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“Golden Lilies” Across the Pacific: Bodies and Paradoxes of U.S. Inclusion in Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Laws

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

by

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ABSTRACT

"Golden Lilies" Across the Pacific: Bodies and Paradoxes of U.S. Inclusion in Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Laws

by

Fang He

"Golden lilies" is a euphonious English term widely used to refer to bound feet or bound-foot Chinese women. The female foot, although is usually seen as a personal and trivial matter today, was seriously implicated not only in Chinese nationalism and modernization, but also in U.S. enforcement of Chines exclusion laws, as well as in the construction of U.S. superiority in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), footbinding had become a widespread practice among all social classes in China. In the face of national crisis resulted from Western encroachment and Japanese aggression, Chinese elites and nationalists launched nation-wide anti-footbinding campaigns to revitalize the nation in the late nineteenth century. In the United States, the Otherness of China appeared most vividly in the custom of footbinding. Paradoxically, however, U.S. immigration officials perceived bound feet as a sign of better morals and higher class. Bound feet thus became a means to obtain an exemption from U.S. laws against Chinese immigration. Therefore, this dissertation started with a simple question: What made possible the admission of the Other?

Footbinding has been commonly considered as a topic of Chinese history and as a subject of feminist critique of the "male gaze." This study instead, investigates it as a visual, discursive and bureaucratic vehicle in U.S. enforcement of Chinese exclusion laws across the Pacific in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It shifts from prominent themes of U.S. immigration historiography–restriction and exclusion–to who was admitted by examining the bodily proof of exemption, knowledge production in the immigration administration, and the larger social milieu which granted validity to those rationales and logic.

Using Chinese- and English-language sources, this dissertation not only challenges U.S. construction of the Other by exposing fissures and instabilities of U.S. orientalist representations of footbinding, but also provides a critique of Chinese participation in orientalism. An exploration of immigration case files reveals that racialized, gendered and classist perceptions of Chinese bodies were utilized to crack the gates of the United States, which in turn, reinforced footbinding as a timeless oriental practice, visualizing the backwardness, cruelty and racial inferiority of China. An examination of historical newspapers, magazines, and periodicals indicates that there was no monolithic condemnation towards footbinding in U.S. discourses and that the Chinese internalized orientalism in their reaction towards the U.S. discourses and displays of "golden lilies." Drawing information from extensive missionary publications intended for different audiences in both countries, I challenge the often-exaggerated missionary success in banning this practice by showing how missionary accounts rendered invisible the Chinese-led anti-footbinding movements. In addition, this study analyzes immigration archives as a contested site of knowledge production to reveal the technologies utilized by law enforcers to marginalize Chinese voices

and place the Other in a different time. Tracing how white female bodies were discussed and measured across the Atlantic and in untold stories of Chicago Cinderella foot contests, this dissertation explicates striking similarities between U.S./Western foot fever and Chinese footbinding.

Through a comparative and trans-Pacific lens, I demonstrate the power of the visual and the body in shoring up multiple forms of U.S. orientalism in a trans-Pacific public sphere and in making possible the paradoxical codification of the Chinese Otherness in U.S. inclusion. This approach allows us to juxtapose the changing reality of China with timeless, static U.S. representations. It shows the paradoxes of U.S. inclusion undergirded by its operations of differences, which often denied coevalness with the Other. This study offers insights into the historical forces that have contributed to fortifying racial, social, cultural, religious and institutional borders with the Other. It reveals how this past as a collective memory and legal legacy continues to shape contemporary assumptions about inclusion and exclusion, tradition and modernity, and globalization and nationalism.

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Introduction

"Golden lilies" is a euphonious English term widely used to refer to bound feet or bound-foot Chinese women. Female foot, although is usually seen as a personal and trivial matter today, was seriously implicated in not only Chinese nationalism and modernization, but also U.S. enforcement of exclusionary immigration laws, as well as the construction of U.S. modernity and national identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), footbinding had become a widespread practice among all social classes in China. In the face of national crisis resulted from Western encroachment and Japanese aggression, Chinese elites and nationalists launched nation-wide anti-footbinding campaigns to revitalize the nation in the late nineteenth century. In the United States, the "otherness" of China appeared most vividly in the custom of footbinding. Paradoxically, however, U.S. immigration officials perceived bound feet as a sign of better morals and higher class. Bound feet became a means to obtain an exemption from U.S. laws against Chinese immigration. Therefore, this dissertation started with a simple question: What made possible the admission of the Other?

The first reported display of "golden lilies" did not take place until the arrival of Afong Moy, a Chinese woman with diminutive feet in 1834. As part of the Carne brothers' advertising strategy for their newly-imported Chinese goods, the exotic Moy was introduced and placed before a luxurious background of decorative and home furnishings. According to John Haddad, the media coverage of the exhibition of Moy was mostly positive and "set off a

firestorm of interest everywhere she went" in Jacksonian America.[1] He attributes Moy's mostly positive experience to American people's general favorable opinion of China in the early nineteenth century.[2]

However, as China's defeat by the British in the First Opium War (1840-1842) and other changes taken place in the United States domestically and overseas, U.S. representations of footbinding became more complicated and twisted in the late nineteenth century. Harold Robert Isaacs argues that the Opium War marked the shift of U.S image of China from what he terms as "Age of Respect" to "Age of Contempt."[3] Although this framework captures the general trend, it overlooks multifaceted representations of Chinese cultures and mixed feelings Americans had towards footbinding since the mid-nineteenth century. With the influx of Chinese men since the mid-nineteenth century, golden lilies also migrated to the United States. Nonetheless, the increasing interaction of Americans with Chinese people, both in China and in the United States, could not guarantee a full understanding of each other. As the Qing court's control over China weakened, more and more transnational Americans, such as missionaries, travelers, diplomats, merchants, and journalists moving back and forth across the Pacific, produced and distributed a great deal of information about China and its people including the practice of footbinding. These accounts, however, were often contradictory.

The exodus of Chinese migrants since the mid-nineteenth century to the United States was in part a result of Britain-led Western imperialist and colonial expansion. Historians

[1] John Haddad, "The Chinese Lady and China for the Ladies: Race, Gender, and Public Exhibition in Jacksonian America," *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*, 5.

[2] Ibid, 8-9.

[3] Harold Robert Isaacs, *Images of Asia: American Views of China and India* (Capricorn Books, 1962), 71.

have seen China's defeat in the First Opium War and the unequal Nanjing treaty that China was forced to sign with the British after the war as the beginning of China's transition to a semi-colonial society. Other Western countries quickly followed the steps of Britain. To catch up, the United States forced China to sign the unequal Wangxia Treaty in 1844 and later touted its "Open Door" policy in China in 1898, portraying itself as the protector of China against those European powers. U.S. expansionist enterprises, nonetheless, manifested more bluntly in its colonization of the Philippines, Hawaii and Guam, which further bolstered its ambition in China and consolidated its informal empire in the Asia-Pacific.

Different from previous Chinese migrants who usually chose Southeast Asia as their destination, most Chinese now were attracted by newly available opportunities in North America, especially the discovery of gold mines in California, and other working opportunities created by U.S. westward movement. Although the coming of Chinese workers filled the hunger for labor in California and the Northwest Pacific, racial hostility and violence against them grew especially during economic recessions. The unusual appearances and customs of the Chinese also made them easy targets and perfect scapegoats. Euro-American workers conveniently perceived Chinese laborers as the reason of their problems. They blamed the Chinese for undercutting their wages without acknowledging the vulnerabilities of these immigrant laborers in their dealings with the exploitative system. The employers sought to steer the Euro-American workers' complaint and anxiety away without having to deal with the real problem: the tension between labor and capital in U.S. society. To appeal to working-class voters, U.S. politicians advocated exclusionist legislations against the Chinese, which in turn, intensified the growing anti-Chinese sentiments.

Without knowing the difficulty for the Chinese immigrants especially women to gain entry, we could not fully understand the vital role of the deployment of bound feet for the Chinese in asserting their exempt status and identity. The first success of the attempts to thwart Chinese immigration at the federal level was a gender-based legislation—the Page Law of 1875. It forbade the entry of women from China, Japan and other "oriental" countries for the purpose of prostitution, contract laborers and felons.[4] This law epitomized U.S. society's deep anxiety and fear towards sexualized image of Chinese women. The Chinese female bodies were seen as carriers of contagious disease and threats to white racial purity. The Page Law not only successfully restricted the coming of Chinese women, but also established prototypes of the twentieth century U.S. immigration policy.[5]

On May 6, 1882, U.S. Congress passed a more comprehensive anti-Chinese immigration law—the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending Chinese laborers from coming for 10 years and affirming that the Chinese in the United States were not eligible for naturalized citizenships.[6] The 1884 Amendment clarified that Chinese merchants, diplomats, students, teachers, and travelers, were exempt. A series of amendments and acts strengthened and extended the original act until its repeal in 1943. However, none of these Chinese exclusion laws explicitly mentioned Chinese women. The Chinese had to fight hard in order to obtain admission for their women. It was quickly made clear that the wives of Chinese laborers

[4] Page Law, 43rd Congress, March 3, 1875.

[5] Erika Lee, "The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration, and American Gatekeeping, 1882-1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Spring, 2002): 37, 42, and 53.

[6] Chinese Exclusion Act, May 6, 1882.

would be excluded.[7] The merchant class, however, was treated with a differential degree of discrimination in the exclusion laws, although the Chinese merchants' wives had to clarify their rights in court as well. Even U.S. citizens' wives did not fare as well as the wives of the merchants.[8] The importance of U.S. trade relation with China and general favorable attitudes towards people from well-to-do background both played a role in this compromise.

To apply as wives and daughters of Chinese merchants domiciled in the country thus became particularly important for the Chinese in the United States to increase new entries of women. Moreover, although the Page Law effectively thwarted the immigration of Chinese women, the public concern over women's morality did not fade away and was consistently reflected in other general U.S. laws and public discourse. Middle class background and women's good morals were often treated interchangeable in the U.S. collective perception. The class status was naturalized as a salient statement of female morality. Ironically, as Dorothy Ko indicates, footbinding as a way to safeguard female chastity is only a modern projection. It was "morally dubious, associated more with the dangers of sexual license than moral steadfastness" and never mentioned in the Confucian classics and didactic texts for women.[9] Nonetheless, this logic was easily projected onto the Chinese female immigrants. Since very few Chinese women were merchants at the time, relying on their husband's

[7] In the cases of Ah Quan and Ah Moy in 1884, the court ruled that wives of Chinese laborers by implication belonged to the laboring class. See Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940-1965* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 11.

[8] In 1902, the Chinese won the right to bring over the wives of U.S.-born Chinese in *Tsoi Sim v. the United States*. However, this right was later denied under the 1924 Immigration Act, which added that anyone under the category of "alien ineligible to citizenship" was inadmissible. It was not until the 1930 Act that allowed entry of alien Chinese wives of U.S. citizens who married before May 26, 1924. This, nevertheless, still separated families who married later than the specified date. Ibid., 14.

[9] Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 138.

merchant status was one of the most important, if not the only, means for Chinese women to be legally admitted to the country during the exclusion era.

Under such circumstances, any proof of merchant class would be held dearly for the Chinese immigrants. Bound feet, which were commonly assumed to severely cripple the body, became a self-evident badge of non-laboring class and visual declaration of better morals at U.S. ports of entry. Meanwhile, the admissibility of Chinese women and men were interrelated. Immigration officials considered bound feet as evidence of their husbands' merchant status because it was commonly believed that only men of means could afford to possess women with dainty feet as their wives.

Strikingly, bound feet seemed to stand out among all the other means that the Chinese tried to demonstrate women's admissibility. Compared to other "physical particularities," Chinese women's foot type was most obsessively questioned and recorded in immigration case files. Therefore, how the U.S. enforcement of Chinese exclusion laws complicated the social significance of bound feet, and how the construction of U.S. national identity and boundaries manifested through Chinese bodies beg for a fuller investigation.

The historiographies in the United States and in China regarding footbinding have confined their attention to Chinese territory. Books published in the United States have reflected conceptual turns and differing feminist concerns over time. From Howard S. Levy's *Chinese Footbinding*[10] published in the 1960s to more recent books by Dorothy Ko, there was a shift from seeing footbinding as evidence of women's subordination to its opposite: women's agency.

[10] Howard S. Levy, *Chinese Footbinding: The History of a Curious Erotic Custom* (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1967).

Levy follows a conventional feminist notion that footbinding embodies the subjection of woman to male-defined standards of beauty, while Fan Hong's feminist approach condemns the brutal patriarchal repression of the female body.[11] With the cultural turn and postmodernism, Ping Wang[12] and Dorothy Ko[13] cast doubt on these early feminist condemnations and seek "to rescue it [footbinding] from its association with women's oppression."[14] Wang maintains that bound feet did not so much evoke eroticism and fetishes as they became the engines for self-identity, female pride and culture, and most important, the basis for female bonding. Ko, in *Cinderella's Sisters*, takes pains to revise the standard narratives submerged by the clamorous voices of foreign missionaries, Chinese nationalists and feminists who saw footbinding as a symbol of China's backwardness, gender inequalities and shame. She stressed the urgency to "historicize" footbinding instead of accepting it as a timeless label. She argues that between the twelfth and the nineteenth centuries, there was not one kind of footbinding but many because of the variations in terms of the methods of the practice and rationales and contested meanings associated with it. Tracking these women's perspective, Ko contends that footbinding was once a fashion, a convention, "a concrete

[11] Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China* (Portland, CA: Frank Cass, 1997).

[12] Ping Wang, *Aching for Beauty, Footbinding in China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[13] Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); *Cinderella's Sister*.

[14] Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 124.

embodiment of self-respect to the woman herself," because in the late Qing Dynasty, "*not* binding became unthinkable, in the same way that choosing to bind is unthinkable to us."[15]

U.S. scholarship emphasizes the custom's origin, spread, and demise over centuries from social and cultural perspectives.[16] Scholars in China, however, tend to focus on its abolition, probably because "from its inception, the study of the Chinese women's history was integral to the nationalistic program of China's modernization," which seeks to overcome the stigma associated with China's semi-colonial past.[17] In China, although the popular accounts about footbinding and anti-footbinding cause are numerous, book-length academic works on footbinding or anti-footbinding movements are scant.[18] The most important works for understanding the chronology of anti-footbinding movement is Xingmei Yang's *Shenti zhizheng* (The Contested Body), which examines not only anti-footbinding movement in the final years of the Qing empire, but also often-overlooked efforts of both

[15] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 227-229. Ko's approach has received criticism from some feminist scholars who maintain that she went too far with "cultural relativist, postmodern" perspective. Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny*, 124.

[16] Anthropologists have studied the economic motivation behind Chinese footbinding. C. Fred Blake, Melissa J. Brown, Hill Gates and others examines the economic forces that made this practice popular even among poor families in China. C. Fred Blake, "Foot-Binding in Neo-Confucian China and the Appropriation of Female Labor," in *Feminism and the Body*, ed. Londa Schiebinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Melissa J. Brown et al., "Marriage Mobility and Footbinding in Pre-1949 Rural China: A Reconsideration of Gender, Economics, and Meaning in Social Causation," *Journal of Asian Studies* 71 (2012): 1035–106; Hill Gates, *Footbinding and Women's Labor in Sichuan* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[17] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1.

[18] Two important books are written by Hongxing Gao and Xingmei Yang respectively. Hongxing Gao, *Chan zu shi* (The history of footbinding) (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Press, 2007); and Xingmei Yang, *Shenti zhi zheng: jin dai Zhongguo fan chan zu de li cheng* (The contested body: The anti-footbinding movement in modern China) (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2012). There are several articles on this topic. For example, Nianqun Yang, "'Guoduqi' lishi de ling yimian," (Transitional period: another aspect of the history) *Dushu* 2002 (06): 128-135; Nianqun Yang, "Cong kexue huayu dao guojia kongzhi: Dui nuzi chanzu you 'mei' bian 'chou' de duoyuan fenxi" (From the discourse of science to control by the state: A multifarious analysis of the historical process whereby the bound foot changed from being "beautiful" to being "ugly"), Beijing dang'an shiliao 4 (2001): 237-296; Ming Zhang, "'Lishi'ling yi mian de kunhuo," *Dushu* 10 (2002) 72–76.

Nationalist and Communist governments to end this practice up to 1949.[19] She also published several articles on this topic.[20] In "Guijian youbie"(Class differentiation), she stresses that before the rise of early modern Chinese anti-footbinding campaign, bound foot was not a strict measure of class status. Since late Song Dynasty (960-1279), it had been commonly held that "not having bound foot was a shame." However, bound foot was not seen as a primary signifier of a higher social class.[21] She argues that to ensure effective abolishment of the practice, anti-footbinding activists took measures like distributing badges to upper-class Chinese women who voluntarily gave up footbinding so as to distinguish them from the lower-class people who could not afford binding their feet. Prostitutes were particularly excluded from this movement to retain the line between the noble and the immoral.[22] In the Chinese discussions about anti-footbinding movements, women's agency and subjugation have been the center of debate as well. To avoid imposing presentist values, Nianqun Yang emphasizes the importance to reconstruct what those women actually went through in the transition from binding the feet to letting feet free.[23] However, scholars like Ming Zhang accused him of being a defender of footbinding.[24]

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[19] Yang, *Shenti zhi zheng*.

[20] Xingmei Yang, "Nanjing guomin zhengfu jinzhi funv chanzu de nuli yu chengxiao" (The efforts and effectiveness of the Nanjing regime in forbidding women from binding their feet), *Lishi yanjiu* no.3 (1998):113-29; Xingmei Yang and Zhitian Luo, "Jindai Zhongguoren dui nuxing xiaojiaomei de fouding" (The denial of the beauty of small feet by the modern Chinese people,) paper presented at the Symposium on the History of Health and Beauty, Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, June 11-12, 1999; Xingmei Yang, "Guijian youbie: wanqing fan chanzu yundong de neizai jinzhang" (Class differentiation: tension in anti-footbinding movement in the late Qing dynasty), *Shehui kexue zhanxian* no.2 (2013): 94-98;

[21] Yang, "Guijian youbie," 94.

[22] Ibid., 96-97.

[23] Yang, "'Guoduqi' lishi de ling yimian."

[24] Zhang, "'Lishi'ling yi mian de kunhuo."

This dissertation departs from these scholars by situating footbinding in a trans-Pacific context which allows me to trace travel of ideas and discourses regarding footbinding and its relation to U.S. enforcement of Chinese exclusion laws across the Pacific. Expanding the feminist concern about the "male gaze," I address the "official and bureaucratic gaze" of U.S. immigration administration posed on the racialized Chinese bodies especially female foot and how the Chinese responded to it. Through the comparative and trans-Pacific lens, I seek to demonstrate the power of the visual and the body in shoring up multiple forms of U.S. orientalism in a trans-Pacific public sphere and in U.S. immigration bureaucratic operation. It explicates the shared body, race, gender and class ideologies of U.S./Western and Chinese societies to challenge U.S. superiority undergirded by its operation of "difference" in its discourse and state apparatus.

Even though the footprints of golden lilies were never confined to China's soil, few scholars have looked at the history of footbinding and footbound Chinese women in the context of Chinese migration to other parts of the world, including the United States. Dorothy Ko is the only scholar who mentions that in the second half of the nineteenth century, footbinding, as an overseas Chinese practice, experienced various fates due to the variation in "the number of women immigrants, their economic status, prevailing customs in their native place, and the attitudes of those in the host countries."[25] Her book *Every Step a Lotus* briefly mentions that Chinese migrants brought this practice to the Philippines, Hawaii, Singapore and Malacca, and parts of the British colony of Malaya.[26] Since it was not the focus of her

[25] Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 140.

[26] According to Ko, during the late nineteenth century, among the Chinese women with bound feet from Zhongshan County of Guangdong who migrated and settled in Hawaii, some continued to practice footbinding for their daughters despite the ban by the King. Interestingly, like some of their counterparts in the United

research, Ko neither articulates how the meanings of footbinding underwent transformations in other lands nor explores how bound feet related to the enforcement of U.S. laws against Chinese immigration.

In U.S. immigration historiography, restriction and exclusion are prominent themes, especially in relation to the history of Chinese immigration. Only several new books have featured Chinese elite immigrants who were granted entry.[27] This study investigates how Chinese immigrants gained exemption by articulating their identity and status through their body. Their strategies reveal not only who was admitted and the standards of admissibility during the exclusion era, but also the limits and paradoxes of their strategy.

Even though certain groups of Chinese were selectively exempted, their inclusion was highly racialized, gendered, and conditioned by the exclusionist policy and its enforcement. To better address the gendered paradoxes of U.S. inclusion, this dissertation builds on the studies of immigration of Chinese women to the United States especially the impact of discriminatory U.S. immigration laws against Chinese women.[28] Scholars have noted the skewed gender ratio of the Chinese American community and explained the shortage of

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States, Chinese merchant wives flaunted their bound feet as markers of elite status after relocating to the Philippines. Ibid., 140–141.

[27] Mae M. Ngai traces the story of the Tapes, an Americanized Chinese middle-class family, during the exclusion era. Mae M. Ngai, *The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Madeline Hsu's *The Good Immigrants* focuses on Chinese elites, especially students, to reveal how the model minority characteristics of many Asian Americans resulted from American immigration policies that selected people based on economic considerations and international politics. Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[28] Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870-1943," in *Entry Denied*, ed. by Sucheng Chan, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 94-146; Benson Tong, *Unsubmissive Women: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco (*Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); George Anthony Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration before Exclusion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940-1965* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

Chinese women who immigrated before the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and during the exclusion era (1882 -1943). Focusing on the pre-Chinese exclusion era, George Anthony Peffer argues that the rigorous enforcement of the 1875 Page Law was the most effective factor impeding the immigration of Chinese women, although generally speaking, both cultural constraints and sojourner mentality remained the primary factors shaping Chinese female immigration at that time.[29] Sucheng Chan and Xiaojian Zhao have both convincingly demonstrated that since the Page Law, the immigration of Chinese women became extremely difficult due to the restrictive legislations.[30]

Building on these works, this dissertation discusses bodily proofs of exemption under extremely harsh legislation against the migration of Chinese women and men. It reveals the paradoxical ways in which U.S. inclusion were elaborated through the gendered and racialized body. It shows that how U.S. modernity, national identity and sense of national boundary were solidified through the inspection and documentation of the bodily signs especially bound feet. Even though being considered as a middle-class privilege, the diminutive female feet visualized the deviant Chinese gender norm, broadcasting the racial Otherness of the Chinese immigrants. This highly visible Otherness powerfully sustained the U.S. national identity as a country of white European immigrants. In spite of obtaining admission, the Chinese were still seen as perpetual foreigners on the U.S. soil.

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[29] Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here*.

[30] Chan analyzes in her article how state and federal lawmakers, judges, and enforcers of the discriminatory laws denied the entry of different groups of Chinese women. Zhao explains why the Chinese brought a significantly larger number of male children than female children during the first half of the twentieth century. She contends that because U.S. legal restrictions crippled Chinese American women's ability to migrate, the Chinese sponsored more males to maximize the number of new entries and to expand their community. Zhao's analysis of this gendered pattern undermines the common beliefs that patriarchal cultural values in China, a sojourner mentality and better opportunities for boys in the United States. Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870-1943," 94-146; Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America*, 29-47.

Footbinding in relation to Chinese immigration to the United States is a familiar topic in Asian American historical studies. Judy Yung's *Unbound Feet,* a pioneering work in the writing of Chinese American women's social history, is organized around the theme of footbinding. Yung argues that in response to economic, social, political developments both in the United States and in China, the Chinese women in San Francisco from 1902 to 1945 gradually unbound their feet, taking steps and strides to improve their lives despite their proscribed traditional gender roles at home and racial discrimination in a larger U.S. society. Although she clarifies that she does not mean "to lend support to the Orientalist obsession with the 'victim script' of bound feet," she uses footbinding as a symbol of women's subjugation and subordination to structure her book, which does not fundamentally challenge the oversimplified interpretation of the practice.[31]

As to footbinding and its relation to women's class status, Asian American historians have failed to recognize that footbinding was not limited to upper class Chinese females, although scholars of China were well aware that footbinding was practiced by both well-to-do families and commoners in Qing China. Asian American scholars Judy Yung and Erika Lee both discuss the role of bound feet in the rigorous enforcement of the Chinese exclusion acts.[32] Yung states that "only merchant wives who immigrated before 1911, when the new government in China outlawed footbiniding, had bound feet," which contradicted with the reality in China. Her view of the situation in China is also contradictory. At one point, she writes that "in practice, only the scholar-gentry, merchant, and landowner classes could

[31] Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 6-7.

