

# Liberal Arts and China's Christian Colleges: A Case Study of the University of Nanking



By Wangshu Tai

*A Project Sponsored by the Colgate University Institute for Philosophy,  
Politics, and Economics, Lampert Endowment*

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Different Educational Tradi- tions.....	6
The Origins: 1888-1910.....	11
Early Republican Era: 1910-1924.....	18
Growth and Adjustment: 1924- 1937.....	25
Second Sino-Japanese War: 1937-1945.....	31
The Civil War and Amalgamation: 1946- 1952.....	35
Conclusion.....	38
Postface.....	41
Bibliogra- phy.....	44
Appendix A: Time- line.....	47
Appendix B: The History of the University as illustrated in Diagram.....	50

## Introduction

For China, the nineteenth century was an era of change. The Qing empire, threatened by the bombardment on its coast, found reality uglier than her worst nightmare. Crises came from all fronts: Manchurian armies proved no rival against western military power; weavers were driven into bankruptcy by the massive inflow of imported textiles; scholars realized to their terror, that moral superiority was no shield against “barbarous skills.”<sup>1</sup> The message was unmistakable —China was imperiled.<sup>2</sup>

It took several decades for Qing elites to reach a consensus on the modernization project, or, whether to modernize at all. But it took much less time for the tide from the West to thrust open the door of the empire. Defeats in the Opium War (1839-42) and the Anglo-French Expedition (1856-60) forced China to grant Westerners the right to trade, reside, travel, and learn the Chinese language. China also revoked its ban on Christianity, a policy introduced by Emperor Yung-cheng in 1724.<sup>3</sup> Soldiers, diplomats, missionaries, and merchants came from the West. Among these groups, missionaries were often the focal point of controversies because they aroused mixed feelings. On the one hand, they propagated a foreign faith under the umbrella of extraterritoriality. On the other hand, they also established China’s first modern hospital and school. Among their work, colleges were particularly important since they produced many graduates who were instrumental in China’s modernization. The graduates of Christian colleges,

---

<sup>1</sup> A contemptuous designation of western science and technology, which were considered much inferior to Confucian orthodoxy by conservative intellectuals.

<sup>2</sup> For general introductory books on modern Chinese history, see Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Patricia Ebrey et al, *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History: From 1600* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Jessie Gregory Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 6.

like their alma maters, are the products of “cross cultural interactions.”<sup>4</sup> As we shall see, the history of these interactions and the institutions themselves is an revealing facet of modern Chinese history.

Christian colleges shared a rather similar history. Many started out as primary and secondary schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but did not begin to flourish until the turn of the century. They expanded steadily and remained largely independent in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, nationalist movements in the 1920s forced the colleges to assimilate. By the 1930s, China had sixteen Christian higher education institutions, thirteen of which were Protestant and three Catholic, accounting for 10% to 15% of China’s total undergraduate population.<sup>5</sup> A greater degree of Sinicization and secularization was the hallmark of the colleges between 1927 and 1937, only to be disrupted by the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). Violence did not stop with Japan’s surrender. Within a few months, civil war (1946-49) broke out between Kuomintang (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As a result, KMT forces lost the mainland within three years.

One of the first projects the CCP launched after its victory was the nationwide reorganization of higher education institutions. Because of their connections with the West, especially the United States, which had supported the KMT during the Chinese civil war, Christian colleges did not fare well with the new regime; they were either closed or merged into public universities. The Christian colleges ceased to exist as independent Sino-Western institutions in the mainland.

This paper is a case study of the history of the University of Nanking, with particular focus on the liberal arts elements of its education. I avoid the familiar term “liberal arts education,” be-

---

<sup>4</sup> Zhang Kaiyuan, ed., *The Spread of Culture and the Christian Colleges* (Wuhan: Hubei Educational Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Jessie Gregory Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 3.

cause the school was involved in many professional programs as well. Nevertheless, elements of the liberal arts can often be found in these programs. The school was founded in 1888 by C.H.Fowler. It was located in Nanking, an important political and cultural center on the eastern coast.<sup>6</sup> The university developed rapidly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and boasted the best school of agriculture and forestry in China. During the nationalist movements in the 1920s, the University of Nanking was the first Christian college that registered with the Chinese government. Like many others, it migrated to Chengdu during the war with Japan and was amalgamated into Nanjing University in 1952. By using the university's curricula, entrance examinations, major requirements, and various other primary and secondary sources, I shall sketch the outlines of the development of the liberal arts ideal, namely, how was it adopted, integrated, and eventually abandoned.

The story of the University of Nanking is worth studying because it is in some sense a “cultural experiment” that successfully adapted the liberal arts to a foreign land. Although such experiences were basically abandoned and forgotten after the 1950s, they could still provide some guidance to current events in China, which is trying to extend its rather successful economic reforms to other fields, including the higher education. I have also tried throughout the essay to put the story of the University of Nanking in larger historical context because it helps us understand the driving forces behind events at the school level. Moreover, the history of the Christian colleges is an integral part of modern Chinese history. Before delving into the specifics, however, it is necessary to have a big picture in mind of the educational conventions of China and the West.

---

<sup>6</sup> Despite the difference in spelling, Nanking and Nanjing refer to the same city (南京). The former is based on the Wade-Giles system, whereas the latter is based on the *pinyin* system. Although Wade-Giles system was once the most popular way of transliterating Chinese, pinyin has been the standard romanization system in mainland China since the 1950s and is becoming increasingly popular internationally.

## Different Educational Traditions

The notion of a well-rounded education was not alien to China. As early as in the time of Confucius (fifth century BCE), an educated man was supposed to master the “Six Arts”: rites (*Li*), music (*Yue*), archery (*She*), charioteering (*Yu*), calligraphy (*Shu*), and mathematics (*Shu*). Although physical training and mathematics were encompassed in the Six Arts, the educators gradually shifted their focus to the humanities. This change was evident in the “Six Classics,” promulgated by Confucius and his followers: the *Book of Poetry* (*Shi*), the *Book of Documents* (*Shu*), the *Book of Rites* (*Li*), the *Book of Changes* (*Yi*), the *Book of Music* (*Yue*), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*).<sup>7</sup> To be sure, there were also other thinkers active in this period with their own educational philosophy and canon, but as Confucianism became the state doctrine in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE), their social impact dwindled over time. Meanwhile, the original Confucian canon expanded and became known as the “Thirteen Classics.”

The influence of Confucian doctrine ebbed somewhat as the Han Dynasty came to its end in the third century BC. In division and chaos, intellectuals turned to Buddhism and Taoism for comfort. But Confucianism soon came back as a unified empire appeared again in the seventh century CE. The crucial event was the creation of the civil examination system (*Keju*) during the Sui Dynasty (581-618 BCE). If one passed the test, the door to government posts was open to him regardless of his original social status. As the standard way of selecting bureaucrats, the civil examination system had tremendous impact on politics as well as on education, which now aimed at training students who could pass the test successfully. Since Confucian canon was now

---

<sup>7</sup> *Chunqiu* is the chronicle of the State of Lu, Confucius’ homeland. Here “spring and autumn” was used metonymically to signify a year, a conventional usage in classical Chinese.

the main, if not the only, basis of the test, Confucianism regained much popularity among intellectuals.

