

Dr. Robyn Hamilton (PhD Melb.)
School of Asian Studies
University of Auckland
New Zealand

hamilton_robyn@yahoo.co.nz

or

r.hamilton@auckland.ac.nz

The International Federation for Research in Women's History Conference:

Women's History Revisited: Historiographical Reflections on Women and Gender in
Global Context

20th International Congress of Historical Sciences,
University of New South Wales,
Sydney, Australia,
8-9 July, 2005

Panel title:
Power and Gender

Paper title:
"Dutiful Daughters: Views of Chinese women descended from the famous Zeng clan"

Abstract:

This paper will discuss the historical contexts of some women descended from the famous Zeng clan of Hunan Province in Central China. Zeng Guofan (1811-1872) was patriarch of his branch of the Zeng clan during his lifetime. He has enormous status in modern Chinese history as one of a handful of brilliant military and official figures, comparable in status to Napoleon of France. Several of Zeng Guofan's brothers and sons also achieved highly in first, the civil service examinations, and then in official or military positions. The influence of the clan on the politics of late nineteenth-century China is undisputed although it has been the subject of cross-Taiwan Strait differences in perspective.

The 1990s marked a turning point in English- and Chinese-language historical studies of the Zeng clan. Scholars began to search for the human side of individuals. As an example, the intellectual history of the clan has been studied through the ways in which Zeng Guofan enacted his thinking on education in relation to the lives of his sons and brothers.

Women from the Zeng clan are understudied and virtually unknown in English-language histories of China and Taiwan. Zeng Baosun (1893-1978) was the great-granddaughter of Zeng Guofan. In addition to her illustrious ancestry Zeng Baosun

was respected and recognised in her own right for her contributions to Chinese politics and society. She was politically and intellectually active during many of the major events of modern Chinese history, first in China, and then in Taiwan. She was the first Chinese woman to receive a higher degree from an English university, an early feminist, delegate on international and national committees during periods when female representation was unusual, and in her later years she acted as historian and gatekeeper to the history of her clan.

The paper argues that study of the political achievements and influence of the Zeng clan on Chinese culture is incomplete without regard to the history of its women. The paper will bring together the results of new research on the lives of Zeng Baosun and other female relatives from her clan.

“Dutiful Daughters: Views of Chinese women descended from the famous Zeng clan.”

Much attention has been paid to the male descendants of the Zeng clan that flourished in China in the second half of the nineteenth century, but this has not been the case for the female descendants. Zeng Baosun (1893-1978) was a great-granddaughter of the famous nineteenth-century statesman-scholar Zeng Guofan (1811-1872). Her great-grandfather wrote in his *Family Instructions* to his descendants, that they should, as members of the privileged elite, “...shape the standards and customs of an age.”¹ Zeng Guofan was patriarch of the Zeng clan of Xiangxiang in Hunan Province, Central China, and an influential figure in his clan as well as in late nineteenth-century politics, official life, military campaigns and the literary world. This paper will show that Zeng Baosun was exemplary in fulfilling her great grand-father’s admonitions. Politics, gender, and issues of identity have obscured her rightful place in history.²

Zeng Guofan saw himself as one in a continuum of people who should promote Confucian morality. He was one of a handful of men who dominated Chinese public life in this period through holding top official posts in the Chinese capital, his home province and in other parts of China. He was made Grand Secretary in 1867, a post that theoretically made him part of the Inner Court. This designation was given to the most distinguished officers in the land. He was governor-general of strategically important provinces, appointed as general against the Taiping Rebellion and other military uprisings, and a scholar and bibliophile. His published life and works form a substantial section of Chinese collections in western academic libraries and have been reprinted in numerous editions. His diaries, published in 1909, span 40 volumes.

In his essay *Yuancai* “Origins of Talent” Guofan urged his descendants to serve the age in which they lived through involvement in the promotion of education and Confucian morals.³ His attitude to learning was not confined to his private life. In 1871, twenty years before China began to look for western models that would reform its institutions, Guofan recommended in a memorial to the court that Chinese students should go abroad to study. Guofan was not to see the realisation of his dreams for students’ overseas study as he died in 1872. His posthumous title Wenzheng “Grand Tutor” was a fitting reward for his contributions to Chinese society.⁴

Several male members of the Xiangxiang lineage rose to national and international prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Studies of these men, like those of Guofan, have tended to focus on their brilliant achievements in public life.

¹ Kwang-Ching Liu, “Education for its Own Sake: Notes on Tseng Kuo-fan’s Family Letters” in Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside (eds.), *Education and society in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 76.

