

# The history of chinese women before the age of orientalism

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The history of Chinese women before the age of orientalism Traditional Chinese society has been male dominant society. Young boys were liked more than girls and women were expected to be subject to men to fathers, husbands, and sons. Men were more educated than women and many books they read were on advice on women and histories of notable women with teach them to be plying second role to men (Susan, 1997). In the ancient also, the female infants had lower chances of surviving to adulthood while men had low mortality rate and could easily survive to adulthood. Bound feet, which were a tradition even for poor women, depict the painful constraints of the female role. Women and culture in the early days in china represent a great part of history in the Chinese writings. Most of the Chinese historians were not in any way influenced by the feminist movements and it was the historians from the North America and Europe who took a step to dig deeper into this history (Susan, 1997). It is only in 1970s that they start researching as a response to feminist scholarship and anthropologist. The historians look at patriarchy while distancing themselves from female victimization. There were only writings on the history from the mid 19th century but currently there has been articles and research into the live of women in the early years of china history. I will capture a number of aspects that depict the role and the status of women in the traditional china. The shift towards dowry and legal protection of women properties is something that is lifting the status of women but tending towards widow celibacy and foot binding suggest something else. Marriage alliances and other modes of women trafficking were more essential as movement tactics in song and Ming-Qing china than in Europe at the time mostly as a result of smooth flow

of status in china (Susan, 1997). Peasants use whatever they have to send their sons to school through civil servants examinations and daughters are groomed for marriages. The daughters were seen as assets as they would be employed at home if they are able bodied and later sold as concubines.

Chinese women were greatly differentiated by both status and privileges.

The traffic in women served as a way for rising in women up the ladder but the elites were disadvantaged. If a woman become aggressive and push for her beliefs another woman will be waiting aside to take her position in her husband's affection. In the elite family a wife was considered the ritual and genealogical mother of every child fathered by her husband. This made it possible for women who didn't have sexual interest with their husband to locate concubines for her husband and still maintain the motherhood status for all the children by the husband. The servant could cook and make the table but the son and daughter in law served the high couple. Mothers in law demanded a lot of respect from their daughters in law. During Han times (202 BCE - 220 CE), the administrative and system help restructure the Chinese families system and women place in it. Han laws help the authority of family tops over the other members in the family. The head of a family was a senior male, but if he died when his sons are still young his widow would take up the role of family head until they grow up to become adults. The law enforced monogamy and provided different kinds of punishments for bigamy and for promoting a concubine to the status of wife. Divorced were allowed if any of the following happen, barrenness, talkativeness, and jealousy. There were no grounds on which a woman could leave his husband, but one could divorce upon agreement with the husband. Ancient China's

renowned goddess, Hsi Huang Mu, as in the classic tale Journey to the West, also expresses traits of yin/yang beliefs. As yin, this goddess has compassion, promising endlessness; as yang, she is a force who had the power to temper with the cosmic yin/yang accord. This prevalent fear that women may cause chaos by upsetting the cosmic harmony was a barrier for women who wanted to plunge into politics. Those who make were seen as breaking one of nature's laws, of becoming "like a hen crowing." Marriage was arranged in such a manner that both families will benefit. The bride's family provide dowry. As a result of this the father of the bride often had the last word on who is to marry the daughter. The daughter to be married didn't have anything to say regardless of her status. References Mann, Susan. (1997). The history of Chinese women before the age of orientalism. Journal of Women's History, 8, 4, p. 163