[32] Yung, *Unbound Feet*; Lee, *At America's Gates*.

afford to bind their daughters' feet and keep their women cloistered and idle,"[33] while in another book she notes that footbinding was widespread in China.[34] Further, she indicates that bound feet served as a signifier of women's morals in the United States: "only women such as my great-grandmother who had bound feet and a modest demeanor were considered upper-class women with 'moral integrity.' "[35] Erika Lee insightfully points out the irony in U.S. government's reliance on bound feet to determine women's exempt status which coincided with the Chinese ban on footbinding, even though she does not pursue further the situation in China.[36]

Thus, the fixed and codified application of social meanings of bound foot in U.S. immigration screening overlapped and contradicted with Chinese meanings of footbinding which had evolved for a millennium and underwent dramatic changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet, historians of Asian America have not given sufficient attention to this tension and its implications for the implementation of U.S. immigration policy *as well as* to the broader context which made it possible.

This dissertation builds on multidisciplinary scholarships on orientalism. Edward Said's *Orientalism* has provided the theoretical foundations for interdisciplinary critical studies of colonialism and imperialism since its publication in 1978. Said challenges Western supremacy underpinned by sets of binary constructions which in justification to Western colonial expansion and domination, portrayed the colonial Others as traditional, backward,

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[33] Ibid., 19.

[34] Yung, *Unbound Voices: A Documentary History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 99; 275, Note 2.

[35] Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 2.

[36] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 95.

emotional, passive and feminine, as opposed to the modern, advanced, rational, active and manly West.[37] Building on Said, researchers of Asian America have articulated how U.S. orientalism manifested itself in films, literature, material culture and foreign relations.[38]

My approach to U.S. orientalism in a trans-Pacific context builds on the conceptualizations of orientalism by literary scholar Lisa Lowe and China studies scholar Mayfair Yang. Lowe sees orientalism as a heterogeneous and contradictory conception. Her observation about French and British orientalisms was instrumental for my analysis of U.S. orientalist discourses of footbinding. She maintains, "on the one hand, that orientalism consists of an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites, and on the other, that each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable."[39] Though Yang's study focuses on the consequences of "native Orientalism" upon religiosities in modern China, I utilize her innovative framework to discuss Chinese engagement with orientalism and acceptance of the construction of differences in the politics of anti-footbinding movements. Yang combines Said's analysis of orientalist discourse with the concept of "colonization of consciousness" as explored by Jean and John Comaroff in their studies on the Protestant mission project in nineteenth-century colonial South Africa. She argues that in semi-colonial China, "colonization of consciousness" can be seen in the ways

[37] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1978).

[38] John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[39] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 5.

in which China's nationalist elites and official classes accepted and participated in the West versus East binary construction of the world.[40]

Combining both scholars' analytic frameworks, I demonstrate that U.S. orientalism neither had a homogeneous discursive construction of footbinding nor exerted a totalizing power over its Other. U.S. discourses of footbinding were far more complicated than a uniformed denunciation. Paradoxically, as the U.S. journalists were fascinated by the oriental beauty of Chinese merchants' wives with dainty feet, to advocate for social reforms, the Chinese nationalist discourse absorbed the racialized binary of Chinese backwardness versus U.S./Western modernity, denouncing footbinding as a symbol of national shame and race decline.

Further, my interventions ground U.S. orientalism not only in discourse and ideas but also in the bureaucratic applications of these discourse and knowledge. Among various interpretations of footbinding, the enforcers of Chinese exclusion laws privileged the one saturated with orientalist fascination and admiration. Bound foot became a vital vehicle for the Chinese to subvert the extremely harsh exclusionary laws. This perhaps simultaneously discloses the desire of U.S. society towards a domesticized female body, the anxiety to contain women's increasing public participation and the fear of the "invasion" of immoral Chinese women in the United States. The racialized, gendered and classist perceptions of Chinese bodies paradoxically were utilized to crack U.S. gates.

Nonetheless, the application of this seemingly favorable interpretation in immigration screening reinforced footbinding as a timeless oriental practice, visualizing the

[40] Mayfair Yang, "Postcoloniality & Religiosity in Modern China: The Disenchantments of Sovereignty" in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 2:3-45; Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

backwardness, cruelty and racial inferiority of China. The dominant representation in immigration bureaucracy denied the undergoing Chinese efforts to terminate the practice at the same time, or in Johannes Fabian's words, denied coevalness with the Other.[41] Therefore, growing interactions in the Pacific could not guarantee seamless circulation of information which constantly intertwined with the asymmetrical international power dynamics.

In terms of methodology, in addition to the categories such as race, gender and class, this dissertation foregrounds the body as an important analytic tool in the analysis of U.S. orientalism, immigration policy and administration *as well as* the nexuses where they intersected. The significance of the body in shaping U.S. orientalism and policies of inclusion and exclusion needs more exploration and elaboration.[42] As physical boundaries matter to a nation, the physical human body itself, imagined or real, exerts concrete visualizing power in the circulation and institutionalization of ideas with respect to what bodies are desirable or not to be "seen" within U.S. national boundaries. What is being "seen" physically or imaginatively cause immediate sentiments, judgements and perceptions, informed by the broader political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. By examining the broader institutional contexts that led to obsession with and heavy reliance on inspecting and

[41] In his book, Fabian talks about how anthropology has managed to maintain distance, mostly by manipulating temporal coexistence through the denial of coevalness. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 121.

[42] A number of works have given varying degrees of attention to how immigrants utilized visible bodily signs to convince U.S. immigrant officials their admissibility. For example, Yung, *Unbound Feet*; Lee, *At America's Gates*; Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Kitty Calavita, "The Paradoxes of Race, Class, Identity, and 'Passing': Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Acts, 1882–910," *Law and Social Inquiry,* Vol. 25, No. 1 (2000): 1–40; Kitty Calavita, "Collisions at the Intersection of Gender, Race, and Class: Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Law," *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 2006): 249-281; Adam McKeown, "Ritualization of Regulation: The Enforcement of Chinese Exclusion in the United States and China," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, Issue 2 (April 2003), 377–403.

documenting the migrants' bodies, I explain why bound foot acquired a remarkable role for both the immigrants and the immigration officials to establish Chinese admissibility in comparison with other bodily evidence. This study demonstrates not only how racial, classist, and gendered schema of the body had been incorporated into immigration operations in enforcing the unenforceable exclusion laws, but also how the development of U.S. modern immigration bureaucracy had intersected with the Chinese bodies.

The ideologies of race, gender and class growing out of an increasingly urbanized and globalized U.S. society in which anonymity and suspicion among people pervaded dictated the dependence on visual proofs in enforcing laws towards the migrants coming from unfamiliar lands. Furthermore, the incoherencies and paradoxes of the concepts of race, class and gender in the exclusion laws, once put into practice, demanded pragmatic implementation approaches and "tangible" evidences such as visible signs from the body.

A transnational turn has reshaped U.S. historiography since the early 1990s.[43] Participating in the efforts to internationalize U.S. history, historians of Chinese America have produced works from transnational perspectives, mainly concentrating on transnational family, marriages, social relations, and immigration networks.[44] This dissertation, instead,

[43] Ian R. Tyrrell, "Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice." *Journal of Global History* Vol. 4, No. 3 (November 2009): 453–474; Mae M. Ngai, "Promises and Perils of Transnational History," *Perspectives on History*, Vol. 50, Issue 9 (December 2012): 52.

[44] For example, Sucheng Chan, ed., *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: a Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Adam McKeown, Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012); Karen J. Kuo, *East is West and West is East: Gender, Culture, and Interwar Encounters Between Asia and America* (Phlidelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Catherine Ceniza Choy and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, ed., *Gendering the Trans-Pacific World: Diaspora, Empire, and Race* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017).

takes footbinding as an entry point to discuss how trans-Pacific relations of power were articulated, visualized, and institutionalized through the discourses, imageries, and law enforcement with regard to footbinding.

I approach "golden lilies" from a Pacific perspective, exploring how the ideas about "golden lilies" traveled across and beyond national boundaries, shifted and circulated in different social, cultural, political, and institutional settings. By tracking the movement of ideas about footbinding across the Pacific and the underlining skewed international power structure, this dissertation puts Chinese history, Chinese American history and U.S. history in conversation with one another. The use of "trans-Pacific" rather than "transnational" serves to remind us of the sloppiness, fluidity and complexity of people's subjectivity and that the travel of ideas doesn't correspond to the arbitrarily defined territorial boundaries. This does not deny the crucial role of nation-state. Rather, the Chinese and U.S. reactions towards footbinding in fact were very much "national" in sentiments. A trans-Pacific and comparative approach force us to juxtapose the original reality of China with the U.S. representations at the same time, which often placed the Other in a different time. Challenging U.S. operations of differences itself urges a trans-Pacific move.

Contextualizing bound feet in a trans-Pacific world not only expands our understanding of how the discourses and representations of "golden lilies" on both sides overlapped, collided and twisted, but also reveals the multilayered interaction between the body, discourse and bureaucracy. The encounter of Chinese migrants and U.S. immigration personnel did not simply represent individual contact but epitomized multiple networks of information, resources, discourses and sets of ideologies about race, class, femininity, and identity, which were often beyond the scope of the Pacific world. The U.S. construction of

Chinese bodies was not a pure domestic product emerging within the confines of the U.S. territory. It can be traced to American and, more broadly, Western people's encounters with the Chinese. It too connected with global flows of ideas, sentiments and fashion trends. The manipulation of U.S. immigration system by Chinese migrants, agents and brokers from different racial background also constituted it. This project, however, does not just seek to demonstrate Chinese migrants' agency and subjectivity but examines what made possible their deployment of bound feet at U.S. ports of entry and the limits and consequences of these strategies.

My bilingual archival research both in the United States and in China has sustained this trans-Pacific approach. This dissertation knits together information collected from multiple sites including: special collections of Wuyi University, the Guangzhou Provincial Sun-yat Sen Library, Chinese National Archives at Guangzhou, Taishan County Archives, Taishan County Museum, Jiangmen Museum, Bancroft Library and Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and U.S. immigration files at branches of the National Archives in San Bruno, Seattle, Washington D.C., New York and Philadelphia.

Some of my findings were surprising as much as rewarding. Qiaokan (Overseas Chinese magazines) are magazines produced by organizations in Guangdong province and distributed internationally to maintain a sense of community among the overseas Chinese.[45] However, after days of research in Wuyi University and Taishan County Archives where the magazines collections are housed, no information regarding footbinding surfaced. The salient absence of discussion of the female foot in *Qiaokan* formed a sharp contrast with the obsessive attention to Chinese women's foot type at U.S. ports of entry, indicated by U.S.

[45] Madeline Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold* offers a detailed discussion on *Qiaokan* especially in Chapter five. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home,* 124-155.

immigration archives. This tension discloses the different concerns across the Pacific. Although more politically oriented newspapers, periodicals and magazines in China like *Shenbao* (Shanghai news, one of the most influential newspapers in China at the time) published numerous articles on anti-footbinding efforts in the first three or four decades of the twentieth century, footbinding seemed to be of little concern among the immigrants especially after 1910.

Even though the scarcity of sources makes it impossible to fully explain the scant interest in footbinding among Chinese immigrants, there are some factors that can be taken into consideration. The Chinese anti-footbinding movements developed very unevenly across the country. The movement in Guangdong, the home province of most of the early Chinese immigrants, proceeded more effectively compared to the rest of the county. According to Guangdong Provincial Surveys of Traditions and Customs conducted in 1929 and 1930, all the women in four counties were either "all natural-footed" or "all letting their feet free" by the end of the 1920s.[46] Moreover, the earliest *Qiaokan* is *Xining Zazhi* (Xinning magazine) that appeared in 1909. Yet, most of *Qiaokan* were created and published after 1910s.

Shishi huabao (Pictorial News Magazine) published in Guangzhou from 1905 to 1913 offers much-needed insights into the situation in the first decade of the twentieth century. Articles advocating for anti-footbinding cause were steadily published through 1907. Ads for a medicinal water which could relieve the pain caused by letting feet free disappeared after

[46] Unfortunately, only four counties' survey results were available. The four counties were Heyuan County 河源縣, Ya County 崖縣, Gaoyao Count 高要縣, Yuning County 與寧縣. "Guangdong quansheng fengsu diaocha" 廣東全省風俗調查(Guangdong Provincial Survey of Traditions and Customs), *Gudongdong minzheng gongbao* 廣東民政公報 no. 69 & 70(September 1930): 217-229.

1908.[47] This change indicates that by the 1910, most local women had either unbound their feet or stopped binding their daughters' feet. Accordingly, the shape of women's feet was no longer newsworthy, and the medicinal water lost its market. Strikingly, coaching materials intended to help the immigrants bypass U.S. immigration interrogation show that they had to memorize women's foot type. Although footbinding was no longer a topic demanding particular attention in the immigrants' daily life, it was still held dearly in the United States. The migration to the U.S. reinvented the significance of bound feet to the immigrants.

Another surprising finding is the rarely-told history of the U.S. foot fever and its extremist form—the Cinderella foot contests. Western corseting and footbinding have often been compared with each other in discussions about harmful bodily practices.[48] Yet, the existence of newspaper articles and ads promoting foot contests was beyond my expectation. Starting with key word research "small feet" in the Proquest News and Newspapers Database, I was only expecting accounts regarding Chinese or Chinese American women. Yet, numerous discussions on U.S., British and French women's vanity of small feet and narrow, pointed shoes came to the surface. One article entitled "Chicago's Cinderella: Mrs. A. H. Talbot Wins the Golden Slipper Awarded for the Smallest Foot That is Most Nearly Perfect"[49] stood out and prompted me to probe further the untold stories of foot contests in the United States and Europe, the topic of Chapter four. A simple phrase "small feet" easily linked the "Orient" to the "Occident." This indicates how inevitable this finding is.

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[47] Guangzhou Museum and Guangzhou Provincial Sun-yat Sen Library. *Shishi huabao* (Pictorial News Magazine) (Guangzhou: guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2014).

[48] John Haddad indicates that both served to signal women's class status. John Haddad, "The Chinese Lady and China for the Ladies: Race, Gender, and Public Exhibition in Jacksonian America," *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*, 13.

[49] "Chicago's Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1907, F1.

Most works on the histories of shoe and foot fashions predominantly concentrate on the development of shoe industry and the material cultural aspects such as the changes of style, material, shape and color. They usually discuss shoe histories in France, Britain, and the United States.[50] Very few popular narratives and scholarships have noticed that small foot as a sign of feminine beauty, refinement and social status was also a Western beauty ideal, even though this kind of fascination was not carried to its Chinese extreme.

Unlike previous works, Nancy Rexford's book *Women's Shoes in America* reconstructs the U.S. social context which granted special significance and meanings to small feet and tiny shoes. Her investigation based on an examination of women's magazines and periodicals like *Godey's Lady's Book*, and my research on mainstream U.S. newspapers both indicate the popularity of small foot among people of European descent. While Rexford's focus is primarily U.S. context, I expand the inquiry into a global setting for a comparative purpose.[51] The stories of foot contests that I found in the *Chicago Tribune* offer powerful details about the overlapping of Chinese and U.S./Western ideologies regarding the female body and its relation to social class and marriageability, *as well as* how the dominant discourse in the United States denied these parallels.

Chinese-language sources in the United States and English-language documents produced in China help to interrupt the dominant narrative regarding the Chinese and illuminate how knowledge and information about the Other could be distorted and manufactured in a trans-Pacific public sphere. By analyzing articles in the Proquest News and

[50] June Swann, *Shoes* (London: B. T. Batsford LTD, 1982); Nancy E. Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America, 1795-1930* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2000); Jonathan Walford, *The Seductive Shoe: Four Centuries of Fashion Footwear* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang 2007).

[51] Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America,* especially Chapter two.

Newspapers Databases, on the website of the Library of Congress, California Newspaper Project, California Digital Newspaper Collection, *Shenbao* and Chinese Periodicals Database, I expose fissures and instabilities of U.S. orientalist representations of footbinding and uncover Chinese engagement with these representations. Drawing information from volumes of missionary records produced for different audiences in the two countries, I interrogate the often-exaggerated missionary success in banning Chinese footbinding by showing how the missionaries rendered the Chinese-led anti-footbinding movements invisible.

Chinese language sources buried in voluminous immigration files shed light on the power dynamics in constructing U.S. immigration records. Historians of U.S. immigration have diligently mined immigration documents in National Archives across the country. However, these records, although couched in a seemingly dispassionate formality, should not be accepted at face value. Drawing on (post)colonial studies that have tenaciously interrogated power-imbued knowledge production in colonial records, we should treat the archival production of immigration bureaucracy itself as a subject of historical inquiry rather than simply as source material. My discovery of multiple untranslated Chinese students' notes about the mistreatment they received at the Angel Island immigration station in the San Francisco Bay and the overlooked translations of Chinese-language news reports published in the United States reveal the ways in which certain sources of information have been privileged over others. More importantly, they demand us to read the official archives with a more critical eye on the colonial-like technologies which the immigration officers used to marginalize Chinese voices and place the Other in a different time.[52]

[52] See Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

The practice of self-reflexivity identifies the importance of reflecting on the contexts in which scholarly claims were produced. Growing up in China and trained as a historian at both Chinese and U.S. universities, I have been negotiating my previous knowledge and assumptions about the United States with my graduate trainings at the University of California, Santa Barbara and with my everyday encounters as a trans-Pacific person. I have navigated a broad social, cultural, political and bureaucratic space and sphere myself while conducting my doctoral research and writing this dissertation. Being exposed to the public discourse and academic discussions across the Pacific, I have become increasingly conscious about the power of U.S. discourse in shaping global understandings of Asia, including China's self-perception and self-representation and its gaze back to the United States. I have been aware of the unevenness of trans-Pacific circulation of information and knowledge. I wonder why today's affordable technology and transportation do not necessarily facilitate more transparent communication between the two countries than one hundred years ago. Therefore, this study has been part of my own search for answers to the questions that have emerged in my trans-Pacific life over the past several years. Without these experiences, this dissertation would be impossible or otherwise different.

"Gold Lilies" Across the Pacific is a historical examination of U.S. operation of difference regarding Chinese bodies from a trans-Pacific perspective offers insights into the forces that have contributed to creating racial, social, cultural, religious, and national borders with the Other. Furthermore, it sheds light on contemporary anxieties over which people and bodies are to be monitored and admitted, and how this past as collective memory and legal legacy continues to shape contemporary assumptions about inclusion and exclusion, tradition and modernity, and globalization and nationalism. Finally, it reveals how "illegal"

immigrants have navigated and experienced legal systems, and how the use, non-use and misuse of knowledge regarding these men and women and their bodies have been made possible in both popular discourse and in immigration administration.

Chapter 1: A Twisted Journey of "Golden Lilies": From China to U.S. Gates

On February 15, 1915, Lam Shee, a Chinese woman at the age of 25, arrived at the port of San Francisco on the steamship "Manchuria," accompanied by 62-year-old Yin Haw, a Chinese merchant and member of Sang Wo & Co., doing business at Grant Avenue, San Francisco. These two claimed to have been married for two years. They were interrogated two days later to determine whether Lam Shee could be admitted as wife of a merchant, an exempt class under the Chinese exclusion acts which restricted and barred Chinese laborers from coming to the United States and by then had been in effect for 33 years. Perhaps the most striking characteristics of this case are the predominance of female feet in the exchanges among the immigrants, inspectors, attorneys and commissioners, and the final recommendation granting her admission despite several discrepancies that the applicants failed to clear.

Discursive references to women's foot type filled with the first page of the transcript on the interview with the alleged husband,

> Q: When did you first marry?
> A: KS 27-4-10 in Hah Long village, Pun Yee dist. To Wong Shee, she died CR 1-8 at home, at the age of 35; natural feet; married again CR 2-12-13 to Lam Shee, bound feet; 25, applicant.[1]
> ...
> Q: How many brothers and sisters have you had?
> A: One brother, one sister; brother is Yin Wai Jung, about 65, at home in China; never been in the US; his wife died about 6 yrs ago; one boy, no girls, How Jing, about 40, he is married, wife natural feet...
> Q: Did your 2rd wife ever see your sister?

[1] "KS" and "CR" here refer to Chinese calendars made according to different emperors' rein.

A: Yes, my sister is now taking care of my children; she is a widow; lives in my house
Q: How old is your sister? A About 50, natural feet.
…
Q: Are your 2rd wife's parents living?
A: Both living; ... mother Jow Shee, natural feet ….[2]

The interrogation on Lam Shee followed. The transcript of her testimony marked her as "Has Bound Feet" at the beginning. She was asked about "what kind of feet" her husband's sister had and that of his brother's daughter in-law. She also voluntarily mentioned her mother had "bound feet." After recording the statements of these two, this case awaited its witnesses to verify. On February 25, admitting that they were unable to locate the Chinese witness who had seen this couple in China or other witnesses, Attorney Stidger and Kennah emphasized the character of Lam shee to Commissioner Samuel W. Backus: "inasmuch as the applicant is beyond question a respectable family woman and has bound or small feet and there can, therefore, be no question as to the genuineness of the case, we would ask the case be decided upon the testimony of the applicant and her husband to avoid further delay."[3]

However, Inspector W. W. Thiess recommended a denial on March 6 on the ground of lack of witness to verify the marriage and the first wife's death, striking age differences between the wife and the husband, and at least seven places in their statements where the alleged couple disagreed with each other. Three days later, Thiess reported that a reexamination did not clear "in any way the discrepancy." Meanwhile, the two attorneys wrote to Commissioner Backus again, reaffirming that "this woman has small or bound feet;

[2] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. File 14144/5-6, Arrival Investigation Case Files, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration-Pacific Region, San Francisco (hereafter NARA-PR, SF).

[3] File 14144/5-6, NARA-PR, SF.

that she is undoubtedly a country woman and of the better class that there can be no question as to her respectability in any way."[4]

Being officially notified a denial on March 11, Lam Shee appealed her case to the Secretary of the Department of Labor the next day. Around a week later, the attorneys secured additional supporting documents. They prepared a certification of Yin Haw's association and of "many Chinese firms of high standing" that vouched for Lam Shee, in which the bound feet were stressed,

> We further call your attention to the fact LAM SHEE is of the respectable class of Chinese country, family women; that she has small or bound feet which is in itself a badge of respectability and we do further certify to you in the names of our associations and firms that if Lam Shee is admitted we will at once notify you if at any time she does not remain the wife of Yin Haw.[5]

The attorney also highlighted the respectability associated with bound feet repeatedly in a note attached to the certification,

> The applicant herself is beyond doubt a woman of eminent respectability and has small or bound feet. We could have easily secured these endorsements before denial was entered had we known they were necessary, but we felt the appearance of the woman and the standing of the husband and his wife was sufficient to overcome any trivial contradictions.[6]

An affidavit of Hin Yaw was provided to clarify "the various seeming contradictions." Along with it was the attorneys' letter, repeating the same line, "In view of the fact this

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

woman has small or bound feet and her respectability, etc., is beyond question."[7] Responding the attorneys' plan to ask for a parole "pending the action of the Department on appeal," Commissioner Backus left a note indicating the application for parole "will be favorably considered" because the "applicant is extremely 'bound-footed.'"[8]

On May 4, the Acting Commissioner-General finally recommended admission. In his memorandum to the Assistant Secretary, he meticulously compared and contrasted points on which the applicant and alleged husband agreed and disagreed. He started off with the remark perfectly corresponding to the attorneys, "The wife is a bound foot woman and there is nothing to show or even to arouse the suspicion that she is anything else than an eminently respectable person."[9] He strove to dissolve all the variations in his analysis that followed. However, it was not as lucid as his confident declaration on Lam Shee's respectability. Even in the conclusion section he still puzzled over the disagreement of the two on the foot type of the wife's mother, "It seems strange also that the alleged husband should not know that his mother-in-law has bound feet, especially as his wife is a bound foot woman and in binding her feet probably followed the example of her mother, belonging to the same social class."[10] Nonetheless, he reconciled his suspicion by speculating that "still he may not have seen her in circumstances which would fully qualify him to speak on the matter." Although he admitted that "some of the actual discrepancies are not easily understood or explained (others are), he forced a conclusion, "they are not of vital consequence … Altogether the Bureau is

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

thoroughly satisfied that applicant is the real wife of Yin Haw."[11] Lam Shee eventually landed on May 6, 1915.