During the one century or so when Mongols ruled China (1271-1368), the significance of civil examination declined because higher civil posts were generally monopolized by Mongolian and Semu aristocrats.<sup>8</sup> However, it was revived in the ensuing Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The Confucian canon also underwent some significant changes, the core of which now consisted of “the Four Books and the Five Classics.”<sup>9</sup> The annotation of the Four Books by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a Neo-Confucian scholar, was adopted as the authoritative version. The Manchus, who originated in what today would be the northeastern corner of the China, grew into a formidable military and political power in the early seventeenth century and in 1644 finally defeated the Ming. They remained in power until 1911. Manchurian rulers upheld the civil examination system from the beginning of the dynasty. Although their reign of China was longer and more successful than that of the Mongols, the civil examination system gradually became rigid and its disadvantages became more pronounced. The test-takers were expected to compose the so-called “eight-legged essay” (*Baguwen*), a genre that stressed form much more than content. And they could only write in a prescribed style. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese elites were aware of the shortcoming of the system. And the Qing court was seeking ways to reform it. Nevertheless, the system was eventually abolished in 1905, seven years before the end of the dynasty itself.<sup>10</sup>

In the west, a systematic, well-rounded education, like many other institutions, was a Greek invention. The curriculum used by Pythagoras (c. 570-c. 495 BCE), a famous Greek phi-

---

<sup>8</sup> *Semu* means assorted categories. It applies to all the ethnicities in the Yuan Empire, with the exception of Mongols, Chinese, and Koreans. In the caste system of Yuan, Semu ranks the second in the four ranks, after the Mongols.

<sup>9</sup> The Four Books are *The Great Learning (Daxue)*, *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)*, *The Analects (Lunyu)*, and Mencius. The Five Classics are the same as the Six Classics with the exclusion of the *Book of Music*, which was lost at a very early time.

<sup>10</sup> For history of the civil examination system, see Xiong Ming'an, *The History of Chinese Higher Education* (Chongqing: Chongqing Press, 1988).

losopher in Late Archaic Period, consisted of mathematics, poetry, reading, writing, music, and eventually, philosophy, the study of wisdom.<sup>11</sup> The sophists, Gorgias of Leontini (c. 485-c. 380 BCE) in particular, added rhetoric and dialectic into the curriculum. Scholars of the Hellenistic period retained the basic structure of the Classical curriculum, with few significant modifications; grammar was now formally established as a subject. Dialectic was replaced by logic. Astronomy and geography, science of the stars and the globe, became new components of education.

The Romans inherited the Greek curriculum selectively as they did to other components of the Greek civilization. Latin was added to grammatical study, which then led to mathematics and music, and culminated in rhetoric, which included a knowledge of literature, logic, and to eloquence. The Latin term *artes liberales* (arts for the free men) indicates that education was still an aristocratic luxury at this time.

Although the Middle Ages in Western Europe is often erroneously portrayed as a period of general ignorance, it was during this period when the seven liberal arts were formalized as trivium and quadrivium. Trivium consists of grammar (chiefly Latin grammar, since knowledge of the Greek language was almost extinct in Europe during the Middle Ages), rhetoric, and logic. Quadrivium is made up by arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. These four subjects were often known collectively as the “mathematical arts” because of their connection with numbers. The normal sequence was that a man should master trivium first and then proceed to quadrivium. The idea of the “Renaissance Man” was clearly influenced by the Seven Arts. Leonardo Bruni (c. 1370- c. 1444), a famous Italian humanist, listed in one of his letters “the sound of through knowledge of Latin” as the “foundation of all true learning,” followed by history, theol-

---

<sup>11</sup> Otto Willmann, "The Seven Liberal Arts," Robert Appleton Company, <http://www.newadvent.org/cachen/01760a.htm>

ogy, poetry, arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> Although Greek was not mentioned in this list, Bruni and his contemporaries were in fact the first generation that could read Greek after the language virtually disappeared in western Europe for one thousand years. With this important addition, the basic elements of a liberal arts education would remain unchanged for another few centuries in Europe and later, the United States. At most denominational colleges in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a typical curriculum “emphasized Latin and Greek, mathematics, philosophy, and religion,” whereas history, English literature, and the sciences also rose in importance as the end of the century approached.<sup>13</sup>

Although China and the West developed and practiced independently the well-rounded, non-vocational educational traditions, their initial encounter was not characterized by mutual understanding. To be precise, it was decades after both sides were acquainted with the physical presence of the other when the possibility of such encounter began to be considered. To the China missions, evangelism was unquestionably their primary, if not the only, concern. But whether it was at Peking, Hangchow, or Canton, direct evangelism met with indifference of the Chinese people. Robert Morrison (1782-1834), who established the first Christian school in China, had his first convert after having resided at Macau for seven years.<sup>14</sup> Those in the field felt the urgent need of new methods. Some turned to education, while others turned to medicine and hospitals. The rationale was similar: tangible benefits might attract more converts than mere preaching. Thus, many early mission schools were free of charge; they sometimes even provided subsidies to attendants. Although the primacy of evangelism was still recognized, the practice of

---

<sup>12</sup> Bruni’s letter was intended to provide advice for an aristocratic woman wishing to be educated, nevertheless, the full curriculum was provided because Bruni had to state the pros and cons of each subject. Leonardo Bruni, “De Studiis Et Litteris,” in *Vittorino Da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, ed. W.H. Woodward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 123.

<sup>13</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

teaching while preaching soon became widespread. In 1866, twenty-seven years after Morrison opened his first school, missionaries had already founded 63 mission schools in China.<sup>15</sup>

Missionaries usually began with elementary and secondary schools, which were often located in urban centers. The subjects normally taught consisted of the Chinese classics, science and mathematics, Western history and geography, and the Christian truth.<sup>16</sup> Missionary educators understood that the Chinese classics were indispensable for an educated man to obtain respectable status. Meanwhile they were also firmly convinced that the physical sciences were conducive to one's rational power, whereas Western history and geography supplement one's knowledge of the world outside China—to them both seemed absent in classical Chinese education. Finally, Christian truth was the ultimate goal of mission education.

The curriculum strongly resembled that of American liberal arts colleges in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception that Chinese was substituted for Latin and Greek. By furnishing such an education, the missionaries hoped that some of them would staff China's future clergy. Nonetheless, their achievements in the nineteenth century was far from satisfactory. China's upper class continued to ignore the mission schools since they did not prepare students for the civil examinations. Those who attended, on the other hand, were not always fully committed. Many were originally poor and illiterate. After acquiring basic literacy and some knowledge of the West, many left the schools to make their fortune in commerce, resulting in high drop-out rates. The nascent mission schools faced isolation and hostility, troubled by internal and external difficulties. However, the turning point was already at the corner.

---

<sup>15</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, ed. Zhang Xianwen (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, 16.

## The Origins: 1888-1910

The turning point for liberal arts education came with China's sharpening crisis. The defeat in the Anglo-French Expedition (1856-60) forced the emperor to sign the Tientsin Treaty. Since the English and French versions of the treaty were considered authoritative, Prince Yixin suggested that the government should establish new-style schools to train Chinese in these two languages. These schools were named Tung-wen Kuan (Schools of Combined Learning). They were affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Established at Peking in 1862, first Tung-wen Kuan marked the beginning of China's modern education. One year later, two similar institutions were set up in Shanghai and Canton, two major treaty ports. In the ensuing two decades, more new-style schools were founded, often under the auspices of liberal-minded reformers in the court and at the provincial level.

As the prototype of China's modern institution was growing, the Qing government also sought to reform the civil examination system. Although the system had been reformed extensively over time, the late-nineteenth century pushed this tradition in important new directions. The reformer strongly felt that in order to cope with the crisis, the examination should no longer be confined to the Confucian classics. Western subjects, above all, science and mathematics, should be included. In 1887, the court issued the imperial edict that mathematics would be included in the civil examination.<sup>17</sup> Many missionaries perceived this as an opportunity. Within six years, three Christian colleges were established in the city of Nanking, which would then unite and form the University of Nanking.<sup>18</sup> Initially, the three colleges remained independent, al-

---

<sup>17</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*. (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>18</sup> They were the Nanking University (1888), the Christian College (1891), and the Presbyterian College (1894). See Zhang, 569.

though they shared a similar curriculum. Here I chose to study the curriculum of the Nanking University because it was the oldest and had the most abundant textual records.