² Zeng Baosun’s date of birth is recorded on her entry papers to Westfield College as “19 Feb. 1894.” The one-year difference in date will be due to the Chinese practice of adjusting birth-years.

³ The essay is cited in Liu, “Education for its own sake,” p. 76 and n. 1.

⁴ “Tseng Kuo-fan [Zeng Guofan]”, in Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period* (hereafter, *ECCP*) (1944) Taipei reprint: SMC Publishing, 1991, pp. 751-756.

Some led military campaigns, mostly against the Taiping rebels, as in the case of Zeng Guofan's brothers, while others were involved with the court in their official positions.⁵ Zeng Jize, the eldest son of Guofan, was appointed ambassador to England and France from 1878 to 1884. He was instrumental in negotiating and arranging treaties such as the Treaty of St. Petersburg that secured parts of Inner Asia for the French and British.⁶ As Lord Dufferin, British ambassador to the Court of St. Petersburg remarked after the Chinese Minister signed the Treaty: "China has compelled Russia to do what she has never done before, disgorge territory that she had once absorbed."⁷ This treaty and the others with which Jize had close involvement would map the boundaries that largely define the world as it is known today.

While research has been carried out on the response of male descendants of the Zeng clan to their patriarch's advice, little is known about the response of the clan's female descendants. Women from the Zeng clan are understudied and virtually unknown in English-language histories of China and Taiwan. English-language translations of the autobiographies of two women from the Zeng clan have been provided by Thomas Kennedy.⁸ But research on the historical contexts of these two women's lives, one of whom is Zeng Baosun, or the testing of theoretical issues surrounding the production of these texts, were clearly not the focus of the translator.

In the case of Zeng Baosun, cross-Taiwan Straits' politics have created a complex historical past. Ongoing political hostilities and cultural tensions between Mainland China (a Communist regime since 1949), and Taiwan (the former base of the opposing Guomindang Party) have, in all probability, influenced the way that she is remembered. Baosun's career spanned both sides of the Taiwan Straits. She was born in Mainland China and was influential and active in intellectual and educational circles there in the first half of the twentieth century.⁹ Along with approximately 1.5 million Chinese who had supported Chiang Kaishek and the Guomindang regime,

⁵ "Tseng Kuo-fan [Zeng Guofan]", in *ECCP*, pp. 751-756.

⁶ "Tseng Chi-tse," in *ECCP*, pp. 746-747.

⁷ Preceding notes to "The text of the Russian-Chinese Treaty of St. Petersburg, 1881, signed by Marquis Tseng on behalf of China on February 12, 1881," in H. F. MacNair, "Relations with Europe, 1873-1886," in *Modern Chinese history; selected readings; a collection of extracts from various sources chosen to illustrate some of the chief phases of China's international relations during the past hundred years*, Shanghai, China, The Commercial Press, 1967, pp. 475-477.

⁸ Thomas L. Kennedy, *Testimony of a Confucian Woman: The Autobiography of Mrs. Nie Zeng Jifen 1852-1942*, Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993 (from the Chinese *Zhongde laoren bashi ziding nianpu* [Yearly Chronicle of the Eighty Year Old Lady of Zhongde], 1931, 1935 revised); Thomas L. Kennedy, (trans. and adapted), *Confucian Feminist: Memoirs of Zeng Baosun* (1893-1978), Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002. Note that both English titles position the Zeng women as "Confucian."

⁹ For brief English-language biographic entries see "Miss Tseng Pao-Swen," in *The China Weekly Review* (eds.), *Who's Who in China*, Shanghai, 4th ed., vol. 3, 1931, p. 390; "Tseng, Pao-Swen (Miss)", *China Yearbook 1966-1967*, p. 671.

Baosun fled to Taiwan in 1949 after the Communists took power.¹⁰ She never returned to China and died in Taiwan in 1978.

The paper will present highlights from Baosun's distinguished career after first suggesting two possible reasons for her neglect by historians. These are the exclusion of the category of "Mainlanders" from current searches for Taiwanese identity and ethnicity, and fluctuations in attitudes towards Baosun's famous ancestor, Zeng Guofan.

