiding officer that was "disinterested and a non-party member." 49 In 1947, she served on the Presidium of another PPC meeting. 50

Wu did manage to withdraw from some political activities. In December 1946, she declined the nomination to serve on the Presidium of the National Assembly, meeting to draft a constitution. Wu noted that she had college work to do; probably more

44 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 12 February 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.
45 Katherine Schutze, "Ginling in Postwar China," World Call, January 1949, in UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1516, YDS.
46 Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 20 October 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.
47 In spring 1948, for example, Wu spoke at two middle school baccalaureate services and Commencement of both Nanjing Theological Seminary and National Central University. Wu Yifang to Friends of Ginling, 12 July 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.
48 "Extract from Dr. Wu's letter to Mrs. New," 6 February 1946, Box 9, 9.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
50 Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 107.
importantly, she had discovered that she and Hu Shi would be the only independents on
the Presidium, and Hu was leaving soon. "That meant I would be the only one to be
called upon to preside over sessions when there were delicate issues with opposing
ideas." She felt "great relief" when her resignation was accepted—but was scolded by
female Assembly members for "not considering women's prestige" and she expected that
the Protestants would criticize her as well.51 She again declined to be nominated for the
National Assembly in 1948, despite being asked by the KMT and the Ministry of
Education. 52 Her lessening involvement might indicate dissatisfaction with the
government—in the past, she had let herself be persuaded. Wu's Chinese biographer
suggests that her move away from politics and back to education was partly due to the
advice of her uncle, Chen Shutong.53

In January 1949, Chiang Kai-shek resigned and was succeeded by Li Zongren. In
March, a new cabinet was formed. Wu Yifang was again offered the position of Minister
of Education, which she quickly declined.54

Wu and Zee also worked together to establish a Chinese Association of University
Women (CAUW). Since Wu was recovering from an emergency appendectomy in
December 1947, Zee did most of the work getting it organized.55 Lacking funds, the

51 Wu Yifang to Mrs. W. Plumer Mills, 8 December 1946, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder
2929, YDS. According to Zhu Xuepo, Wu did not participate since the Communists and other parties were
not participating, so the gathering was not representative of people's opinion. Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 104-
105.

52 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 1 April 1948.

53 Zhu Xuepo, Wu Yifang, 105.

54 Ibid, 116-117.

55 Wu Yifang to Mrs. New, 30 January 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.
organization was to be temporarily located in the administration building at Ginling.\textsuperscript{56} At the organizational meeting of the CAUW in Shanghai in fall 1947, Wu Yifang presided and was elected the first national president.\textsuperscript{57}

In mid-1948, Wu was invited to attend the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam as a China consultant. Initially declining, declaring she did not know enough about church organization, missionaries and Chinese Christian later persuaded her to go by insisting that she could represent Chinese viewpoints more generally.\textsuperscript{58} She also attended the International Missionary Council meeting in Europe.\textsuperscript{59}

Wu later told a Ginling alumna that in Europe, she had received “much inspiration from the Christian fellowship and the united effort to seek for guidance above in overcoming the serious crisis facing the world today.”\textsuperscript{60} Explaining to Thurston that one of her main reasons for going was “to seek for light,” Wu wrote,

I found that my faith in the ultimate triumph of Christ’s way of life was strengthened and my own anxieties about many problems were quieted somewhat—without this faith it is impossible to go through the present struggle which is bound to last for some years yet.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Mrs. New to Dr. Douglas, 22 January 1948, RG 668, Folder 91, SNA.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 20 October 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS; Mrs. Hsien Wu (Yan Caiyun), “Contemporary and Friend,” Ginling Alumnae Association Newsletter # 10, page 12, April 1956, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2957, YDS
\item \textsuperscript{58} Wu Yifang to Friends of Ginling, 12 July 1948.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Wu Yifang to Sisters Abroad, 14 October 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3004, YDS.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Wu Yifang to Lily Quon, 12 October 1948, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 7 October 1948, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Increased Student Activism

After the end of World War II, as living conditions deteriorated because of severe inflation and the country plunged into civil war, students became increasingly more involved in political activities. As Chiang Kai-shek's government proved itself incapable of resolving China's economic and political problems, more and more people looked to the Communists to provide an alternative solution. At the same time, the U.S. government's policy of rebuilding Japan and its continued support of the Chinese government helped spur the rise of anti-American feeling.

Ginling had historically seen less student political activity even than other Christian colleges—\(^{62}\) but as the 1940s progressed, Wu Yifang found herself fighting an increasingly difficult and largely futile battle to stem the student tides. Controlling and guiding young spirits in a hard world—spirits that had a radically different vision of a new China—had never been so difficult.

In Nanjing, protesting students clashed with police on May 20, 1947. Although Wu Yifang apparently had an altercation with Chiang over the handling of this incident,\(^{63}\) there is no mention of it contemporary letters. Instead, Wu told Ruth Chester, who was on furlough, that Ginling students had not participated in the demonstration, but later held a one-day protest strike to express sympathy. Wu expressed concern that future demonstrations would result in riots due to the involvement of "agitators."\(^{64}\)

Wu continued her efforts to channel student activism:

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\(^{62}\) Until the late 1940s the Christian colleges had generally been able to maintain a tighter rein on such activities than government universities. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, 409-410.

\(^{63}\) Wu Yifang, "Aiguo aidang airenmin."

\(^{64}\) Wu Yifang to Dr. Chester, 30 May 1947, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2930, YDS.

269
In spite of our certainty that there are further difficult days ahead, we still have faith that a better China will emerge out of this serious period of tribulation which confronts not only China but the whole world. In educational work, we feel the impact upon our young people of all kinds of confusion and efforts made to attract them to lesser ways of life. These only sharpen the challenge to direct them in the right way. In dealing with our own students, I have become increasingly aware that we must put more conscious effort into helping them as individuals instead of depending upon the traditional procedures to produce effective results...It is Jesus' way, and that is the only hope for a new China.65

Students, she wrote a day later, were suffering from the effects of "uncertainty and restlessness." In order to help them "grow into intelligent and responsible citizens able to face the long struggle ahead against Communism," Wu suggested, "we must give them as effective training in academic discipline and character as we possibly can."66

Wu’s solutions to the problem, however, did not sit well with the radical students. She could no longer convince them it was patriotic just to study, and political activities continued to gain in importance. This is illustrated by an incident in April 1948. When news came that there was to be a large-scale KMT crackdown on the student movement, Wu Yifang called a general assembly. Asking the students not to become too involved in politics, Wu told them that the important thing was for them to master their studies; they should leave national affairs to political leaders. As she spoke, the students talked amongst themselves. Then, something unprecedented happened—a student stood up and offered a challenge:

What President Wu said today is incorrect. She has often said that we should be patriotic and have a sacrificial spirit. How can we students study quietly

65 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 29 April 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.

66 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 30 April 1948.
with our minds at ease while the government concerns itself only with fighting a civil war and the people are in deep misery?^{67}

Two radical students later recalled that in the tense political atmosphere, they did not appreciate Wu's efforts to look after them.^{68}

One student who entered Ginling in 1947 later recalled how she became politically active. Her father had rationalized that since Ginling only took female students, the college would not be affected by the student tides, and he would not have to worry as much as a parent. But for her, political activism quickly superceded academic work in importance. Her account illustrates the important influence of the leftist students and teachers:

At first I was still able to study with my heart at ease, but when the tide of revolution swept up and the storm brewed on campus, my blood also boiled. With the teaching of the underground party and my progressive classmates, I began to awaken, participating in a torrent of student activities.^{69}

Wu became increasingly concerned about the politicization of students and the rising anti-American sentiment. Writing to the executive secretary of the United Board, she suggested that the Christian colleges put out information to counter-balance the general wave of anti-Americanism. Wu herself was trying to get Christians to see the need for a new program. She warned one Christian military leader that the Communists knew what they wanted and utilized their personnel to that end, but Chinese Christians, while expressing disapproval of what they did not like, "do not present an active program

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^{67} Hong Fan, "Gaoji jianzhushi—Xiao Lin," (Xiao Lin, a senior architect) in Jinling nuer, 300.

^{68} Wang Cuizhen, "Huainian xiaozhang xuexi xiaozhang," (Cherishing the memory of President Wu, learning from President Wu) in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 175-176; Li Zhenkun, interview by author, Nanjing, China, 14 December 2000.

^{69} Zheng Jingsu, "Wo jixu zai yixutiandi chicheng," (I continue to "race" around the world of arts) in Jinling nuer, 402-403.
challenging enough to the students to attract their interest.” She also suggested at a meeting of the Council of Higher Education that church leaders, administrators and professors get together to consider how Christian leaders could clarify standards and give effective leadership to young people.70

In light of the rising anti-American sentiment in China, in June 1948 American Ambassador John Leighton Stuart issued a statement taking Chinese students to task for their anti-American accusations and warning them that their actions might have “unfortunate results.”71 This statement was widely denounced by students around the country and sparked an episode that posed a strong challenge to Ginling’s administration.