As Nanking University President John C. Ferguson stated, the object of the school was to “combine a thorough knowledge of Chinese literature with a knowledge of one Western language and of western science, mathematics and philosophy.”<sup>19</sup> The school was composed of the School of Theology, the School of Medicine, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Preparatory School.<sup>20</sup> For students enrolled in the liberal arts, their course of study consisted of three years of Biblical studies, four years of classical Chinese, three years of mathematics, two years each of English and history, one year each of physics, zoology, biology, chemistry, physiology, botany, surveying and navigation, moral philosophy, logic, astronomy, geology, political economy, and psychology.<sup>21</sup> The course of study was the same for all the students except for the one elective in the final year, chosen from mineralogy, meteorology, or differential calculus.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that all instruction was conducted in Mandarin (except the English courses), but students were expected to “supplement their instruction by reading works in English.”<sup>23</sup>

The most direct inspiration of this curriculum came from contemporary American liberal arts colleges, from which many of the missionaries graduated. First, the “elective principle” was already very popular among US higher education institutions in late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> Compared with the unitary system, electives allowed much more freedom and diversity. Second, Chinese

---

<sup>19</sup> John Fryer, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*, 1 ed. (Shanghai: Educational Association of China, 1895), 45.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Nathaniel Gist Gee, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Supervision*, 2 ed. (Soochow: Educational Association of China, 1905), appendix vii.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Fryer, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Rudolph and John R. Thelin, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 305.

and English replaced Latin and Greek from the beginning. This choice was understandable. Even in the United States, the classical languages were long past their prime. To missionary educators in China, there was little practical reason to spend limited resources on these two languages when there were much better alternatives.

The second source was the classical Chinese curriculum. The mastery of classical Chinese was still the minimum requirement to be considered an educated man in this society. As A.P. Parker commented in 1890 that mission day schools should devote “at least one-half of their time to the classics or parents would never send their children to them.”<sup>25</sup> Although classical Chinese education was still a core element in mission education, its nature and pedagogy underwent significant changes. With the addition of Biblical studies and instruction on Chinese history, the Chinese classics were essentially “placed in a comparative context and historicized.”<sup>26</sup> Pedagogically, verbatim memorization was no longer employed as the main pedagogical method. In 1905, students at the Nanking University in 1905 had to recite *Tso Chuan* only (a commentary the Spring and Autumn Annals, one of the Five Classics). Compared with the whole collection of the Five Classics and the Four Books, there was indeed a substantial cut in workload. Furthermore, the recitation was spread over a span of three years.<sup>27</sup>

The curriculum of Nanking University also differed from that of contemporary schools sponsored by the Qing government. As mentioned above, the pioneers in modern Chinese education were pragmatists. Their objectives were to strengthen the military by learning the advanced technology of the West. Many were deeply inspired by the successful efforts of Japanese reform

---

<sup>25</sup> Ryan Dunch, "Science, Religion, and the Classics in Christian Higher Education to 1920," in *China's Christian colleges : cross-cultural connections, 1900-1950*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Daniel H. Bays (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 64.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> Gee, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Supervision*, appendix vii.

under the Meiji government and its famous “rich country, strong army.” Therefore, most government institutions during this period were technical or professional in orientation. For instance, the Chinese Imperial Naval College at Nanking, founded in 1890, taught mathematics, mechanics, navigation, nautical astronomy, physical geography, English, engineering, rifle exercise, and gymnastics.<sup>28</sup>

Several distinct features of the curriculum are worth mentioning. First, instead of the system of major, minor, and electives now familiar to American colleges, the Nanking University offered only a unitary course of study. Ferguson was, therefore, in the same bastion with Devello Sheffield, who argued that “studies essential to the proper equipment of every educated man should be marked *required*, while others would be *optional*.”<sup>29</sup> It was not an uncommon practice for mission schools at the turn of the century. In fact, some schools went even further than Nanking University by leaving no place at all for electives. Calvin Mateer’s Shantung Christian University and Young Allen’s Anglo-Chinese College in Shanghai were in this category. But some schools had already begun to lose interest in the cover-all approach in 1905. Peking University and the Anglo-Chinese College in Ningbo, for instance, adopted separate degrees program and electives.<sup>30</sup> The move toward different degree programs would become the general trend in the Republican Era.

Second, religious instruction was a central component of the curriculum. It consisted of Biblical History and Literature, History of the Church, Bible introduction, and Christian Evi-

---

<sup>28</sup> Fryer, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Devello Sheffield, “The Educational Association of China and Public Examinations,” in *Records of the Triennial Meeting of the Educational Association of China, 1893*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Dunch, “Science, Religion, and the Classics in Christian Higher Education to 1920,” 73.

dence. The parents had to understand “that they are placing their sons where they will be under religious instruction, and that the purposes of the school is thoroughly evangelical.”<sup>31</sup>

Third, although most textbooks were written in English, all the teaching was done in Chinese. There were, however, different strands of opinion on this issue. They were best represented by Calvin Mateer of Shantung Christian University and Francis Pott of St. John’s University. Shantung was known for teaching the sciences in Mandarin and its focus on classical Chinese training; more than a dozen of Mateer’s students actually passed the civil examination at the district level.<sup>32</sup> Pott, on the other hand, argued that the western subjects could not be taught in Chinese because of “inherent imprecision, the lack of an accepted scientific nomenclature, and the speed with which translated texts on science would become out-of-date.”<sup>33</sup> Teachers at St. John’s had been using English in science courses since 1894.<sup>34</sup> Although Pott’s argument on the incapability of adapting Chinese into a scientific language may well be debated, it was a matter of fact that missionaries found it much easier to teach in their native tongue. Further, good science textbooks in Chinese were in constant shortage despite the hard work of the School and Textbook Series Committee.<sup>35</sup> As we shall see, Chinese would gradually give way to English as the medium of teaching.

Four, professional education existed from the very beginning. As noted above, the College of Liberal Arts was only one of the four branches of Nanking University. The Fowler Biblical School, named after its founder, trained its students in “historical, exegetical, systematic and

---

<sup>31</sup> Fryer, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Dunch, "Science, Religion, and the Classics in Christian Higher Education to 1920," 66.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>34</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, 70.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

practical theology” in the duration of three years.<sup>36</sup> Its graduates were expected to become ministers. The curriculum of the School of Medicine consisted of “anatomy, materia medica and the practice of medicine and surgery.”<sup>37</sup> Missions were generally unsupportive of professional education because it did not contribute directly to evangelism.<sup>38</sup> Medicine and theology, however, were two exceptions. Theological schools were desirable because they trained native preachers. Medical education was also needed since missions, while maintaining schools, often ran hospitals at the same time. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), for instance, supported both the Christian College and the Christian Hospital at Nanking. The trainees became medical practitioners in mission hospitals after graduation from mission medical schools. It therefore solved the staffing problem. Mission schools did not just reflect educational philosophy, they were also shaped by practical concerns.

Finally, one should not neglect the importance of preparatory school. In the *Educational Directory for China*, the curriculum of the preparatory department was listed just under that of the college. There were considerable continuities. The preparatory program of Nanking University lasted for five years, including Bible, Chinese, English, Biology, and Universal History.<sup>39</sup> The university did not express explicit preference for graduates of its own prep school, but it had a separate “special program” for students who gave up their preparation for the civil examination and came to the university.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Fryer, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Nathaniel Gist Gee, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Supervision*. 2 ed. (Soochow: Educational Association of China, 1905), appendix vii.

<sup>40</sup> Xi Cao, "The Nanking University," in *The History of Nanking University: From 1888 to 1988*, ed. The Alumni Association of the University of Nanking (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988), 134.

## Early Republican Era: 1910-1924

Although the Qing court implemented many reforms in the last twenty years of its reign, dissatisfaction and resentment of Manchus ran high. One fatal mistake was the repeated delay of the first constitutional convention, which largely discredited the efforts put into reform in many other realms. When the first cabinet was formed in 1911, public outrage finally exploded; nine out of thirteen were Manchus. On 10 October 1911, the revolutionaries had their first successful uprising in Wuchang. Within one month, seventeen out of twenty-two provinces declared independence.<sup>41</sup> By promising to elect him as the president, the revolutionaries also managed to persuade Yuan Shikai, who was the de facto leader of Qing's elite military forces, to endorse the revolution. On 12 February 1912, Emperor Xuantong announced his abdication. The Qing Dynasty came to an end.