The overwhelming attention given to Chinese women's feet in this case leaves us with many questions: Why did bound feet play such a critical role in establishing Chinese women's admissibility? Why did the attorneys and the immigrants initially and repeatedly refer to women's foot type? It is even more striking if we locate this case in a trans-Pacific context. In China, long before the year Lam Shee arrived the United States, footbinding had been widely practiced by women of different social classes. To reinvigorate a weakening nation, anti-footbinding movements spread across the country as a crucial part of China's modernization effort. These movements started from the late nineteenth century and gained far more momentums, compared to Qing Court's early attempts to stem the practice. Bound feet had thus shifted to visualize backwardness and national humility in China. The most progressive class in China took the lead to unbinding women's feet. In addition, a grown-woman's feet are hard to change, yet her social class and morality are far more fluid. Furthermore, being an upper-class person does not warrant one's morals.

This chapter demonstrates a striking contradiction between U.S. immigration authorities' interpretive efforts regarding Chinese female bodies in enforcing the exclusion laws and the reality of the Chinese lives. It seeks to illustrate the ways in which the immigration inspection posed its "stylized official gaze" onto the Chinese female body, and how the immigrants deployed the immigration system to their advantage to enter the gates of the United States.[12] It moves beyond the framework of women's subjugation and agency by

[11] Ibid.

[12] I borrow the phrase "stylized official gaze" from Ann Laura Stoler. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Thinking Through Colonial Ontologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 23.

looking at how the Chinese female body manifested a racialized, classist and gendered aspect of U.S. immigration enforcement.

The main argument is that the enforcement of U.S. immigration exclusion, as a highly racialized and gendered process, was part of U.S. empire's regulation of its would-be domestic Other as opposed to its overseas Others. Although the footbound Chinese women were treated favorably in the highly selective immigration screening, the inclusion of this kind was grounded in the racialization, objectification and codification of female bodies in immigration administration. It reinforced the differences of the Other. It diminished women's subjectivity and individuality. They rested on two faulty assumptions: one is that women's morality and social status were engraved on their bodies and could be visualized; the other is that cultural and social meanings of Chinese female bodies were stagnant, and frozen in time. These assumptions ironically served the immigrants' purpose to "perform" their admissibility, yet at the price of consolidating the racialized and gendered notion of footbinding as a timeless, oriental custom.

Footbinding in China

Although historical records regarding how and when footbinding first started were scarce, footbinding is believed by many that it originally practiced among palace dancers and royal families in China. The most popular story about the practice may be the myth of Yaoniang, a dancer during the Southern Tang dynasty under the rule of Li Yu (reign 961–975). Li Yu made lotus-shaped shoes out of gold for her.[13] Scholars also mostly agree that

[13] "He had Yaoning wrap her feet with silk *[yibo raojiao*]; he had them rendered slender and small [*xianxiao*], curving upward like the new moon. In plain socks [*suwa*] she danced to the music 'In the Clouds,' her posture was as though she were soaring into the clouds . . . Later people imitated her, finding arched and slender feet [*gongxian*] wonderful. This is the origin of footbinding." Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 114, Note 19.

footbinding started to spread during the Song Dynasty (960–1279). It was gradually adopted by ordinary people and reached its peak in the Qing Dynasty, from the north to the south. Although it began to spread centuries earlier, it was primarily a fashion symbol that marked the leisurely life of upper-class women until the early Qing. In the late Qing, the number of lower-class women who practiced it grew tremendously.

This practice also varied by ethnicity. Manchus, the ruling ethnic group of the Qing Dynasty did not have the tradition of binding women's feet. Footbinding was chiefly a custom of the majority ethnic group—Han Chinese. However, there were exceptions among the Han women. The Hakka women in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces seldom practiced footbinding. The Tanka women of Guangdong Province, who worked and lived on boats all their lives, were also natural footed.[14] Long before Western missionaries begun their anti-footbinding efforts, the Manchu rulers strove to prohibit the practice during their reign. Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), one of the most radical political and religious upheavals in nineteenth-century China also included anti-footbinding as part of its campaign. However, these efforts were unsuccessful throughout most of the Qing Dynasty. So popular was footbinding that Manchu ladies attempted to emulate it by making a style of footwear called platform shoes that gave an illusion of smallness. They wore a two-inch high small white support at the bottom of their regular shoes. This support was the only thing that was visible when a dress concealed the shoes.[15] Ethnic groups such as the Mongols, Tibetans, Hakka, and Miao did not bind feet.

[14] Ping Wang, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 34.

[15] Ibid., 67–68.

The procedure of binding underwent changes over the long history of footbinding. Different regions practiced it somewhat differently, and the size of bound feet varied. There were considerable variations through time and space.[16] The ideal time to bind girls' feet was between four and nine years old before their feet fully developed. In the late stage of its history, the practice usually entailed soaking the feet either in hot water or in a concoction of herbal ingredients, breaking and folding the girls' toes (except the big one) underneath the sole (Figure 1) and using very long silk or cotton cloth to wrap their feet all the way to the ankle. Even though the actual binding methods and degrees differed, ideally the arches were gradually broken and purposely forced upward (Figure 2). Dorothy Ko, however, has contended that "arched feet" was not a timeless trait of bound feet. She argues that it did not gain popularity until the sixteenth century.[17] The ideal was three-inch feet, euphemistically called golden lilies, or *Jin Lian*, meaning golden lotuses in Chinese (Figure 3).

[16] Archeological findings of women's skeletons also confirm this conclusion. Elizabeth Berger, Liping Yang, and Wa Ye, "Foot binding in a Ming Dynasty Cemetery Near Xi'an, China," *International Journal of Paleopathology*, no. 24 (2019): 79–88.

[17] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 170, 191.

Figure 1. Yang Jinge revealed her feet to British photographer Jo Farrell. Courtesy of Jo Farrell Photography.

Figure 2. X-ray of bound feet, China. Library of Congress Collection.

Figure 3. A "Lily footed" woman of China. Library of Congress Collection.

Footbinding had a myriad of meanings for women of all social classes. It served as a gendering tool and marked a woman's beauty and sensuality. It demonstrated women's aspiration for upward mobility and their claim to dignity, obedience, femininity and fashionable beauty, which were intimately related to their marriage prospects.[18] However, in

[18] In Pang-Mei Chang's memoir of her great-aunt, Zhang Youyi, she accounted the pressure Zhang Youyi faced in resisting footbinding and how girls' reaction to the pain in the binding process was considered as part of women's character: "Prospective in-laws ask: 'Did she complain much during her foot-binding years?' If yes, then they would think twice. She was a complainer, then, not obedient enough. Even at age three, I knew. If I was good, Mama and Baba would say that my feet were perfectly formed golden lilies, that I had been even-tempered and docile during those difficult years. But if this were not true, everyone would know. The kitchen God would tell the Supreme God. The match-maker would warn prospective families. The servants would gossip about me to other servants in the town. Everyone in Jiading knew the Chang family. If I was bad, no one

reality, owning bound feet could neither guarantee women what they and their families aspired for nor did it ensure their morals as fixed as their foot size.

One of the deepest concerns of the late nineteenth century Americans was that Chinese women came to the country for the purpose of prostitution. They thus assumed that footbound women, belonging to the upper class, would not fall into this disgraceful profession. However, in *Shen Bao* (Shanghai News), one of the most influential newspapers in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China, multiple articles mentioned that Chinese prostitutes had bound feet.[19] One noted that bound feet made prostitutes look seductive and appealing to their clients.[20] Another one reported that a brothel madam forced footbinding upon one prostitute named Xiaohong Tian.[21] Levy also notes that "there were both tiny and natural-footed Cantonese prostitutes."[22] A booklet, published by *Tianzu Hui* (Heavenly Foot Society or Natural Foot Society) in 1906 which aimed to promote reforms in Chinese society challenged the popular belief that bound feet signified dignity. It pointed out that some Chinese prostitutes had "golden lotuses."[23] Ironically, the anti-footbinding movements also remade the boundaries between the respectful and the immoral women in the Chinese society. As the natural feet begun to signify nobility and progressiveness, in some regions, prostitutes were not encouraged to abandon footbinding or even explicitly prohibited

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would want me. I would not marry and would become a disgrace to my family. And still, I cried." Pang-Mei Chang, *Bound Feet & Western Dress*: *A Memoir* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 22.

[19] For instance, "Lun quanjian funv chanzu yi xian guangshe nvshu yi qing qi yuan" (Persuasion for Women to Quit Footbinding Should Start with Establishing Girls' School), *Shen Bao,* June 13, 1896, 1.

[20] "Chanzu shuo" (Analysis of Footbinding), *Shen Bao,* May 24,1872, 3.

[21] "Yanxun nueji biming an" (A Case about A Prostitute Being Abused to Death), *Shen Bao,* April 7, 1900, 3.

[22] Levy, *Chinese Footbinding,* 54.

[23] "Jiubi liangyan" (Words to Remedy the Society), Tianzu Hui, 1906, 1–2.

from letting their feet free.[24] Furthermore, women entered prostitution for a variety of reasons, and to what extent working as a prostitute speaks to women's morality was another topic worthy of serious academic debates beyond the scope of this chapter.

Although bound feet limited women's mobility, when footbinding as a fashion reached the poorer women, they never stopped working either in their household or in the field.[25] The varying degrees of binding permitted women to perform different levels of labor. Traveler accounts from the mid-nineteenth century note that some lower-class people did have bound feet. Robert Fortune observed that "in the central and eastern provinces . . . [foot-binding] is almost universal –the fine ladies who ride in sedan-chairs, and the poorer classes who toil from morning till evening in the fields, are all deformed in the same manner."[26] He also documented that one traveler in Henan and Shanxi during the Qing noted that even female beggars and water carriers "had tiny and regular feet which pointed upwards like water chestnuts."[27] Moreover, it was not uncommon for Chinese women and their families to suffer downward mobility in times of war, uprising, turmoil and natural disaster whereas their foot size were hard to be reversed once bound.

The social meanings of female bodies were also open to change. Although bound feet symbolized the upper-class status to which people from all walks of life aspired, some

[24] Yang, "Guijian youbie," 97-98.

[25] A documentary documents some of the footbound women who spoke about their ability to work in the fields, regardless of contracted feet. "THE LAST GENERATION: The lives of Foot-Bound Women," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eG2kZ4iM-c published on April 12, 2016, accessed on October 4, 2018.

[26] "Women of the poorer classes, such as those who worked in the fields, were often barefooted; in areas such as Kwangtung and Kweichow, meticulous footbinding was associated with families of wealth and eminence. A tiny-footed concubine in Kwangtung was politely referred to as 'aunt,' but if natural-footed she was derisively called 'bare foot' and was not allowed to wear socks and slippers until after one of her sons married . . ." Levy, *Chinese Footbinding*, 53–54; Blake, "Foot-Binding in Neo-Confucian China," 456.

[27] Levy, *Chinese Footbinding*, 54.

privileged people initiated anti-footbinding movements in the late nineteenth century in the face of Western encroachment and Japanese aggression. Chinese nationalist intellectuals and republican reformers such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao (1873–1929), stimulated by the larger movement for political reform, modernization, and gender equality in China, launched an anti-footbinding campaign. In sharp contrast to fully colonized societies that usually witnessed massive resistance to colonial reforms, say, the colonial regulation of female circumcision in Africa and the colonial government's efforts to end Sati in India, the elites in semi-colonial China quickly internalized the western discourse regarding "modernity" and "backwardness," and projected the "uncivilized" image onto themselves.[28] Many Chinese started to perceive footbinding as a sign of national humiliation and the declining health of the race. They believed that eliminating footbinding was crucial to revitalize China, and called for cutting the tie with the shameful past that this tradition represented.

For the well-educated urban elites who actively participated in anti-footbinding campaigns, natural feet symbolized modernity, liberation, and good marriage prospects. Many Western-oriented students, officials, and intellectuals wanted to present a new ideal of beauty in their pursuit of a new and strong China. A 1900 *Shen Bao* report recounted that "the three governmental officials with most distinguished and respectable status in Wuchang did not bind their daughters' feet."[29] This was not an unusual piece of news in China at that

[28] Lynn Thomas, "Ngaitana (I will circumcise myself)": The Gender and Generational Politics of the 1956 Ban on Clitoridectomy in Meru, Kenya," *Gender & History,* Vol. 8, Issue 3, (November 1996), 338-363. Lynn Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003. Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India," *Cultural Critique* No. 7, The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse II (Autumn, 1987), 119-156.

[29] *Shen Bao*, January 8, 1900.

time. Many *Shen Bao* news articles published from the its first issue in 1872 to the 1930s discussed the damage that resulted from the tradition and promoted anti-footbinding campaigns.

Progressive women born in wealthy and highly-respected families such as Xiangning He (1878-1972) and Youyi Zhang (Yu-i Chang, 1900-1988) fiercely resisted their mother's coerced binding. Youyi Zhang, who was born in 1900 to a well-to-do family in Jiangsu Province, China and later married to Zhimo Xu (Chih-mo Hus), a prominent Chinese poet, rejected her mother's attempt to bind her feet.[30] Xiangning He was born in 1878 to a wealthy family in Hong Kong. Her daughter narrates that she was inspired by the stories of natural-foot female soldiers during Taiping Rebellion and resisted her mother's effort to have her feet bound by cutting the binding cloth every night until her mother eventually gave up. Her natural feet met the expectation of her future husband Zhongkai Liao, a U.S.-born Chinese who insisted in marring a wife without bound feet.[31]

The elites in Guangdong, where most of the pioneering Chinese immigrants came from, actively supported the campaigns of *Tianzu Hui* and publicized governmental decrees and booklets on how to regulate and eradicate this practice.[32] Although anti-footbinding movement was mainly a male operation, a handful of Chinese women did join the *Tianzu*

[30] Pang-Mei Chang, *Bound Feet & Western Dress*: *A Memoir* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 16-24.

[31] Mengxing Liao, *Wo de mu qin He Xiangning* (My mother He Xiangning) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chaoyang Press, 1973), 2-3.

[32] *Jie chanzu wenchao* (Selection of Anti-footbinding Works), Shunde gurong shuwu.

Hui. Some elite women took on the responsibility of facilitating missions for letting feet free.[33]

As is the case with many social movements that aimed to terminate traditional practices, the actual transformation from bound feet to natural feet lagged behind the pace of political change. It took time for individuals to digest and negotiate shifting values. The bandaging had been deeply inscribed on women's bodies, so a reversal was physically and emotionally painful, and sometimes impossible. Conventions still dominated especially among poorer, less educated, and rural people who resisted the encroachment of the elites' ideology and worried that unbound feet would prevent their daughters from marrying up. Some educated men found it hard to perceive any beauty in a big-footed woman. In some regions people's preference for small feet persisted because reformers focused on transforming feet instead of advancing women and reforming the social climate.

Although it was often perceived as a custom signifying male domination and female suppression, women also played a role in perpetuating it. Footbinding was most commonly practiced by the mother or other female members in the family who shouldered the responsibility of safeguarding their family's moral reputation and ensuring their daughters' marriageability. According to oral history accounts, some mothers insisted carrying out the binding on their daughters even though their fathers were against it.[34] Some girls themselves demanded footbinding. For example, Fenglan Li, born in 1927, thought the tiny feet were pretty and asked her mother to bind her feet when she was nine years old despite that her

[33] "In Fanshi county, the magistrate's wife and daughter traveled from village to village inspecting and persuading women to unbind." Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 59.

[34] Sanniu Jin's story was one of example of this kind. Xiaojiang Li, *Rang nuren ziji shuohua: wenhua xunzong* (Let Women Speak for Themselves: Tracing the Culture), (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003), 244.

father did not want to see her suffering.[35] Born in 1915, Zenglian Guo had progressive parents who supported the anti-footbinding course, but she passionately bound her own feet around the age of 10.[36]

It is hard to specify exactly when the practice of footbinding ended in China considering the vast territory and the unevenness of anti-footbinding campaigns, but, according to Chinese historian Yang Xingmei, the anti-footbinding movement lasted in Yunnan Province until the mid-1960s.[37] Therefore, from this brief history of footbinding in China, we see that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the social and cultural implications of bound feet were far more complicated than being a symbol of elite status and respectability.

"Golden Lilies" at U.S. Gates

When "golden lilies" arrived the other side of the Pacific, the meanings of bound feet became more fixed, rigidified and racialized in the context of immigration inspection as we have seen from Lam Shee's case at the beginning of this chapter. As I have mentioned, immigration officials interpreted bound feet as a sign of better morals and upper class, and thus a proof of admissibility in the immigration screenings. Even though it was a problematic belief that morality and class were interchangeable, it was very instrumental for the officials who had to confront the challenge of determining whether a Chinese applicant belonged to the exempt class. In addition to serving as an important meaningful signifier, bound feet were believed to be a sign of seriously-handicapped body. As the Chinese exclusion laws explicitly

[35] Li, *Rang nuren ziji shuohua*, 251-52.

[36] Ibid., 252-55.

[37] Yang, *Shen ti zhi zheng*, 315.

banned Chinese laborers, the seemingly crippled body was considered as non-laboring class. Meanwhile, to obstruct frauds, the officials of the Board of Special Inquiry often questioned and recorded women's foot type in the cross-examination of the applicants, their sponsors and witnesses.

Bound foot was among the various proofs of admissibility developed by the enforcers of the exclusion laws over time. Chinese women's feet became a contested site where institution, culture and the body intersected. Compared with the complexity and fluidity of the meanings about bound foot, the bureaucratic fixation in one timeless interpretation of footbinding reinforced the "Otherness" of China, and simplified the complicated individual experiences and subjectivities. This focus on visuality offered possibilities for the immigrants to reinvent their admissibility, yet helped little to reverse the gendered orientalist construction of footbinding and the image of Chinese immigrants as perpetual foreigners. This institutional context expands our understanding of immigration bureaucracy as a realm of U.S. orientalism.

By the turn of the twentieth century, immigration authorities considered bound feet as "overwhelming evidence of a women's exempt-class status."[38] As one official documented in his report, "there has never come to this port, I believe, a bound footed woman who was found to be an immoral character, this condition of affairs being due, it is stated, to the fact that such women, and especially those in the interior, are necessarily confined to their homes and seldom frequent the city districts." Furthermore, he wrote, "the present applicant No.14418 is a very modest appearing woman whose evident sincerity, frankness of

[38] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 95.

expression and generally favorable demeanor is very convincing."[39] In a hearing of a Chinese merchant wife's case, W. D. Heitmann, a member of the Board of Special Inquiry reported that in "the case of the alien before the board she comes as the wife of a merchant, having bound feet there is no doubt she is of a respectable class." The chairman and the other board members reaffirmed his conclusion.[40]

Immigration records reveal that if the case involved Chinese women, officials would question whether the women had bound feet and document the response during the interrogation. In 1910 officials asked Chang Shee, the wife of a merchant, about her foot size and that of her mother, sister, and her husband's brother's wife.[41] In another case during the same year, an U.S.-born Chinese tried to bring over his wife Chew Shee and daughter Leong Sen Toy. The official posed this question to Chew Shee: "You are a little or bound-footed woman?" Their neighbor's foot size was also recorded during the interview with the daughter. After Leong Sen Toy mentioned that Leong Duk Wai's family lived near her house, the official continued to ask how many children Leong Duk Wai had, his wife's name and the size of his wife's feet. Leong Sen Toy specified that his wife had "bound feet."[42] In 1913, another U.S.-born Chinese who attempted to gain admission for his Chinese wife was asked not only about his wife's feet, but also the feet of other female family members in China, including his stepmother, birth mother and two deceased grandmothers. When the inspector asked him to give the name, age, type of feet, and present whereabouts of his first wife, he

[39] Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 24.

[40] File 10434/22–11, NARA-PR, SF.

[41] File 10433/2852, NARA-PR, SF.

[42] File 10433/2850, NARA-PR, SF

stated, “Soo Hoo Shee, died S. T. 3–2– when she was 29 years old, bound feet.”[43] Chinese students were another category of the exempt class under the Chinese exclusion laws; some of them were asked about their mother’s foot type too.[44]

Even in cases in which Chinese immigrants presented contradictory testimonies, bound feet served to impress immigration officials and improved the chance of admission. In 1914, when Chin She applied as the wife of a merchant at Seattle, the inspector found that her testimony about her birthplace differed from the information provided by her husband. Inspector G. H. Mangel commented that “although the testimony is not as strong as it might be on the point of relationship, I believe the case is bona fide, and I recommend admission of the applicant. The matter was submitted to Mr. Monroe who joined me in believing that the woman should be admitted.” Mangels’s rationale for his decision was that “this applicant is a woman forty-two years old, and of the bound-foot class. Her appearance and manner impress Interpreter Quan Foy and me very favorably.”[45]

In contrast, women’s natural feet automatically caused suspicion and functioned as a warning for more scrutinized interrogation. On January 6, 1905, a letter from Chinese Inspector H. Kennah was sent to Chinese Inspector in Charge at San Francisco in regard to admitting Chin Shee as a wife of native, advising that “In view of the large number of alleged wives of natives who are now being brought into this country for purposes of ill fame, it would seem to me that testimony of the most positive character should be required before any

[43] File 29438/4–5, NARA-PR, SF.

[44] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Flies 52961/24D, Subject and Policy Files, Record Group 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NARA, DC).

[45] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. File 32278, Chinese Exclusion Case Files, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration-Pacific Alaska Region, Seattle (hereafter NARA-PAR, Seattle).

young, alleged native's wife with natural feet should be admitted."[46] From this, we see the degree to which the Chinese admissibility rested on female applicants' foot type. Those with natural feet were spontaneously put in a disadvantageous place. With other discrepancies, Chin Shee was denied entry. In another immigrant inspector's report that involved conflicting testimonies, the inspector discredited the woman with natural feet. "This applicant is a natural-footed women 21 years of age and her appearance and manner of testifying do not strike me favorably."[47]

In addition to the high social status that bound feet were believed to visualize, U.S. immigration inspectors asked about women's foot size for more practical reasons. Typically, each case required multiple people, including the applicants, their sponsors, and the witnesses to undergo interrogation. Bound feet became a means to cross-examine each person's testimony.

For instance, in the 1910 case of Chew Shee and Leong Sen Toy mentioned above, the alleged husband and father referred to the bound feet of his uncle's wife during interrogation. Immigration officials subsequently asked about this woman's feet when they interviewed Chew Shee and Leong Sen Toy even though this relative had little to do with this application. The mother, Chew Shee, was asked to name "any other families living around you that your daughter knows" and to specify the person's whereabouts, marital status and foot type. The same information was required in the process of the daughter's interrogation. Her response matched her mother's answers.[48] It would be unfavorable to a case if the information about foot type offered by all the parties did not agree with each other. One of the reasons why Lam

[46] File 10089-3340, NARA-PR, SF.

[47] File 29438/4–5, NARA-PR, SF.

[48] File 10433/2850, NARA-PR, SF.