When officers of Ginling’s student self-government association were preparing to present a statement attacking the American policy of strengthening Japan and Stuart personally—a statement originating with the student self-government associations of Central and the University of Nanking—to Ginling’s student body for adoption, Wu and the Dean of Students convinced the chairman to distribute the draft statement to the students for consideration while Wu had Stuart’s original statement sent out. Some students argued that the statement should be revised, and after debate, students voted in favor of revision. The revised statement, also adopted by the self-government associations of Central University and the University of Nanking, referred only to China’s opposition to the U.S. government policy of strengthening Japan, and not to the ambassador personally. Wu, the Counselor of Extra-curricular Activities, and the Dean spoke with individuals to

70 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 29 May 1948, Box 9, 9.12, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

71 Shaw, An American Missionary in China, 224-225.
...help the students, especially the seniors, to be courageous in speaking out their own opinions. We have emphasized that the essential principle of democracy is for all the constituent units to take responsibility for any action for the whole, so each must make her own judgment and be responsible for it. All of this time, the majority of the students were not in favor of the extreme actions by students in general, but very often a small number of very active students, well organized, got in touch with similarly active student groups in other universities and put through actions before the unorganized majority could take any action.\textsuperscript{72}

In a series of letters and reports, Wu made no bones about her opinion on the issue: the stand was “independent and intelligent”,\textsuperscript{73} the “serious and responsible” students had come to the fore and the “liberal and reasonable” group won the vote.\textsuperscript{74} While the majority of students at Ginling and other institutions were either too busy or “indifferent and easily swayed,” a small minority of “serious minded and public spirited” students, dissatisfied themselves with the status quo, but not believing in “negative and destructive activities,” took a “courageous stand.”\textsuperscript{75}

As had been the case for decades at Ginling, Wu insisted the trouble was not at Ginling—outside influences had played an important role. She was particularly concerned since the issue had pitted students against the college administration. It was the first time, Wu wrote, that Ginling students had been more influenced by contacts with students from the big universities than by “advice from the faculty.”\textsuperscript{76} She reported:

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{72} Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 16 June 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.
\textsuperscript{73} Wu Yifang to Friends of Ginling, 12 July 1948.
\textsuperscript{74} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Eastman, 26 July 1948, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.
\textsuperscript{75} Wu Yifang, “Report of the President, Ginling College,” November 1948.
\textsuperscript{76} Wu Yifang to Mrs. Mills, 3 July 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2931, YDS.
\end{verbatim}
A small minority, including some of the student government officers, seemed bent on following other students in the city and taking part in joint meetings, demonstrations and strikes. In their dealings with the Dean's Office they showed a tendency to avoid responsibility, to twist facts, and a lack of confidence in the college administration.77

The students' critical attitude toward the situation in China, Wu believed, negatively affected their attitude toward the college and faculty.78

In a further attempt to guide student activities, in June 1948, Ginling required parents and students to sign an agreement pledging students would have “an attitude of ready receptivity”; all student organizations were to be registered with and recognized by the college and follow college rules; and the college was to be absolved of responsibility if something should happen to a student participating in an unrecognized activity.79

Nearly all the students returned the signed statement. In August, however, a mimeographed letter appeared ridiculing the three principles as a means of “controlling and suppressing student activities.” The letter indicated that a signature was not sufficient to stop student activities. The administration countered with a circular stating that students would be expected to carry out their pledges. Nanjing students were quieter in the fall, Wu believed, because of arrests in August. Students at Ginling had put up wall posters without signing their names, but the administration made it clear that it expected them to follow regulations and observe the principles to which they had agreed.

78 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 1 June 1948, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
79 Ginling College to Parent or Guardian of Students, 28 June 1948, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.
“It is a most trying and difficult process but we hope our labors may not be in vain,” Wu wrote.⁸⁰

With large parts of the country falling to the Communists, the tense situation in Nanjing continued into spring 1949. In March, Wu told Ettie Chin that while students all over China were under pressure from the secret police, and some of their friends and acquaintances from other universities had been arrested because they were active in student organizations and participated in protests against the government, there had been no arrests at Ginling. A senior, an officer in the student government, told Wu she was afraid she was on a secret police black list.

That night I was awake a long time but fortunately there were no arrests. On top of such experiences there has been much propaganda from the Communist side as to how their coming is to liberate the people from such oppression by a dictator. We should understand the impatience of the young people but at the same time this is exactly where we should help them to get training in the real democratic processes and liberal attitudes.⁸¹

In fact, although Wu did not mention it in letters to her American friends, she did much more than stay up at night worrying about students. A former student and faculty member remembered that when she was in trouble—probably a suspected Communist—Wu found a novel way to keep her safe. The student checked into a hospital until the Communist forces arrived.⁸² In 1948, Wu Yifang, worried that students would be hurt in Nanjing’s frequent student movements, told authorities they were not to cause trouble at a

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⁸¹ Wu Yifang to Ettie Chin, 16 March 1949, 70, Ginling College Records, Box 3, Smith College Archives.

⁸² Zhu Enjen, “Bi Muqin hai qin,” (Closer than a mother) in Yongjiude sinian, 47.
women’s college by making arrests—and no Ginling students were arrested. These incidents illustrate not only Wu’s reputation and her willingness to help the students; they also indicate she had good connections. Even Wu’s name could make a difference. When an alumna came to the attention of the KMT for her activities in a free clinic and daycare center, her boss prevented her arrest by saying that she had been Wu Yifang’s student, and that she was a Christian.

In addition to leaving out her help to students in trouble, in letters to friends abroad, Wu also did not mention that Chen Shutong—the man who was like a father to her—was sympathetic to the Communist cause. Only after the 1949 change in government did Wu tell Matilda Thurston that Chen had to leave his home in Shanghai in January 1949. Even then, she merely said he had expressed disapproval of Chiang Kai-shek’s government.

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83 Zhu Xuepo, *Wu Yifang*, 111; See also Zhang Xiaojing, “Chunyu rutu cuimiaozhang,” (The spring rain on the soil speeds the growth of the sprout) in *Jinling nuer*, 247; Suo Fengguang, “Zoushangle wenxuezhilu,” (I took the path of literature) in *Jinling nuer*, 339.

84 Yu Zhiyin, “Wu xiaozhangde mingzi shi wo mianyu beibu,” (President Wu’s name keeps me from arrest) in *Yongjiude sinian*, 49.

85 Identifying the man only as the uncle of Wu Yifang, Y.T. Zee described 1948 Christmas Eve dinner at his house. Her host, “very active in the revolutionary movement,” told her to renounce her Christian faith and Christian missionaries and help close up the Christian colleges. Zee should leave everything behind and work for a classless society. He told her: “Get rid of corruption and purify our nation. Use Marxism as a political tool and philosophy until we develop our own.” He asked Zee to pass on his message to Wu Yifang. “She must mend her ways and help to drive away the 19th century mentality, although we are in the 20th century revolution.” Hearing the message, Wu said “she could not believe it was so near and decisive a show-down.” Zee’s memory seems a bit faulty, however. For example, she said that her host spoke against the Party’s “wrong policy of not fighting against the Japanese invasion,” but the Japanese had been defeated in 1945. She also had him leaving to join the revolutionaries in Yanan. Y.T. Zee, Autobiography, page 75-76, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, RG 8, Y.T. Zee Papers, Box 145, YDS. Emphasis in original.

86 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 21 January 1950, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
In April 1949, 92 out of 117 Ginling students voted to join a mass student protest in Nanjing. When they asked Wu to have the absence excused, she urged them to discuss the matter thoroughly, pointing out that a parade could create an incident and discredit the government, and suggesting they consider whether a parade would actually promote peace. Disregarding Wu’s advice, the students voted again, this time sixty-seven out of ninety-seven, to participate in the parade, and on April 1, Ginling students joined their counterparts from Nanjing’s other universities demanding “existence, real peace, and freedom” (zheng shengcun, zheng zhenheping, zheng ziyou).

Alarmed by reports that students had been beaten and arrested, Wu telephoned Minister of Education Hang Liwu and learned that a student propaganda corps group had clashed with disband ed army officers. In a letter to the United Board, Wu indicated she thought the propaganda group was at least partly responsible for the altercation. Ginling, she explained, had had some experience with the group when they tried to recruit students for the parade: “I would call them at least very annoying.” Noting that the anti-American slogans were a reaction to American policy, Wu also pointed out that the future of Christian institutions was largely dependent on America’s policy toward the new political regime. In a postscript, Wu wrote that it had become clearer that the incident had been “created” and used by the Communists. The administration had agreed to suspend classes on Monday for students to go and express their sympathy to the wounded, which Wu thought gave them more trust in the faculty.87 Regardless of the fact that she

87 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 2 April 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 149, Folder 2932, YDS.

277
had not wanted the students to participate, and there were no Ginling students hurt, Wu Yifang personally went to visit the wounded in the hospital the next day.\textsuperscript{88}

\textit{On the Eve of Liberation}

Conditions in Nanjing continued to deteriorate. By October 1948, it was nearly impossible to buy food in the city, and the fighting was drawing near the capital. Transportation facilities were overloaded as people tried to flee. Understandably, students had difficulty concentrating on their studies. Faculty, staff and students contemplated whether they, too, should leave.\textsuperscript{89} By December, some classes, totally bereft of students, had stopped meeting entirely, while others continued with a limited number.\textsuperscript{90} A year that had begun with Ginling’s highest enrollment ever—482—ended with only about one hundred students on campus.\textsuperscript{91}

Although in mid-1947 Wu predicted that the future of Christian work would be “dark” if the Communists were to gain power,\textsuperscript{92} by late 1948, she had apparently decided it was time to prepare for the inevitable. In December 1948, she reported that the Christian student association had discussed “Christianity and Communism.”