However, the exultation at the founding of the republic proved to be short-lived. The compromise between the revolutionaries and Yuan Shikai was very fragile. It collapsed when Song Jiaoren, a major leader of KMT, was assassinated in 1913, supposedly with the consent of Yuan.<sup>42</sup> The KMT retaliated by launching the Second Revolution, which was soon suppressed by the forces loyal to Yuan.<sup>43</sup> Yuan did not rejoice at this victory for too long, for he died after a scandalous restoration of the overthrown imperial institutions. After Yuan, there was no one that could unite the numerous local-based military and political powers that grew during late Qing

---

<sup>41</sup> Tong Tekong, *Yuanshi Dangguo [The Reign of Yuan Shikai]* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>42</sup> Historians still disagree about the true culprit. Many hold Yuan accountable for Song's death. But more recent scholarship shows that it was unlikely that Yuan ordered the assassination directly. His followers might have misinterpreted his message. See Chapter 3 in *Yuanshi Dangguo*.

<sup>43</sup> The KMT was a party developed from the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance (Zhonghua Tongmenghui), which led the Wuchang Uprising.

and the early republic. The leaders of these powers were known as the “warlords.” Dominated by these warlords, China entered a period of great strife and disunity.

Although the political history of the early republic was characterized by turmoil, progress was made in many other fields, including higher education. Public universities developed rapidly during this period, some of which would soon become China’s most prestigious higher education institutions. Peking University, for instance, became an intellectual center during the twelve years Cai Yuanpei served as its president (Cai was also the first minister of education of the Republic of China). Peking University was the birthplace and epicenter of the New Culture Movement, which advocated the substitution of vernacular for classical Chinese in literary works. Although public universities began much later than the Christian colleges, they developed so rapidly that some could already compete with or surpass the best of Christian colleges in the early republican era.

The Christian colleges responded to the new challenge by resorting to consolidation. At the 1913 China National Conference held by the Continuation Committee, the members of the committee agreed “that evangelical and educational work are both included in our Great Commission, and that the success of evangelistic work largely depends on the efficiency of educational work, and that to secure such efficiency *union* is highly desirable.”<sup>44</sup> This statement not only reflected favorable change in attitude toward educational work but also pointed out the direction of such work—union. By means of coordination and concentration, it not only avoided duplication but also reduced the financial burden of each mission and raised academic standards because the limited resources of individual missions were brought together. This was the historical context of the founding of the new University of Nanking. In 1906, the Christian College and

---

<sup>44</sup> John Raleigh Mott, *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia, 1912-1913* (New York: Chairman of the Continuation Committee, 1913), 338.

the Presbyterian College joined to form the Union Christian College. Four years later, it merged with Nanking University to form the University of Nanking. The university was located at the old campus of the Nanking University. The primary and secondary departments were located at the old sites of Presbyterian College and Christian college, respectively.<sup>45</sup>

The nascent University of Nanking was characterized by several changes. The length of the undergraduate study, for instance, changed from four years to five years in 1917 in accord with government regulations, only to be restored to four years in 1922.<sup>46</sup> Some changes, however, were permanent. The most important one was the abandonment of a unitary course of study. A student could now choose a major, but at the same time he had to complete a number of compulsory and elective courses. The requirement still covered a wide range of subjects. For students in the College of Arts (though students could major in the sciences, the degree earned was still the Bachelor of Arts), the compulsory courses consisted of Chinese literature, British literature, Chinese philosophy, Western philosophy, ethics, sociology, pedagogy, biology or physiology, astronomy or geology, and politics.<sup>47</sup> The institution was officially put into place in 1915,<sup>48</sup> but it began earlier. In his memoir, Chen Yuguang, who entered the school in 1912, wrote that “[although] I majored in chemistry, I was required to take History of British Literature, Rhetoric, and Classical British Literature.”<sup>49</sup> English was not the only subject he had to take, for Chen was said to “work hard also on the humanities, history, and geography courses.”<sup>50</sup> The compulsory and elective courses were calculated in credit units. Normally, a student could

---

<sup>45</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>47</sup> *Daxue Chujiانشi de Wenke [The Division of Arts During the Early Years of the University]* (from the 1922 Yearbook), in *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, ed. The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>48</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> Yuguang Chen, "Some Reminiscences About the University of Nanking," in *The History of the University of Nanking from 1888 to 1988*, ed. Alumni Association of the University of Nanking (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>50</sup> Lanfang Sha, "President Chen Yuguang," *ibid.*, 138.

earn three to four credits by successfully completing a course. In the 1920s, a student had to earn 117 credits in order to graduate. One credit entailed fifty hours of work at school or seventy-five hours of work outside, which was equivalent to three hours of class, homework, and laboratory each week for an ordinary student.<sup>51</sup>

The trend toward union also affected professional programs at the University of Nanking. The medical school was transferred to the Shantung Christian University in 1917.<sup>52</sup> The greatest change, however, was the establishment of the School of Agriculture. Although the University of Nanking would gain fame for its agricultural education, the origin of the school was in fact quite haphazard. In 1913, a branch of the Beiyang Army sacked Nanking, which declared independence during the Second Revolution. War left thousands homeless. Joseph Bailie, professor of mathematics, hired the refugees in tree-planting and thus provided them with a means of living. Convinced that experts in agriculture and forestry were essential to China, Bailie proposed to the home board to open the School of Agriculture in 1914. His proposal received support from thirty dignitaries, headed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen.<sup>53</sup> However, not everyone was happy with the new schools. The home boards had long warned that professional education was a waste of limited resources, because it did not contribute directly to evangelism. When Bailie resigned and returned to United States in 1916, the American board suggested that the university should give up its agricultural program and focus on the liberal arts. Zhang Pengchun, then a member of the board in the US, objected to the proposal. He argued that since agriculture was fundamental to

---

<sup>51</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University, ed., *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]* (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989), 343.

<sup>53</sup> "The University of Nanking Magazine 1943.2," in *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, ed. The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989), 18.

China, the program should not only be maintained, but also expanded.<sup>54</sup> Zhang finally managed to persuade the board. The School of Agriculture became permanent.

Clearly, a liberal arts education was not the aim of the School of Agriculture from the beginning. Quite the contrary, the school was highly professional and practical—it was designed to train experts in agriculture and forestry. It by no means, however, denied the value of liberal arts. The entrance examination, for instance, required the same subjects for candidates for the School of Arts and the School of Agriculture. There were also plenty of compulsory and elective courses designed to broaden students' horizons. The School of Agriculture required its students to take Chinese, English, Physics, Chemistry, Principles of Economics, and Introduction to geology.<sup>55</sup> In a word, the School of Agriculture could not be narrowly defined as a vocational program. It was more of a hybrid.

The third important institutional change during this period was the introduction of the mandatory minor system in 1924. Students had to choose a minor in addition to the major. Generally speaking, one's minor was to be related to his or her major. For instance, students majoring in mathematics often chose chemistry or physics as their minor, although this was not required. The number of credits required by a major usually ranged from 32 to 60. For a minor it ranged from 20 to 35.<sup>56</sup> During the 1920s, a student had to earn 150 to 160 credits in order to graduate.<sup>57</sup> The mandatory minor system would not eliminate the student's freedom to explore, but it did raise the rigor of the academic program.

---

<sup>54</sup> "The Founding of the School of Agriculture and Forestry," in *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, ed. The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Bangyan Dai, "The Credit System of the University of Nanking," in *The History of Nanking University from 1888 to 1988*, ed. The Alumni Association of the University of Nanking (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988), 123.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>57</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 29.