Shee's case was first denied was that the alleged husband Yin Haw mentioned his mother-in-law had natural feet, whereas Lam Shee said her mother was bound-footed.[49] In short, immigration officials utilized the highly visible physical mark of bound feet in their interrogations in order to ascertain the veracity of immigrants' identities.

This explains why questions about foot size also emerged in Chinese labor migrant cases. In 1904, in regard to Hong Bot, a Chinese labor who sought readmission to the U.S. at the sub-port of Melone, N. Y., the Chinese inspector wrote to J. S. Rodgers, the Commissioner of Immigration at Philadelphia about his investigation. He reported that during his visit to Hong Bot's laundry, the brother in charge of the store stated that their mother "is still alive and that she is a bound-foot woman."[50] In a 1910 case, Lee Jung Sing, a farm hand, offered his debtor's statement to verify his right to return. His debtor, Ng Yen (Yick) Hock, was the owner of a cigar factory in San Francisco. In response to the inspector's questions about their wives' names, ages, and feet, they offered the following answers: "Ng Shee, 24 yrs old, bound feet, still living in China, only one wife," and "Hom Shee, 46 yrs old, bound feet, still living in China, only one wife."[51] Although these two applicants were not merchants, the questions on their wife's feet and the efforts to document their foot type indicate how the examination of female foot had become routinized in the immigration inspection due to its unique visual feature.

Some U.S. citizens of Chinese ancestry had bound feet. However, the inspectors did not really differentiate them from immigrant female applicants. When they applied to return

[49] File 14144/5-6, NARA-PR, SF.

[50] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Box 1. The Commissioner Letters Sent Concerning Chinese Immigrants (1904-1911), Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Philadelphia, (hereafter NARA, PA).

[51] File 10434/297, NARA-PR, SF.

to the United States after visiting China, immigration inspectors also used bound feet as an important means of identification and cross-examination. The favorable attitudes towards the small footed women persisted too. The officials did not take issue with U.S. citizens with bound feet from coming back to the country, nor did they discredit their Chinese parents who carried out the binding. This illuminates that to the Immigration Service, these women's bodies were supposed to align with their Chinese racial background, regardless of their citizen status. The U.S. born- Chinese were seen and treated as domestic Other without hesitation.

In 1896, when two girls born in Sacramento, California applied to return after spending 10 years in China, "small footed woman" was frequently used to refer to Lum Ah Ying, the one who had bound feet. The inspector asked Lim Lip See, the uncle of the two girls on father's side if Lum Ah Ying was "small footed, or large footed" when she left for China in 1886. He correctly answered that "she was large footed—her feet were not bound until she was 9 yrs. Old—then she was in China." As a key method for cross-examination, later the inspector questioned Lum Ah Ying's foot condition again from another angle, asking whether he noticed that she had had her feet bound when he paid a visit to China three or four years ago. He confirmed it again. Inspector Meredith's handwritten note also indicated the symbolic meaning of bound feet was applied similarly in citizens' cases. It stated, "This case bears a badge of respectability. The elder girl is a small footed woman, and the witnesses, with one exception, are of a superior class to those who generally appear in these women cases."[52]

[52] File 9555/590,591, NARA-PR, SF. In addition to bound feet as a sign of better class, all the witnesses spoke English well and were merchants or witness "of the better class."

Another native-born applicant, Lee Ying's feet were bound in China when she was three years old. Her small feet were also carefully documented when she applied to return in 1896. One of the witnesses, Jung Shee, her mother-in-law, mentioned her son "married a small footed woman." Hee Tin Young, her father-in-law, was asked if Lee Ying was "large or small footed," and "where was she made small footed, here or in China?"[53] Their statements all matched up to ensure a bona fide case.

One custom collector's question brought to light the common sense of the time about the relation between race, body and citizenship: "Do your people at home like to have small footed women come here?"[54] The most likely inadvertent use of "your people" and "at home" which referred to the Chinese in this question clued why the immigration officers did not react strongly to the fact that footbinding was done to U.S. citizens. Although this girl was born in California, she still seemed to be viewed as a different kind of citizen—a secondary citizen or a permeant Other who was not much different from other Chinese immigrants ineligible to citizenship on U.S. soil. The binding feet were not very much incompatible with this fact.

As the inspectors relied on women's foot type to identify them and verify their applications, some Chinese and Chinese Americans utilized these expectations and assumptions in their attempts to gain entry to the United States. For example, they would refer to the size of women's feet even if the immigration inspector did not ask. In the afore-mentioned case of Lum Ah Ying, when she answered the question about his father's name,

[53] File 9517/75, NARA-PR, SF.

[54] Ibid., her answer is "That I cannot say."

she initially included, “I am a small footed woman. My feet were tied after I went to China.”[55]

To the question on whether they had any children, the above Lee Ying’s husband, Hee Hoy, added that “my wife is a small footed woman” to his answer. His affidavit reveals more about why he did so. It stated, “That, Hee Hoy further deposes and says, said Lee Ying, said Hee Hoy’s wife, is what is termed ‘A little foot woman’ which are the most respected and honored among the Chinese.”[56] No further comments from immigration officials were made in response to Hee Hoy’s claim. But this note on respectability ought to be recorded as a favorable evidence. Otherwise it would be pointed out as information against admission. This further perpetuated the misperception.

In a case involving the arrival of a Chinese merchant’s wife on September 27, 1907, when the immigrant inspector asked the husband about his wife’s name, the merchant answered: “Hom Shee, bound feet.”[57] He drew attention to his wife’s bound feet without being asked. Later he also mentioned that his wife’s mother had bound feet even when no one inquired.[58] In the 1910 case of Chew Shee and Leong Sen Toy, when the immigration official asked their sponsor, a citizen of Chinese ancestry, if his uncle was married, his response was “yes, his wife has bound feet.”[59]

Another case featured Lum Goon, a laborer who lost his previous merchant status after selling his interest in the Quong Him Wah Co. and applied for a return certificate before

[55] File 9555/590,591, NARA-PR, SF.

[56] File 9517/75, NARA-PR, SF.

[57] File 10209/587, NARA-PR, SF.

[58] “Q What was the name of her mother? A Lum Shee, bound feet.” File 10209/587, NARA-PR, SF.

[59] File 10433/2850, NARA-PR, SF.

leaving for China. When the inspector asked him to state his "wife's name, age, birthplace" and where they got married, he replied, "Jew She, bound-feet, 45, years of age, born in Hah Loo village, S. W. D., and I married her in K. S. 16 in my home village."[60] Such responses indicated that Chinese immigrants had learned about how the immigration system worked, and used it to their own advantage.

Immigrants' references to bound feet were not limited to the foot conditions of the applicants. Since women's status was usually dependent on her male family member's socioeconomic standing, bound feet were not only an indicator of Chinese women's status and morals, but also a way to demonstrate Chinese men's merchant status and thus to improve an entire case. For example, when a boy and girl sought admission as children of a Chinese merchant, the inspector interviewed their father's business partner to prove his merchant status. When asked about whether the father was married or not, this witness answered, "Yes, his wife's name is Wong Shee, a bound footed woman."[61] When the inspector then asked who would take care of the girl since this merchant's wife was not in the United States, the business partner responded, "She will live with Lee Yoke Suey's family– he has a bound feet wife and two children here."[62] These examples of Chinese immigrants' deployment of female feet all illustrate that bound feet was a symbol of Chinese men's merchant status, which was a prerequisite for many Chinese in the United States to gain their family members' admission. This in part explains why Chinese applicants referred to bound feet in their testimony even in cases not directly involving women.

[60] File 33577, NARA-PAR, Seattle.

[61] File 10209/598, NARA-PR, SF.

[62] Ibid.

Chinese migrants and their attorneys learned to take advantage of immigration officials' favorable stance toward bound-foot women. Lam Shee's case at the beginning of this chapter was one of the best examples of this kind. Her attorneys seized every opportunity to call attention to her bound feet and how they related to unquestionable respectability. To clear up the discrepancies between his testimony and Lam Shee's, the attorneys helped prepare an affidavit of the alleged husband in which explained why Lam Shee made a mistake regarding his nephew's children. "This nephew lives some distance away and while the nephew['s] wife having natural feet had called from time to time at affiant's house, affiant does not recall that his wife, who has bound feet and, therefore cannot walk around so easily, has visited the nephew's house."[63]

According to Erika Lee, "One of the earliest examples of this strategy was the case of Jow Ah Yeong and Chun Ah Ngon, a merchant's wife and daughter who arrived in San Francisco in 1885." As she notes, "Because immigration officials expected merchant families to possess fine clothing, a respectable manner, and, especially, bound feet, Chinese women and their attorneys learned to highlight these traits in order to achieve their goal of entering the country."[64] In 1893 Leong Shee, a merchant's wife who had not been to the United States before, attempted to bring her *mui tsai* (domestic servant in Cantonese) to the United States as her U.S. native-born daughter. Leong falsely claimed that she had resided in San Francisco. When asked about her memory of the city, she replied, "I do not know the city excepting the names of a few streets, as I have small feet and never went out."[65]

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[63] File 14144/5-6, NARA-PR, SF.

[64] Erika Lee, "Exclusion Acts: Chinese Women during the Chinese Exclusion Era, 1882–943," in *Asian/Pacific Islander Women: A Historical Anthology*, eds. Shirley Hune and Gail Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 82.

[65] Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 15; Yung, *Unbound Voices*, 13.

To cope with these rigorous interrogation procedures, Chinese brokers, immigrants, attorneys, interpreters and others who could profit from Chinese landings created coaching books for would-be immigrants that listed potential interrogation questions. Such services later developed into a highly systematic and profitable business.[66] Although coaching books were normally made by a Chinese, a complex transnational and cross-racial network helped to obtain the coaching information which usually involved decades-long family history and multiple persons' testimonies. The most direct way to prepare coaching materials was to ask people who knew about the case and who had testimonies documented in official records. There were professional coaching paper writers who sometimes even traveled to the other side of the Pacific to obtain relevant sources.[67] Another way to collect information was through lawyers and attorneys who were able to retrieve records such as copies of certificate and transcripts of court hearings.[68] Some sources of information came from the records stolen and sold by immigration personnel.[69]

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[66] For more information about coaching books, see Guoxiong Zhang, *Kou gong zhi* (Coaching Books) (Beijing: Zhongguo hua qiao chu ban she, 2007).

[67] Mr. Yuen's uncle was one of them. His uncle worked as an in-between with a lawyer and the migrant. "The case is this: you got my case, then if you don't have a book already made, then uncle would help you to make them. He had enough of the basis to make a good book out of it, just by talking to you and your relatives, your father and mother, you grandmother. He might have to take a trip to Hong Kong. So make sure everything is recorded."[67] A paper family grew over time. This means coaching materials were often prepared by multiple writers. As Mr. Yuen pointed out, his uncle gathered "all these different books been used. . . It wasn't an easy task. So you compile a new one for the newcomer that includes all the previous questioning." Angel Islands Immigration Station Interviews with Chris Chow, Mr. Yuen, Ira and Ed Lee, 1977, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[68] A *Daily Alta California* reporter obtained an interview with the Collector of Customs, W. H. Sears on August 20, 1885. "An attorney a few days ago came to me to ask permission to see a certain certificate. I sent him to the deputy, and it seems that in inspecting the certificate the attorney had access to the registration book." "Collector Of The Port," *Daily Alta California*, August 21, 1885; Ira who used to work in Angel Island from 1928-1929 said that if it's involved appealed cases to Washington. Lawyers can get access to the transcripts of the hearing. Angel Islands Immigration Station Interviews with Chris Chow, Mr. Yuen, Ira and Ed Lee, 1977, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[69] For instance, as one *Washington Post* report noted, "In the way of deceit the Chinaman has proven himself a worthy ally of his Caucasian brother who is engaged in the business of stealing certificates and selling them." "Chinese Immigration," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1885, 2.

Coaching documents further indicate that Chinese immigrants were fully aware of the importance of highlighting women's foot type during interrogation. According to these documents, references to bound feet improved the chance of admission. During a 1917 Department of Labor raid in San Francisco and Berkeley, government agents seized letters from the stores and residences of a Chinese leader of an international smuggling organization. This man had written letters to his employees –"Chinese graduates from the smuggling ring's school in Hong Kong" –who were being held in U.S. immigration detention. Excerpts from some of the letters reveal the significance of references to bound feet in immigrant testimony:

> Please look after this landing. The coaching does not say whether the women in the village have bound feet or natural feet –nor containing which direction the village is faring. I taught them to tell the inspector that all the women in the village had bound feet. Some have natural feet and the village faces to the south. Please tell the father to give the same answers.[70]

Another coaching document featured a map of houses that included detailed notes to identify each inhabitant: "Moy Park, forty years old, wife Chin Shee, bound feet, one son Ah Wee, twenty odd years, not married," lived in the last house in the eleventh alley of the village. "Mow Sing, age forty, wife Chin Shee, bound feet, two sons, attending school somewhere else," lived in the thirteenth alley.[71] Many coaching sources kept in China show similar ways of mapping out the immigrants' home neighborhood with information on

[70] "Two Additional Suspensions in Smuggling Case," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 10, 1917, 8.

[71] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 197.

women's foot in each family unit.[72] Even if the bound-feet women included in the map were not the applicants for admission, information about bound feet helped to facilitate the interrogation process since the inspectors could ask about it for the purpose of cross-examination.

Coaching books created in the 1920s and as late as in the 1940s show that, by then, Chinese immigrants mentioned natural feet more frequently during interrogation. This was probably a response to U.S. immigration authorities' growing awareness of immigrants' exploitation of the system to claim their admissibility, as well as the irreversible effect of anti-footbinding movements in China.[73] Nevertheless, the immigration officials' adjustment of its inspection methods fell far behind the shifting reality in China. Chinese immigrants' redeployment of the official perception of bound feet in relation to the construction of their class, admissibility, and identity played important roles in the process of reinventing bound feet and, in turn, strengthening the orientalist interpretation of bound feet in immigration bureaucracy. Moreover, the Chinese manipulation of the system only agreed with the official interpretation rather than challenging it.

Conclusion

The context of U.S. immigration inspection lends us a unique lens to view how a cultural practice could be Orientalized in an institutional setting. Chinese immigrants'

[72] Dongqing Wang, Zhiqiang Huang, and Ming lü ed., *Konggongzhi* (Coaching Papers) (Guangzhou: linnan meishu chubanshe, 2014). This is a collection of the coaching materials housed in Jiangmen Wuyi Museum of Overseas Chinese.

[73] These coaching books can be found in Jiangmen Wuyi Museum of Overseas Chinese, Taishan County Museum, and Guoxiong Zhang, *Kou gong zhi* (*Coaching Books*) (Beijing: Zhongguo hua qiao chu ban she, 2007), 35–47. Coaching materials seized by the immigration officials were mostly kept alongside with each case file in immigration archives at the U.S. National Archives.

manipulation of the U.S. immigration system, and their refashioning of their class, admissibility, and identity, *as well as* immigration officials' perceptions and decisions, played significant roles in the process. The association of Chinese female feet with their eligibility for admission racialized, objectified and codified the female body in the enforcement of Chinese exclusion acts. It created a niche in which Chinese immigrants could perform female morality and class through the actual display of, as well as discursive references to, the female body in these encounters. Although this kind of performance demonstrated these immigrants' resilience to U.S. orientalism, it also perpetuated U.S. operation of difference in the context of the exclusion laws, and suppressed the channeling of facts that reflected the most recent changes.

This twisted journey of "golden lilies" from the Chinese nationalist slogans to the bureaucratic gaze at U.S. gates, stings any modern mind that believes a linear progression from backwardness to modernity as the migrants departed from China and entered the United States. The obsession of women's foot at U.S. ports of entry captured a modern nation-state's anxieties and desires towards what bodies should be seen within U.S. national boundaries. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Chinese elites launched modernization projects that included anti-footbinding campaigns to catch up with North America and Europe, ironically, "modern" Americans perpetuated an orientalist fascination with bound feet at U.S. gates.

In crucial moments of deciding who had better chance to come to the United States, the officials seemed to lack of interest in situating the Chinese female body within the same timeframe as theirs. While negotiating their admissibility under the Chinese exclusion laws, these migrants, men and women, quickly learned that footbinding, even though as a custom which had been outlawed and lost its charm in their homeland, could still be cherished as

their social capital at the U.S. ports of entry. This also leads one to question how Chinese footbinding was represented in U.S. public, why the allochronic knowledge of footbinding persisted for such a long time, how the immigrants actually felt about the institution that favored the "backward" aspect of their culture, and the larger social milieu that granted validity to the officials' rationales and logic, which I will proceed to discuss in the following chapters.

Chapter 2: The Condemned and Admired Other: Discourses and Displays of "Golden Lilies" in Public Sphere

Judy Yung, in both *Unbound Voices* and *Unbound Feet*, included a compelling story of Sieh King King (Xue Jinqin), a Chinese female student who came to further her study in the United States and gave a speech on women's rights in San Francisco Chinatown in 1902.[1] In her speech, Sieh "boldly condemned the slave girl system, raged at the horrors of foot-binding and, with all the vehemence of aroused youth, declared that men and women were equal and should enjoy the privileges of equals."[2] According to Yung, her talk "caused a sensation because it was the first time that such feminist ideas, already prevalent in China, had been introduced in San Francisco Chinatown and by a Chinese woman."[3] Strikingly, the Chinese in the United States fell behind their counterparts in China in receiving those feminist thoughts, paralleling with the allochronic application of bound feet at the U.S. gates.

The heterogeneity of the public sphere across the Pacific and the rigid interpretation of footbinding in immigration screening propel us to address the following questions: how did U.S. people in general at the time perceive, interpret and imagine Chinese footbinding especially its relation to female morality and social status? To what extent did those views differ from or resemble the ideas of people in China? In what ways did those perceptions, interpretations, and stereotypes contribute to constructing social, cultural and religious borders with the Chinese? This chapter situates U.S. discourses and displays of Chinese

[1] Yung, *Unbound Voices*, 181-187; Yung, *Unbound Feet*, 52-55.

[2] "Leads Her Sisters Out of Bondage: Chinese Woman Begins a Crusade against Social Conditions in Her Country," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 3, 1902, 7.

[3] Yung, *Unbound Voices*, 181.

footbinding in a trans-Pacific context. It traces how "golden lilies" was represented in the U.S. public through contradictory narratives and through actual display of women with bound feet in world's fairs.

Within this trans-Pacific framework that draws information from both Chinese and English sources, I discovered uneven exchanges of knowledge and information about footbinding that emerged on the both sides of the Pacific through personal encounters, and through the flows and circulation of ideas in newspapers, magazines, periodicals, cartoons, traveler accounts, and missionary publications. Apart from differing explanations of footbinding's origin, procedure, and social meaning, there was no monolithic condemnation but various forms of orientalist representations of it. While those transnational circuits, connections, and networks facilitated interactions and changes, they also to some extent fortified differences and borders that thwarted the exchanges of facts, which had consequences for both sides.

As the Chinese nationalists actively engaged with Western discourses of racial and evolutionary theories, "golden lilies" exhibited in the United States triggered strong nationalist sentiments against footbinding among the Chinese male elites in both countries. The U.S. women missionaries, at the same time, persisted in portraying footbinding as a form of male-imposed cruelty in China. Those representations of "golden lilies" on the one hand, constructed social, cultural, and religious differences between the Americans and the Other, and on the other hand, obscured the differences between the "modern" and the "backward" crucial to the discourse on empire.

I suggest three main reasons for such a disparity among these accounts. First, Jurgen Habermas's concept of "public sphere" notes that when the laws of the market entered the public sphere, rational critical debate was replaced by consumption. The transformation from

a culture-debating to a culture-consuming public explains the consumptive nature of newspapers, periodicals, and missionary magazines, and images of China and Chinese women which were invented to attract different consumers. As historian Julia Guarneri notes, "The newspapers of the turn of the century were sprawling, chaotic, and wildly contradictory documents. Because editors tried to craft papers that provided something for everyone . . . the two types of material could be completely at odds with one another."[4]

Secondly, Lisa A. Lindsay has teased out "at least three different but overlapping ways" to understand and explore gender: "through discourse (that is, how people talk), through actions and practices (what people do), and through subjectivities (how people think about themselves)."[5] Although U.S. understandings of bound feet as emblems of respectability, domesticity, ladyhood and middle-class status partially reflected Chinese beliefs and discourse, what Chinese people actually did was far more complicated.

Lastly, changes of perception did not take place overnight. Representations of footbinding in the public sphere intersected with different times and spaces. Stuart Creighton Miller has argued, "the human mind is not a tidy filing system, so new percepts rarely replace older contradictory ones but are simply filed away side by side. As experience reenforces the new percepts an image emerges that dominates but does not totally displace older ones."[6] Also, as we see in the immigration inspection, the bureaucratic discourse of footbinding avoided the accomplishments of Chinese anti-footbinding struggle. A parallel could be seen

[4] Julia Guarneri, *Newsprint Metropolis: City Papers and the Making of Modern Americans* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 11.

[5] Lisa A. Lindsay. *Working with Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 4.

[6] Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: the American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 23.

in the U.S. public sphere as well, even though the popular representations were far more chaotic and uneven.

More Than a "Civilizing" Mission

The condemnation towards footbinding prevailed in U.S. newspaper coverage, denouncing China's backwardness and its opposition to U.S. modernity. "Barbarous bondage," "centuries-old horror," "torture," "cruelty," "oriental deformity," and the like were commonly associated with this practice.[7] The racially charged rhetoric in newspaper articles presented a self-portrait of the United States as a superior culture. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1902: "The present news is that an agitation has been started to protest against the barbarous custom of bandaging the feet of Celestial girl babies and thus making artificial cripples of the mothers of the Chinese race. There are many absurd and idiotic fashions and customs in the world, but this is perhaps the most idiotic of all."[8]

Even though costing life was rarely the case, some authors tended to sensationalize the "evil" of footbinding. They asserted that it often resulted in death, demonizing the Chinese parents who practiced it in the hope for a brighter future for their daughters or simply followed the convention. In 1896, the *Chicago Tribune* reprinted from the *Philadelphia Record*, quoting an anonymous Chinese writer who advocated natural feet: "Chinese women have bound feet, and are too weak even to bear the weight of their own clothes. They think it looks nice, but in reality it does not look nice, and weakens their bodies, often causing

[7] For example, "Chinese Custom of Foot-Binding: 'Graphic Description of a Curious and Barbarous Oriental Practice,'" *Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 1894, 14; "Barbarous Bondage: Tortures of Chinese Women caused by Foot-Binding," December 15, 1894, 16; "Foot-Binding in China: Some Reasons for the Relic of Barbarism Among the Women," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1893.

[8] "No More Small Feet for Chinese Women," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1903, 6.

death."[9] The same quote appeared again in *Tribune* later in the month.[10] Another *Tribune* article stated in 1902 that as the seams and fissures of the distorted foot became sore, blood poisoning often ended the woman's life. The binding procedure was described as "it is customary to sprinkle the feet with saltpeter while binding them, thus literally putting them in pickle," which projected the parents who conducted it as bloodless agents of Chinese patriarchy.[11]

However, other forms of orientalist interpretation that contrasted with the discourse of condemnation were also salient. Paralleling with the favorable consideration with the footbound women in immigration enforcement, orientalist admiration towards "golden lilies" also occupied conspicuous space in the public sphere, especially when the practitioners were the upper-class Chinese. As the journalist of the *San Francisco Chronicle* Genevieve L. Browne observed upon her visit to a merchant's home in San Francisco's Chinatown, "The sole of the foot was shaped perfectly, though the heel and instep were lumped and elongated, and the ankle was extremely small and delicate."[12] Browne expressed her fascination with "Oriental" domesticity: "It is impossible to remain insensible to her charms, particularly when she has been seen surrounded by the refinements of her home and among settings that make her the center of an oriental picture."[13]

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[9] "Against Footbinding," *Chicago Tribune,* November 15, 1896, 34.

[10] "War Against Chinese Foot-Binding," *Chicago Tribune,* November 29, 1896, 30.

[11] "To Reform China's Feet: Empress Dowager Proposes A Daring Undertaking," *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 1902, 2.