Even though this may appear too delicate a subject at the present time yet we deem it essential to start with the Christian members of the college family to

\textsuperscript{88} Wang Cuizhen, “Huainian xiaozhang xuexi xiaozhang,” 176.

\textsuperscript{89} Florence Kirk to Mrs. Dixon and Mr. Slater, 10 October 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 50, Folder 1290, YDS.

\textsuperscript{90} Florence Kirk to Friends in New York, 18 December 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 50, Folder 1290, YDS.

\textsuperscript{91} Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949.

\textsuperscript{92} Wu Yifang to Dr. Robert J. McMullen, 24 July 1947.
help them understand more deeply the Christian Way both as a personal and social gospel, and also to give them a clearer understanding of Communism as Marx considered it and as it is now practiced in Russia and by the Communists in China. We have also had small faculty discussions and we want to face more seriously the problem of making our daily living more Christian. It is really the only way to overcome Communism.93

By November 1948, Wu made it clear that some foreigners should go—in the event of a government change-over, the percentage of Westerners on staff would be too large, since many Chinese faculty had already left. A handful of foreign faculty members decided to heed the second warning from the American consulate.94

As for Wu Yifang herself, she told Matilda Thurston in November 1948 that she had faced the situation in Amsterdam, and since her return, had “decided to stay regardless of what may happen.”95 Indeed, when the KMT sent her a plane ticket to Taiwan on the eve of their withdrawal from the capital, Wu declined to use it.96

In fall 1948, Wu had asked the Board for advice about whether the college should remain open under changed conditions.97 Ultimately, Wu, the faculty and the Board decided against moving the college, reasoning that if Nanjing should fall, there would not be any other place in the country safe enough to warrant moving—assuming the funds could be found. Furthermore, if the campus was not being used, the buildings might be

93 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 29 December 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2073, YDS.
94 Stella Graves to Friends, 15 December 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3004, YDS.
95 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 15 November 1948.
96 Wu Yifang, “Huiyi yu zhuhe—xiezai jianguo sanshiwu zhounian qianxi,” (Recollections and congratulations—on the eve of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the PRC) 27 September 1984 in Wu Yifang jinian ji, 119. Wu once indicated that the KMT was “annoyed” the college did not leave Nanjing with the central government. Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 18 October 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.

279
appropriated by the new government and the college would not be able to reclaim them. In any event, leaving could only put the college in a worse position with the new government. It was decided to continue the work, regardless of political changes. The group was hopeful since Christian organizations in areas already controlled by the Communists had been permitted to continue their work.98

Although she had concerns about carrying on Christian work in an area under Communist domination, Wu wrote, she kept returning to the same position—continuing the college work as an experiment. There were two possible results. The Communists, busy with political and economic problems, might leave the Christian and other private agencies alone for a time. More likely, Communist control and interference would force the college to close.

But even if we have to do this after a short while the attempt itself will be of great value both from purely the Christian way of life and from the knowledge and experience gained in working under Communist domination. Furthermore, then there will be no regrets on our part and no accusation from the Communists that the Christians merely withdrew at their approach.99

In response to an inquiry, Wu was adamant that she had not reached any understanding with the Communists—not only was it difficult to find anyone in Nanjing in touch with the Communists, she declared, she was not interested in politics. She had, nevertheless, heard from “friends who listen to Communist broadcasts” that she and some other college presidents had been asked to stay on with their work; since she was not a

98 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 8 December 1948, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2073, YDS; Ruth Chester to Friends, 14 December 1948, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Ruth Chester Papers, RG 8, Box 39, Folder 33, YDS.

99 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 29 December 1948.
member of a political party, she could carry on educational work. Wu suggested to the secretary of the United Board:

Several of us have given some consideration to the advisability of a statement either from the United Board or from the Foreign Mission Conference regarding the Christian purpose of mission work, evangelical, medical and educational. It seems such a statement might be of value in clearing the position of the Mission Boards from political entanglement and at the same time affirming a strong stand on religious liberty and academic freedom. We realize that if the Communists wanted to accuse the missions of being the "running dogs" of capitalism they could do so no matter how many statements were made. However, if such a statement is in the hands of the Christian institutions, hospitals and churches, it may serve a double purpose of helping in individual dealings with the Communists and helping to strengthen Christian character and hold groups together.

Looking ahead to running the college under a new government, Wu suggested that the college should insist upon being allowed to continue voluntary religious courses and services, make faculty appointments, decide upon course content and texts, and determine entrance requirements and conditions for dismissal.100

Only one hundred thirty-five students made it back for spring term 1949.101 Despite the unsettled conditions, Wu urged Chinese faculty members in China and abroad to return to Ginling. In February 1949, for example, she gave one person this advice: "From the view point of the college, we still plan for the future and that is the only way we can help in the developing of young people to become reliable and positive citizens and it is in this same reasoning that I suggest that you had better plan to return."102

100 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 8 December 1948.
101 Wu Yifang to Friends, 5 March 1949.
102 Wu Yifang to Lin Pei-fen, 17 February 1949, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2073, YDS. Other accounts include Tang Mingxin, "Wo yu muxiao Jinnuda," (Me and my alma mater, Ginling College) in 281
Nanjing was "liberated" without a fight on April 24. On that Sunday morning, a group from Ginling, including faculty, servants, some children and Wu Yifang, watched from a vantage point on Ginling’s South Hill as the PLA peacefully entered Nanjing.\textsuperscript{103} There was one day without classes at Ginling to rest up since many people had been on nighttime guard duty,\textsuperscript{104} then the college continued its regular schedule.

After the KMT forces left and before the PLA arrived, a Nanjing Order Maintenance Committee was theoretically in charge of the city. Wu Yifang’s name appeared on official KMT street notices as a vice-chairman. According to Wu’s contemporary accounts, the former garrison commander had recommended her for the position, but left the city without informing her. Since she had no way to correct the notice, she did nothing. The PLA arrived the next day, ending the committee’s responsibility.\textsuperscript{105} In later accounts, however, Wu said she had volunteered to help keep order and sent a cable to the PLA and Mao Zedong welcoming them into the city.\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{Wu Yifang and Ginling Under a New Government}

Despite her original apprehension of a Communist victory, Wu quickly gave the new government the same support she had given its predecessor. Continuing her policy

\textsuperscript{103} Kirk, \textit{Sunshine and Storm}, 257.

\textsuperscript{104} Ruth Chester to Friends, 13 November 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3005, YDS.

\textsuperscript{105} Wu Yifang to Daisy Yen Wu (Yan Caiyun), 3 June 1949, RG 668, Folder 91, SNA; Wu Yifang to Friends and Alumnae, 17 June 1949, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2073, YDS; Wu Yifang to Miss Mackinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949.

\textsuperscript{106} “Dui Wu xiaozhang de huainian,” (Cherishing the memory of President Wu) in \textit{Yongjiude Sinian}, 67-68; Zhu Xuepo, \textit{Wu Yifang}, 120.
of emphasizing the constructive, almost immediately, Wu began to write positively about
the Communist leaders and government policies.

Personally, I have been greatly helped by reading the “New Democracy” and
other Communist statements. For instance the decision of the Educational
Conference in the northeast showed how the Communist government there
saw the importance of regular education emphasizing the subject matter and
reducing the amount of time given to political training and extra-curricular
activities....The leaders of the liberating army have shown a very friendly
and courteous attitude and have said again and again that they are ready to
learn from others and to receive criticisms on their mistakes. I have been
impressed that these leaders are seeking ways and means to get the support of
the people in their program of working for the people.107

Wu Yifang herself also joined in activities of the new government. She was
invited to be a member of a Preparation Committee to celebrate the liberation of the area
and the anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. She attended meetings and other
public functions and was on the review stand for the military review and a mass parade.
“The parade,” she wrote the New York office, “certainly showed how the common
people rally to such things both for their own enjoyment and for the sake of showing their
cooperation with the new authorities. It also showed that the new leaders are experienced
in organizing people.”108 The organizational abilities of the Communists—which for
years Wu had portrayed as a source for worry—were thus suddenly put in a positive light.

Just over a week after the PLA entered the city, Wu and President Y.G. Chen
(Chen Yuguang) of the University of Nanking were invited to visit General Liu Bocheng,
chairman of the Military Control Commission and mayor of the Nanjing People’s
Government, and General Chen Yi. On May 16, Wu attended a gathering of scholars and

107 Wu Yifang to President Daen Lin of Hangchow University and President K.M. Wu of Cheloo
University, 17 May 1949, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.

108 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949.
professors from various colleges and research institutions at the invitation of General Liu. When advice was solicited, Wu told the group, “under the principle of religious liberty our college with its idea of Christian education would continue to train young women to serve the people.”