Taiwan and its new history

Guomindang rule of Taiwan ended after fifty years in March 2000. Questions of identity and independence from the Mainland had already been on the agenda, but these became more publicly argued. Until the 1980s, people only thought of themselves as "Chinese" or "Chinese on Taiwan," but new questions were being asked about the role of the Guomindang in the Confucian legacy: was Taiwan the real China, the legitimate China, the only "free" China? The leaders of the Guomindang, the Jiang dynasty, were challenged. Calls for democracy and freedom followed the lifting of martial law in 1988.¹¹

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century Taiwan has been a hotbed of political and social turbulence. The reasons for this have been largely attributed to questions of identity and ethnicity.¹²

The search for Taiwanese history or a new way of explaining Taiwanese history has put the spotlight on the terms used for the different ethnic groups living on the island and the terminology used to describe them. Officially, there are four main categories of Taiwanese ethnicity, but these are constantly in a state of re-definition and sub-categorising. The two groups that are most closely identified with the new "Taiwanese for Taiwan identity" are *yuanzhuren* ("aborigines") who were the original inhabitants of the island. "Aborigines" are further divided into "mountain aborigines" and "plains aborigines" and there are differing attitudes towards these two groups. These "original people" are also often simply called *bendi ren* (lit. "original-place people"), or *Taiwan ren* (Taiwanese). The other group recognised as "original Taiwanese" are *Fulao* (lit. "the old familiar people from Fujian Province"; also *Hoklo*, or again, simply, *Taiwan ren*). These people came from Fujian Province in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and form the majority of the population at 70%.

In addition to these two categories is the further designation of *kejia* (lit. "guest people"), who are Hakka people from Guangdong, making up 14% of the population. The category of *waishengren* (lit. "outside-the province-people") usually refers to Mainlanders and is one of the most contentious and emotive terms. Association with this group often has connotations with the Guomindang, the former ruling party. The term is often sub-categorised further. About 1.5 million Mainlanders made up this

¹⁰ The Pinyin method of romanisation is used in this paper, except in cases where personal names, book titles or place-names are better known in the Wade-Giles system. Thus, Chiang Kaishek (Wade-Giles system) is retained.

¹¹ Q. Edward Wang, "Taiwan's search for national identity: a trend in historiography", *East Asian History*, 24, 2002, pp. 93-116.

¹² *Ibid.*

group after 1949, and they were often servicemen or police or connected to the military. *Waishengren* are informally divided further in Taiwan according to their place of origin in Mainland China. Local societies, historical societies and journals, hostels, restaurants, and shops are often prefaced with the name of a village or province (such as Hunan), or a city such as Beijing. New terms are being developed to meet changing social and political contingencies: *xin yimin* (“new immigrants”) is a relatively new term used to describe newcomers and there are terms for other categories of military immigrants.¹³

Taiwan history (or, history of the “Taiwan-ness of Taiwan,” suggesting the “aborigines,” the “original people,” and so on, as indicated above) is now the most popular genre amongst all historical writings in Taiwan and between 1991 and 2000 23% of history graduates chose Taiwan history as their major.¹⁴ Previously, it had been politically and economically expedient for Taiwanese scholars to focus on research on Mainland China as this attracted US funding and scholarly exchanges. US scholars could make Taiwan their base from which to conduct their research on China without having to run the risk of battling Communist bureaucracy in libraries and institutions. This close collegial relationship with US scholars, although still in existence, has weakened since the US recognition of Mainland China in the United Nations in 1971.

The trend towards the recovery of a national Taiwanese identity has influenced the field of women’s history on Taiwan. There has been an outpouring of popular publications about Taiwanese women in recent years. In 2000 *Taiwan xin nüren* (Portraits of women in Taiwanese history) was published.¹⁵ This publication is indicative of a number of similar publications now available from high-class popular bookshops. Each chapter has a woman as its subject: all of the twenty women were born in Taiwan and all were born around the turn of the century. The text is lavishly illustrated with pictures and photographs from historical archives. The women included in the line-up are from varied backgrounds: one of the chapters is on Xu Shixian, born in Tainan in 1908, who was the first female PhD on Taiwan and first female mayor.

The three-volume proceedings of the 2001 conference “Women, Nation and Society in Modern China” held at the Institute of Modern History at Academia Sinica in Taipei is perhaps representative of current directions in scholarship about Chinese women by Taiwanese scholars and their international colleagues.¹⁶ The three

¹³ Definitions and percentages adapted from Wang, p.106 and Melissa J. Brown, in Chapter 1, “What’s in a Name? Culture, Identity and the “Taiwan Problem,” in *Is Taiwan Chinese? The impact of culture, power, and migration on changing identities*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, pp. 7-13.

¹⁴ Wang, p. 95 and p. 103.

¹⁵ Zhuang Yongming, (ed.), *Taiwan xin nüren* (Portraits of women in Taiwanese history), Taipei, 2000.