[12] Genevieve L. Browne, "Fair Chinese Ladies: Visits to Our Local Golden Lilies," *San Francisco Chronicle,* August 6, 1893, 1.

[13] Browne, "Fair Chinese Ladies," 1.

However, she regarded the Chinese female body as fascinating not because of its association with respectability, but rather because of its display of Chinese women's supposed childishness, passivity, and lack of sophistication. Browne stated that "she always retains a certain childish simplicity of mien and appearance, which is perceptible even in women of advanced age, for she has little intellectual development."[14] She continued, "the 'Golden Lilies' have particularly refined features, which coupled with their innocence and childlike simplicity of expression produce an effect at once naive and charming."[15] Even though this kind of accounts did not denounce footbinding, the orientalist gaze saturated with racial condescension was posed on the Chinese female body, drawing a line between the self and the Other.

The perception that small feet signified Chinese women and men's upper-class social standing was glamorized in U.S. press coverage. Chinese merchant wives with lily feet were publicized as beautiful and welcomed to the country, which mirrored the class prejudice embedded in the Chinese exclusion acts and their implementation. In 1881, when reporting that the new Chinese Minister stopped by Chicago on his way to Washington, the *Chicago Tribune* editor described the wife of the Minister as "a very pretty little woman." Among all her features, it spotlighted "HER VERY SMALL FEET" in a separate title with capital letters.[16] By highlighting these men's exclusive ownership of bound-feet wives, many editors straightforwardly expressed their admiration towards eminent Chinese merchants in the United States. The following two reports both delivered the message that the wealthier the Chinese merchants were, the smaller feet their wives possessed. Regardless of their extreme

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

deformity, those women with smaller than average feet were beautiful and desirable. In 1888, the *Chicago Tribune* captured people's attention in an article entitled "Smallest Feet in the New York," reporting "a sensation produced by the arrival of "the third-girl wife" of Leon Ah Dam, a Chinese merchant in Mott street of New York：

> The young lady . . . . is without doubt the prettiest Chinese girl now in the city. Aside from having a pretty face, Mrs. Dam has a pair of the smallest feet in New York, if not in the whole United States. They are said to be an inch and a half long by half an inch wide. They are incased in neat and beautifully wrought red satin shoes.[17]

The reporter exclaimed the wealth of the Chinese husband, "Mr. Dam, the happy husband, is the richest Chinese merchant now in New York and owns several buildings in Chinatown. His firm is the oldest of the kind in this city, having started in business on Park row in 1869. Mr. Dam has since been amassing a fortune of over $100,000."[18]

Strikingly, narratives of this kind that glorified the "backward" tradition rather than functioning as a "civilizing" force was not scarce in the late nineteenth century. Even ten years later, in 1898, a *San Francisco Call* article titled "Smallest Chinese Feet in America" was still saturated with an identical sensation. The reporter claimed, "among all the Chinese women who help to make this city picturesque there are but six with really small feet." It accentuated that "these six women were eagerly snatched up as wives by the most prominent members of the rich and powerful Six Companies the moment they landed in San Francisco." The *Chronicle* interviewed Mr. Sing, one of the most powerful merchants in the Six

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[16] "Celestial Callers: The New Chinese Embassy Halts in Chicago on Its Way to Washington," *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1881, 8.

[17] "Smallest Feet in the New York," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1888, 3.

[18] Ibid.

Companies whose wife "has the smallest foot of them all." Being asked why so few Chinese women had small feet that could rival those of his wife, Sing replied, "Oh, my wife is of verra fine family—verra fine family." He proudly added, "only the ladies in the very best families of China understand how to properly bind the feet to make them small" which was "a strict family secret."[19] However, as commonly seen in other depictions of the Chinese in the United States, the reporter's careful characterization of his Chinese accent kept reminding readers his difference.

As a leader of the Six Companies in San Francisco Chinese community, Mr. Sing probably had been acquainted with U.S. curiosity and fascination towards the "lilies of gold," especially considering that he just secured his wife's landing. If not, this conversation and the reporter's request of taking a photo of his wife (which was printed along with the article) could easily lead him to discern their fondness of the footbound women.[20] It is unknown if Mr. Sing resonated with anti-footbinding cause on the other side of the Pacific, considering the Chinese in San Francisco Chinatown were still largely unaware of feminist upsurges in China until Sieh King King's speech in 1902. Even if he did, he should have well familiarized himself with what was the "safest" way to present himself in a society where anti-Chinese sentiments could be compromised if you demonstrated your high socio-economic background. Flaunting his wife's bound foot, a sign distinguished them from the main target of the exclusion laws—Chinese laborers—would run least risk. The U.S. discourse and policy which differentiated the Chinese immigrants by class carved out a niche

[19] "Smallest Chinese Feet in America," *San Francisco Call*, March 20, 1898, 21.

[20] Ibid., 21.

where the traditional form of Chinese masculinity was reinforced rather than dissolved, despite a sea change occurred in China.

One of the most important reasons why people commonly assumed that the footbound women belonged to the upper-class was explicitly expressed by some authors. For instance, one *Chronicle* article stated, "As a woman with stunted feet cannot move around and do housework, the Chinese regard this as an evidence of aristocracy, for a woman who does not have to work must be high born."[21] The *Washington Post* explicated the connections between aristocratic background that guaranteed a leisure life and small feet that were likely resulted from little movement: "while there is no difference in the anatomical construction of the foot, I find that the daughters of wealthy families do not give sufficient exercise in youth to their feet, which grow slender and fail to develop a high instep and a strong elastic ankle."[22]

Although misreading was common, some U.S. newspapers did notice that there was no real class distinction marked by bound feet: "She is a cripple, hobbling about on bound feet. If she is rich and high class she is not allowed to go on the streets, and if poor she works in the fields and does all sorts of drudgery."[23] Others noted that "the beggars bind their feet,"[24] and "today there is not one girl in a hundred whose feet are not bound, and these exceptions are among the farming classes, where the women work in the field and could not do so if their feet were bound . . . . But so strong a hold has it got upon the masses of the people that

[21] J. M. Scanland, "Foot-Binding in Chinatown: Late Edict of the Empress Will Have No Effect," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 19, 1903, 5.

[22] "Deceptions in Feet: How the California Ladies Compress Their Pedal Extremities," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1883, 2.

[23] Frank G. Carpenter, "Chinese to Cease Binding of Feet: Ancient Practice Being Given Up by Many and Sentiment Against It Grows," *Chicago Tribune*, December 19, 1909, A3.

[24] "Footbinding Among the Chinese: Several Traditions as to the Origin of the Oriental Deformity," *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1893, 11.

even the children of paupers are bound."[25] Nonetheless, these corrections did not substitute other interpretations.

Thus, the U.S. public discourses of footbinding were not unified denouement of China's cruelty, traditionalism and racial degradation. U.S. orientalism took in different shapes and usually treated the richer class of the Chinese with a lesser degree of discrimination. This reflected the capacity of U.S. inclusion, which found the domestic female body desirable yet only accepted them with limited terms. No matter contempt or fascination, they were all orientalist in sentiments, visualizing the differences and distancing the Other.

China Experts—U.S. Missionaries

Among those who moved around the world at the time, Western missionaries served as powerful agents to promote the flow of ideas, knowledge and people. Their activities and movements mapped circuits of multiple Western powers in the Pacific and beyond in the age of empire. Compared to other available sources, missionaries' long-term residence in China and frequent contact with Chinese people gave their accounts a greater sense of authenticity and reliability. The U.S. missionaries actively interacted with port authorities, Chinese interpreters, government officials, and moralists. Although historians of Asian America have long been aware that missionaries played a role in the early debates over Asian immigration and Asian rights in the United States, "the first scholarly attempt to unite the history of missions with the history of immigration policy" in a book-length study did not come out

[25] "Royal Deformity: The Custom of Footbinding Among Chinese Women," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1899, 7.

until 2006.[26] Despite myriad missionary records on footbinding, scholars have not adequately examined missionaries' engagement with footbinding. To what extent their numerous observations have shaped the knowledge formation about footbinding in the U.S. public and immigration inspection is worthy of fuller exploration.

Heathen Feet, Mind and God

Missionaries both in China and the United States penned thousands of newspaper articles, reports, letters, and books marshaling a wealth of detail to accounts on China and its people, which usually gave prominence to their Christianizing and civilizing mission. Confronting frustration with the general Chinese indifference towards their religious preaching and a limited number of converts, missionaries found the footbound a better didactic model so as to elicit greater support for their cause in China. Perhaps they also targeted it out of a pragmatic consideration. Some attributed to bound feet the difficulty for Chinese women to come to church.[27]

Although they shared similarities with other groups, including their condescending attitudes, and civilizing self-portrayal, missionaries' religious impulse distinguished them from others. Compared to the racial degradation usually attached to footbinding in Western minds, they "did not blame inherited racial capacity or morality for heathen intransigence before the Gospel."[28] Missionaries' religious formulation of the practice left adequate space for their belief in racial malleability. However, paralleling with the Orientalist West/East dichotomy, the binary of "Christianity/Heathen" as the primary lens of missionary

[26] Jennifer Snow, *Protestant Missionaries, Asian Immigrants, and Ideologies of Race in America, 1850-1924* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xvii.

[27] *Heathen Woman's Friend*, Vol. XIII, No. 8 (February 1882): 174.

[28] Snow, *Protestant Missionaries*, 18.

interpretation created another insurmountable barrier between them and the Chinese. Leaflets about the China mission called footbinding as "the heathen cruelties."[29]

To demonstrate their tireless effort to transform stubborn Chinese heathen minds and their achievements, like those U.S. editors, the missionaries called footbinding barbarianism. In one report on W. F. M. S. Work in Central China, the missionary mentioned their accomplishment at a girls' school in Jiujiang, a region where every class bound their women's feet. She first mentioned Mary Stone, the alleged first Chinese girl who was allowed to grow up with natural feet, under her own parents' care and then commented, "these became the tiny wedge which has been sunk deeper and deeper into this old, barbarous custom, until now the accumulated force of twenty-five years has made foot-binding an acknowledged barbarism by all." [30]

Regardless of their nationality, missionaries from different parts of the world associated the body with God. They regarded the binding of female feet as a sin against the commands of God. The missionaries invented the term of "Natural feet" or "heavenly feet" (tianzu). It originated from one meeting that led to the founding of the Heavenly Foot Society presided by Rev. John MacGowan in Xiamen (Amoy) in 1875. MacGowan's theological rationale about footbinding was: "It had completely destroyed the grace and symmetry with which the Nature had endowed the women."[31] Anti-footbinding was thus to protect the God-given natural body.

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[29] *Heathen Woman's Friend,* Vol. X., No. 11 (May 1879): 251.

[30] Kate L. Ogborn, "A Study of W. F. M. S. Work in Central China," *Woman's Missionary Friend,* Vol. 31, No.2 (August 1899): 49-50.

[31] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 14-15.

As Canadian medical missionary, Dr. Retta Gifford Kilborn, stated at the Women's Conference in Shanghai in 1900, "I hope in the new China that is to be, something may be done to forbid the cruel practice of foot-binding, for so long as the women of China are physically dwarfed, just so long will they be mentally and spiritually dwarfed."[32] In missionary views, bound foot was deemed an emblem of heathenism, which was incompatible with their vision of a new China. The ultimate means to build a new China was to end this heathen deformity through religious conversion to Christianity. Unbinding the feet was seen as a physical proof of conversion which would eventually lead to spiritual transformation.

To convey the possibilities of the conversion, one discursive strategy commonly utilized in missionary writings was to showcase how the miraculous power of Christianity could triumph over heathen stubbornness. For example, in 1883, the *Heathen Woman's Friend* published Miss Cushman's letter to her father, who served as an editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. She narrated one girl's magical transition from a protester to a supporter of anti-footinding cause. At first, this girl argued, "Jesus never said unbind your feet!" However, after the older girls' prayer-meeting with her, "her pride and vanity gave way, and at last she removed the bandages herself.'"[33]

Medical mission sought to prove the advantages of Christianity over the heathenism by remedying physical illness. One report from China claimed that "through the restoration of health to patients in the hospital, salvation has come to the soul." It told a story of an old lady patient whose four sons and one daughter were "devoted idol worshipers." She later turned to

[32] *Home Life of Chinese Women: Records of Women's Conference in China* (Shanghai: Women's Conference, 1900), 47.

[33] "Letter from Miss Cushman," *Heathen Woman's Friend*, Vol. XV., No.5 (November 1883): 104.

Christianity and unbound her daughter's feet after the mission's successful treatment of her carbuncle. According to the report, before they came to the mission "they had called upon their idols and the native doctors in vain, and she was given up to die." However, in the mission, "she was treated, soon improved, and finally recovered." With this powerful contrast came "an indication of what will follow": the mother "was converted; her four sons attend public services; the daughter, with tiny bound feet, walked six miles to attend worship; and the feet of a little grand-child have been unbound."[34]

Although intending to bridge the heathens with the Christians, triumphant narratives of this kind constructed the victimized images of the heathen worshipers whose idols left them helplessly to illness, in contrast to the medical missionaries who effectively cured them. This strengthened the distinction between the two. The missionaries' ambition of religious conversion hindered them from fully acknowledging and publicizing the fact that progressive movements in China and among the Chinese in the United States were not simply results of Christian efforts.

Gendered Missionary Discourse

Newspapers, periodicals and magazines penned by the Protestant mainline women missionaries such as Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists spent a good deal of energy discussing footbinding.[35] For example, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church had its monthly missionary magazine—the *Heathen Woman's Friend* (changed its name into the *Women's Missionary Friend* in 1896). Running from 1876 to 1921, it was filled with reports of Chinese missions and accounts of meetings addressing

[34] *Women's Missionary Friend*, Vol.39, No. 10 (October 1907): 373.

[35] In the *American Periodicals* Database, numerous reports on footbinding could be found in missionary periodicals such as *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (1873-1909), *Christian Advocate* (1866-1905), *Christian Observer* (1840-1910), *New York Evangelist* (1830-1902) and *Zion's Herald* (1868-1910).

footbinding and anti-footbinding movements, and missionaries' observation and interactions with local women including "heathen" Chinese and Chinese Christians. Its note for potential advertisers in 1895 indicates its vast readership and main source of revenues: "Having the largest circulation of any woman's religious publication in the United States and being the only paper having an almost exclusive circulation among the women of Methodism, the FRIEND is beyond doubt a valuable advertising medium."[36]

Scholars such as Patricia R. Hill, Jane Hunter, Peggy Pascoe, Derek Chang, and Pui-lan Kwok note a growing number of female missionaries' presence in the United States and/or in China which signified a period marked with a highly gendered missionary discourse. Their works illustrate how those women missionaries' loyalty to the ideology of domesticity shaped female rhetoric that bolstered the mission enterprise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century United States.[37] Pascoe centers the concept of "female moral authority," arguing that "the home mission challenge to racial determinism was ultimately rooted in a gender determinism expressed in the ideology of female moral authority."[38] The search for female moral authority as a way to establish women's moral power in relation to men, when

[36] "Rates for Advertising," *Heathen Woman's Friend*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (July 1895): Advertisement Section.

[37] According to Patricia R. Hill, "Foreign missions gripped the imaginations and enlisted the support of hundreds of thousands of middle-class churchwomen in the late nineteenth century. By 1915 there were more than three million women on the membership rolls of some forty denominational female missionary societies. The interdenominational woman's foreign mission movement ...was substantially larger than any of the other mass woman's movements of the nineteenth century." Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Derek Chang, "Imperial Encounters at Home, Women, Empire, and the Home Mission Project in Late Nineteenth-Century America," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960,* ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie A. Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 270-293.

[38] Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue,* 144.

applied in intercultural relationships, "it came to express mission women's authority over the very women they hoped to serve by establishing rescue home."[39] She mentions that in their contact with Chinese women in the San Francisco Chinese Mission Home, the mission women developed three images of Chinese women: the girl with bound feet, the carefully guarded merchant's wife, and the Chinese slave girl, who all manifested female powerlessness in Chinese culture in which men dominated.[40]

Building on Pascoe's work, I further articulate how gendered bound feet were used by these female missionaries to bolster their self-confidence and U.S. Christian nationalist identity. Recurring patterns to portray Chinese women as victims of Chinese men, who needed to be saved by advanced Christian West indicated trope of this kind was commonly constructed in establishing Western superiority and positioning the missionaries as the saviors of their Chinese Other.

In 1895, Ruth Sites, a missionary woman in Foochow, recounted "an exciting little incident" about how a heathen husband, under the influence of God, dramatically changed his attitudes towards his Christianized wife's action of unbinding her feet. Sites did not only romanticize the power of Christianity but also oversimplified footbinding as a form of female subordination to Chinese men. According to Sites, this wife, as "one of the brightest of the young married women" in that Woman's School, was "convinced of the sin of the custom." When her "heathen" husband came to argue in the church, Sites noted "the difference in them." The wife's face was portrayed as "bright" and "calm" in contrast to her husband's "angry and sullen face." No one could subside his anger until Sites directed him to the Lord.

[39] Ibid., xxi-xxii.

[40] Ibid., 52-53.

While he was talking out his anger, Sites "felt the Lord was giving us the victory." Then she suddenly "turned and talked right at him, pointing him to Jesus Christ, the only Saviour from these sins, and passions, and cruelties." She suggested to "kneel and pray about all these troubles." When they rose from their knees, "the angry man politely bowed 'good day,' and added, 'Please pardon my angry words.'"[41] This way of storytelling created the dichotomy of heathen men versus Christian women, a gap that only Christianity could bridge.

According to annual reports of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, Helen F. Clark had started the Morning Star Mission of New York and been dedicated to mission work in New York Chinatown since 1892.[42] In 1900, the American Baptist Publication Society printed Clark's book *The Lady of the Lily Feet and Other Stories of Chinatown*.[43] In its preface, Clark claimed the situations described in her book were representative of the Chinese women's experiences in both countries, "The writer begs permission to say to all who may read this volume that the condition herein described exists today, and not in China only, but in New York, San Francisco, and all those large centers wherein the Chinese have established themselves in any considerable numbers."[44] Moreover, she asserted that the Chinese exclusion acts could not effectively change their oriental sisters' sufferings. She stressed Christianity was the only remedy which could accomplish to "change the masculine mind of Asiatics" upon these "unspeakable sufferings." Without Christianity, she believed that the exclusion laws and education of the heathen could not achieve "a

[41] *Heathen Woman's Friend*, Vol. 26 (February 1895): 223-224.

[42] *Annual Report of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, Issues 15-18*, The Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1894. Clark's reports can be found on pages 59-60, 77-81 and 83-85.

[43] Helen F. Clark, *The Lady of the Lily Feet and Other Stories of Chinatown* (Philadelphia: Griffth and Rowland, 1902). It was first published in 1900.

[44] Clark, *The Lady of the Lily Feet*, 5.

complete change of mind on the part of these Oriental men."[45] In other words, the idea of women's absolute subordination to Chinese patriarchy predetermined her interpretation of Chinese women's experience.

One of her New York Chinatown stories dramatized footbinding as a form of male abuse and domination over women in the notorious Chinese slave trade. It recounted a rescue story of a girl whose feet were bound by a male slave trader called Gong Gue. The operation of binding the feet mostly was a women's affair and did not remove the nails or caused bleeding. However, under Clark's depiction, when the police officer came, the mother "held up the bleeding stumps," crying "Gong Gue take go see. He break de feet. He killee. See!"[46] After the girl was sent to the hospital, one surgeon said, "They've torn off every nail. Look at those toes! There's not a whole bone in them. Great God! Can such men be human?"[47] Although Clark in the preface boasted her "intimate knowledge of these dear women," these plots read more like fiction than reality. It was unlikely the slave trader would risk his profit by tearing off the girl's nails which was not a procedure of footbinding. These scenarios were hardly to be seen in China either. However, she confidently claimed at the outset of her book that the situation existed in China as well. Even though footbinding was a product of a patriarchal society in which women's marriageability was the most important thing for a Chinese girl, Clark exaggerated male brutality, which conflicted with the fact that female family members of the Chinese girls were the primary practitioners of footbinding.

[45] Ibid, 5-6.

[46] Ibid., 96.

[47] Ibid., 97.

The widespread fear of Chinese slavery—the illegal importation of Chinese and the patriarchal structure of Chinese society—also infiltrated into the missionary comprehension of bound feet.[48] They usually discussed it together with other kinds of female debasement in China such as female infanticide, infant betrothal and concubinage. The big concern of home mission workers was the trafficking of Chinese slave girls. What bound feet spoke to Chinese women's social status and morality had captured a great amount of attention in the United States at the turn of the century when the sentiments against the influx of Chinese women for the purpose of prostitution reached its peak. As China experts and enthusiastic workers among the Chinese, the missionaries interacted with and won respect from the immigration officials. In spite of the missionary's overall supportive stance towards Chinese immigration which conflicted with the immigration authorities, the missionaries and immigration inspectors' gendered imagination and explanation of bound feet overlapped to a large degree.

Some missionaries claimed that one could identify a Chinese merchant's wife by examining her feet. In 1896, one *San Francisco Call* article published an interview with Rev. Dr. F. J. Masters, the superintendent of the Methodist Chinese Mission on the Pacific coast. He was born in England but was "called to California to take charge of the Methodist Chinese missions on the Coast" in 1886. He married a U.S. missionary and settled down in California until his death.[49] Mr. Masters obviously shared the concern of people on the U.S. west coast, criticizing the inability of the current immigration system to keep out immoral

[48] It is not difficult to see this kind of fear in non-missionary publications too: "Ever since The Chinese set foot upon the shores of California human chattel slavery has existed." "Slaves Sold for Spot Cash," *San Francisco Call*, Volume 79, Number 136, April 14,1896, 16.

[49] "Dr. Masters was widely known on the Coast and among English-speaking people in China for his work among the Chinese . . . He was born in Evesham, England. . . Immediately upon his graduation he went from England to Canton, China, and entered the service of the English Wesleyan Mission. At the expiration of ten years spent in charge of this mission Dr. Masters returned to his native country and preached for two years in the Wesleyan church." **"**Sudden Death Of Rev. F. J. Masters," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 3, 1900, 9.

Chinese women: “the gates of the Custom house have been thrown wide open to the admission of disreputable Chinese women.” He advised that “if I were the Collector and a woman came to me with bound feet and told me that she was the wife of a merchant I would admit her without any further evidence.” He further explained, “in China a boundfoot woman is a lady,” and bound foot was “a mark of virtue and respectability.” [50]

Mr. Masters’s reasonings reflected the common sense of the time: girls with contracted feet “cannot do any menial work, but must be waited upon as a real lady,” and “when she arrives of age she is married to some man who can afford to have a lady for a wife and to hire servants to wait upon her.”[51] The underlying rationale was that the husband’s economic status determined his wife’s womanhood which could be detected from her body since she did not need to work if she married rich. His reasoning was largely a projection of the cult of domesticity in the United States of the time, well defined by Barbara Epstein as “economic dependence on a man” in “the ‘middling classes’ marriage.”[52] Regarded as an expert who had been connected with the mission and studied this problem for many years, and as “a Chinese scholar of more than ordinary attainments,” his words gained its currency in the public sphere.[53]

Women missionaries also played a powerful role in perpetuating these linkages between the body, class, and morality. The narratives that presumed bound feet as a statement of economic status and female morality were not unusual among the missionaries. Clark in

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[50] “Slaves Seared with Hot Irons,” *San Francisco Call*, April 19, 1896, 6.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Barbara Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 2.

[53] “Slaves Seared with Hot Irons,” *San Francisco Call*, April 19, 1896, 6.

her book accounted a story of Ah Ling, a bride of a Chinese merchant in New York's Chinatown who was sold into prostitution and later rescued. Despite that Ah Ling eventually freed her feet in the mission house, the ways in which Clark described "lily feet" probably aroused curiosity and affection towards bound feet from her readers. She wrote, "There were three things that contributed to make Ah Ling the most remarkable lady in Chinatown: her beauty, her exceptionally small feet, and her exquisite needlework."[54] She underscored the servant girl Mee Lee's "admiration" and "awe" towards the lily feet of the new mistress: Lee clasped "her hands with reverent wonder," and exclaimed, "See de lovely lily feet! Oh, so little! Never see so little before!"[55] This strongly echoed the above-mentioned newspaper narratives that spotlighted the beauty of Chinese merchants' wives with dainty feet.