Representing the educational group, Wu was also a delegate to the Nanjing People’s Representatives Conference and was appointed a member of the new Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, PPCC) that met in Beijing in September. Expressing hope of “starting right with the new organizations,” Wu decided to attend the conference, even though she would miss the opening of college. While there, it is likely that she met with her uncle Chen Shutong, who was also active in the PPCC. She also attended the October 1, 1949 ceremony in which Mao Zedong proclaimed the People’s Republic. Although she did not mention it in any extant contemporary documents, in later years she often recalled the pride she felt. She did, however, write more generally about her impressions of Beijing, praising the good discipline and the “high spirits” of the party workers and the PLA. Wu’s enthusiasm is clear: “all the visitors to Peking are impressed with the active and energetic

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109 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 6 June 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2074, YDS.
110 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 8 December and 27 December 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.
111 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 16 September 1949, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
112 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 21 January 1950.
113 See, for example, Wu Yifang, “Huiyi yu zhuhe—ziezai jianguo sanshiwu zhounian qianxi,” 119.
planning and the enthusiastic atmosphere in the great work of launching a new period and
the creation of a new China.”¹¹⁴

At the same time she was busy with activities connected to the new government, Wu remained active in religious organizations. In 1949, for example, she attended meetings of the NCC Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the China Christian Education Association.¹¹⁵ For a time, Wu also considered traveling to Toronto for a July 1950 meeting of the International Missionary Council.¹¹⁶

The change in government in Nanjing had little immediate effect on the college. American donors, including mission boards and Smith College, continued to send money to Ginling. Spring semester 1949 ended with no inspection and no questions asked about the program.¹¹⁷ Each department began a voluntary revision of the curriculum,¹¹⁸ as Ginling College considered how to revise its program to “meet some of the immediate needs and yet uphold the original purpose of the college.”¹¹⁹

Students became much more involved in college affairs, from planning extracurricular activities to participating in administrative decision-making. They, too, offered suggestions on curriculum change. High on most students’ list was abolition of Chinese and English comprehensive examinations. They also asked for a host of other

¹¹⁴ Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 18 October 1949.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 30 December 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.

¹¹⁷ Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949.


¹¹⁹ Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 16 June 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2074, YDS.
changes, including less supervision, limiting work in physical education, more freedom to choose classes, the abolishment of thesis requirements and roll call, fewer requirements, fewer English classes, and more freedom to join outside activities. Students also wanted more practical teaching materials. Sociology majors had the longest list of recommendations. Attendance records were unnecessary, they suggested: “Students will come if teachers give tests and make work worth while [sic].” Nor did they want to be reminded of their failings: “Warnings of poor work are unnecessary and unpleasant.”

Wu Yifang observed that while some student suggestions were “good and reasonable,” others were mainly concerned with eliminating what the students themselves did not like. The faculty executive committee eventually made some changes, omitting the oral English comprehensive and altering policy on absences. Nonetheless, Wu Yifang wrote, the trouble did not stop there: “these same girls have been so busy with outside activities that they are not satisfied with the college decisions. They became impatient with the college procedure of giving careful study to changes before introducing them.” Following the example of their counterparts at the University of Nanking, student government association officers demanded the establishment of a new college government body consisting of equal representation from the faculty, staff, students and servants. Wu noted that the students were understandably restless; some had joined the political corps, but the majority continued with their studies. “Another small group seems to face the conflict between joining the movement right away or continuing college work and consequently they find dissatisfaction with the present program. They

120 “Suggestions of Student Department Meetings,” May 1949, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.
criticize it as being of no immediate and practical value to them." Wu again suggested that these students were swayed by outside influences, particularly from the University of Nanking.

Wu was more positive about the involvement of student representatives on the college's policy-making body, the College Council: "If we can have a responsible type of student," she wrote the New York office, "it is a very sound educational principle to have students understand the task of college administration and it helps in securing better cooperation from the students in general." Wu noted that the practice of students sharing in administration had been implemented in at least one American institution and tried in others. In a letter to Matilda Thurston, Wu expressed optimism that students on committees would foster better understanding.

Before the Communist takeover, members of the underground Communist party and other radical students had been involved in student government. Afterwards, it became increasingly dominated by Communist Youth Corps members. One Ginlinger reported that by late 1950, a handful of Communist Party members, twenty-five to thirty Communist Youth Corps, and five or six "progressive" faculty members had made sure members of their group occupied every important position at Ginling. Wu Yifang only hints at this in her letters—she reported in mid-1949, for example, that the majority of

121 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 16 June 1949.
122 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 6 June 1949.
123 Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon and Dr. McMullen, 20 July 1949.
124 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 29 November 1949, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.
students complained their officers were not keeping the whole student body informed of administration decisions and sometimes acted without consulting them.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 6 June 1949.}

Wu was quick to see, however, that the students most critical of her administration were those in the Youth Corps. In December 1949, student response to a questionnaire yielded constructive suggestions, with only a few exceptions.

The few students who seem to be fault-finding we must help to understand the function of the college more fully. There is no question that these are in close touch with the Student Union or with the Democratic Youth Corps. At the same time, I shall keep in contact with the educational authorities and the Democratic Youth Corps Committee in the city so that I can know what their attitude is toward student activities in a college. It is only through such mutual understanding that we may be able to solve problems and overcome difficulties even when they shall arise.\footnote{Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 8 December 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.}

In addition to student representatives involved in administration, Ginling’s self-government association, whose original area of influence was dormitory and extra-curricular activities, was reorganized into a student association that supervised student activities and was affiliated with other student associations in Nanjing.\footnote{Eleanor McCurdy, “Ginling College News Sheet,” November 1949, Box 9, 9.30, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS; Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 8 December 1949.} Although she said nothing against the reorganization, Wu could not have been pleased with the development, since she had complained about outside influence at Ginling for years.

In contrast to its predecessor, the Communist government was highly suspicious and critical of the U.S. Anti-American sentiment thus rose considerably in China after the establishment of the People’s Republic. The change caused treasurer Elsie Priest to comment in late December 1949, “At times it is hard being one of the despised nations
when a few months ago we were the most favored!”\textsuperscript{129} Despite the rising anti-Americanism, Wu repeatedly reassured the United Board and American friends that the government distinguished between government policy and individuals.\textsuperscript{130} Wu believed that the Communist leaders were upholding religious liberty, although this was not always the case in the countryside, where the “lower ranks” had not been properly informed of policy.\textsuperscript{131}

By mid-1949, however, Wu’s letters to the administrative offices in New York were less cordial than before. Referring to a comment concerning “wild rumors” about Ginling, Wu suggested that they were generated by the “reactionary KMT.” She added, “But I can see how, in the present hysterical fear of Communism in America, all the friends of Ginling will be tempted to listen to anything to discredit our People’s Government.”\textsuperscript{132}

Wu also became more critical of American policy. She faulted Taiwan and American radio broadcasts for portraying conditions in famine areas as worse than they were, praising the government efforts to alleviate the crisis. She also criticized the

\textsuperscript{129} Elsie Priest to Margaret, 27 December 1949, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Elsie Priest Papers, RG 8, Box 159, Folder 5, YDS.

\textsuperscript{130} See, for example, Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 1 August 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2074, YDS.

\textsuperscript{131} Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 16 September 1949.

\textsuperscript{132} Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 18 November 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 77, Folder 2077, YDS. Fenn had previously mentioned the rumors in a letter. Wu assumed he was referring to the same rumors as had gone around the year before—that Ginling had been closed by the government and reopened under a new president.
sending of tanks and other aid to Taiwan, suggesting that America’s domestic politics had influenced its foreign policy. 

Wu was disappointed when only 166 students enrolled in the regular college program for fall 1949. She attributed the lower enrollment mainly to economic reasons, observing that girls were the first to be deprived of the privilege to go to college. Furthermore, the government was offering short training courses, Ginling was adhering to its usual admissions standards, and the capital was now in Beijing. Responding to the financial straits of students and a growing demand for practical courses, Ginling added a special two-year course in child welfare for nursery school teachers.

While in Beijing, Wu met with the dean of Yenching’s school of religion, T.C. Chao (Zhao Zichen). The two agreed that the “immediate task is to help strengthen the Christian faith and to equip Christians with knowledge to meet the challenge of other ideologies.” Wu hoped to implement this at Ginling and envisioned the college training Christian students, strengthening their faith at the same time it trained talent for the new China.

Writing to the New York office in November 1949, Wu noted that most Christian students had only a “general and vague” understanding of Christianity. She suggested,

If they can be helped to have intelligent knowledge of the essentials of Christianity we can expect them to stand firm when they confront other

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133 Wu Yifang to Matilda Thurston, 11 April 1950, Box 5, 5.7, Matilda Calder Thurston Papers, UTS.

134 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 18 October 1949.

135 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 7 September 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2074, YDS. Jessie Lutz incorrectly identifies this as a short program in nursing. Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 454.

136 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 18 October 1949.
ideologies. If we do not help in the culture and nurture of the student generation now where can we look for Christian workers in the future. This has all the time been the function of the Christian college but I confess humbly that most of us have rather failed in carrying out this high purpose. We have suddenly awakened to the urgency of this responsibility and we appreciate more keenly what a Christian college should be doing.

In addition, Christian schools had a future if they could prove their value “to the building up of the New Democratic China.” That would mean following government educational policies and training personnel to meet the needs of reconstruction. Since students were now more serious about the work they would do when they graduated from college, Ginling would “consider the academic program in the light of the needs of various types of workers in the new day.”

A remark from a colleague especially inspired me recently. She said that in addition to making our program of more practical value to the girls we should attempt to carry on a more meaningful experiment in practicing Christian democracy on the campus. We all know the attraction and appeal of the New Democracy to the young people and we also know where the Christians have fallen far below what Jesus taught in regard to effective and loving concern for each other. I fully realize that such high ideals require strong personal conviction and Christian faith. However, I was deeply touched by that remark and some of us are bold enough to think we would like to make a beginning even in the humblest way.137

Wu was also encouraged by the increase in the percentage of Christian students at Ginling; they comprised fifty percent of the total student body and sixty percent of new students.138 She was aware she would have to move carefully in trying to maintain and strengthen the Christian work at Ginling.