¹⁶ Lu Fangshang (ed.), *Wu sheng zhi sheng 1: Jindai Zhongguo de funu yu guojia 1600-1950* (Voices amid silence 1: Women and the Nation in Modern China 1600-1950), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2003; Yu Chien-ming (ed.) *Wusheng zhi sheng 2: Jindai Zhongguo de funu yu guojia 1600-1950* (Voices amid silence 2: Women and society in Modern China 1600-1950), Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2003; Lo Jiu-jang and Lu Miaow-fen (eds.), *Wu sheng zhi sheng 3: Jindai Zhongguo de funu yu guojia 1600-1950* (Voices amid silence 3: Women and culture in Modern China 1600-1950), Taipei:

volumes have been reviewed in English by Louise Edwards in the Taiwan publication “Research on women in modern Chinese history.”¹⁷ These volumes are clearly not the place to look for research on Taiwanese women. Two articles in the second volume deal with marriage and family issues on Taiwan, while the research in the remaining twenty-six chapters is on Chinese women living on the Mainland.¹⁸

A review of the contents of the English-language journal *Nannü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* published out of Leiden reveals the same pattern in western scholarship on Chinese women: the research deals exclusively with Chinese women living on the Mainland.

In summary, since the lifting of martial law in 1988 and the ending of Guomindang rule over the island in 1990, there has been a dramatic search for Taiwanese identity and ethnicity. The corresponding increase in focus on histories of women has mainly been on those women of Taiwanese ethnicity. The preliminary research for this paper suggests that the category of “Mainland woman” is a neglected area of study. This has been the finding too of other research, not specifically on Mainland women on Taiwan, but on the whole category of Mainlanders on Taiwan: “...no one ever writes about the *waishengren* [lit. outside-province-people]...” stated Stéphane Corcuff in an article on ways of identifying this category of people.¹⁹

Zeng Guofan

The twentieth century has seen fluctuating attitudes towards Baosun’s famous ancestor, Zeng Guofan. At times there has been open hostility in political and academic circles towards him, while at others there has been an outpouring of passionate admiration for him. The authors of an article about Zeng Guofan’s influence on the ways that the Chinese nation has been “re-imagined” since the mid-1980s have coined the term “The Zeng Guofan Phenomenon.”²⁰

The renewed attention that was paid to Zeng Guofan from the 1980s onwards, was due in part to the relaxation of control of the CCP over how the past should be understood. The CCP had taken the view that the nineteenth-century Taiping Rebellion was a peasant led, anti-Manchu, anti-foreign rebellion and as such, Zeng Guofan who led the armies that suppressed the Taipings, must be considered an enemy of the Party and all that it stood for. The move away from this official view, together with the popular “search for roots” movement of the 1980s during which

Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2003. Reference to these three volumes is hereafter abbreviated to “*Voices*”.

¹⁷ Louise Edwards, “Voices amid silence: New directions in scholarship on Chinese women’s history,” *Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* (Research on women in modern Chinese history), 11, 2003, pp. 333-349).

¹⁸ Chen Ziyu, “Hunyin yu jiazou shili: Rizhi shiqi Taiwan Yanjia de hunyin celüe” (The influence of marriage and family: Strategies for marriage of Yan family during Japanese occupation of Taiwan), in *Voices* 2, pp. 173-202; Paul R. Katz, “Social structure and marriage patterns in East Haven: a preliminary analysis,” in *Voices* 2, pp. 203-234.

¹⁹ Stéphane Corcuff, “Taiwan’s “Mainlanders”: a new ethnic category,” *China Perspectives*, 28, 2000, pp. 71-81

²⁰ Yingjie Guo and Baogang He, “Reimagining the Chinese Nation: The “Zeng Guofan Phenomenon,” *Modern China*, 25 (2), 1999, pp. 142-170.

Chinese people searched their past for alternative heroes and model figures than those presented to them by the Party, has meant a revival of interest in, and cautious admiration for, Zeng Guofan.²¹ The sheer volume of articles and books on Zeng that have been published within the last twenty to thirty years and the variety of attention that has come from previously ambivalent, or even openly hostile political and academic quarters, marks a new and welcome era in studies of nineteenth-century Chinese figures.

These historical trends and political factors have influenced official and public attitudes towards the Zeng clan and its descendants.

Zeng Baosun (1893-1978)

Baosun distinguished herself in Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese intellectual and political circles, thus showing that she was indeed a worthy inheritor of her ancestry. All of these activities are recorded in her memoirs,²² and can be verified from other historical sources, such as institutional records.