In her 1886 report, Emma Cable of the Occidental Branch of the Woman's Foreign Mission Society of the Presbyterian Church linked the small footed women who accepted her home mission work with the better class, "many of our families belong to the better class of Chinese, where I think our work is most acceptable. Among this class I have thirty 'little footed' wives and sixteen 'little-footed' girls. The process of foot binding, a mark of rank."[56] Although she was fully aware of regional variations in terms of foot size, Mrs. S. L. Baldwin, a missionary woman in Fuzhou, still insisted that full-grown, unbound feet belonged to the field-women, servants, and concubines, while the two-and-one-half-inch feet were of the "shutup" ladies.[57]

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[54] Ibid., 16.

[55] Ibid., 15.

[56] Emma R. Cable, *Little Ah Yee of the Opium Dens* (Occidental Board of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church, 1886), 3.

[57] Mrs. S. L. Baldwin, "Bound Feet of Chinese Women: Missionary in Fuhchau," *Independent*, January 5, 1882, 5.

Despite intending to reverse this misinterpretation, some clarifications fell into the trap of unwittingly reinscribing other sorts of stereotypes. To dispel the pervasive misperception, the *San Francisco Chronicle* quoted a missionary woman's words in 1903, "the small foot does not always designate wealth, but it means to guarantee that the woman is of gentle birth, which is frequently not the case." However, her further explanation oversimplified the motivations of the poor to carry out footbinding. She saw it as "a matter of money-making with the poorer parents," because they could "sell their daughters to rich husbands for a much larger price than if the feet of the girl were permitted to spread out to natural proportions."[58]

Chinese mothers pleaded to the missionaries, stressing that bound feet were considered as a symbol of virtue and closely tied to their daughters' marriageability. The missionaries, however, insisted on the insanity and inhumanity of the Chinese mothers, placing the Chinese as the antithesis of themselves. For example, Miss French said, "Why a mother should be willing, after having undergone herself years of torture from this cruel practice, to inflict the same punishment for life on her own little daughter, is a mystery that none of us can understand, notwithstanding the ironclad custom around her on every side."[59]

Thus, the knowledge produced by these China experts were no less ideologically-laden than other agents of information. Although seeking to connect the "uncivilized" heathen with their civilized self through Christianity, the missionaries often failed to confront facts that contradicted their culturally and socially reasonable conjectures and hopes, and their struggles for religious conversions. Like other transnational Americans, missionaries failed to acknowledge that the social and cultural connotation of lily feet spoke only to the Chinese people's aspirations for upward mobility, respectability, and marriageability, rather than

[58] Scanland, "Foot-Binding in Chinatown," 5.

actual morals and social status. The female missionaries even went further than most main stream newspapers to persistently formulate footbinding within their preconceived male suppression narrative. Missionaries like Helen F. Clark provided sensationalized storytelling of the horror of footbinding forced by Chinese men. The consequence of these tendencies was profound, even though these women missionaries did expand their world and obtain self-confidence by engaging with the missionary enterprises in the public sphere. Their projected spiritual superiority prevented them from addressing the problems in their own culture. They were unwilling to admit that body mutilations did not exclusively belong to the Other. Although often with a benign will, they were not able to see the heathen Other as equal human beings, and the heathen cultures and beliefs as equally valuable or problematic.

Collisions in the Trans-Pacific Public Sphere

However, exaggerations of the effectiveness of missionary work were conveniently circulated in the popular discourse, which usually projected the Chinese as subjects needed to be awakened and saved. The *Chicago Tribune* described the Qing anti-footbinding decree as a "wake up" call in response to the missionary efforts in 1902: "The custom which has been followed for centuries by Chinese women of the better classes has been so vigorously attacked by native societies and the influence of the missionaries has been so powerful that the Dowager at last is said to be awake to the welfare of her women subjects."[60] This resonated strongly with other Western journalists and writers who attributed early twentieth-century social advancement among women in China to the influence of enlightened Americans and Europeans.

[59] *Home Life of Chinese Women*, 47.

In 1927, U.S. writer Paul Blanshard concluded in his *New York Times* article on the feminist upsurges including anti-footbinding activities in China. He remarked that compared with the women of the West who had already largely won the sex equality in family and community life, Chinese women just began their long struggle. He believed that women's movement in China primarily fought for U.S. ideals of womanhood: "To a great extent it is the first successful effort of Chinese women to express in an organized form ideals of womanhood that America has taught to young China."[61] In this article, Blanshard positioned China as a young student of the United States while assuming that Western countries had mostly achieved gender equality. The construction of China's inferiority thus was not just at the price of not seeing China and the world as they were, but also limited people's critique of their own societies.

Nonetheless, a different picture surfaced after a closer look at the records that reported the hurdles the missionaries encountered on the other side of the Pacific. Although Western missionaries played a role in accelerating the anti-footbinding movement, their influence on both the Chinese elites and the broader populace was in fact limited. According to historian Jane Hunter, before the 1890s when an anti-footbinding movement led by Chinese reformers took shape, "most missionaries tolerated what they could not change."[62] She added, between 1873 and 1904 the middle-aged pupils at Swatow Bible Training School all had bound feet.

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[60] "To Reform China's Feet: Empress Dowager Proposes A Daring Undertaking," *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 1902, 2.

[61] Paul Blanshard, "Women of the New China Lose Their Age-old Shackles," *New York Times*, November 6, 1927, SM11.

[62] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility,* 22.

Most of the pupils had unbound their feet after 1904, "encouraged by the exhortation of their missionary mentors, but also by a larger reform movement and an imperial decree."[63]

Mrs. Archibald Little, the leader of the missionary anti-footbinding movement in China, was in fact not a missionary but the wife of a British merchant. At a conference on "Home Life of Chinese Woman in Shanghai," she pointed to the fact that there was a non-Christian Chinese society of 300,000 men, "heads of families, mostly in good position, who were opposed to foot-binding." Many husbands encouraged their wives to unbind their feet and did not allow footbinding conducted on their daughters. She noted, "There is an enormous movement in this direction among the people not reached by Christian influence. Many are not aware of what is being done by the Chinese themselves to free women from this cruel custom."[64]

Despite the belief that Christianity could keep women from the sinful practice of footbinding, Miss French in the same meeting indicated a great degree of difficulty to discontinue footbinding among the converted Chinese women. Her Bible woman refused "a slight loosening the bandages" and "preferred going on with her small feet, walking miles and miles" so as to hear people's compliments like "such pretty little feet!"[65] She lamented, "Many instances, I am sorry to have to say, I could bring in by way of substantiating this sad fact, but it is only too true, as the missionaries present know only too well. I acknowledge with shame and regret that in my eagerness to see souls saved I have, to a large degree, lost sight of the sin of the cruel custom, and I do not doubt that others present would say the

[63] Ibid.

[64] *Home Life of Chinese Women*, 51.

[65] Ibid., 48-49.

same."[66] Nonetheless, Mrs. Little's insights and the missionaries' frustration with their limited impact on local people were rarely publicized in the United States.[67]

English-language newspapers intended for the Westerners residing in semi-colonial China also disclosed the reality that they probably were unwilling to send back their homelands yet had to confront with. In 1905, for instance, one correspondent of the *North-China Daily News* openly commented that among all the social reforms in China at the time, there was "none that promises more towards the relief of suffering and the elevation of Chinese womanhood, than the anti-footbinding movement." However, "this is distinctively a native affair having no connection whatever with the Tien Tsu Hui or the Christian Church. It has enrolled more than a hundred members, many of them being prominent representatives of the gentry."[68]

On December 17, 1908, the *North-China Daily News* reported that the missionaries were excluded in Chinese anti-footbinding agenda. It mentioned a "strange" clause in the Chinese anti-footbinding proclamations which was "quite out of accord with the principles of the founders of the Natural Foot Society." The clause designated that "Christians are not 'included.'" The correspondent indicated, "I know they are not permitted to join the local branch of the society. Whether the clause is meant as a 'hit' at the Christians, or only as a bait

[66] Ibid., 49.

[67] In this conference, the missionaries expressed their frustration with the limited impact of their protest against footbinding: "I acknowledge with shame and regret that in my eagerness to see souls saved I have, to a large degree, lost sight of the sin of the cruel custom, and I do not doubt that others present would say the same." Ibid., 48–49.

[68] "Anti-footbinding," *North-China Daily News*, November 9, 1905, 5.

to those who do not favour Christianity, I am unable to ascertain. At any rate, it is no encouragement to the former, and, quite naturally, resented by them."[69]

The home mission among the Chinese in the United States struggled with unfathomable obstacles too. A radical crusade against footbinding was absent in their agenda. Emma Cable, who worked as a house-to-house visitor for the Presbyterian Church, confided the difficulty of approaching the San Francisco Chinese community: "At first I could enter but very few houses without having the door closed in my face."[70]

While claiming her success in stopping some incidents of footbinding, Cable's report revealed that at least from 1879 to 1886, the period of her appointment by then, the home mission did not take strict measures to terminate the practice among those Chinese she visited. She indicated that among 80 Chinese families on her visiting list, 46 wives and girls were "little-footed."[71] Although aiming to valorize home mission's achievement despite tremendous hardships, her narrative documented the Chinese resistance and challenge to her authority. "The process of foot binding, a mark of rank, I have prevented in many instances, not however without encountering the formidable fact as expressed by them, 'O!' Merican woman likee little waist; China woman likee little foot. *All same*."[72]

Nevertheless, Cable seemed to have little intent to reflect on any commonness she might have with the ones who she sought to Christianize. It was perhaps easier for her to view the Chinese opposition as heathen stubbornness to hold on to an evil tradition than to admit the similarity between Chinese and U.S. women, which would acutely impair her sense

[69] "Anti-footbinding," *North-China Daily News*, December 17, 1908, 7.

[70] Cable, *Little Ah Yee of the Opium Dens*, 2.

[71] Ibid., 3.

[72] Ibid.

of "female moral authority" as phrased by Pascoe.[73] While the Western corsetry could be read as fashion that women aspired to pursue, Chinese footbinding barely had such a privilege. Within an unequal power relation, women missionaries like Cable could easily ignore the challenges from the Chinese.

Being confronted with the same charge that "foreign woman bind her waist" in China, Retta Gifford of Canadian Women Missionary Society admitted, "If we would exert the influence we wish over these women, we must discard corsets and everything approaching them."[74] However, photographs of Gifford suggested that she "probably ignored her own sensible advice."[75] This discloses the unresolved contradiction in the missionary logic which on one hand, the missionaries assumed a spiritually inferior Other waiting for salvation, and on the other hand, they in fact bore similarities with whom they sought to save.

Under scrutiny, the "civilizing" ideological position the missionaries maintained diligently was, in fact, very vulnerable. The comparison of the missionary discourse with the reality they encountered in their personal contact with the Chinese both in China and the U.S. reveals that the missionary discourses in the U.S. public had forcefully marginalized the Chinese-led anti-footbinding activities. The missionaries gauged their progress and legitimated their investments in those anti-footbinding enterprises without acknowledging there was a similar Chinese movement going on. Like the official discourse in the Immigration Service, the missionary framing of difference projected a stagnant China. Yet, apart from the racial, social, and cultural boundaries drawn in the immigration bureaucratic

[73] Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*.

[74] Rosemary R. Gagan, *Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992), 120.

[75] Ibid.

operation, it added a religious border with their Chinese Other. The Chinese critique to Western corsetry and resistance to religious conversion were powerful and tenacious. Even so, within an asymmetrical power paradigm in the Pacific, there challenges could not crumble the constructed sense of supremacy among the missionaries. The most effective way to transform the Other, however, as the Canadian missionary Retta Gifford and some Chinese proposed, perhaps was to reform themselves.

The heterogeneity of the trans-Pacific public sphere can also be observed in the ways in which how the Chinese and U.S. people reacted to the exhibits of "golden lilies." Through the comparative lens, the clash, collision and confluences of public discourse on the both side of the Pacific shed light on mutual gazes between China and the United States, and ironies of Chinese nationalism and U.S./Western modernity. In contrast with the overall benign curiosity over the arrival and display of Afong Moy with lily feet in the "Age of Respect" as what Harold Robert Isaacs calls, my discussion of bound-foot women in 1904 St. Louis World's Fair falls into the "Age of Contempt" which was marked by the end of the first Opium War.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, white Americans perceived Chinatowns in the United States as exotic and mysterious tourist sites. Regardless of the rising Chinese nationalist sentiments and international condemnation of footbinding, these Chinatown residents exploited these ideas for profit, thereby reinforcing the appeal of bound feet: "Some of the poorer class, who bandage the feet of their girls, make more money by exhibiting these feet than they lose from the inability of the girls to work. Anyone with a morbid curiosity can see a stunted foot for 25 cents, and in the tourist season business is

lively."[76] Thus, while anti-footbinding efforts were underway in China, ironically, in the United States, people's fascination with "oriental" traditions presented an economic opportunity to maintain and display the "backward" and "barbarous" custom. This also shows that the poor class was often willing to emulate the bodily standard of the richer class through which they hoped could bring them better prospects of life. This, in turn, obscured the original class boundary this embodiment was supposed to signify. According to newspapers in China during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, similar ways of collecting money through the exhibition of bound feet were still seen on the streets of Europe.[77]

The presence of "golden lilies" in world's fairs captured even more complex power dynamics in the Pacific. As Robert W. Rydell states, "World's fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated the ideas and values of the country's political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders and offered these ideas as the proper interpretation of social and political reality."[78] The fairs served as platforms to affirm and extend U.S. leadership and supremacy in the international arena in cultural terms. Despite the exercising of power, as a modern form to exhibit the power and development of participating countries, the exhibits in world's fairs were granted a greater sense of authenticity.

In 1904, China had its first official exhibition in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Compared to the sensation caused by the display of Afong Moy in the 1830s, the

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[76] Scanland, "Foot-Binding in Chinatown," 5.

[77] Shufu 叔輔, "Bali de shentong yu xiaojiao" 巴黎的神童与小脚 (Genius and small feet in Paris), *Yusi* 语丝 No. 151(1927):14-17; "Xiezai balishi shang faxian fengyang xiaojiao nüren zhihou"寫在巴黎市上發現鳳陽小脚女人之後 (After discovering a Fengyang woman with small feet in Paris), *Fengyue huabao* 风月画报, Vol. 7, No. 38 (1936): 1; Xu Yu 徐訏, "Bali de xiaojiao" 巴黎的小腳 (Small feet in Paris), *Shamo huabao* 沙漠画报 Vol. 6, No.9 (1943) :13-15; "Qingtian nüzi ouzhou mai xiaojiao" 青田女子歐洲賣小脚 (Qingtian woman displaying small feet for profit in Europe), *Guoji xinwen huabao* 国际新闻画报 No. 56 (1946): 5.

[78] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

exhibits of small-feet Chinese women in the St. Louis World's Fair did not receive much media attention. Increasing interaction between Chinese and U.S. people, a growing number of Chinese women residing in the United States, and the enduring media coverage on the topic of footbinding could all explain the lack of a special notice on the display of "golden lilies." Furthermore, the suspicion of illegal Chinese migrants disguised as workers for the fairs had become the focus of the anti-Chinese media in the late nineteenth century. Last but not the least, among all the ethnological displays of the exhibits on "native tribes" in the Fair, exotically-dressed Igorots from the Philippines occupied tremendous attention and were widely publicized. This reflected the national and international interests in the newly acquired territory and U.S. efforts to justify its imperialist expansion in the Philippines. For instance, *The Complete Portfolio of Photographs of the World's Fair, St. Louis, 1904* which appeared in the same year, overwhelmingly documented the primitive and barbarous representations of the new possession, including "A native of the Philippines at the fair," "Dogs to Feed The Igorrotes," and "A Filipino Belle," while its title claimed it as a comprehensive record of the sights and wonders.[79]

Although unlike the fully colonized Philippines, China, as a semi-colonial society, also had limited power to determine its exhibition lists. The editor of *Chung Sai Yat Po* (China West Daily), the first Chinese language daily newspaper in the United States noted that some Chinese exhibits arranged by the Qing government included things like smoking devices and shoes for bound feet. This editor stated that some of these were actually set up by "Westerners" who worked for the Qing government to humiliate China.[80]

[79] *The Complete Portfolio of Photographs of the World's Fair, St. Louis, 1904: The Sights, Scenes and Wonders of the Fair Photographed* (Educational Company, 1904).

[80] *Chung Sai Yat Po*, June 6, 1904.

In contrast to the minimal English-language newspaper coverage in the United States, the "barbaric" image of Chinese women with bound feet in the Fair stirred agitation in the Chinese communities on both sides of the Pacific. The effort to perish the plan of a display of bound-foot women in the Fair started before 1904. The *Zhongwai Ribao* (China and Overseas Daily) reported that a human display was included in the exhibition inventory for the St. Louis Fair at Fujian custom house. The Tokyo-based Chinese newspaper *Zhengjiang Chao* commented on this news, saying, "To present degrading traditions of Fujian, one bound-footed girl, one barefooted girl and one bride were planned to be exhibited to humiliate the Chinese." This reporter saw such a plan as a signifier of China's demise as a nation and race, and strongly protested it. "How could I express my sorrow, Alas! Our country has virtually perished although it seems to exist. Our race is declining, although it seems to survive."[81] He deemed it as "the saddest and most unbearable humiliation." He warned of the consequence if the Chinese ignored this issue, because this was a national shame and stigma of the race. He called for more attention and action before the nation and race would have vanished. "For a nation, it signifies that we have no country left; for a race, it means that we are an evil race. . . I called everyone to cry for it, feel indignant and fight against it so as to stabilize the nation and to advance the race."[82]

Despite the protest, however, a Taiwanese named Chen brought two women with bound feet from Taiwan to work as tea serving maids in the 1904 St. Louis Fair.[83] Regardless of the *Chung Sai Yat Po*'s criticism of Chen, a Chinese man called Huang later

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[81] "Suowenlu zhuju cengwen meiguo saihui zhi xieshi huaren fou" 所闻录诸君曾闻美国赛会之亵视华人否 (Discrimination towards Chinese in the U.S. fair) *Zhengjiang Chao* (Tokyo) 浙江潮(东京) No. 10 (1903):119-121.

[82] Ibid.

[83] *Chung Sai Yat Po*, June 6, 1904.

brought a bound-foot wife of another man from San Francisco to the Fair and advertised her as a Chinese beauty. After paying a fee, fair-goers could take a peek at her feet. Hearing this incident from his friend, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* editor was infuriated by these two Chinese men's selfish decisions to profit at the price of shaming the nation. The editor's friend condemned, "dogs and pigs were better than them." The editor noted that the newspaper avoided disclosing their full name, in the hope that they would immediately realize their mistake and not repeat it.[84]

The *Dagong bao* in China also reported Huang's display of "golden lilies" at the Fair a furious denunciation from Chinese newspapers in the United States. "This humiliated our nation and race. It also accounted that the Chinese in the local branch of *Weixin Hui* (Reforming Society) met with the official Qing representative and petitioned to remove the exhibition. The official was infuriated, sending an investigating committee the next day. After the official left the U.S. for Europe, however, another Chinese man called Hua hired a Westerner at the gate of the exhibition hall, holding around 10 pairs of lily foot shoes and exclaiming the extreme smallness to solicit the passerby to watch "golden lilies" inside. A group of Chinese students from Chicago regarded this a huge insult and requested an immediate removal. Eventually, with the help of *Weixin Hui* in St. Louis, the footbound woman and her husband received enough money for their trip back to San Francisco and then to return China. Like other Chinese journalists mentioned above, this *Da Gong Bao* reporter saw such an exhibit as "a miniature of national demise."[85]

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[84] Ibid.

[85] "Meiguo saihuichang ziqian chanzu shimoji" 美国赛会场貲遣缠足女始末记 (A report on footbound women in the U.S. fair), *Dagong bao* 大公报, Issue 02, September 6, 1904.

Therefore, although the World's fairs were always portrayed as sites that afforded an educational study of progress and development in the world, it in fact propelled a commodification of Chineseness, which was bound to display China's Otherness rather than its progress. Some Chinese actively participated in this commodification trend as well. The absence of special attention to these "golden lilies" in U.S. media shows how common this representation of China had become. In sharp contrast to U.S. reporters' indifference, Chinese elites both in China and North America were outraged and saddened by the exhibit of this kind. Chinese historian Xingmei Yang considers that the 1903 Osaka Fair and the 1904 St. Louis Fair marked the turning point at which China's attitude towards footbinding shifted. Yang maintains that since these fairs, "the shame associated with bound-footed women in the fairs had become part of Chinese collective memory; footbinding thus became the symbol of national humiliation."[86] This also echoes what Rydell notes, "World's fairs provide a partial but crucial explanation for the interpretation and popularization of evolutionary ideas about race and progress."[87] China, especially its elites seemed to have little resistance to Western discourse and notions of race and evolutionary theory in the time of national crisis. They appropriated the concepts of evolution and racial theories to comprehend the shifting power paradigm in the Pacific and attributed footbinding to the cause of China's racial decline.

The Chinese nationalists and elites only partially internalized the Western ideas. The meanings both sides assigned to the anti-footbinding movements diverged. Chinese female powerlessness and male control of women's bodies which was central to missionary depictions were almost absent in the Chinese discourse. Ironically, in fact, the Chinese anti-

[86] Yang, *Shen ti zhi zheng*, 50-59.

[87] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5.

footbinding enthusiasts and promoters were mostly male leaders and elites. The rise of Chinese nationalism propelled them to tie the destiny of their country and race to women's bodies. Chinese women's voices, however, were relegated to the marginal places of a trans-Pacific public sphere.

Conclusion

Situating bound feet in the trans-Pacific and global contexts creates a lens to view how racial thinking, exotic fantasies, Orientalist sentiments, and gender and class ideologies intersected with each other. Footbinding, as a racially and culturally alien subject, invited condemnation and revulsion in the "civilized" United States. Paradoxically, however, Americans could not resist being enthralled by domesticity, respectability, and a sense of upper class tied with "golden lilies," in which U.S. and Chinese ideals of womanhood converged. Self-absorption with "difference" restricted people ability to come grips with the shifting connotation of bound feet in a distinctly transformative time and prevented them from acknowledging the similarities in gender relations and class ideologies between U.S. and Chinese societies.

The dominant U.S. discourses paid little attention to, and were reluctant to acknowledge the efforts China had made as a semi-colonial society to outlaw footbinding and to revitalize itself in the time of crisis. In the 1904 World's Fair, bound feet became a key site to contest China's modernization at the turn of the 20th century. The Fair offered the fairgoers a comparative dimension that bolstered one country's progress based on the objectification of another country's backwardness and barbarism, which validated, in this case, the U.S. intervention. As James S. Moy notes, "The context for this type of display is the anthropological gaze associated with modern museums, in which the power and authority of

the spectator's privileged look is affirmed, usually at the expense of the novel 'primitive' objectified or dead Other."[88] This explains the intriguing contradictions and contestations in the trans-Pacific public sphere.

Although operation of difference was undeniable in U.S. representations of footbinding, the narratives circulating in the public were permeated with contradiction, ambiguity, incompleteness. Varied representations of footbinding demonstrated how different forms of orientalism intersected with multiple times and spaces, and how they could simultenously support and fail each other. As a discursive and visual category, footbinding reflected both Chinese and U.S. societies' anxieties and desires in a drastically changing world. New changes occurred in China were noted but this did not entirely replace the older discourses. Unlike the standardized official interpretation of bound feet in U.S. immigration inspection, various accounts of China and footbinding produced by the newspaper companies and missionary presses in intention for cultural consumption and religious conversion sometimes stretched to introduce counterpoints against the dominant ideas.