137 Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen and Miss MacKinnon, 26 November 1949, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.

138 Ibid. In Ginling’s early years, nearly all students and faculty were Christian, but the percentage of Christians gradually declined. By the Chengdu years, about 50 percent of students were Christian. Thurston and Chester, Ginling College, 123. Apparently, this number had declined further, since Wu was pleased to have the number at 50 percent in 1949.
If we plan carefully and work quietly we should be able to help these students and to reach others. I used the word “quietly” purposely; in the middle schools there is the definite expectation from the authorities that there shall be no religious activities inside the school buildings...While in the college we still continue our daily chapel services, I would not wish to have anything happen to attract attention to this phase of the work and thus handicap the very thing we wish to emphasize.

Wu supported the attitude of Christian student leaders—they should participate in the activities of the general student body and then in Christian activities, since a split between Christian and non-Christian students would be a “very bad situation” for a Christian institution.139

Ginling’s first major curriculum change came in spring term 1950, when students and faculty were required to take four weeks of political study. Academic work suffered as students spent their time attending political meetings.140 Some of the Western faculty attended the general lectures, but there was no suggestion that they attend the small faculty-student groups for discussion. As the political atmosphere became increasingly charged, in classes, English teacher Florence Kirk was content to mark technical errors in composition and let the students say what they wanted.141 As a music teacher, Rosa May Butler allowed for varying interpretations—including a Marxist interpretation of Bach.142

The first lecture of the political study series, Wu noted, was on the theme Work *Created the World*. Although she was concerned that this conflicted with the Christian

139 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 8 December 1949.

140 Rosa May Butler, “A Report on Ginling College from May, 1950, to January, 1951”; Ruth Chester to unknown recipient, 3 February 1950, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Ruth Chester Papers, RG 8, Box 39, Folder 17, YDS.

141 Florence Kirk, “Ginling College, As It Appeared When I Left,” 15 July 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 50, Folder 1290, YDS.


292

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view of Creation, she was relieved when the instructor made it clear that personal religious faith should be respected “if it is pure and for human progress and not utilized for imperialism.”

Wu Yifang agreed with theologian T. C. Chao’s suggestion that “while the number of churches and church members is bound to be reduced yet the Christian faith and experience will be enriched.” She believed this was already the case at Ginling. Pointing to increased chapel attendance and more meaningful faculty fellowship and student discussions, Wu argued that the political study had made many Christian faculty and students think more deeply about their religion. At a recent conference for Christian students, “The students took the leading part in the discussions and showed real desire to deepen their Christian faith and experience and to express it positively in the building up of a New China.” Chester agreed that the political indoctrination had actually stimulated Christian fellowship and activities, with increased chapel attendance and more vital small group discussions.

Another Ginlinger saw it differently. The month of political study in spring 1950, Butler later suggested, showed “far-reaching results” by the end of the semester. Although some students had deepened their faith, others had renounced it, and all

143 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 3 March 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.

144 Ibid.

145 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 5 September 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 77, Folder 2077, YDS. Wu conceded that the increased chapel attendance was also likely due to a more convenient time.

146 “Letters of Ruth Chester,” 22 March 1950, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Ruth Chester Papers, RG 8, Box 39, Folder 16, YDS.

293
Christian faculty and students had to face the difficulty of being a Christian in a Communist society.\textsuperscript{147}

The United Board continued to have confidence in Wu Yifang, at least partly because it felt she was influencing the educational policies of the new government and the college would thus be able to function without interference from officials.\textsuperscript{148} Likewise, a speaker at a Smith Club suggested that supporting Ginling and Wu Yifang meant the "tempering of communism."\textsuperscript{149}

Although enrollment was up to 215 in September 1950,\textsuperscript{150} with limited funds and a smaller student body, Wu again argued for allocating more resources to the development of three or four departments. She suggested strengthening the Department of Social Work for the training of social workers and child welfare workers.\textsuperscript{151} She recognized that the Department of Home Economics might have to be reorganized, since there were no longer teaching positions in this field and students now needed to work after graduation.\textsuperscript{152}

Ginling College and its students continued with their social service work under the new government. Wu was pleased when the Police Bureau and the Democratic Women's League in Nanjing praised the work of sociology majors in helping with a

\textsuperscript{147} Rosa May Butler, "A Report on Ginling College from May, 1950, to January, 1951."

\textsuperscript{148} Robert J. McMullen to my dear B.A. [Garside], 20 October 1949, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA.

\textsuperscript{149} "Report on Ginling College—Mrs. George Kerry Smith to Washington Smith Club," April 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3012, YDS.

\textsuperscript{150} Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 19 September 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 77, Folder 2077, YDS.

\textsuperscript{151} Wu Yifang to Djeh-I, 27 July 1950, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

\textsuperscript{152} "From Dr. Wu Yi-fang, Ginling College," 23 May 1950, 70, Ginling College Records, Box 3, Smith College Archives.
survey of prostitutes. The leaders told her that working with the students had changed their impression of Christian institutions as isolated and aloof from the community. In addition, Wu hoped to enlarge Ginling’s child welfare service center. She also wrote proudly that Ginling’s rural service station—after the return to Chengdu, the college had opened another rural service station in a town near Nanjing—was considered the best in the area and would service as the model “winter school” for the county.\textsuperscript{153}

Wu indicated strong support for government policies. In education, she praised an editorial in a Communist paper in Beijing on the subject that people should have political understanding, but they also needed science and technical skills. The article, Wu wrote, “shows that when the government leaders plan for the future of the country they necessarily emphasize the positive and the constructive, those things which are of permanent value.”\textsuperscript{154} Reporting that prices for commodities had gone down, Wu attributed the decrease to the new government’s national planning policies.\textsuperscript{155} When asked for advice from a Chinese student in America in June 1950, Wu strongly encouraged her to return, pointing to the great need for trained personnel.\textsuperscript{156}

The senior banquet in June 1950 centered around the theme \textit{China Calls}, with various groups and individuals presenting the calls to service—in the classroom, child care, social work, rural work, factories—to the graduates. In her comments, Wu stressed

\begin{footnotes}
\item[153] Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 14 January 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.
\item[154] Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 9 May 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2076, YDS.
\item[155] Wu Yifang to Dr. McMullen, 22 April 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2075, YDS.
\item[156] Wu Yifang to Swen Bao-Hwa, 26 June 1950, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.
\end{footnotes}
the "unusual challenge of the times." Writing about the program, Wu indicated her enthusiasm for the service emphasis of the new regime:

What impressed me most was how we of the traditionally educated middle class have changed our attitudes and how naturally a faculty committee worked out such a program to challenge the graduates. It is true that we have recognized the needs of the people before and as early as 1934 we talked about "go to the country". However, it was a mere acceptance of the idea and few college graduates did really go to the country to serve the people. Through the past year we have been led to face more vividly the needs of the masses of farmers and workers, and to accept more realistically the fundamental [sic] importance of building the country from the bottom.

The Korean War and Ginling's Final Days

Despite the increasingly virulent anti-Americanism in official campaigns, Ginling foreign faculty had little trouble until fall 1950, at which time the atmosphere in China changed dramatically with the escalation of hostilities in Korea. Although China's reaction to North Korea's June 1950 invasion of the South was at first muted, by October, Chinese troops had moved into North Korea. Reports of bitter fighting and Chinese fears that the U.S. would take the war to Chinese soil precipitated a surge of patriotic sentiment. With the accompanying "Resist America, Aid Korea" propaganda campaign that emphasized imperialist aggression and designated the U.S. as enemy number one, the atmosphere in China became charged for people with Western or KMT connections. The Christian colleges were especially targeted as agents of cultural aggression and many

157 E.M. McCurdy, "Ginling College News Sheet," Commencement 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 159, Folder 3005, YDS.

158 Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 7 July 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2076, YDS.

159 Florence Kirk to Friends, 16 May 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 50, Folder 1290, YDS; Florence Kirk, "Ginling College, As It Appeared When I Left."
foreigners and Chinese Christians were attacked in personal accusation campaigns. Nearly all foreigners had been forced to leave China by the end of 1951. As Sino-American tensions deepened into the 1950s and the U.S. gave aid to Taiwan while Chiang Kai-shek vowed to retake the mainland, the anxious new government broadened the campaigns to ferret out "counterrevolutionaries" and other enemies. Targets of these campaigns included, but were certainly not limited to, Chinese Christians.

Since the imperialist connections of the church in China had again become an important issue with the Communist victory in 1949, Wu Yifang and many other prominent Chinese Christians, who believed the new government was bringing constructive change to China, searched for a role for Protestants to play in the revolution. In April 1950, a group of Christian leaders led by Y.T. Wu (Wu Yaozong) and including Wu Yifang, fellow Ginling alumna Cora Deng (Deng Yuzhi) and T.C. Chao, requested a meeting with government leaders to discuss religious policy and the role the Protestant church could play in the new China. In May, the group met several times with government and party officials, including Premier Zhou Enlai. Zhou noted the connection between Christianity and foreign aggression and suggested that the churches had to sever such links if they were to continue in China.