Baosun documented her own history and that of other members of her clan in her autobiography. Many of these stories about servants or household retainers will not have found their way into mainstream histories. She chose the genre she was most familiar with: the self-narrative, the *zizhuan*, the *huiyilu*, that was meant to depict one's own moral worth and the history of one's ancestors. Her detailed descriptions of the plan of the compound in which she lived and her early schooling brings valuable knowledge of late nineteenth-century aristocratic society.

Baosun's father, Zeng Guangjun, had taken at last three wives and various concubines, a factor that must have been at odds with the morality of her Christian, western teachers.²³ She knew little of her father or paternal grandfather for they had both died when she was young. Her grandfather Zeng Jihong (1848-1881), a mathematician, had married Guo Yun. As matriarch of one part of the clan after her husband's early death, Guo Yun ensured her children and grandchildren (including Baosun) received the benefits of a western education alongside a Chinese education.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Historiographical questions to do with the authenticity of Zeng Baosun's memoirs have yet to be fully investigated. At least three versions of her memoirs compete for rights to completeness and authenticity: Zeng Baosun nüshi jinianhui bianji weiyuanhui (eds.), *Zeng Baosun nüshi jinianji* (Memorial collection for the female scholar Zeng Baosun), Taipei: Zeng Baosun nüshi zhisang weiyuanhui, 1978; *Zeng Baosun huiyi lu* (Recollections of Zeng Baosun), in Zhang Yufa and Zhang Ruishi (chief eds.), *Zhongguo xiandai zizhuan congshu* series, no. 7, 1980-, Taipei: Longwen chubanshe, (Min78), 1989, pp. 623-712, contains essays 1-43. An edition published in Mainland China, *Zeng Baosun huiyi lufu/Chongde Laoren ziding nianpu* (Memoirs of Zeng Baosun with a chronological autobiography of Mrs. Nie Jifen), Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1986, is thought to have missing passages (yet to be verified). Excerpts from Baosun's memoirs appeared in the periodical *Zhuanji wenxue* (Studies of literary biographies), Taipei between 1972 and 1974.

²³ Zeng Baosun's father was Zeng Guangjun, the eldest son of Zeng Jihong, who, in turn, was the second son of Zeng Guofan. The names or designations of her father's several wives and concubines are mentioned in Baosun's memoirs, particularly in relation to child-bearing status: "Tang *furen* did not produce; Chen *furen* was my mother; Concubine 1, did not produce; Zhao *furen* did not produce; Concubine 2, had a son."

Thus, Baosun's passion for education can be seen to be part of a continuum of ancestors, both male and female, who insisted on the benefits that teaching and learning could bring to an age. Her illustrious great grandfather Zeng Guofan had died twenty years before she was born. Thus, her early life appears to have been one where women were the dominant decision makers and guides.²⁴

Her education in China had included schooling by western teachers, which was combined with her Confucian schooling at home. She had three years tuition at the Western-run Mary Vaughan High School for girls in Hangzhou. Baosun forged many contacts in Hangzhou that were to last a lifetime. One of her teachers and mentor was a Miss Louise Barnes, who accompanied Baosun to London. It has been thought that she was the first Chinese woman to receive a higher degree from an English university but this has not yet been verified in the present research. Before entering Westfield College Baosun had a year's schooling at Blackheath High School in London.²⁵

Westfield College was one of four colleges established in the second half of the nineteenth century that were later admitted to membership of the University of London. It was founded for the higher education of women on Christian principles. A French woman, Agnes de Selincourt (1872-1917) was the principal (1913-1917) during the period that Baosun attended. Miss de Selincourt had studied oriental languages at Somerville College, Oxford University (1895-96) and had spent the earlier part of her career establishing a school for girls in India.²⁶ Baosun's autobiography is peppered with the names of influential men and women who were active in early twentieth-century educational and social circles.²⁷ Some of her contacts in Britain were possibly derived through family connections. Her great-uncle Zeng Jize had lived and worked in London and Paris in the 1880s and had been a major player in Chinese-Western diplomacy.

Baosun entered Westfield College in October 1913. Her entry details state her father's profession as "Member of Imperial Literary Institute, Peking." Baosun studied science, botany, chemistry and maths. She graduated with a BSc (Hons.) in Botany in 1916.²⁸ Her cousin Yuenong studied mining while in Britain. Proficiency in the industrial physical sciences had been recommended by their great grand-father years before as a way of making China strong: chemistry was needed for making explosive shells, mathematics was needed for calculating distances and heights, and for making precision machinery.²⁹

²⁴ "Wo de jiashi" (My family background), in *ZB, I*, pp. 633-640.