The fourth change was the language of instruction. Although it was a more gradual process compared with the other three, its significance could not be underestimated. According to President Chen, “except for courses on the Chinese classics and history, which *could* not be taught in English, English was used in all other courses and extracurricular activities, including lab instruction given by assistants, conversation between athletes on, and cheerleading.”<sup>58</sup> The importance of English was stressed from the very beginning. In the entrance examination, the English test consisted of listening, reading, composition, grammar, and vocabulary.<sup>59</sup> It was so demanding that many failed to achieve satisfactory grades and had to take the English “sub-course” upon matriculation.<sup>60</sup> A sub-course did not count toward graduation and merely served to ease the transition to college-level work.

The last but not the least, religion had become an elective. According to an official report issued by the Ministry of Education in 1920, students of the preparatory department had to spend two hours each week on religious education. It was also compulsory for undergraduates enrolled in the School of Arts.<sup>61</sup> The ministry suggested that the University of Nanking make religion an elective. This was probably enforced in 1921, when the university changed the College of Arts to the College of Arts and Sciences and reorganized its departments based on the suggestions in the same report. Another piece of evidence was that in a 1922 yearbook, religion had already been listed as one of electives.<sup>62</sup> This change showed the increasing influence of the Republican government on the University of Nanking. The attitude of the government was best summarized in a regulation passed in 1925 concerning the schools supported by foreign funds.

---

<sup>58</sup> Chen, "Some Reminiscences About the University of Nanking," 10.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Xiao Xinsheng, Interview, 8/02/2011.

<sup>61</sup> "The Report on the Visit to the University of Nanking from the Ministry of Education," in *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, ed. The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>62</sup> "The Division of Arts During the Early Years of the University (from the 1922 Yearbook)," 17.

Foreigners should follow governmental regulations and seek recognition from the Ministry of Education when they found schools at any level. The name of the school should contain 'private.' The president of the school should be a Chinese national. If not, the vice president should be Chinese. Chinese nationals should account for more than half of the board of trustees. Evangelism should not be the objective of the school. The subjects should satisfy the standards set by the ministry. And no religion course should be made compulsory.<sup>63</sup>

Although the political authority to implement these measures was greatly undermined by disunity, the 1925 regulation should not be neglected. It set up the basic principles held by the government when dealing with Christian colleges. As the central authority was restored during Chiang Kai-shek's reign, these measures would gradually be implemented.

On the other side, the Christian colleges were ready to comply with the regulations of the new government. In the national conference, the Continuation Committee advised the mission schools to "follow government curricula as far as is possible without prejudice to our special purpose" because government recognition was "in itself much to be desired."<sup>64</sup> By and large, the mission schools transformed from alien institutions outside the educational system to Sino-Western academies actively seeking government recognition. The University of Nanking became more involved in the erratic political landscape of early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This process was characterized by growth as well as integration.

#### Growth and adjustment: 1924-1937

The defining theme of China in the 1920s was nationalism. The rise of Chinese nationalism owed much to anti-imperialism. The direct trigger was China's diplomatic failure at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The Beiyang Government declared war against Germany, which held

---

<sup>63</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Mott, *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia, 1912-1913*, 338.

many privileges in Shantung Province, toward the end of the war. Further it sent workers to help the Allies, primarily in western Europe, especially France. Therefore, at the conclusion of the war, China expected the return of territories and privileges formerly held by Germany. The Peace Conference, however, decided to transfer the privileges to Japan. Many Chinese felt humiliated and indignant upon hearing the decision. Their massive protest was later known as the May Fourth Movement, a milestone in modern Chinese history. Anti-imperialism ran high, especially among the students. Some were attracted by the Marxist-Leninist doctrines. In 1921, Chen Duxiu, a prominent scholar and activist, founded the first charter of Chinese Communist Party.

Others found anti-Christian doctrines appeals more provocative. Despite their hard work, the image of missionaries as perceived by the majority of Chinese had not changed much. One may easily recall that the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), a violent anti-foreign movement that resulted in the sack of Peking, was triggered by disputes concerning missionaries. After all, they were proselytizing under the protection of extraterritoriality. As early as in 1920, John Dewey and Bertrand Russell questioned the usefulness of religion to the modern world. Because they were both in China at the time, their arguments had great social impact. In 1922, the Young China Association launched attacks on Christian missions.

The tipping point came when the World's Student Christian Federation (W.S.C.F) announced that it would hold its annual conference at Tsing Hua University. This was taken as an insult, for Tsing Hua was one of the most prestigious government schools at the time. Some intellectuals formed the Great Federation of Anti-religionists in Peiping. The movement soon spread to China proper and developed into the Restore Educational Right Movement. It was held in consensus that education is a sovereign right. Therefore, mission schools should register with

the Chinese government and arrange their curricula as stipulated by the Ministry of Education. Above all, religion should no longer be a compulsory course in any form.

Intellectual storms were echoed in politics. In 1926, the KMT launched the Northern Expedition from its base in Canton. China was now ruled by a host of warlords who were virtually autonomous in their own turfs. Chiang Kai-shek and his troops advanced very quickly. On March 23 1927, the KMT troops entered Nanking. The next day, large-scale riots against foreigners broke out, resulting in the death of several foreigners, including J. E. Williams, the vice president of the University of Nanking. British and American warships responded by firing at the city. Although the KMT managed to settle the conflict the next day before it escalated, foreign residents had evacuated the city, including the foreign faculty of the university. An interim committee was soon established. Chen Yuguang, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, was elected president of the university. In December 1928, KMT completed the Northern Expedition and established the Nanking government.

One of Chen Yuguang's first measures was registration with the new government, which was completed in 1928. In 1929, the university made its science division a separate college in accordance with the new statute that registered universities should have at least three colleges.<sup>65</sup> One year later, the university received stipulations from the ministry of education that the university should dispense with its religion department.<sup>66</sup> Chen Yuguang explained to the ministry that religion was not a compulsory course and students had full liberty to choose courses other than religion.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the ministry would not alter its decision. Chen Yuguang suggested

---

<sup>65</sup> "The College and Arts and the College and Science to Be Formed out of the Division of Arts and Science ", *The University of Nanking Weekly* 1929. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji*, 44.

<sup>66</sup> "Directive 268,269: Concerning the Suspension of the Religion Department," ed. Ministry of Education (Nanking 1930). In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> "The Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Nanking", (1930). In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji*, 44.

to the board of trustees that the school could allocate the religion courses to departments like sociology, history, and philosophy.<sup>68</sup> Chen's proposal was accepted. The disputes on religion were finally settled with the disappearance of the religion department. Three Principles of the People (Three Principles of the People, a set of doctrines developed by Sun Yat-sen) and military training became compulsory courses for all students. The other Christian colleges were treated the same.

The move from religion to Three Principles of the People is highly symbolic. For the Christian colleges, the price of integration was not cheap; they were compromising at the expense of their most distinctive feature. It showed that the increasing power and intention on the government behalf to dominate and influence the Christian colleges. This trend would continue till the demise of the colleges.

As the situation stabilized, professors and students again concentrated on academic work. Apart from the influence of Chinese nationalism, the decade from 1924 to 1937 saw the fruition of several trends that had begun during the proceeding decade. The credit system and the mandatory minor became more sophisticated. The total number of credits needed for graduation was 142. Majors usually required 32 to 48 credits, whereas minors required 20 to 28 credits.<sup>69</sup> There were three levels of compulsory courses: university-level, college-level, and major requirement. Several courses were required for all the students regardless of the college they were in, including Three Principles of the People (4), military training (8), and physical education (2).<sup>70</sup> Each of the three colleges also had its own compulsory courses. Generally speaking, these courses were

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Catalogue of the University of Nanking* (Pamphlet. Nanking: the Secretariat of the University of Nanking, 1933). Held at Shanghai Municipal Library, 148.

<sup>70</sup> The number in the parenthesis is credits of the course. Ibid.

designed to broaden the students' horizons, and students were expected to finish them within the first two years.