After the meetings with Zhou, Y.T. Wu, in consultation with the premier, drafted the "Christian Manifesto," a document that spelled out a pro-government political standpoint for the church. Christianity, the Manifesto noted, had made a "not unworthy" contribution to Chinese society, but it had strong connections with imperialism. Imperialist nations would want to destroy the new China and might use Christianity for this purpose. The Manifesto stated,
It is our purpose in publishing the following statement to heighten our vigilance against imperialism, to make known the clear political stand of Christians in New China, to hasten the building of a Chinese church whose affairs are managed by the Chinese themselves, and to indicate the responsibilities that should be taken up by Christians throughout the whole country in national reconstruction in New China.\textsuperscript{160}

It went on to exhort Christians to support government policies. Issued in July 1950, just as the Korean War began, the Christian Manifesto began with forty signatures, including Wu Yifang’s. Ultimately, over 400,000 Chinese Christians signed, almost half the number of Chinese Protestants.\textsuperscript{161}

In a July 1950 letter, Wu mentioned the meetings with Chinese government officials and discussed the First National Conference on Higher Education she had attended in Beijing in May-June 1950. She praised the leadership of the Ministry of Education and passed on what the vice-minister had told them—mission institutions had sent out good graduates but they should pay attention to be vigilant not to be used by foreign imperialism; religion must be separated from education; educational programs are expected to follow national policies. Although gradually financial support should be obtained in China, the Ministry recognized that mission contributions were necessary.\textsuperscript{162}

Writing to William Fenn at the United Board in October, Wu noted that the colleges


\textsuperscript{162} Wu Yifang to unknown recipient, 25 July 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 76, Folder 2076, YDS.
wanted to be self-supporting, but the process would take time since China’s economy needed to recover.\textsuperscript{163}

Originally, the process of severing links with churches abroad was expected to take some years. The Korean War and the changed atmosphere it precipitated, however, sounded the death knell for foreign involvement in China’s Christian churches and for the existence of foreign-financed educational institutions like Ginling much earlier than expected.\textsuperscript{164}

Until fall 1950, when her letters to the U.S. stopped abruptly, Wu Yifang depicted the new China in positive terms. Writing in February 1950, Ruth Chester, however, described a desperate economic situation in Nanjing, financial difficulties and government interference in religious work—although in higher education, religious activities continued as usual. “Our best friends, of long standing, for the most part talk very freely with us and they are deeply discouraged,” wrote Chester. “They see no hope ahead and it is a burden we can never completely share with them.” Chester noted that Christian students were under great pressure from “progressive” classmates to renounce their religion.\textsuperscript{165}

Wu Yifang had worked to strengthen Christian fellowship at Ginling, but at least one Ginlinger believed that her efforts led to unwanted attention. According to Butler, when the five Christian fellowships at Ginling in fall 1950 started meeting together on alternate Sunday nights, they created a large group which drew especial attention because

\textsuperscript{163} Wu Yifang to Dr. Fenn, 16 October 1950, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series II, Box 77, Folder 2077, YDS.

\textsuperscript{164} Wickeri, \textit{Seeking the Common Ground}, 129-133.

\textsuperscript{165} Ruth Chester to unknown recipient, 3 February 1950, China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, Ruth Chester Papers, RG 8, Box 39, Folder 17, YDS.
of its "vitality." Butler surmised that this contributed to a later attack on Ginling—the mayor said to Wu Yifang in December "he had been told that the Christian group at Ginling was growing and that that must not be."  

Until mid-November, Chester recalled, everything seemed to be going well and the regular work was going on "better than we dared to hope earlier." Then there was a sudden intensification of anti-American propaganda, and personal attacks on Western staff members began. The difficulties at Ginling were part of a coordinated nationwide campaign.

First, Wu Yifang received a letter from the Student Association—dominated by the Youth Corps—denouncing British faculty member Marjorie Causer. Her actions and words, the students charged, had served to "betray her own imperialistic actions" and to "insult all the students of China." Causer, for example, had used the term Formosa, with its colonial connotations, instead of Taiwan. A student in the special course for nursery school teachers accused Causer of asking questions students could not answer and calling them stupid. The student was not just complaining that Causer treated students disrespectfully—she added that the class had trouble understanding her and wanted classes in Chinese for first-year students. According to Butler, although the


167 "Report of Ruth M. Chester, Ginling College, February 16, 1951," UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515, YDS.


169 A First-year Child Welfare Student to Members of the Student Executive Committee, 10 November 1950, RG 668, Folder 89, SNA. Years later, in a very different depiction, one alumna recalled Causer's concern and caring for the students. Lei Anmei, "Xiaoyuan Shenghuo Jishi," (A record of campus life) in Jinling nuer: The Daughter of Ginling, 85.
letter demanded that the president and the College Council take action, Wu Yifang, busy with plans for Founders Day, did not understand the situation’s seriousness and did nothing. As a result, the letter and other statements from the students got posted on the bulletin board. Causer responded by writing to the Student Association, but her first letter was rejected because she had not confessed to being an imperialist. Causer’s third letter was accepted. 170

On November 14 the second, more virulent attack came against Helen Ferris, a sociology professor then teaching English. Ferris was attacked for having changed “United States” to “United Nations” when correcting a student’s essay on the Korean conflict. She immediately resigned and made preparations to get an exit permit. It appeared the case was closed and tensions seemed to ease. 171 In late November, however, the incident flared up again, spearheaded by a letter from one of the “most progressive” students, whom Ferris had taught alone the year before in a course on Social Institutions. An altercation between the students who delivered the letter and Ferris resulted in more criticism on the school bulletin board; students claimed they had been insulted. Helen Ferris then became the subject of a national campaign, and was denounced in meetings, parades, newspapers and even songs. 172

Although the case was part of a planned national campaign, at Ginling, it was clear why Ferris had been chosen—with her “easily aroused temper” and “very

171 Ibid.
172 Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951, UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515, YDS.
dominating attitude," she provided a natural target.\textsuperscript{173} Spicer noted that from her arrival, Ferris had been a vocal critic of Ginling and Wu Yifang. Her criticisms might have been justified, Spicer conceded, but her bad attitude was not.\textsuperscript{174} Problems with Ferris had apparently started earlier. Although Wu referred to her as a "real addition" to the Sociology Department when the Methodist Board transferred her to Ginling in 1948,\textsuperscript{175} by August 1950, Wu wrote to ask the department chair if any decision had been made on whether Ferris should teach in the department. Wu’s comments suggest the students already had a problem with her teaching.\textsuperscript{176}

According to Spicer, Ferris was angry that no one came to her aid, but Wu Yifang, who knew she was powerless during the height of the campaign, "put herself out a good deal" to get advice concerning what would be acceptable after it began to die down. Wu blamed herself for putting Ferris in a difficult position by allowing her to teach a course to only one student.\textsuperscript{177}

According to Butler, Wu Yifang believed that Ginling was the first institution attacked partly because "Ginling College in general and Dr. Wu in particular had not gone far enough in enthusiasm for the new regime." Ginling had already been denounced at a political meeting at Central University as a "hotbed of American imperialism." Factors in that determination included the presence of so many American teachers and

\textsuperscript{173} Rosa May Butler, "A Report on Ginling College from May, 1950, to January, 1951." According to Butler, Wu Yifang agreed that Ferris was a natural target.

\textsuperscript{174} Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.

\textsuperscript{175} Wu Yifang to Miss MacKinnon, 29 April 1948.

\textsuperscript{176} Wu Yifang to Dr. Fan, 3 August 1950, RG 668, Folder 88, SNA.

\textsuperscript{177} Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.
their friendships with many Chinese; funds came largely from America; too few Chinese faculty had joined the Communist Women’s Democratic League; and Wu Yifang herself was “too lukewarm” toward Communism as well as “too openly Christian.” Wu gave Spicer the same impression. “She feels that Ginling was made the centre of the first big attack of this nature because it has come to be regarded as not moving as fast and as far in the new direction as it should, and her own position enters into that.”

In sharp contrast with Wu’s own letters, Butler recalled her very much concerned about Ginling’s future.

Several times during the last year President Wu has confidentially expressed to me her great concern related to Ginling’s continuing to receive money from America. She has mentioned each time that the United Board put the responsibility on each Christian College president to say when the college was no longer Christian enough to be worthy of receiving Christian money. This concern of hers became acute during the month of indoctrination one year ago. She kept asking herself...“At what point do we say that Ginling is not longer Christian?” As long as there was such earnest interest and participation in Christian activities on the part of a sizeable Christian group in the college none of us could have said that the anti-Christian attitudes on the part of a small group outweighed those that were Christian.

