

Women in an inferior position in china

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



The view of women in china may have changed over the years but they all have lived in a male dominated world. The past has been like many cultures, in the legal and cultural suppression of women. The culture of china's past has placed women as a far inferior position to men. In this environment gaining power and rights was extremely difficult. Despite this there are stories of important and powerful women in china's history. This is different than many cultures of the world where the suppression of women's rights was total through their history.

The culture has become more open to women's rights over the years, allowing for more power and more control for them as they years went on. Education has slowly been allowed along with greater human rights. Modern women are allowed to travel, be educated, marry and be the sole wife. They commonly participate in politics, as well as all other fields of work. Women of modern times in china have greater possibilities and fewer limitations, but things are not perfect, there is still a social bias lingering from past inequality.

The women of china's past lived in an intensely male dominated world. Men dominated china both in law and in culture. Legally women were in servitude to men in the forms of marriage polygamy was common practice for men. For the most part women did not ever participate in the governing of the country. There were Dynasties that were less conservative, women were allowed more power at times. This is evidenced by the rule of Empress Wu. She rose to power from the status of concubine to rule china. This was more exceptional rather than the rule. When the Sung dynasty took over, men

dominated again. Any ability of women to gain political power was taken away.

It is in the culture that the real domination can be seen. Without this the legal repression would not have happened. Many practices reinforced the view that women were inferior. From basic philosophy, Yin and Yang, equated, darkness to women and light to men. The beliefs of Confucianism said that women weren't meant to do outdoor work, thus construing them as weak and inferior. The idea of having them not do outdoor work was reinforced by the practice of foot binding. Again started in the Sung dynasty, this practice along with the other preferences on the appearance of women objectified them and put barriers on what women could do or be. Women were seen as property, as seen by the practice of concubines and polygamy those of high status had many women and having many sons was an even higher symbol of status.

Despite these legal and cultural blocks on women, the domination was not total. There were many female figures that were looked up to and honored, both legendary and real women. At times the culture changed enough to allow women to participate in politics, and more rights were given to them. Powerful women of the past were looked up to and revered. The Queen Mother of the West was mixed with legend and history, but she was worshiped at times by men. Other legends indicate that women could be respected. Although Disney has probably distorted it a bit, the legend of Mulan even by being passed down shows a respect for women.

Not only legends were respected. There were several times in the past that women have risen to power Empress Zhen (AD 182) was fought over and had power through her beauty and high status. Other women had even more power, Empress Wu, actually had power, and ruled china for a time.

The culture of china's past has suppressed women, through it's culture and laws, with brief periods of cultural change, in which women gained rights and respect were brief and followed by periods which they were again taken away. These limitations on women, were reinforced by the isolation that china had, continuing into the twentieth century this isolation prevented women from leaving if they could not stand their situation. Despite the few legendary women the opportunities for advancement or power for women were few and difficult.

Things have changed in recent times. Women are gaining power and rights in modern times. There are international groups protecting their rights as well. The first good example of this is in the ways of marriage. Arranged marriages, and those for money are no longer the norm. They are allowed to maintain their own names with marriage. Without this they did not have as much of a separate identity. Also in modern times, women have gained the rights of inheritance from their families, equal to that of their brothers. Other aspects of women in marriage have changed. They are not as expected to bear children, and the culture is changing to give them a voice in this decision.

In the areas of employment, there are opportunities as well. Women now make up 38 percent of the total workforce. In most major parts of the work

force women play a part. Women even play a part in politics, representing a major part of their official government. These women are not legendary, or exceptional. It is just accepted and considered normal.

Women have made advances in the field of education as well. Illiteracy among women has fallen as well and education is accepted. Women are allowed in universities and even given funding to continue education.

These opportunities, encouraged by many international organizations are also backed by Chinese law. The law states:

1. Equal rights for men and women. The Constitution stipulates that "Women enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, political, economic, cultural and social, including family life";
2. Protection of special rights and interests of women; and 3. Banning of any discrimination, maltreatment and persecution directed at women.

In addition Other laws have been enacted concerning their rights. These explicitly state aspects of life that women are equal to men. For example equal, equal votes, and rights to political power, freedom, and protection.

These laws being stated are the only thing that I can see evidencing that there are not equal opportunities for women. The fact that they have to be stated so explicitly probably indicates a problem. It is difficult to find out what the cultural views of women are from the outside, but it appears that they have all the major opportunities that men do and that their power is

increasing. One thing that has really changed is in the area of the world. There is the opportunity to leave the country and go to another culture.

Granted the rest of the world is still mostly male dominated in culture, but the opportunity to emigrate is still there. The only lingering restrictions are from tradition. Lingering views of women as being inferior are probably the only thing that could keep them back now. These things can be seen through the increasingly seldom seen practices of mail order brides and foot binding. In addition, I came across a large industry of pornography featuring Chinese women when searching for information. These things limit the respect that women have in society.

The opportunities for women have grow through history. Starting from the possessive view of women, giving them no rights, and giving men utter control, has changed in recent history to the to allow women more power, rights and education. Women have had their limits striped away, partly with law and partly through changing culture. The physical limitations have gone as well. The opportunities for travel have grown as well, the world is more open, and the ability to find a place more accepting exists. With fewer limitations, opportunities for women are increasing.