For students in the College of Arts, their course of study was uniform for the first three semesters. They had to take Chinese: a selection of different genres (4), English language and literature (4), modern Chinese history (4), and introduction to social sciences (4). In the second semester, they had to take Chinese: a selection of different genres (4), English: reading and composition (4), modern European History (4), and introduction to natural sciences (4).<sup>71</sup> In the third semester, they had to take Chinese: advanced composition (3), English: advanced composition (3), general biology (4), mathematics (3), and philosophy (3).<sup>72</sup> One could still see the vestiges of the unitary course of study in the early periods from the course offerings in the first three semesters. After the third semester, however, students would concentrate on their major and minor requirements. There was, therefore, more variation in the course of studies.

The courses required by the College of Science generally follow the same mode, except it focuses more on the natural sciences and mathematics. The course offering of the School of Agriculture, however, is worth closer examination, because it was not a liberal arts program in orientation. Despite its professional orientation, the School of Agriculture was still influenced by the liberal arts ideal as it was in the previous decade. In their first semester, students had to take chemistry: qualitative analysis (4) or general physics (4), principles of economics (4), introduction to Chinese literature (3), public speaking (1), English language and literature (4). In their second semester they had to take general botany (4), chemistry: qualitative analysis (4) or general physics (4), general geology (3), English: scientific papers and composition (4), agricultural machinery (1). Students became more specialized in their third semester. They had to take crop

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 158.

science (3), agricultural economics (3), general zoology (3), and general horticulture (2). They also had to choose one course from chemistry (4), Japanese (4), and mathematics (2).<sup>73</sup>

During this period the university initiated its first vocational program (Zhuanxiu Ke): special program of Chinese studies. Seeing the lack of qualified Chinese teachers in secondary schools and the general neglect of the classics, the university initiated the vocational program in Chinese in 1926. It was intended to train Chinese teachers for secondary schools and professionals in Chinese studies.<sup>74</sup> Although applicants of this program had to take the same entrance examination as applicants of the three colleges, they only needed to study for two years.<sup>75</sup> The program set up the model that many later programs would follow: specific career goals, separate degrees, and shorter time. The demand for such programs would surge during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Although the shock wave of Chinese nationalism affected the University of Nanking in the early 1920s, the university quickly adjusted itself to the new political situation and thrived till the total outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The discontinuation of the religion department was a milestone on its way to secularization. As Three Principles of the People and military training replaced the role of religion, the government became influential in school affairs. Professional education continued to expand, although the influence of liberal arts was still strong. Many signs seemed to indicate that the university would enter a period of steady expansion and development. As the total war with Japan unfolded, however, the university's days grew limited.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 266

<sup>74</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 126.

<sup>75</sup> The subjects tested included party doctrines, Chinese, English, mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences. See *Catalogue*, 163.

## Second Sino-Japanese War: 1937-45

Japan had coveted China's territories and resources long before 1937. The Qing Empire ceded Taiwan to Japan after defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Japan grabbed the German stronghold in Shandong Province after WWI. During the Northern Expedition, the Japanese army attacked civilians and killed Chinese diplomats at Tsi-Nan on the pretext of protecting Japanese residents. On 18 September 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, which was occupied within three months. The outbreak of total war came six years later. Claiming that it had lost a soldier, Japanese army fired at Chinese troops at Marco Polo Bridge (an ancient bridge near Peking) on July 7, 1937. Within a few months, China had lost much of its eastern territories, where most Christian colleges were located. They had two options: suspension or migration. Many Christian colleges, including the University of Nanking, chose to migrate with national universities and the KMT government to the interior of China. Within a few months, tens of thousands of people were relocated to the southwest of China via train, vessel, automobiles, or even on foot. The migration of the University of Nanking took three months, and the school reopened on time at the campus of West China Union University, together with the medical department of National Central University, Ginling College, Shantung Christian University, Yenching University, and the biology department of Soochow University.<sup>76</sup> They would remain in Chengdu till the end of the war.<sup>77</sup>

The migration boosted economic development in central China, but it also created a great shortage of resources and manpower. For instance, the increasing pressure on transportation called for experts in automobiles. China's alliance with Britain and the United States required

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>77</sup> Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province and an important city in central China.

competent translators and secretaries. Practical need gave rise to various vocational programs. The University of Nanking developed five such programs during the war: film and radio, automobiles, library science, English, and horticulture.<sup>78</sup> These programs generally followed the conventions set by the program of Chinese studies, which was founded in 1926. The entrance examination was the same as that of the undergraduate colleges. The programs usually lasted for two years, and they were affiliated with a department. The influence of liberal arts was still considerable. Students enrolled the film and radio studies, for instance, had to take Chinese, English, mathematics, physics, optics, and electromagnetic theory.<sup>79</sup> Apart from the two-year programs, the University of Nanking also engaged in short-term training programs. The university did not confer degrees for trainees. In a word, the university had developed during the war a fourfold hierarchy composed of graduate institutes, undergraduate colleges, vocational programs, and short-term training.

However, this is only the bright side of the story. Inflation rate ranged from 10 to 20 % per month.<sup>80</sup> The library lost 95% of its holdings.<sup>81</sup> Even the house of President Chen could not escape Japanese bombs.<sup>82</sup> A liberal arts education requires the school to spend four years and thousands of dollars on each student. Knowledge of Confucius, Darwin, and calculus seem, quite honestly, useless to a nation at war. Was it luxurious, inefficient, or even unpatriotic to insist on the liberal arts under such circumstances?

According to Liu Youjing, dean of the College of Arts of the University of Nanking, the liberal arts was indeed not a popular idea during the war. In an article published in the school magazine, he summarized the general attitude toward higher education:

---

<sup>78</sup> Shiliaoji, 49.

<sup>79</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 237.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 82.

After the September 18 incident, public opinion changed again. People believed that the humanities and social sciences are useless and should be dispensed with. The universities should have four divisions only: agriculture, engineering, medicine, and science. Thus they can train students useful to the society. The popular slogan at the time was ‘science saves our nation.’ Then there came ‘engines save our nation.’ Afterwards there came ‘aeronautics saves our nation.’<sup>83</sup>

Liu was not convinced by such argument at all. He believed that learning per se matters more than the “usefulness” of the subjects. All good students have “an object, a plan, hard work, and persistence,” which are key to success regardless of the field one is in.<sup>84</sup> In other words, every subject, including the liberal arts, can be useful or useless depending on one’s attitude toward learning. Therefore, what one should do is not to argue about the usefulness of the subjects but to “choose a subject based on one’s ideal, interest, and ability, follow the guidance of the professor, and work hard.”<sup>85</sup>

Many professors shared Liu’s understanding of learning and attitude toward the liberal arts. They responded to the crisis by making the existing liberal arts education more rigorous. For students in the College of Arts, they had to take Chinese, English, modern Chinese and European history, ethics, introduction to philosophy or introduction to science, introduction to sociology, economics, and biology.<sup>86</sup> The credits of compulsory courses increased from 48 in 1933 to 68 in 1941.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, students majoring in Chinese, English, and history had to choose two courses from astronomy, geology, chemistry, physics, and algebra.<sup>88</sup> The academic standard was also maintained at a high level. The major requirement for history, for example, consisted of twenty courses, including history of Japan, Britain, Southeast Asia, and Russia,

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 404-5.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 405

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *Course booklet for students of the College of Arts* (Pamphlet. Chengtu, 1941. Held at Nanjing Municipal Library), 18.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 20.

western intellectual history, European diplomatic history, European economic history, methodology, historical geography, and the history of the study of history.<sup>89</sup> Majors that required the least courses were Chinese and philosophy, both requiring eighteen courses.

The eight-year war with Japan brought great destruction and disruption to almost every field in China. Nevertheless, the University of Nanking maintained its high academic standards. Professional education grew tremendously during this period, but the university managed to carry on its liberal arts education at undergraduate level. In other words, liberal arts education coexisted with professional training.