The situation changed, Butler noted, after the attacks against missionaries in November. Christian staff began suggesting that American funds be stopped. Then, in late November, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Warren Austin, referred to the Christian schools and hospitals in China as evidence of the goodwill of the American people for the Chinese. His comments sparked another mass campaign. As the

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179 Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.
campaigns gained in intensity, it became increasingly clear to Christian college personnel that a complete break with all American influence was necessary.\textsuperscript{180}

In December 1950 the U.S. government halted the remission of funds to China; the Chinese responded by freezing American assets in the PRC. In late December, Chinese Christian organizations were instructed to sever their connections with American mission boards. According to Butler, the December freezing of funds was a "distinct relief" to Wu and many Christian teachers, since it resolved the problem of stopping "Christian money" to "anti-Christian" Ginling College.\textsuperscript{181}

Unaware of the seriousness of the changes in China in the last weeks in 1950, on January 16, 1951, the United Board sent a telegram to the Christian College presidents stating that William Fenn would be in Hong Kong in mid-February and wanted to discuss finances with them. The cable, Ruth Chester noted, arrived just when Wu and President Chen of the University of Nanking were in Beijing for a meeting of the foreign-subsidized higher educational institutions with the Ministry of Education. It was posted publicly and caused a "big furor." Chester told the United Board not to cable or communicate for any reason; funds could not be accepted even if they could be arranged.\textsuperscript{182} Conveying similar sentiments to the United Board, Elsie Priest hinted: "The curtain is fastened down quite securely."\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{180} Rosa May Butler, "A Report on Ginling College from May, 1950, to January, 1951."

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{182} Dr. Ruth Chester to Committee of Nine of U.B.C.C.C., 10 February 1951, UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515, YDS. The response to the cable was reported in the news: "Another attempt by U.S. imperialist interests to sabotage transformation of former foreign subsidised universities into independent institutions has failed." Wu Yifang, the article said, had "ignored this telegram, and would resolutely ignore all American imperialist inducements in the future." "China Christian Colleges Foil U.S. Sabotage Plot," \textit{The Shanghai News}, January 26, 1951, in UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515. Change had

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According to Spicer, Wu Yifang favored a merger with the University of Nanking, since it might be possible to save the jobs of faculty members, and she herself could leave more easily. Wu realized, however, that her position was not very strong. Wu wanted to

...avoid, if possible, the continued effort to appear to be running an institution which is on the surface private and Christian, but in which there is no real administrative freedom, no academic freedom, and in which the extent and freedom of Christian activities is rapidly declining. I am sure that to you in the States and indeed to us in China that she seems to have gone a longer way in acquiescence than is easy to understand, but I do assure you that there has never ceased to be an internal struggle, and that she is already under criticism, and will probably receive much more criticism in the future for not being able to go with them as far and as fast as they wish.184

Before leaving for Beijing in January, Wu met with Butler and Chester, explaining that she and many of the Ginling Christian teachers and alumnae had decided that under the circumstances, they would like to see Ginling amalgamated with the University of Nanking as a government university. Ginling’s “most political” teachers would be opposed, Butler observed, because the merger would “put a crimp in their ambitions.” Due to financial considerations, Wu was sure the proposal would be accepted.185 Chester also had the impression that the administrations of both Ginling and the University of Nanking were in favor of merging and becoming a national institution.186

183 “Committee of Nine U.B.C.C.C.,” Letter from Elsie Priest, 19 February 1951, UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515, YDS. In fact, the United Board had applied for a special license to remit funds to China, but it was not granted until May 1951—but as Priest makes clear, there was no way for the funds to be accepted. Lutz, China and the Christian Colleges, 467.

184 Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.


186 “Report of Ruth M. Chester, Ginling College, February 16, 1951.”
Wu’s hopes to continue the Christian work at Ginling had little chance of being realized. While in October 1950 the Chinese Ministry of Education was warning against hurting religious feelings in schools, so quickly did the political atmosphere change, that by June 1951 the Ministry had prohibited religious advocacy in schools and was urging administrators to strengthen political and science education. Religion was either attacked as “superstition” or condemned for its association with imperialism. Wu Yifang had envisioned a post-Liberation Ginling training Christian leaders as well as personnel for a new China, but by the early 1950s, it was clear that the Chinese government did not believe the two were compatible.

According to Butler, Wu Yifang would “more than anything...like to withdraw from the administrative scene and live an obscure, private life.” She told Butler that she wanted to join the school of religion at Yenching and work with theologian T. C. Chao in “some small capacity, no matter how obscure.” Wu also gave Spicer the impression that she would like to “give up the whole administrative struggle,” but she had a strong sense of responsibility to the faculty.

Ruth Chester noted in early 1951 that it looked like attacks were in the works for Wu Yifang, who had unsuccessfully been trying to bring them out in the open. It was a “terrible ordeal” for her, Chester wrote, and since she could not do anything worthwhile

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187 Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.
190 Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.
in her position, she wanted out.\textsuperscript{191} Spicer wrote that Wu had previously discounted the numerous rumors that she was the object of attack by the Youth Corps, but had come to realize this was indeed the case. It had not been serious thus far because of her prestige, especially overseas.\textsuperscript{192} Nonetheless, although there were many accusation campaigns in 1951 against Chinese in Christian educational institutions as the PRC sought to rid itself of Western influence in the educational system,\textsuperscript{193} Wu Yifang does not seem to have been targeted.

In the changed atmosphere, Wu and other Chinese Christians continued their efforts to find a place for Christianity in China. Most ultimately joined in a (government-orchestrated) campaign to establish a “Three-Self” Movement, which rejected foreign influence, emphasized patriotism, and worked to implement the three goals of self-governance, self-support and self-propagation. These three aims had long been objectives of the Chinese church, but they were far from being realized. This transformation was to ultimately take place within official, registered churches subordinate to the Communist government. Similar national organizations were eventually created for Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Muslims and Taoists.

In April 1951, the Chinese government invited Protestant leaders to Beijing to address once again the issue of institutions receiving funds from abroad. The new regulations adopted at this meeting ended foreign participation in the Chinese Christian

\textsuperscript{191} Dr. Ruth Chester to Committee of Nine of U.B.C.C.C., 10 February 1951, UBCHEA, RG 11B, Box 106B, Folder 1515, YDS.

\textsuperscript{192} Eva Spicer to Bill [Fenn], 14 January 1951.

\textsuperscript{193} Lutz, \textit{China and the Christian Colleges}, 468-470.
churches and prohibited missionary activity. At the same time, a Three-Self committee was set up; the official organization was not established until 1954.194

By spring 1951, all Western faculty had left Ginling. That year, Ginling and the University of Nanking were merged to form National Ginling University (Gongli Jinling daxue). Ironically, this was the amalgamation that had long been advocated by Christian educators in China and the U.S., but bitterly opposed by Matilda Thurston, Wu Yifang and other Ginlingers. Wu Yifang was appointed vice-president of the new institution. A year later, Ginling and other Christian colleges were eliminated in a national reorganization of higher educational institutions, ending a chapter in the history of education in China and in cross-cultural exchange. The Ginling campus became the site of Nanjing Normal College (Nanjing shifan xueyuan).195

194 Wickeri, Seeking the Common Ground, 96-98 and 117.

195 In 1984, Nanjing Normal College became Nanjing Normal University (Nanjing shifan daxue).
CONCLUSION

Ginling College began as a pioneer educational institution for women founded by Christian missionaries. Although Matilda Thurston and her fellow missionaries were largely unsuccessful in converting the Chinese, she and the Christian colleges in general did play an important role in the promotion of women’s higher education, particularly in the early twentieth century when there was no other provision for higher education for women in China.

Ginling’s early years must be put in the context of both Christian missionary endeavors in China and Chinese educational reform in the early twentieth century. In 1915, when Ginling was founded, no Chinese institutions of higher education took female students. Within four years, however, the May Fourth Movement’s attack on traditional thought and society had broken down the barriers of gender separation that had prevailed in China, and universities became co-educational. With attitudes in America also changing towards co-education, Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang fought for the next thirty years to prove Ginling’s relevance and worth as an institution for women only.

Matilda Thurston devoted nearly thirty years of her life to Ginling College and the promotion of women’s higher education in China under Christian auspices. Despite a four-decade career in China, during a period in which Christianity was unpopular at best, Matilda Thurston never gave up hope that that county would become a Christian nation.
and she continued to look for opportunities to spread the gospel. Thurston increasingly identified with China—even while showing herself at times woefully uncomprehending of events transpiring around her. Chafing under male dominance in her own missionary group, Thurston encouraged Chinese women to take positions of leadership.

Born at the end of the Qing Dynasty, Wu Yifang witnessed two important political transformations in the China of her day—the Republican Revolution of 1911 and the Communist Revolution of 1949. A graduate of Ginling, Wu, like many other educated Chinese of her generation, was imbued with nationalist purpose and wanted to play a role in ushering China out of its national crisis. Wu was different, however, in that she brought Christianity into the mix. Like her missionary predecessor, Wu Yifang also fought for an expanded role for women. She exhorted her students to work for the nation and for women’s interests.

Although Matilda Thurston and Wu Yifang had very different backgrounds and views on China’s struggle to become a modern nation, as well as significantly different administrative styles, they were in surprising agreement on many key issues. Both challenged traditional gender norms and expected women to play roles in the public sphere. Both Ginling presidents emphasized the importance of higher education for women in China, championed women’s colleges over coeducational institutions, and gave emphasis to social service work.

Furthermore, Thurston and Wu both wanted to shape Ginling’s curriculum around the gender of its students. Agreeing that gender did not preclude women from playing an important role in national salvation, they saw education as the most important preparation for China’s future female leaders. To Thurston and Wu, these female leaders, who would
take their places beside the men in national reconstruction, were best cultivated in
female-only colleges. They thus fought to keep their small college intact, retaining
autonomy, instead of being merged with the University of Nanking.