²⁵ On the Mary Vaughan High School link see "Tseng Pao Swen (Zeng Baosun)," in Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998, p. 681. The principal of the school was Miss Louise Barnes.

²⁶ Janet Sondheimer, *Castle Adamant in Hampstead: A History of Westfield College 1882-1982*, 1983, London: Westfield College.

²⁷ Kennedy, (trans. and adapted), *Confucian Feminist*, passim.

²⁸ Westfield College Register of Students, Volume 3, entry 102, transmitted by email from Westfield College Archivist, 19 January, 2001.

²⁹ Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: a manual*, [1998] Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, revised and enlarged, 2000, p. 675.

In 1917 Baosun set off on the journey back to China, armed with her London degree and a wealth of social and educational experience. On her arrival in Changsha she set about establishing her own school for girls. In 1918 she established Yifang Girls' Collegiate School in Changsha along with her cousin Zeng Yuenong.³⁰ The school was named after her grandmother's studio, thus reinforcing her recognition of the value of women in her own life. The philosophy that Baosun brought to the school was derived from her experiences at the residential colleges she had attended in England. The provision of pastoral care and a pleasant living environment would imbue a sense of self-worth, refinement and morality in the students.³¹

The school was in operation for some thirty years, despite at least three attacks by factions in opposition to the concept of a private school. In 1927 Yifang School was closed down by the Communists. Despite sometimes going through turbulent times, the establishment of Yifang Girls Collegiate School was a defining point in Baosun's life and ensured her a place in educational history, provincial history, and world-wide humanitarian and Christian history.³² All of her biographies begin with the note that she was the founder of the School, thus indicating its importance. Her founding of the School It also defined her moral worth, a value inculcated by her family teachings. Baosun was also active in wider educational circles. From 1919 to 1920 she was President of the Government Normal School for Girls in Changsha and from 1931-32 she was Principal of Hunan Provincial Second Middle School.

Some of Baosun's writings and actions suggest that the term "early feminist" could be used to describe her. Indeed, Kennedy has attached the label "Confucian feminist" to his translation of her memoirs, but without further substantiation.³³ At any rate, Baosun was an early activist for advancing the status of girls and women. This can be seen by reading her speech "The Chinese Woman Past and Present" prepared for a Symposium on Chinese Culture, held during the Fourth Biennial Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Hangzhou and Shanghai, October 21-November 4 1931.

The Institute of Pacific Relations was founded in Honolulu in 1925 at a meeting organised by people associated with the YMCA in Hawaii. The wish of the meeting was that "...American understanding of Asia could be improved by international application of the YMCA idea of bringing leaders of different racial communities

³⁰ Yifang jiaoyouhui (eds.), *Hunan sili Yifang nüxiao wushi zhounian xiaoqing ji qingzhu, Xiaozhang Zeng Haoru Baosun xiansheng, Xiao wu zhuren Zeng Yuenong xiansheng qizhi songshou qingdian lianhe dahui tekan* (A special combined journal celebrating Hunan Private Yifang School for Girls fiftieth anniversary school celebrations, School Principal Zeng Haoru Baosun and School Administrator Zeng Yuenong seven decades of longevity), Changsha? Yifang jiaoyouhui, 1968.

³¹ Westfield College Register of Students, Volume 3, entry 102, transmitted by email from Westfield College Archivist.

³² The following sections of Baosun's memoirs describe the school: "Chuangban Yifang nüxiao" (Establish/Found the Yifang School for Girls); "Yifang qianru Haoyuan" (Yifang School moves to Great Garden); "Yifang de zuzhi yu xuesheng de zizhi" (The organisation of Yifang School and students' self-government); "Wusi yundong yu Yifang" (May Fourth Movement and Yifang School).

³³ Kennedy, (trans. and adapted), *Confucian Feminist*, see title page and p. xiv for mention of "feminism."

together for frank discussions of differences.”³⁴ Six national councils (the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan) had been established by the time of the second conference in 1927. Committees were set up that dealt with finance, research, education, and publications. A major journal was *Pacific Affairs* (1928-1960).