Even though the numerous accounts about China and Chinese women with bound feet in the U.S. public were inevitably contradictory, sloppy, and incomplete depictions, in the service of their claim of authenticity, these narratives often enumerated differences of the Other. Despite a sense of admiration and compliment, the domesticity tied to footbinding was seen as part of "oriental" beauty rather than commensurable to white middle-class cult of domesticity. By conceptualizing footbinding as a barbaric, exotic, and charming cultural practice, Americans imagined and constructed intrinsic differences between the Chinese and themselves. These seemingly insurmountable differences reinforced and idealized U.S.

[88] James S. Moy, *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (Iowa: University of Iowa, 1993), 13-14.

identity as a civilized race and an emerging power in the Pacific world. Yet most Americans glossed over the extent to which the male domination and female dependence that they saw as inherent in Chinese culture also characterized their own society. The orientalist admiration towards “golden lilies” left in the historical records simultaneously reinforced and eroded the tenaciously and at times unwittingly constructed social, cultural, and religious borders.

Chapter 3: The Constructed Truth and the Making of U.S. Immigration Archives

Despite the stereotypical images of China persisting in the U.S. public sphere, the impact of Chinese anti-footbinding movements and the shifting meanings of bound feet were noted in U.S. newspapers, periodicals, magazines and missionary publications, especially in the early 20th century when the Qing government's inability to remedy the national crisis became clearer and clearer. However, the enforcers of the Chinese exclusion laws continued to question and document women's foot size for decades at the gates of the United States. Orientalist understandings had been systematically perpetuated in the immigration institution, positioning the Chinese Other in a different time from contemporary Americans. The consideration of lily-footed Chinese women as the exempt class remained unchanged until the 1920s. Ironically, as the stereotype was finally dropped, the Chinese immigrants lost an important means to assert their admissibility.

As Ann Laura Stoler notes, "Colonial regimes were not hegemonic institutions but uneven, imperfect, and even indifferent knowledge-acquiring machines. Omniscience and omnipotence were not, as is so often assumed, their defining goals."[1] Likewise, the process of formulating immigration screening rules was not a neat accumulation of knowledge about the immigrants. The institutionalization and documentation of Chinese female bodies in enforcing the exclusion laws quickly took on its own life once formed, which perpetuated more traditional understandings of footbinding despite that collisions occurred in the official

[1] Ann Laura Stoler, *"Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," in* Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History, *eds. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 55.*

and everyday exchanges between Chinese leaders, ordinary migrants, and immigration personnel.

Mirroring the disparity of the spread and operation of footbinding across regions, moments when the immigration authorities were confronted by situations that did not fit their routinized practices were not unusual. Chinese high officials and community leaders to the United States made efforts to publicize details about China's nationalism and modernization and challenged anti-Chinese legislations. Moreover, some merchants did bring wives with natural feet and did not practice footbinding onto their daughters. Nor was every immigrant fully aware of or informed about the importance of referring to bound feet. As I have demonstrated in Chapter one, the natural feet of merchants' wives, daughters and other family members were recorded in juxtaposition to the footbound women. Furthermore, while most Chinese migrants had little means to directly challenge the system, those who felt humiliated by the interrogation about bound feet expressed their resentment when the circumstances allowed.

One cannot help but ask: what were the forces that integrated these disparate segments of information into a functioning system? How were the "truth" about footbinding and the migrants' sentiments rendered invisible in the exchanges between the Chinese and U.S. gate keepers, *as well as* in the archive making process? Who authorized whose source of information to be incorporated into immigration regulation? This chapter examines how the social and cultural borders constructed through the discourse of "golden lilies" manifested into the implementation of the Chinese exclusion laws. It investigates the struggles of Chinese officials, Chinese community leaders, and ordinary Chinese migrants in the United States to interrupt stereotypical images of footbinding, and to assert China's coevalness with the U.S. *as well as* the limit of their contestations.

This chapter also urges to challenge the authenticities and objectivities commonly associated with official archives by analyzing them as a contested site of knowledge production and examining U.S. imperial power embedded in perceptions, classifications and operations when dealing with the Other. Immigration archives have been diligently examined by U.S. historians. Yet compared to scholars in (post)colonial studies who tirelessly strive to challenge the authenticities and objectivities commonly associated with archives, few works on the histories of U.S. immigration and Asian America have centered immigration documents as a research subject.[2] The archival production of immigration bureaucracy itself should be approached as an object of historical inquiry. The monitoring and manufacturing of "facts" in the colonial archives noted by scholars of colonialism also occurred in the making of U.S. immigration archives. In addition to reading "against the grain," I will engage with what Ann Laura Stoler frames as "reading along the archival grain" to illustrate the power dynamics in the process.[3]

Chinese Minister, Wu Ting Fang

Wu Ting Fang (1842-1922), the Chinese Minister to the United States from 1897 to 1902, and from 1907 to 1909 made great efforts to refute popular misassumptions about China including footbinding in the United States. Born in Singapore, raised in Guangdong and Hongkong, and trained as a barrister in Great Britain, Wu was better equipped to

[2] Nicholas B. Dirks, "Annals of the Archive Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History," in *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*, ed. Brian Keith Axel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 47-65; Durba Ghosh, "National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation: Britain and India," in *Archive Stories*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 27-44; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Thinking Through Colonial Ontologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[3] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain.*

communicate with U.S. political leaders and the public in general compared to his predecessors.

In 1902, Wu published an article titled "Footbinding Among the Chinese," in the *Chicago Tribune.* He highlighted the decline of the tradition at the very beginning, stating that "the Chinese are abandoning foot binding." By calling Western corseting "waist binding," he tried to show the parallel between these two practices to U.S. readers: "It is a fashion that is going out like waist binding among the Caucasians. All the world and its peoples are slaves to fashion." Likely responding to the often exaggerated and demonized portrayals of footbinding, he stressed, "The Stories told about foot binding in China are often untrue. It was simply a fashion. … Attempts have been made to uproot it from time to time, just as your doctors have preached against waist lacing, which is a greater menace to the human race than foot binding."[4] Nevertheless, as the racial Other in the United States, the Chinese found it hard to claim having a fashion as much as the Americans.

Wu also brought a cultural-relative perspective, saying that "it shocks a Chinese woman just as much to see a laced waist as it does a Caucasian to look at a bound foot." U.S. women's craze for small shoes, which strongly resonated with footbinding was noted by him. "[Chinese] Women wanted their feet small and then smaller. I believe even American ladies are accused of wearing shoes smaller than the natural size of their feet, so that it is easily understood how this fashion degenerated."[5]

Furthermore, although Wu stated that in China fashions did not change so readily as among the Americans who had been rebelling against corseting for years, he called attention

[4] Wu Ting Fang, "Footbinding Among the Chinese," *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1902, 13.

[5] Ibid.

to the progress being brought about by anti-footbinding movements: “The reaction against foot binding is general, and that a large percentage of the girls whose feet would have been bound during the last two years are growing up naturally and able to romp and play like other little girls.” He positively predicted that “I should not be surprised if the reaction against this practice should accomplish general results in a short period, and that within ten, fifteen, or twenty years there would be none foot-bound in China, except the old women.”[6] Later, he talked about the more progressive trend that occurred much earlier in the places where most early Chinese immigrants came from. “The Provinces of Chili, Kwangtung, and Kwangsi, after the Taiping rebellion was suppressed, acknowledged foot binding was wrong, and the half of them abandoned the practice.” He also corrected the popular interpretation regarding bound-foot women’s higher-class status, “The practice is not confined to the rich. Poor women are just as rigorous devotees of this fashion.”[7]

Wu’s words about footbinding certainly ignited great interest in the U.S. media. The *Chicago Record-Herald* published a similar piece, which was reprinted in the *Washington Post* on December 29, 1901.[8] Wu was always an interesting figure to the U.S. media. When he was delegated to be Chinese Minister again in 1907, one *Chicago Tribune* editor stated, “in a moment of reckless confidence, he were to tell all he knows or thinks . . ., it would make better reading than the most interesting and entertaining of his many addresses.”[9]

Undoubtedly, the feet of Wu’s wife could not escape from the media’s gaze. Although the excitement of newspapers over her tiny feet resembled some other accounts freighted

[6] Wu, “Footbinding Among the Chinese,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1902, 13.

[7] Ibid.

[8] “Likened Sets: Mme. Wu's Opi,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 1901, 21.

[9] “Wu Ting-Fang,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1907, 8.

with Orientalist admiration, Wu and his wife's progressive views were reported. On June 15, 1903, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Wu had become a member of the anti-footbinding society. At the most recent annual meeting, "he declared himself to be an unalterable enemy of the cruel and senseless practice, and said that if he had a daughter he would not allow her feet to be bound." He confided that he "deferred marriage three years, hoping for a wife of suitable rank with natural feet." However, "his parents could find no helpmeet for him who could fulfill this requirement, he was obliged to marry one with compressed feet or remain single."[10] Commenting on Mrs. Wu's small feet, Wu said his wife shared the same opinion with him and was trying to unbind her feet despite the difficulty to unloosen once bound. According to Wu, she urged him to come the meeting, and donated $100 to the society.[11] On August 9, 1905, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Mrs. Wu had undergone a surgical operation to restore her feet back to the normal state.[12]

The scarcity of sources does not allow a closer examination of how information provided by Wu Ting Fang with respect to footbinding would have been evaluated by the enforcers of the Chinese exclusion laws. Nevertheless, it is not hard to note the media's reluctance to accept that a positive trend was occurring on the other side of the Pacific to see the Chinese in the same time as theirs and. The suspicion towards the authenticities of China's promise to reform in general, and of Wu's words in particular was apparent in contemporary newspapers. On August 23, 1903, the *Washington Post* reprinted an article from the *Kansas City Journal*, titled "The Shrinking of Wu: He was a Great Man Here, But in China It's Different." It suggested that although one may well "fancy him at home, bossing

[10] "Wu's Wife's Feet," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1903, 8.

[11] Ibid.

[12] "Mme. Wu Has Feet Unbound," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 1905, 1.

the Dowager Empress or telling the weak-kneed boy Emperor what was what," upon Mr. Wu's return to China, "the band didn't play and there was no parade. His job is so small that it is doubtful if it even gives him license to chat with the office stenographer during the lunch hours."[13]

The reports on positive trends occurring in China often blended with a pinch of salt. For instance, even though it appeared to publicize Mrs. Wu's progressive anti-footbinding action, the *Chronicle* article accentuated that through a "thoroughly successful" surgery performed in the United States, Mrs. Wu eventually recovered her feet to the right proportion. "Until she came to the United States, her feet were tightly bound, according to the custom in China." The article asserted that "it's believed that in time thousands of high-caste Chinese women will be applying to American hospitals to get their feet undone," alluding that China could not achieve this on its own.[14]

Wu's first term as Chinese Minister to the United States ended in 1902. When he was reassigned with the same position, the *Chicago Tribune* commented on Qing government's intention for reform with a grain of salt, "a man of his ability, with his thorough knowledge of western as well as of eastern civilization, ought to be of more service to his country at home than abroad if it be true that there is a serious intention to introduce reforms in China." The editor continued,

> Incidents of this kind tend to create the impression that most of the talk at Peking about the creation of a new China is intended for foreign consumption--is inspired by the thought that foreign governments will be more likely to let China alone if they are led to believe that that country is to

[13] "The Shrinking of Wu: He was a Great Man Here, But in China It's Different," *Washington Post,* August 23, 1903, ES9.

[14] "Mme. Wu Has Feet Unbound," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 9, 1905, 1

> be made over after a European pattern. It may be that the empress dowager and her advisers, while professing great admiration for western institutions, and asserting that they are to be copied soon, hold them in great contempt.[15]

Besides his article on footbinding, numerous accounts reported Minister Wu's protest against the Chinese exclusion and his effort to refute the misassumption and misinformation about China and its people through newspaper interviews, public activities, plea to committees of Congress, and other unconventional ways for negotiation. These accounts pointed to Wu's growing tension with the lawmakers.[16] Wu's correspondences to Secretary of State John Hay (1838-1905) and other high officials in the Treasury Department, under whose jurisdiction laid immigration matters, also documented his tenacious efforts to swing the Washington authorities who could exert their power to instruct the enforcers of Chinese exclusion acts.[17] Multiple newspaper articles noted Wu's stance to subvert the power of the immigration administrators. He declared the consequence of leaving the administrative power to the Commissioner General of Immigration, Mr. Powderly, who, according to Wu, "is influenced entirely too much by the labor vote of the country, which is hostile to the Chinese. He would even exclude, said Minister Wu, the merchants and the students."[18]

During Wu's two terms, the passage of Gary Act in 1892 extended 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act for another 10 years. The United States also expanded the Chinese exclusion

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[15] "Wu Ting-Fang," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1907, 8.

[16] To name a few, "Talked of The Orient: Banquet of the Asiatic Association in New York," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 27, 1900, 2; "Hitt Will Try to Secure Prompt Action In House," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan 7, 1902, 2.

[17] Notes from the Chinese Legation in the United States to the Department of State, 1868-1906, Volume 4, U.S. National Archives at Washington. This is cited from Ching-Hwang Yen, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese During the Late Ch'ing Period (1851-1911*) (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), 297-301.

[18] "Wu Ting-Fang Active: Chinese Minister Takes Hand In Legislation," *Washington Post*, May 27, 1900, 1.

to its territories, the Philippines and Hawaii in 1904. Wu's defeats revealed that as a Chinese diplomat, his stance against Chinese exclusion in part explains that his arguments and evidence would be hardly embraced by U.S. policy-makers.[19]

As historian Yen Ching-Hwang concluded, "Wu's representation, which was one of the best Chinese diplomatic documents of the time, seems to have no effect on the attitude of the government of the United States."[20] Wu's personal effort could not reverse the asymmetric power paradigm across the Pacific. His push for a less restrictive legislation towards Chinese immigration alienated him from a White House where anti-Chinese sentiments and politics prevailed. As a representative of a nation at a disadvantageous position in its dealings with the imperialist world, Wu's words were noted at best, but could not penetrate the dominant perception and psyche of an empire in which China's modernization and nationalist moves could only be accepted in highly limited terms.

Immigration Archives as a Contested Site of Knowledge Production

Despite often being infested with stereotypes, the consumption-oriented mass media allowed the proliferation of opinions and information. Different interest groups' efforts to influence and shape public opinions produced multiple reports that took different stances and tones to portray Minster Wu. Yet, the immigration bureaucracy, as an administrative institution required a clear guideline to execute the exclusion laws. Accordingly, sets of screening practices often revolved around more narrowly defined and fixed knowledge.

The coexistence of bound feet and natural feet in the merchant class was certainly not a secret to the immigration officials. For example, the inspector remarked the 1896 case of

[19] Linda Pomerantz-Zhang, *Wu Tingfang (1842-1922) Reform and Modernization in Modern Chinese* History (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992), 132.

two native-born girls I discussed in Chapter one as "a badge of respectability" in part due to one of the girls' small feet. Yet, he avoided discussing the fact that the younger girl, Lum Kue, whose feet were never bound, even though she was already 13 years old and their parents died only a year ago. In another case of a native-born Chinese, Wong Lung Sein in 1911, the witness Wong Art (Dart) was a merchant "in good standing" of Chee Chong Wo & Co., 717 Clay Street in San Francisco and had a record of high standing Americans, such as Colonel Tobin, to verify his status. He mentioned that his deceased and current wives had natural feet. He also confirmed that the applicant's father Wong Lin was a merchant of a cigar factory and his two wives Lim Shee and Sue Shee had natural feet. The inspector specifically questioned Wong Art about if he ever heard whether Wong Lin "had a bound footed wife or not?" He said that he "never heard he had a bound footed wife."[21] In both cases, the applicants successfully landed.

The institutional demands of formality and seeming objectivity of documenting the interrogation procedures made it hard to detect any emotion and individual characteristics from both the inspectors and the immigrants. Most cases were documented in fixed formats and sentiments were buried in "their flattened prose and numbing dullness."[22] This seemingly detached process of authorization and justification in fact worked through a power ground on which a "hierarchy of credibility" operated. Stoler points out that "reading along the grain" helps "to understand how unintelligibilities are sustained and why empires remain so uneasily invested in them."[23]

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[20] Yen, *Coolies and Mandarins,* 315.

[21] File 9508/648, NARA-PR, SF.

[22] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain,* 23.

[23] Ibid., 53.

Immigration documents about two investigations that took place in 1911 and 1912 concerning the harsh treatment of Chinese migrants at the Angel Island immigration station allow us to see more clearly the migrants' affect and how the "truth" was contested, resisted and established in their encounters with the enforcers of the Chinese exclusion laws. The competing narratives emerging in these investigations urge us to further explore the "ethnographic space" of the immigration archives in which the officials tenaciously or unconsciously relegated the Chinese voices to the margins and frozen the Other in the past.

Two Versions of the 1911 Investigation at Angel Island

The importance of maintaining a good trade relation with China had been the central reason why U.S. merchants willingly got involved in the politics of Chinese exclusion. Regardless of the popular anti-Chinese sentiments, organizations of U.S. merchants and traders often advocated for equal treatment with the Chinese especially the merchant class in the country alongside with their Chinese partners. In response to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce's complaint and request for assistance to investigate alleged abuse in the administration of the exclusion laws, on June 6, 1911, a committee[24] representing the American Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Association of San Francisco, paid a visit to the Angel Island immigration station.[25] Various organizations such as the Chinese

[24] This committee consisted of Captain Robert Dollar, Mr. Paul Elder, Mr. J. M. Kepner, Doctor Merritt, and Mr. Schiller. There is a discrepancy regarding who Captain Robert Dollar was representing between the information from the Chinese Newspaper, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* and the Immigration Service's report. The Chinese news article reported that he represented the American Chamber of Commerce, whereas the transcript in the immigration file recorded that he said, "I am an invited guest, representing the Chamber of Commerce, but really only representing himself as an invited guest." Files 52961/24D, NARA, D.C.

[25] The Downtown Association of San Francisco was an organization devoted to the betterment of San Francisco and its Downtown Business District from 1907 to approximately 2004. Downtown Association with the purpose of rebuilding and improving the downtown corridor and to bring business back to downtown from Van Ness Avenue where they feared it would stay. Once downtown was reestablished as the city's commercial center, the association shifted its mission to improving the downtown triangle and eventually broadening its influence to include the entire city of San Francisco and adopting the motto "For the Good of the City." http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8k07905/, accessed on September 4, 2017.

Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Six Companies had petitioned to President William Howard Taft for necessary improvements at the immigration station. Among those who accompanied them was Mr. Ng Poon Chew, the founder and editor of the *Chung Sai Yat Po*, one of the most prominent leaders in Chinese community in the United States. Acting Commissioner Luther C. Steward toured the committee around to inspect physical conditions and interrogation procedures at the stateion, and discussed the problems listed in the statements of those organizations.

The Immigration Service and the *Chung Sai Yat Po* both recorded the entire investigation. The immigration stenographer Gruetter produced a 91-page transcript according to his notes. In its June 7 and June 8 issues, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* consecutively published two articles titled "Account of the Minute investigation conducted by the American merchants into immigration affairs."[26] Acting Chinese Inspector in Charge at San Francisco, John Endicott Gardner translated excerpts of the two articles. The translations were kept in the same immigration file along with Gruetter's transcript.

According to Gruetter, when the committee reviewed the interrogation questions and answers of a case, Mr. Schiller questioned why they asked about bound feet. Acting Commissioner Steward explained that "It is a very distinctive means of identification, whether they are bound or natural. I might add that the question of morality—it has no connection with this case--they say that a woman with bound feet has a badge of respectability, is it not, Doctor?" Steward turned to Mr. Ng. Their following conversation was recorded in the transcript as below:

[26] "Ji xishang zhi xiangcha haiguanshi" 記西商之詳查海關事, *Chung Sai Yat Po*, June 7, 1911; "Xishang xiangcha haiguanshi zaiji" 西商詳查海關事再記, *Chung Sai Yat Po*, June 8, 1911.

> Mr. Ng Poon Chew: No; not so much now. Except, it is supposed to be a better class of people. It does not affect the morality at all.
> Inspr. McCall: In other words, do you ever find an immoral woman with bound feet?
> Mr. Ng Poon Chew: Yes, in China.
> Inspr. McCall: In San Francisco?
> Mr. Ng Poon Chew: No; not in San Francisco.
> Mr. Schiller: Is it not a fact that a great majority of the married women in San Francisco have bound feet?
> Inspr. McCall: I said prostitution is never found together with bound feet. There was a case, and there was objection to the Chinese consul in that case and she was removed. It is in the boy's favor if she has bound feet.[27]

Therefore, in Gruetter's version, each person spoke in a very impassive manner. When Mr. Ng pointed to the wrong correlation the Commissioner drew between bound feet and women's morality, the inspector directed the center of attention to whether this was the case in China or San Francisco. Then Ng said that was only the situation in China, asserting that no immoral women found in San Francisco were bound-footed.

However, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* reported the same encounter not only in a very different tone but also with different details. With respect to the interrogation about bound feet, Ng asked them to stop posing such an offensive question that contradicted with the positive trend happening in China. When the inspector asked whether the mother was bound footed in the case of Leo King (or Low King), one committee member Merritt "was astonished at this and said: 'What has the size of a person's feet got to do with the questions of admissibility? What harsh treatment!'" Steward explained "in an argumentative manner, that according to the customs of the Chinese, the character of a bound footed woman is good; that of one who is

[27] File 52961/24D, NARA, DC.

not bound footed is bad; that it was on this ground that the question was asked." When Merritt turned to Ng for clarification, Ng responded,

> No. No. Even in older times bound foot only indicates women's social nobility not her character; More recently, with greater enlightenment in the land, Chinese women either do not bind their feet at all, or if they had already bound them, they now unbind them. Have you not heard of what is known as the "Heavenly Foot Society" in this country? Hereafter, you should not ask such an impropriate question; it can only cause unnecessary irritation.[28]

The discrepancies led one to question not only which version is more trustworthy, but also why the discrepancies occurred in the ways they did. It was unlikely for Mr. Ng to contradict himself and distort the truth in an investigation aiming to address the problematic administration of the exclusion laws. It was much more likely that while attempting to justify the administrative practice in vogue, the immigration staff failed to rework the conversation neatly. The awkward reasoning that footbound women in San Francisco had good morals whereas in China that was not the case pointed to this intentional alteration (How could migrating to the United States suddenly transform the women's morals?). This also explains why Ng's statement about "Natural Feet Society" which exemplified Chinese anti-footbinding efforts and well supported his point was entirely omitted. Gruetter also avoided recording the protesting sentiment from the committee and the tension between the two parties. Furthermore, regardless of what Ng said to the inspector, to cater to its Chinese readers, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* must have reflected the situation that the Chinese resonated with.

[28] The Chinese newspaper version says, "伍曰否否。中國舊俗 婦女之纏足不纏足 祇分貴嬌非貴嬌。非分品行也 況近今風氣開通過。婦女無纏足者 即前之纏者今亦釋放 獨不聞我國之所謂天足會耶 嗣後總不

Nevertheless, what these Chinese individuals said and wrote were not possible to be treated as a priority. The up-to-date information regarding footbinding was not adopted, regardless (or because) of Mr. Ng's status as a well-known figure in Chinese community in the United States. Inspector and Interpreter Gardener's accurate translation of the excerpts of the two *Chung Sai Yat Po* articles was kept in the same file, yet apparently were not seen as equally important. In his correspondence to the Commissioner-General of Immigration at Washington, D.C., dated July 14, 1911, Steward did not mention the issue of questioning women's feet at all. His report mainly addressed the issues raised in the official statements of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Six Companies, which the President and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce also reviewed. It is unknown whether this was Steward's selective winnowing or he just simply did not care. Yet, the purpose of the Immigration Service's collaboration with this investigation outlined in the same letter helps to make sense,

> It is firmly believed that, if civic bodies and commercial organizations can be brought into closer touch with the administration of the Immigration Service in this locality, a great deal of unjust criticism can be eliminated and that many disinterested men will refuse to accept slurs and innuendos directed at our Service without requiring proof of the existence of wrongdoing.[29]

Therefore, the aim to eliminate criticism instead of improving current administration predetermined Steward and the immigration institution's overall tendency to defend its enforcement measures in vogue. The truth about the cultural customs of the immigrants, was merely one interpretation among a hierarchy of sources of knowledge in which the opposing

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宜以此為問。致滋煩瑣也" *Chung Sai Yat Po,* June 2, 1911; Gardener's translation of excerpts of this news article is a credible piece of work. File 52961/24D, NARA, DC.