#### The civil war and amalgamation: 1946-1952

When Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, China was already on the verge of exhaustion. After eight years of war, the desire for peace was stronger than ever. Civil war, however, was knocking at the door. The communists expanded their military power during the war and had become a rival the KMT could not ignore. Civil war broke out in 1946. Though KMT forces had some small victories at the beginning, it soon found the situation turning against it. After its strategic loss in several major battles, the KMT regime collapsed. On April 23, 1949, communist troops entered Nanking, the capital of KMT regime at the time. Chiang Kai-shek and his remaining forces retreated to Taiwan. The University of Nanking, like many other Christian colleges, refused to retreat to Taiwan with the KMT. Rampant inflation, corruption, and censorship had made the colleges increasingly disillusioned with the KMT government during the civil war. The professors and students expected that a new communist government would redress these problems and restore the social order.

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 25.

The communist party paid special attention to the Christian colleges, because of their ties with the West, especially the United States. These connections were perceived as threatening to the new socialist regime. In 1950, when Korean War broke out, the United States and the People's Republic confronted each other on the battlefield. The communist regime made a patriotic call and ordered all the mission schools to sever their connections with the national enemy. The Ministry of Education now assumed their financial burden, thus turning them into public universities. This was only the first step of the grand project. In 1951, the ministry decided to merge the University of Nanking with Ginling College, a women's college in Nanking. The new university was known as the public university of Nanking. The department of philosophy, geography, home-economics, the Institute of Chinese studies, and the preparatory programs for medicine and nursing were disbanded due to lack of faculty.<sup>90</sup> The departments of sociology and history, as well as the program of media studies, were suspended because "the change in outlook and viewpoint would entail adjustment of textbooks."<sup>91</sup> What the new regime really intended was a re-compilation of the textbooks and deletion of materials not in accord with the communist social and historical theory.

Meanwhile, the curricula also underwent significant changes. There were two guiding principles of the reform. First and foremost, all the courses should be reorganized according to the theoretical framework of Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Second, scientific and technical courses were to be enhanced. For all students of the University of Nanking, the spring semester of 1950 started with four weeks of intensive political studies. The former university-level compulsory courses were cancelled (Three Principles of the People, military training, and physical educa-

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 507.

<sup>91</sup> "The Proposal Concerning the Merging of the University of Nanking and Ginling College, " (1951). In *Shiliaoji*, 80.

tion).<sup>92</sup> Apart from that, they had to take fourteen credits of political theory during the four years, eight of which should be taken during their freshman year.<sup>93</sup> On the college level, the deans had not yet worked out the new compulsory courses in the spring of 1950; they only decided to give considerable liberty to individual departments in terms of which courses should be prescribed. Many new courses were added including elementary and advanced Russian, theory of New Democracy, dialectical materialism, historical materialism, history of social development, and political economy.<sup>94</sup> The situation changed rapidly. Within one year, the amalgamation with Ginling college was completed. The new curricula also changed accordingly. All freshmen should focus on the history of social development. Sophomores of the College of Arts and School of Agriculture should focus on the studies of political economy.<sup>95</sup> The credit system was also abolished in favor of school years.<sup>96</sup> With such rapid politicization, the influence of the government on the Christian colleges was unprecedented. The influence of the Christian missions, on the other hand, had all but vanished. Within just two years, the new regime had created a decisive break in the continuity of organization, ideology, and educational philosophy. The liberal arts, along with many other legacies, had been effectively overwhelmed and dissolved. But the final blow was yet to come.

In 1952, the People's Republic launched its first five-year plan. According to the plan, higher education institutions would undergo complete transformation based on the Soviet model. There would still be a few national universities with course offerings in different fields, but most schools would be reorganized so that similar departments joined to form highly professional in-

---

<sup>92</sup> "A Draft Proposal to Enhance Political Education and Reform Curricula," (1950). In *Shiliaoji*, 226.

<sup>93</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 495.

<sup>94</sup> "The Decision to Reform Curricula for the First Semester of 1951," (1951). In *Shiliaoji*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 228.

stitutes (i.e., Peking Aeronautical Engineering College, Peking Steel College).<sup>97</sup> These institutes largely concentrated on scientific and technical education. The Christian colleges, with their liberal arts orientation, had no place in the new educational system. They were first carved up; the universities absorbed the departments in humanities and social sciences, whereas the work in natural science and professional programs were transferred to newly founded professional institutes.

The reorganization of the University of Nanking was quite typical. Its School of Agriculture became part of the Nanjing Agricultural College. The departments of electrical engineering and chemical engineering became part of the Nanjing Industrial College. The education department became part of the Nanjing Normal University, located on the former campus of Ginling College. The other departments were transferred to Nanjing University.<sup>98</sup> Sixty-four years after its founding, the University of Nanking ceased to exist as an independent institution.

## Conclusion

I have devoted as much attention to the “backdrop” as to the actual “story”: history of liberal arts education at the University of Nanking. By doing so, I hope to reveal to readers the correlations between the changes in purpose, curricula, and requirement with larger historical context, or to be precise, the political events that defined China in the first half of the twentieth century. More often than not, these events directly caused the changes—in this sense, they are not only the context, but part of the “text” itself. For the same reason, I arranged important political events and changes of the university in the same appendix in order to highlight such correlations.

---

<sup>97</sup> Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, 474.

<sup>98</sup> Zhang Sheng et al., *Jinling Daxue Shi [a History of the University of Nanking]*, 513.

The changes in the liberal arts education were as spectacular as its historical background. I approached the changes in five aspects. First, the course of study became diverse over time. The University of Nanking, like most Christian colleges, began by offering a unitary course of study. But it was gradually transformed to the system of major, minor, and electives that are familiar to us. Second, the religious aspect diminished rather quickly. By the end of the 1920s, religion courses, supposedly the core of mission education, had disappeared from the curriculum. Its place was first taken up by Three Principles of the People and then by Marxist theory. Third, although Chinese was initially used for teaching by missionaries, their successors gradually opted for English because of its commercial value and shortage of good Chinese textbooks. Fourth, even though missions discouraged works in professional education, it coexisted with liberal arts from the very beginning and expanded over time. At first, the University of Nanking provided education in medicine and theology. But by the 1930s, it had already developed the best school of agriculture and forestry, as well as various other professional programs. Last but not the least, the university of Nanking was part of the mission educational system that consisted of secondary and elementary schools and even kindergartens. At the beginning, there was a certain degree of exclusiveness in the system because the continuity in education was significant. But as China developed its own modern education, the pool of candidates expanded and the preparatory departments became relatively unimportant. Much has been written about the trends of Sinification, professionalization, secularization, politicization and so on. I prefer to call it integration. Initially, liberal arts was an alien ideal embodied by alien institutions. As the colleges were integrated into Chinese society and became venues of cross cultural interaction, the ideal itself also evolved and gained hybridity.

The integration, however, was not fully voluntary. The power of the government steadily increased in the history of the colleges. Its role changed from advisory (Beiyang Government) to supervisory (KMT government) and eventually total dominance (communist regime). The demise of the colleges was not the failure of the institutions and the liberal arts ideal. Rather, unchecked political power should be held accountable for their sudden death. For the same reason, the Christian colleges, as first modern higher education institutions in China and pioneers in liberal arts, medicine, comparative law, agriculture, female education, nursing etc., have faded into oblivion.

## Postface

The primary sources I cited in this paper come from several places: Nanjing Municipal Library (the Central Library before 1949), Shanghai Municipal Library, Jiangsu Provincial Archives, and several online databases. The Second National Archives of China has the largest holding of primary documents of the University of Nanking. Unfortunately, it is undertaking a digitization project that will take several years, which means no access to the documents is allowed before the conclusion of this project. Now only a tiny proportion of the archives is stored at Nanjing University, the main successor of the University of Nanking after 1952, because the majority of documents were transferred to the Second National Archives during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) for security concerns, where they have been kept ever since.

In my PPE application, I mentioned a piece of news about the Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTC). At that time, its application for independent admission right was still pending. Several updates have been posted since then. First, the Ministry of Education denied the application. Second, a branch of CCP has been established within the school. Moreover, half of the trustees of SUSTC are party officials and none are professors. Many begin to doubt whether “depoliticization of higher education institutions” (*Gaoxiao quxingzhenghua*, that is, to downplay the influence of the CCP and give autonomy to the schools) is just a slogan. The future of SUSTC and reform of higher education seems uncertain.