Baosun’s essay “The Chinese Woman Past and Present” indicates that she was an accomplished, lucid intellectual. The essay still stands today as a model of logic and objective reasoning.³⁵ Baosun made a convincing argument in her “Past and Present” speech essay for the improved status of women in society. Her logic for ushering in change towards Chinese women was based on four points: traditional views of women had no religious or legal foundation, the Chinese mind was “tolerant and conciliatory,” emancipation of women would be just and advantageous to society, and the higher-class of women were educated.³⁶

The papers collected together in the *Symposium* are a “who’s who” of leading Chinese intellectuals and activists and thinkers of the times. The object of the volume, as stated by the editor, was to present “...a picture of contemporary culture with emphasis upon its changing phases.”³⁷ To this end, Y.Y.Chao, from the National Research Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica wrote his essay “Music” in the hope that music “...be given a chance against the national culture-preservation complex of his purist countrymen and the China-as-museum –of antiquities complex of his occidental friends.”³⁸ Other notables who contributed to the volume were Hu Shi, at that time Professor of Philosophy at Peking University, writing on religion and philosophy, and Franklin L. Ho, Director of the Institute of Economics at Nankai University writing on industry. The editor of the collection especially thanked Baosun for the effort she brought to her essay when her world was crumbling around her: the Changsha Communist uprising was taking place as she wrote.³⁹

During the 1930s there were new and important questions for the Institute of Pacific Relations to face. These included the role of the Soviet Council in the IPR, the Sino-Japanese War, the growth of Chinese communism, and the entry of the United States into World War II.⁴⁰ Baosun had been present at the Kyoto conference where there was heated controversy over these issues. Chinese delegates circulated a document,

³⁴ John N. Thomas, *The Institute of Pacific Relations: Asian Scholars and American Politics*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974, p. 3.

³⁵ Miss P. S. Tseng [Zeng Baosun], “The Chinese Woman Past and Present” for the Symposium on Chinese Culture, held during the Fourth Biennial Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Hangzhou and Shanghai, reprinted in Sophia H. Chen Zen (ed.), *Symposium on Chinese Culture*, [1932] reprint New York: Paragon Press, 1969, pp. 281-292.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 286.

³⁷ Sophia Chen, “Editorial Foreword,” *Symposium*, September 1931, Peiping.

³⁸ Y.R.Chao, “Music”, in *Symposium*, pp. 82-96.

³⁹ Sophia Chen, “Editorial Foreword,” *Symposium*, September 1931, Peiping.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 11.

the “Tanaka Memorial,” which expressed concern about Japanese activities in Manchuria.⁴¹

Baosun was also an international delegate on women’s and Christian committees while still living in China. Between 1923 and 1928 she was co-opted as member of the National Christian Council of China and she was a delegate to the International Missionary Council Conference, Jerusalem. Knowledge of her expertise took her into politics. In 1948 she was a delegate on the First National Assembly in Nanjing. Only thirty-eight women sat on the Assembly, out of the more than one thousand delegates chosen to represent the provinces and cities of China.⁴²

After her move to Taiwan Zeng Baosun lived with her cousin and lifelong companion Zeng Yuenong in a Japanese-style single-storey house in a lane off Heping East Road. The two cousins shared a common descent from Zeng Guofan: they were related through their grandfather Zeng Jihong. The pair were “first cousins” *tangdi* and *tangmei*: children of the same generation whose fathers were brothers. They were inseparable in life and in death: their graves share the same plot at Taipei Number One Public Cemetery, Area 12-2, plot 64, and 65. The grave site is a substantial one, composed of concrete, stone walls, and marble on an east-facing slope. The two graves are covered with large white marble slabs. Low-growing shrubs, including the fragrant cassia, mark the side boundaries of the site. Photographs of Baosun and her cousin in their later years are mounted on the rear wall of the site. Inscribed memorial stones narrating the lives of Baosun and Yuenong were later additions to the site.

From 1952 onwards, Baosun’s relations with Song Meiling (Madame Chiang Kaishek) and other high-level leaders continued, through her involvement in political and cultural organisations. The women chosen by Song Meiling to work on women’s committees in the early fifties were often powerful and well connected. Zheng Yuxiu was one of these women: she was the first Chinese woman to become a lawyer, and was the first Chinese person, of male or female sex, to practice in the French courts in Shanghai.

To conclude this biographic sketch, two high points will be mentioned that show Baosun’s commitment to Taiwan. The first was her involvement in the establishment of Donghai University in Taizhong. Baosun was a member of the Board of Directors of the University which had been founded and funded by the Luce family of *Time* magazine. Her cousin Yuenong was the founding president in 1952: a bust of Yuenong stands in the main foyer of the library and the main road through the campus is named after him. A feature of the campus is the famous parabola-shaped Luce Chapel, designed by the architect Chen Qiguan who has been described as a “Taiwanese Michelangelo.”⁴³ The establishment of Donghai University in Taizhong can be seen as an important step taken by Zeng Baosun and Zeng Yuenong to both further their ideas on education and to prove their moral worth to society.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.6.