That is not to say, however, that Thurston and Wu had the same vision for
China’s salvation. Thurston, who had been actively involved in many social service
groups during her own college days at Mt. Holyoke, heartily approved of her students’
involvement in such activities at Ginling. Nevertheless, she believed that China’s
ultimate deliverance lay in the spiritual realm, with the conversion of the Chinese to
Christianity. The combination of learning and religion, Thurston believed, would
“inspire for service” and thus “transform the world.”¹ Wu Yifang, despite a strong
personal faith, does not seem to have seriously considered the Christianization of China
as a viable solution to China’s social and political problems. Her goal of transforming
China was nevertheless similar, and she believed that Christians should play a role in
resolving China’s national crises. To that end, in the latter part of the 1940s and after the
founding of the PRC in 1949, Wu pushed for significant change in the way that
Christians in China operated.

Yet neither Thurston nor Wu seemed inclined to recognize that the larger forces
unleashed by May Fourth—in particular, the overriding belief in science and an
accompanying anti-religious fervor—threatened to thwart their efforts at Ginling.
Changing attitudes towards women’s roles and a rejection of the gender separation of
traditional China, while opening up opportunities for women, also made it more difficult

¹ Matilda Thurston, “Ginling College -The Sixth Year,” 1921, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 155,
Folder 2968, YDS.
to gain advocates for Ginling's alternative model of single-sex higher education for women. China's volatile political situation, plagued as it was in the Republican era by both internal instability and Japanese aggression, also provided obstacles to realizing the goals of Ginling's two presidents.

In addition to their other points of agreement, both presidents generally opposed student activism as manifested in protests, strikes, demonstrations and boycotts. It is hardly surprising that American missionaries like Matilda Thurston looked askance at China's nationalist movement, with its anti-foreign nature. Yet as an administrator, Wu Yifang—and at least some portion of the Chinese staff, particularly alumnae—also strongly opposed the more strident forms of student activism.

The Kuomintang was largely successful in harnessing volatile nationalism and using the preoccupation of China's educated class with national salvation to further its own agenda in the 1920s. By the 1930s, however, disappointed with China's continued weakness in the international arena, particularly in the face of Japanese aggression, students joined protest activities and moved increasingly to the political left. The Chinese Communist Party also championed nationalist sentiment, and students found its promise of immediate and dramatic transformation more and more attractive. Unable to respond with the strong stance against Japan demanded by the students, Chiang's government instead tried to stifle protest. This pattern continued into the postwar period and joined rampant inflation and political instability as factors in widespread disillusionment with the Nationalist government in the universities.

Chinese students continued the May Fourth tradition of student activism throughout the Republican period, participating in parades, strikes, petitions and
occasionally anti-government activity. Both Ginling presidents did their best to contain
the damage from the protest activities, and it is likely that because of their efforts—and
the fact that Chinese women in the early decades of the twentieth century were less likely
than their male counterparts to be politically active—the campus was much quieter than
most of China’s universities, both government and Christian. Despite the general
leftward trend among Chinese students from the 1920s through the 1940s, Ginling stayed
largely outside the tide. Wu Yifang urged students to concentrate on their studies; she
attempted to channel student unrest and students’ wish to show patriotism into activities
such as social service and rural work. By the late 1940s, however, Wu found herself
fighting an essentially futile battle to calm the storm of student activism at Ginling.

After the Communist takeover in 1949, Wu Yifang, despite her original
apprehensions about the new government, quickly supported it. She continued to try to
find a place for Ginling College—and for Christianity itself—in the educational
environment of a new China. Ultimately, however, rising Sino-American tensions and
the Korean War made the attempt to save Ginling College and the other Christian mission
institutions fruitless.

Contrary to the impression she gave Western Ginling staff in 1950-1951, Wu
Yifang did not retire from public life in the 1950s. Instead, she was one of many
Christian college alumni that remained prominent in the PRC. Wu had a long career after
1949, serving as Commissioner of Education for Jiangsu Province, Vice Chairman of the
Jiangsu provincial government, and delegate to the National People’s Congress. She also
represented China in conferences overseas in the 1950s and was on the editorial board of
an English-language periodical, *China Reconstructs*.
Wu and at least one other Ginling graduate, Cora Deng, remained active in the Three-Self Movement. In 1954, Wu was named a vice-chairman of the committee. The Three-Self Movement eventually helped redefine Christianity in China, making it acceptable to Chinese authorities and a large number of Chinese. Shorn of the stigma of Western affiliation, Christianity became Chinese in a sense it had never been before.² From the 1980s, Christianity and other religions have enjoyed a resurgence in China. Although it is difficult to accurately determine the number of Christians in China today, there are clearly many times more Protestants in China now than in 1949.³ It is tempting to speculate that Wu Yifang, through her role in the Three-Self Movement, might have made more of a contribution in the spread of Christianity in China than Matilda Thurston.

Ginling’s graduates were particularly active in the field of education as teachers and administrators. Many also went into social work and health care. These women, especially Ginling’s early graduates, stepped into new roles not previously assumed by women in China. It seems safe to say, however, that more became staunch Communists than Christian activists. In fact, the founders’ original ideas of Christian service ultimately meshed well with those of Confucian—or Communist—service to society and the goal of national salvation. This can been seen in the different post-1949 parallels that alumnae drew to the college motto, “Abundant Life.” One alumna in Taiwan noted that it was at a Christian college she learned “college education was given me not for my own

² See Philip Wickeri, Seeking the Common Ground.

benefit but for that of others.”

Zhu Jiaofang, a Ginling graduate in America, suggested that “Abundant Life” was akin to Confucius’ admonition that after making a contribution, one should help others to do the same. On the mainland, at least two former students drew comparisons between the Christian and the Communist calls to service.

Matilda Thurston herself was well aware that Abundant Life was not strictly a Christian concept, as seen from her comments—or perhaps more precisely, warnings—on proposed changes to Ginling’s constitution to facilitate registration in 1928. “Sacrifice and service are not essentially Christian: they are possible for the sake of communism as well as for the Kingdom of God.”

Wu Yifang’s emphasis of values such as loyalty, cooperation, service and self-sacrifice, and her firm belief in the transformative power of education, would be at home in Confucianism, Christianity and Communism. It is most likely this fact and her strong concern for China’s future that best explain her later achievements in the PRC and her strong support of the Chinese Communist government.

Matilda Thurston, commenting on the changes in China in 1951, referred to one of her favorite books. In it, the heroine, Countess Matilda of Tuscany, asks, “What do you think will be the end of it?” The reply, “Who Knows? The end is not in our keeping.

4 Djang Siao-sung, “My Experiences As A Student In A Christian College in China,” n.d., UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 136, Folder 3738, YDS.


7 Matilda Thurston to Miss Bender, 16 August 1928, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 126, Folder 2613, YDS. Eva Spicer argued that while Abundant Life is not exclusively a Christian conception, “we who are Christians believe that it can only find its highest fulfillment in Christ.” Eva Spicer to Ruth [Chester], 23 November 1954, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 131, Folder 2678, YDS.
We can only be faithful to the trust we have.” The “trust,” Thurston suggested, was Ginling’s graduates, who would help to build a better future.8

Wu Yifang was no less concerned about the college’s alumnae; she, like Thurston, believed Ginling graduates would help build a better future. After the reorientation of Chinese policy in the post-Mao period, when foreign connections became acceptable again, Wu quietly exhorted alumnae to establish branches of the Ginling Alumnae Association and an overarching organization to encompass alumnae on the mainland and outside the borders of the PRC. Her short college history proudly discusses the accomplishments of prominent Ginling alumnae in China and abroad. Through her efforts and those of Ginling alumnae after her death in 1985, “Ginling College” was reopened as part of Nanjing Normal University in 1993, offering courses in English, tourism management, nutrition and food hygiene—for women only.9

8 “Mrs. Thurston’s Message,” Ginling Association News Letter, 14 November 1951, UBCHEA, RG 11, Series IV, Box 154, Folder 2956, YDS

9 “Qidai liangan xiaoyou jiaoliu hunjimengrao Jinlingnuda—ji Wu xiaoazhang bingzhong qijiande zhufu,” (Looking forward to cross-Strait alumnae exchange, with Ginling College always in mind—an account of President Wu's entreaties when she was very ill) in Yongjiude sinian, 69-70.
## Appendix: Ginling Statistics

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<td>1932</td>
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**TABLE 1. Enrollment Figures.**

Note: Enrollment statistics are only approximate since sources are inconsistent—some documents cite the highest number enrolled, others the average attendance. Enrollment could vary greatly from semester to semester due to China’s political turmoil.

**Sources:**
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Graduates/Regular College Program</th>
<th>Number of Graduates/Special Programs Combined Total</th>
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<td>1919</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>

Source: “Jinnuda sishinian.”
### TABLE 3. Bachelor’s Degrees by Major.

Note: From 1915-1926, students majored in either Arts or Sciences.
Source: “Jinnuda sishinian.”

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Major</th>
<th>Number of Graduates</th>
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<td>Sociology</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Home Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
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<td>Foreign Languages (1942-1951)</td>
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<td>English (1927-1941)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology and Social Work (1950-1951)</td>
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<td>Mathematics-Physics</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>

### TABLE 4. Diplomas Awarded, Special Programs.
Source: “Jinnuda sishinian.”

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Major</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education Two-year Course</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Education One-year Course (1929-1930)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare Two-year Course</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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*The Educational Review*
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