The lack of academic independence may be seen as part of the Maoist memory. But there are other less tangible evils that owe their existence to the post-Mao years. Rapid economic

growth gave rise to a generation of *nouveau riche* as well as overflowing materialism, which accentuated the decline of the humanities because of their “poor earning potential.” This evolved into an abnormal version of scientism best embodied in the saying, “Learn mathematics, physics, and chemistry well, you need not fear wherever you go.” I would like to conclude my paper with the excerpt of an article written by the dean of College of Arts at the University of Nanking, part of which has already been cited in the main body. Although it was written seventy years ago, its content is not only relevant to China today, but also the United States in some ways:

“As the Republic was founded, economics and political science become popular almost overnight.<sup>99</sup> Students were very enthusiastic about these subjects. Students majoring in these disciplines were many times more than other in universities, with the belief that economics would easily pave their way to politics. Is there really any royal route? I do not quite believe it. This has been the trend for six or seven years. What did we get? After the September 18 incident, public opinion changed dramatically.<sup>100</sup> People believed that the humanities and social sciences are useless and should be dispensed with. The universities should have four divisions only: agriculture, engineering, medicine, and science. Thus they can train students useful to the society. The popular slogan at the time was ‘science saves our nation.’ Then there came ‘engines save our nation.’ Afterwards there came ‘aeronautics saves our nation’... Today people see A and follow A. Tomorrow they see B and praise B. These are arguments that will end nowhere. Honestly speaking, if one wants to accomplish anything, it requires an object, a plan, hard work, and persistence. If one has them all, it is unlikely that he or she will achieve nothing. How is learning different from this? Know what you want, what you like, and what you can do. Choose a subject. Follow the schedule

---

<sup>99</sup> Here the Republic is referring to the Republic of China, the official name used by both the Beiyang government and the KMT.

<sup>100</sup> On September 18, 1931, Japanese army invaded Manchuria. Within three months, the region was occupied.

under the guidance of your professor. And study hard. I do not believe that you will attain nothing if you persist for a few years. However, if you have already decided to learn literature. Then you switch to economics because it is popular. Then you hear that only science will save our nation and you turn to chemical engineering. Then you find the idea of rural reconstruction very appealing and switch to rural economy. If you do not have your own idea and only go with the flow. Honestly, you will achieve nothing.”<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 404-05.

## Bibliography

- Bruni, Leonardo. "De Studiis Et Litteris." In *Vittorino Da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, edited by W.H. Woodward, 119-33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912.
- Cao, Xi. "The Nanking University." In *The History of Nanking University: From 1888 to 1988*, edited by The Alumni Association of the University of Nanking. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988.
- Chen, Yuguang. "Some Reminiscences About the University of Nanking." In *The History of the University of Nanking from 1888 to 1988*, edited by Alumni Association of the University of Nanking. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988.
- Dai, Bangyan. "The Credit System of the University of Nanking." In *The History of Nanking University from 1888 to 1988*, edited by The Alumni Association of the University of Nanking. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988.
- "Directive 268,269: Concerning the Suspension of the Religion Department." edited by Ministry of Education. Nanking, 1930. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- Dunch, Ryan. "Science, Religion, and the Classics in Christian Higher Education to 1920." In *China's Christian colleges : cross-cultural connections, 1900-1950*, edited by Ellen Widmer and Daniel H. Bays. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Fryer, John, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Instruction*. 1 ed. Shanghai: Educational Association of China, 1895.
- Gee, Nathaniel Gist, ed. *The Educational Directory for China: An Account of the Various Schools and Colleges Connected with Protestant Missions as Well as of Government and Private Schools under Foreign Supervision*. 2 ed. Soochow: Educational Association of China, 1905.
- Zhang Kaiyuan, ed. *Wenhua Chuanbo Yu Jiaohui Daxue [the Spread of Culture and the Christian Colleges]*. Wuhan: Hubei Educational Press, 1996.
- Lutz, Jessie Gregory. *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.
- Mott, John Raleigh. *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia, 1912-1913*. New York: Chairman of the Continuation Committee, 1913.
- Rudolph, Frederick, and John R. Thelin. *The American College and University : A History*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.
- The Secretariat of the University of Nanking. *Course Booklet for Students in the College of Arts*. Pamphlet. Held at Nanjing Municipal Library.
- The Secretariat of the University of Nanking. *Catalog of the University of Nanking*. Pamphlet. Held at Shanghai Municipal Library.
- Sha, Lanfang. "President Chen Yuguang." In *The History of the University of Nanking from 1888 to 1988*, edited by Alumni Association of the University of Nanking. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1988.
- Sheffield, Devello. "The Educational Association of China and Public Examinations." In *Records of the Triennial Meeting of the Educational Association of China, 1893*.

- The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing, ed., *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The College and Arts and the College and Science to Be Formed out of the Division of Arts and Science ". *The University of Nanking Weekly*, 1929. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Decision to Reform Curricula for the First Semester of 1951." 1951. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Division of Arts During the Early Years of the University (from the 1922 Yearbook)." In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Draft Proposal to Enhance Political Education and Reform Curricula." 1950. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Founding of the School of Agriculture and Forestry." In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Nanking." 1930. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Proposal Concerning the Merging of the University of Nanking and Ginling College ". 1951. In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The Report on the Visit to the University of Nanking from the Ministry of Education." In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- "The University of Nanking Magazine 1943.2." In *Jinling Daxue Shiliaoji [a Collection of Historical Documents of the University of Nanking]*, edited by The Institute of higher education studies of Nanjing University. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 1989.
- Tong, Tekong. *Yuanshi Dangguo [The Reign of Yuan Shikai]*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2009.
- Willmann, Otto. "The Seven Liberal Arts." Robert Appleton Company, <http://www.newadvent.org/cachen/01760a.htm>.
- Xiao, Xinsheng. Interview at Nanjing University. Nanjing, China. 8/02/2011.
- Zhang Sheng, Shen Xiaoyun, He Qingsheng, and Chen Yunxi. *Jinling Daxue Shi [A History of the University of Nanking]*. Edited by Zhang Xianwen. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.

## Appendix A:

### Timeline

Note: ◇ important historical events ■ important events of the University of Nanking

Events	Time
◇ Anglo-French Expedition	1856-1860
◇ The founding of the first Tung-wen Kuan	1862
◇ The imperial edict on the inclusion of mathematics in the civil exam	1887
■ The founding of the Nanking University	1888
■ The founding of the Christian College	1891
■ The founding of the Presbyterian College	1894
■ The merging of the three colleges	1910
◇ The end of the Qing Dynasty	1912
◇ The Second Revolution	1913
■ The founding of the School of Agriculture and Forestry	1914
■ The beginning of the credit hour system	1915
■ The end of the College of Medicine	1917
◇ The Paris Peace Conference	1919

Events	Time
◇ May Fourth Movement	1919
◇ The founding of the Chinese Communist Party	1921
■ The Division of Arts became the Division of Arts and Science	1921
◇ The Anti-Christian Movement	1922
■ The beginning of the mandatory minor system	1924
■ The beginning of the first vocational program	1926
◇ The Restore Educational Right Movement	1927
◇ The Northern Expedition	1926-1927
◇ ■ The Nanking Incident	1927
■ The election of Chen Yuguang as the new president	1928
■ The registration of the University of Nanking	1928
■ The founding of the College of Science	1929
■ The suspension of the religion department	1930
◇ Japanese occupation of Manchuria	1931
◇ The outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War	1937
■ The migration to Chengtu	1937

Events	Time
◇ Japan's surrender	1945
■ The university reopened in Nanking	1946
◇ Chinese Civil War	1946-1949
■ Political Education became mandatory	1950
◇ The outbreak of the Korean War	1950
◇ All mission schools severed their connection with the West	1951
■ The merging with Ginling College	1951
■ The amalgamation into Nanjing University	1952

## Appendix B:

The history of the university as illustrated in diagram