⁴² “Zeng Baosun” in “Hunansheng” in Guomin dahui mishuchu (eds.), *Diyijie Guomin dahui daibiao minglu* (A list of names of representatives at the First National Assembly), Taipei: n.p. [Min 50, 10 mo.] 1961, p. 77.

⁴³ Tajing Wu, “In Motion: Taipei Fine Arts Museum displays a retrospective of painter and architect Chen Chikwan’s works,” *Taiwan News*, 16 Januray 2004, (Weekend), p. 1 and p. 6.

The second major commitment Baosun made to Taiwan was presentation with her cousin of several boxes of original documents and paintings belonging to the Zeng clan. On sixth February 1972 historians and museum curators, representing the elite of Taiwan's academic institutions assembled at the National Palace Museum in the Shilin district of the city to receive the gifts. The group assembled for the presentation included the noted scholar of Yunnan and Museum Director Jiang Fucong and Vice Director Li Lincan. These documents had been in the care of Baosun and Yuenong since they had escaped from Hunan during the period of Japanese occupation. These original Zeng documents were presented in 36 packets which had, in turn, been stored in pressed metal boxes.⁴⁴ Later that year a special exhibition was mounted displaying the gifts: the autumn edition of the Museum's periodical recorded that event.⁴⁵

The presentation of this collection of original historical documents of the Zeng clan to the National Palace Museum was a significant moment in Taiwan's intellectual history and in marking the commitment of these "Mainlanders" to Taiwan-Mainland. It was also a fitting symbol of Baosun's life-long commitment to learning, education, and history.

Conclusions

Not all Chinese people living on Taiwan subscribe to official or populist notions of a national history and there is no common historical experience for all Taiwanese or "Chinese living on Taiwan".⁴⁶ The term "Taiwanese" is ambiguous and although loaded with unspoken references to the influences and contributions of women such as Zeng Baosun made to Taiwan society and politics, excludes the category of "Mainland woman". This suggests that efforts to construct a homogenous, master-narrative for Taiwanese history are flawed.

Women from the Zeng clan were instrumental in family life, and had influence in Chinese intellectual, political and cultural circles on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. Bringing the history of women from the Zeng clan into centre stage changes views of the politics, culture and intellectual life of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century on Mainland China and on Taiwan. As Gail Hershatter has pointed out in her paper "Making the Visible Invisible...", Chinese women often inculcated moral values that were the foundation of social order and state function. The authority of the family, clan, and household was often channelled through the works, deeds and writings of its women. Husbands and sons (and in the case of the Guomindang on Taiwan, leaders of the new nation) relied upon women to succeed in

⁴⁴ Photographs 3 and 4 and "Xuyan" (Preface) in Guoli gugong bowuyuan (eds.), *Xiangxiang Zengshi wenxian mulu* (Index to the Literary Works of the Zeng clan of Xiangxiang), Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, (Min72) 1983, Frontspiece and pp. 5-8 respectively.

⁴⁵ "Item 13: Tezhan mulu wuzhong" (Five kinds of special exhibitions", in "Chuban gongzuo" (Publishing work), *Gugong qikan* (Quarterly of the National Palace Museum), Guoli Gugong bowuguan, Taipei, Min 61, 7:1, p. 14 and p. 27. The exhibition was held between twenty-second of March and fifth of April.

⁴⁶ Wang, p. 115.

their public, official lives. In other words, their official public outside lives were based on the social order of the home and the authority of the clan.⁴⁷

These insights of Susan Mann and Gail Hershatter help to recognise the seeming reluctance or blindness of Chinese historians in recognising the often leading, often supportive and often complementary role women played in the lives and histories of their clans and in the creation stories of nations. Zeng Baosun was a woman who played such a role.

⁴⁷ Susan Mann, *Precious Records: women in China's long eighteenth century*, Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 15 cited in Gail Hershatter, "Making the Visible Invisible: The Fate of "The Private" in Revolutionary China," in Lu Fangshang (ed.), *Wu sheng zhi sheng: Jindai Zhongguo de funu yu guojia 1600-1950* (Voices amid Silence: Women and the Nation in Modern China 1600-1950), 3 vols. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, Min 92, pp. 257-258.