[29] File 52961/24D, NARA, DC.

voice from the less powerful was almost impossible to make its way to the top. Commissioner Steward already differentiated the credibility of the two narratives in his report by stating that Ng "prepared two articles setting forth the visit of the committee *according to his recollection*," whereas "Stenographer Gruetter has undoubtedly preformed an excellent piece of work, and the inclosed transcription will set forth *clearly* the views of the investigators on the various points which arose."[30]

Meanwhile, although trying to reverse cultural bias, Chinese intellectuals, diplomats and community leaders like Wu Tingfang and Ng Poon Chew perhaps did not want to go too far either. When gaining entry was so difficult, it would make no sense to suggest any changes that would further eliminate new entries. Minister Wu's public speech regarding footbinding was part of effort to combat demonized imageries of China and its traditions that bolstered the exclusion of the Chinese, rather than a direct challenge to the immigration inspection practice. Ng did not mention the bound feet issue in his 1908 booklet which specially addressed the maltreatment of the exempt classes of Chinese in the United States.[31] Among all the impropriate questions he took initiatives to discuss with Steward, the question of women's foot size was not included. If he did ask the commissioner to stop posing such a question in the 1911 investigation as his newspaper reported, he was not the one who brought up the topic at the first place. Moreover, it happened in a more private setting, which ended up only being publicized in a Chinese-language newspaper. Perhaps this also in part explains why some Chinese merchants, in the mainstream newspaper interviews, remained silent on the shifting social signification of footbinding. Their dilemma epitomized the working of U.S. imperial power in holding on to the orientalist representation in the making of

[30] File 52961/24D, NARA, DC.

immigration regulation methods and the limit of the Chinese efforts to reorder the inequal power relations.

Investigating 1912 Chinese Students' Case

One year later, another investigation regarding the manners of handling the case of a group of Chinese students was conducted in Angel Island. The survival of original notes written by these students leaves us rare glimpses of the human dimension of Chinese migrants' experience including their outrage to questions about women's feet, and how their voices were muted in a "hierarchy of credibility" as what Ann Laura Stoler phrases.

This group of 77 Chinese students arrived on June 17, 1912 under the guardianship of a Christian woman, Miss Ida K. Greenlee of Seattle and of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Greenlee planned to send these students to study in different cities and towns under the help of local churches. Upon arrival, the students were immediately taken to Angel Island for further examination. She later submitted a 16-page complaint about the students' detention, including a list of 20 questions she propounded to them on the conditions of the Island after they were dismissed. Although she requested "each boy to answer honestly every question" chosen by lot, only 28 students' original answers in Chinese survived in the immigration file. All of them seemed to respond to the same set of 12 questions. No English translation was attached. The answers from Chan Hing, whose case was specially referred to by Miss Greenlee and whose name was the only one mentioned in the immigration officials' reports

[31] Ng Poon Chew, "The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the United States," 1908, Folder 20, Carton 1, Asian American Studies Archives, U.C. Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library.

were not found in the file. Nor were the immigration papers of his case despite it was referred serval times by immigration authorities.[32]

When being requested to list any inappropriate questions asked, Chan Fat and Chan Ho both complained that the custom collector asked whether their mother had big feet or bound feet. Another student, Yee Kam Yuen elaborated,

> During the interrogation on Thursday and Friday, the custom collector asked me whether my mother was bound footed or not. Based on this question he asked, I wonder if they were allowed to ask about various things about my country and keep going on and on? Or the collector intentionally asked about this in order to find some pleasure out of it? Or he just wanted to ask about these illegal things to kill his time? I just couldn't understand."

Coming as a student, Yee perhaps was not informed about and prepared for this kind of questions. He was puzzled by the custom collector's obsession with such a detail and offended by the collector's interest in an old practice that had been outlawed in China. Although he got to file his complaint, this was a rare opportunity that most migrants could not possibly obtain. Even though it is unknown how each migrant would exactly react to questions of this kind when they overwhelmingly focused on increasing their chances of entry and when the anti-footbinding reforms in China were very uneven, the national humiliation attached to footbinding was indifferently evoked time and time again at America's gates.

Yet neither Miss Greenlee nor the immigration authorities prioritized the students' first-hand observation as a crucial reference. The major pressure on the immigration

[32] Chinese Inspector in Charge Charles Mehan in his report to Commissioner of Immigration at Angel Island on September 10, 1912it was submitted and referred to. Commissioner Samuel Backus in his correspondence to Commissioner-General of Immigrants at Washington, D. C. three days later.

personnel resulted from the charges from Miss Greenlee, the Reverend Dr. Matthews of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. Because their complaints either had already flied to or eventually would reach the desks of their higher-ups such as Secretary Charles Nagel and Acting Secretary, Ben S. Cable of the Department of Commerce and Labor at Washington, D. C.

On August 28, 1912, the inspector in charge of Immigration Division wrote to the commissioner at Angel Island, saying that Miss Greenlee's complaints stemmed from her unrealistic expectation about what the Immigration Service could do. As to the students' testimonies, he merely mentioned that the students' answers "to these questions do not appear in the report before me." His indifference revealed he had already decided the "truth." He claimed that "it is pretty well established that those detained there are comfortably and carefully taken care of and suffer no harm, either physically or mentally."[33] Miss Greenlee submitted the original papers containing the answers along with her report, yet indicated, "Not being able to translate them myself I do not know what they have written." "I know only this," she continued, "that their idea of the United States and its protection for the Chinese student was greatly changed during their term at the Island." Despite her intention to help, she undermined the most important evidence from the students, and in turn, assisted the Immigration Service's irresponsible attitudes.

The students' statements demonstrated that the inspector's declaration that the boys suffered "no harm, either physically or mentally" was simply a self-fashioned cover-up. At least three among the 28 students reported scolding and physical maltreatment.[34] Lum

[33] File 52753/13 A, NARA, DC.

[34] Ibid.

Cheung Yan, a student originally from Hong Kong St. Paul's College described his experience as follows,

> On the evening of June 19, around 5, when I was chatting with my friends in the wooden house, suddenly one doctor came in during his shift, he checked around and hit my back with newspapers and scolded me harshly, "god damn." I didn't know why he beat me. I only know he is a barbarian, so I didn't argue with him.

Yee Kam Yuen also recalled, "On June 18 at around 11 am, we went to the hospital to have hookworm examination. I was waiting on the stairs because there were too many of us to enter the room at the same time. One watchman used his hand to hit my back and kept scolding me angrily."[35]

In fact, the question on women's feet was not the only routinized offensive questions. Woo Fat's note pointed to other improper inquiries: "When the custom collector examined my case, he asked me if I was married. I said I was not married. He then asked about how many children I had. I answered how could I have children without having a wife?"[36] Si Tu Yao encountered a similar question. Although the questions sounded ridiculous to him, he had to contain his anger,

> When I was about to land, the custom collector asked me if I was married. I said no. He then asked how many sons I had. I answered how

[35] He expressed his indignation, "When I was in my country, I heard that America had a good sense of honor and shame and is a civilized country of courtesy and righteousness. However, I didn't expect being treated in a way that tigers and wolves would treat their enemies and preys when we arrived at the custom house. We are innocent, but we suffered; without reason, we were beaten. This had never been heard in history and in the world. Was this the fault of the watchman or the American government? I think both should take responsibility." File 52753/13 A, NARA, DC.

[36] Another question Woo Fat found uncomfortable with was: "He also asked me about the wall of the Ng-Lee school in Hong Kong was made of bricks or wood." The Ng-Lee school mentioned here was established by Miss Greenlee. File 52753/13 A, NARA, DC.

> could I had sons without getting married. He then asked how many daughters I had. I realized that these people did not really listen to me and insisted their ways of questioning. I really wanted to ask him if he realized that this would offend people. So I raised my voice while answering these questions.

The veracity of these written answers from the Chinese students was evident for serval reasons. First, different handwriting styles, literary wordings and phrasings indicated each student penned his own answer as told by Miss Greenlee. Second, their differing answers to the question about whether there was enough bedding in detention matched up with Angel Island's inadequate accommodation that the officers acknowledged. Moreover, their notes about how they were treated were far from fabricated exaggeration. For instance, while a number of students complained of being forced to take medicine without getting any explanation, some confirmed that no beating happened to them.

A "hierarchy of credibility" can be detected in ways in which the officials addressed the complaints and legitimated whose information as trustworthy evidence. The Immigration Service's defense in this case mainly took in three forms: first, legitimizing their inspection practices by quoting from their own staff especially those of Chinese background, second, foregrounding their suspicion of the students and blaming the victims, and last, returning the pressure to the Congress by redirecting attention to lack of facilities and funding.

Inspector Charles Mehan's report to Commissioner at Angel Island on September 10, 1912 exemplified these rhetoric strategies. To refute Miss Greenlee's accusations towards the immigration officers, he referred to the accused officers' words as if they were the only and most authoritative sources. He asserted that "her accusations against Inspector Lorenzen are equally without foundation is clearly shown in the accompanying frank and full report rendered by that officer." He further emphasized that the interpreter Lee G. Dean was a

reliable Chinese, saying that he is "a Chinese person of a mild disposition and gentle manner as well as an efficient officer, concurs" with the report. Mehan continued, stating that Greenlee's complaint against Inspector Jones was equally without foundation, because Jones's reply was borne out by other Chinese members of the Service.

> It is corroborated by Stenographer Buckle who is a Presbyterian minister and by George Chan who is a Chinese himself and son of a Chinese Methodist clergyman. Neither Mr. Buckle nor Mr. Chan could be accused of being anti-Chinese in feeling and they both deny with Inspector Jones that anything like Miss Greenlee complains of happened.

On the contrary to what Mehan strove to prove, however, M. A. Mattews' letter dated September 12, 1912 to Secretary Nagel, ascertained that the inspectors admitted unfairness had been done: "I am told further that they are willing to repent and correct all the errors complained" because of Miss Greenlee's "willingness for the department to give the erring employee another chance."

Apparently, Mehan found it hard to entirely avoid addressing irritations from the Chinese. His higher-ups who received Miss Greenlee's questions would expect reports and explanations from him. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that his discussion about the resentments of the Chinese was not grounded in how the Chinese migrants felt. Greenlee asked, "What is the value to the Chinese student of his Sect. VI paper if when he lands at a port in the United States he is made to feel that he has been guilty of a criminal offense?" He responded with a flat refutation: "This question would have no place." He then unabashedly evaded the critical point about the rights of the exempt class, and forcefully turned the charge to the students, "any contempt for the laws of this land or resentment against their execution" would be "good proof that their Chinese education has either been sadly neglected or that it

has had no effect on them" because Chinese schoolbooks taught that "the duty of a person about to enter a foreign state is to ascertain what the laws of that state are, in order that they may not be violated."[37]

Meanwhile, other Chinese statements that would assist the immigration administration again were quoted as "powerful" weapons against the dissent to justify their discretion and administration as if the Chinese allied with the Service automatically became the authorities. Mehan attributed Greenlee's accusations "partially due to her lack of knowledge that advance information had been transmitted to the Department by a person in Hong Kong as to the undesirable character of her so-called students and the unworthy motive prompting her Chinese backers." Although no evidence to prove frauds, he suspected their drafts would be "fictitious" because "too many fictitious drafts have been exhibited at this port for us." Perhaps realizing he had not provided any circumstantial evidence, he hastily wrapped up, saying that Miss Greenlee and others' concern "is considerably neutralized by the fact it was a Chinese who first warned this government to be careful concerning Miss Greenlee's consignment of 'students.'" On the surface, this discussion seemed to be all about the Chinese, yet the Chinese students' voices were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of credibility.

Mehan also diligently directed the accusations to Congress by singling out questions regarding the facilities in Angel Island,

[37] "The Chinese Exclusion Act has been in operation in this country for upwards of a quarter of a century. It would seem that had this law not been humanely executed, the Chinese would not continue to evince as they do an ardent desire to gain admission into this country. Not much apprehension need be felt over the possible antagonism of these people against the United States, since by their wild desire to come in through every available avenue, they demonstrate their fondness and admiration for the country governed by such laws as Miss Greenlee chafes under and is fearful of."

> Congress has not seen fit to appropriate enough money to provide playgrounds and escorts and different officials necessary to bring about such ideal conditions. . . . They may be directly charged to the inadequacy of the service. If that is so, the proper method is to so advise Congress and ask that it make proper provision so as to improve conditions.[38]

Therefore, paradoxically, in the investigation on the treatment of the Chinese, the Chinese who were in the physical position to observe and to know the handling of the cases were the only group whose evidence was not considered and discussed almost throughout all the communications. In the hierarchy of credibility, evidence and insights from the Chinese could only be referred when they served to support the implementation of the laws under attack.

Immigration Interpreters as Archive Makers

As we have discussed, the challenges to the immigration administration through official channels usually invited strong defenses from the immigration authorities. Yet, the immigration documentation and inspection took place every day, mostly without direct confrontation and face-to-face discussion. Moreover, neither the immigration bureau nor the Chinese community was a homogeneous entity. When a certain enforcement measure became a vogue, some "insiders" worked hard to perpetuate the existing mechanism to secure personal gains, which further complicated the making of immigration archives. Although scholars have noted the importance of immigration interpreters as brokers,[39] the archival power held by these interpreters has not been underscored in current scholarly works. While a comprehensive study of the role of interpreters is beyond the scope of this chapter, I will

[38] File 52753/13 A, NARA, DC.

[39] Mae M. Ngai, "'A Slight Knowledge of the Barbarian Language': Chinese Interpreters in Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2011):5-32.

focus on one investigation of the case of a Chinese merchant of Philadelphia, Mark Kee Poo[40] in 1914 who exposed one interpreter's misconduct, to illustrate immigration interpreters' power in fabricating immigration archives.

Usually coaching letters were sent to applicants in China to better prepare them for interrogation after landing. Yet, when trying to bring his son Mark Shu Som over, Mark confided his son never saw the coaching material. It was the interpreter Joseph H. Lee who requested him to write a coaching letter for the purpose of preparing an "admissible" case. Mark described how Lee extorted money from him and promised that he would fix up the case,

> After my second boy had been examined here at Seattle and the papers referred to the Philadelphia office for investigation Lee sent word to me that he wanted to see me in the office at once as there was no one there at the time. I hurried to the office and was told by Lee that the boy had his testimony all mixed up and that if I would give him $100 he would straighten things out so the boy would be admitted, and as I was helpless in the matter I agreed to pay the $100. Lee told me to come to the office the next day when I would be examined. I stated to him that if the boy's testimony was all mixed up I wouldn't know what to say, and he said leave that to me, you simply say something in Chinese in answer to their questions and I will fix up the answer for you. The next day when examined I did as told and later on the boy was admitted.[41]

In another round of investigation, Mark stated that Lee asked him to write out "all about our family and to draw a diagram of the village for his use."[42] It is unknown whether Mark's wife had bound feet or not. It was recorded in the immigration file that the inspector

[40] His family name is Mark, "Mai" in pinyin and "麦" in Chinese character.

[41] File 28717, NARA, Seattle.

[42] Ibid.

did ask about her foot size. The testimonies of Mark and his son in the case files both stated she was bound-footed as the coaching letter indicated.[43]

This case reminds us the limits of the resistance narrative which often presumed a united Chinese community that fought against a hegemonic U.S. immigration bureaucracy. The interpreters, taking advantage of knowledge and information available on both sides, could exert tremendous power to create records for whoever was willing to pay, despite the race or national origin of their clients. They usually deployed and perpetuated the existing screening practices rather than disrupting them. Sometimes the interpreters played more than one role in the immigration network to maximize their profit. Familiar with the fact that buying a share in a U.S. company was one way to "produce" a Chinese merchant, Lee purposely opened such a store to create a crucial proof for the migrants to establish their mercantile status. According to Mark,

> Lee has a little store in Philadelphia named Quong Lee Company. He has an old man running it for him and he sends boys back to China as partners in the firm when they are not partners in the firm. He, of course, collects something from each one for giving him a mercantile status. The store belongs to Lee himself. His claim to having a number of partners is but a blind.

Lee seemed to accumulate considerable wealth by regularly extorting money from his Chinese fellows.[44] One immigration official who investigated Joseph H. Lee stated some other interpreters received similar accusations from Chinese migrants as well. The process of

[43] File RS 26136, NARA, Seattle.

[44] "Every laborer who goes back has to pay him $5. If he doesn't come through he always holds up the case a month or two, saying he has not time to take up the case. It is well known to all the Chinese of Philadelphia that every merchant has to pay him $50 to get his case through. He built two or three houses when he went home to China this last time on money accumulated in this country." File 28717, NARA, Seattle.

immigration archival production, therefore, was filled not only with contestations but also negotiations and exploitations.

Coaching System and Institutionalization of "Truth"

In addition to the archival power held by immigration authorities and the interpreters in producing immigration records, as shown in Chapter one, the Chinese also participated in the coaching business which indirectly yet powerfully contributed to the immigration archive-making. However, the coaching system could not be simply labeled as a product of "Chinese agency." The close associations among immigration commissioners, inspectors, interpreters, lawyers, brokers, and private enterprises permitted a transnational coaching system and collaborative performance between potential or detained immigrants, and who profited in their landing. This illuminates the multiple underlying forces which sustained a highly organized system that demanded to codify the Chinese bodies rather than producing truthful knowledge in the immigration inspection. For the Chinese migrants, to pass immigration interrogation through coaching was not a game about "truth" or lies, but a tedious exam that the "right" answers had already been set up.[45] This further explains why the orientalist perception regarding lily-footed Chinese women continued to flourish in immigration screenings.

Female foot sizes were incorporated into coaching maps, some of which sketched the residents in each unit and their physical features, contributing to an institutionalization of those migrants' bodies and cultures. Migrants, immigration officials, interpreters, brokers, attorneys, and lawyers, Chinese or non-Chinese, willingly or sometimes unwillingly, were all

[45] I owe my thanks to Professor Guoxiong Zhang, who shared this idea with me in my research trip in 2016. Zhang is an expert on coaching materials at the Wuyi University in China.

drawn into this performative collaboration and archival making, keeping these screening techniques unchallenged.

People were hired to perform as witnesses in the cross-examination process, which often ended up with strengthening the already codified knowledge.[46] As a professional witness, the person was coached to ensure a successful landing. However, they often had to answer unexpected questions. Sometimes, these witnesses were even too scared to respond to the simplest questions, let alone revealing any truth. On May 17, 1915, Sue Ming testified in a case of a merchant son, as the witness for Shew Luck who was allegedly his company's partner and the father of Shew Quan Lum. Being caught off guard by the question about his wife's name, age, feet and whereabouts, Sue Ming stated his wife's name wrong and tried to avoid answering those questions by saying, "I dont think it necessary to ask me those questions, I am the manager." His dialogue with Inspector W. W. Thiess was recorded as follows:

> Q: It is not for you to say what is necessary for you to answer; if you are not willing to answer these questions say so right now?
> A: All right.
> Q: Do you want this examination to proceed?
> A: All right.
> Q: What is the age of your wife?
> A: 31.
> Q: What kind of feet has she?
> A: Bound feet.[47]

[46] Solicitor of the Department of Labor, J. B. Densmore's Memorandum for the commissioner on September 20, 1917 noted that "The above Chinese is a professional witness, having appeared as witness in cases of sons of Natives applying for admission. In most of the cases substitution of photographs on the alleged father's papers has taken place, and this Chinese should in the future be discredited as a witness." File 12016/1076-4, NARA, SF.

[47] File 9567/32, NARA-PR, SF.

Moreover, he said “none” in response to the questions about how many natural or adapted children he had have. This conflicted with the fact that he brought over two children which was recorded in the immigration files. In the reexamination, Sue Ming explained that he misunderstood the question. Nonetheless, such straightforward questions were unlikely to be misunderstood, considering he had gone through the interrogation process in order to land his wife and two sons. More likely he was instructed to answer “no” to any unprepared questions, which was commonly noted in the coaching documents. He actually admitted that the questions were unexpected,

> Q: What is the name of your wife?
> A: Fong Shee.
> Q: Can you explain why the other day you said her name was Chan Shee?
> A: That was my mistake the other day.
> Q: You do not know much about your family judging from your answers made when I asked you questions when you sat there? You seemed non-plussed?
> A: Because I was examined about my business and my mind was in different ways.
> Q: And these questions were unexpected? --is that it?
> A: I did not know that that was going to be a question.
> Q: Have you any further explanation to offer at this time regarding your family?
> A: I did not pay particular attention the other day in the examination but to-day I give what is right.[48]

His seemingly ridiculous mistakes revealed that in such a system, people dared not to speak about truth other than the codified information.

Furthermore, the participants in such a complex system did not have a fixed position as interpreters, inspectors, lawyers or migrants. They moved among different positions or

[48] Ibid.

took multiple roles simultaneously in the system. This also contributed to the routinization and standardization of the constructed "truth." Ones who had "insider" knowledge about the immigration inspection procedures and matters later could engage in the business of practicing immigration laws as attorneys, and vice versa. Since they made their living out of Chinese landings, they worked to maintain this lucrative business, including perpetuating the non-use or misuse of knowledge of China and its cultures as well as peoples.

For example, Inspector Jackson "was formerly in Washington with the appeal board" before he was transferred out to Angel Island to work as an inspector for a while. He later became an attorney. Ed Lee who worked at Angel Island said that Jackson's "cases were very successful. So after a while he charged a very high price."[49] When John Birge Sawyer worked as U.S. Consul General in Shanghai, his former colleague wrote to him on November 11, 1924, stating that some U.S. immigration personnel in Chinese matters "had resigned and gone into law practice" when the Immigration Act of 1924 "to some extent lessen the demand for officers expert in Chinese matters."[50] As "insiders," these people disseminated knowledge about what would work or not in gaining admission. The assertions made by the attorneys, for instance, about the eminent respectability indicated by the bound feet of Yin Haw's wife at the beginning of Chapter one was just one example of how their knowledge about the system was used to establish admissibility, which ended up promoting misinformation.

Conclusion

[49] Angel Islands Immigration Station Interviews with Chris Chow, Mr. Yuen, Ira and Ed Lee, 1977, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[50] *John Birge Sawyer Papers*, Folder 2, Box 2, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

In China, women's natural foot had become a symbol of progress and modernity since the late nineteenth century. However, the institutionalization of "differences" in immigration inspection exerted tremendous power in fixating footbinding as a "oriental" practice frozen in time. Those enforcement officials did not change their favorable decisions towards women with bound feet until years after the real shift took place. Except in Hawaii where footbinding was officially banned in 1895, and the Honolulu immigration officers begun to systematically record the transformation about women's feet around the year of 1916,[51] it was not until almost 10 years after these two investigations that immigration inspectors eventually dropped the connection they made between bound feet and women's morality and class. Nonetheless, they never made preferential comments towards women with natural feet as they previously did with the footbound women. Natural foot mainly functioned as a physical identifier in the 1920s and up to the end of the Chinese exclusion while its representation of the most progressive class in China were left out in the official discourse. The end of the favor towards "golden lilies" and indifferentiable treatment with the natural-footed women successfully closed the loopholes of the screening process. The Chinese migrants no longer could claim their exempted status through women's feet type.

The examination of the transmitting and producing knowledge and facts in these investigations sheds light on the paradoxes of "golden lilies." In everyday enforcement of the exclusion laws, the inspectors mainly followed the routinized inspection methods. The migrants were certainly not in equal footing with the immigration authorities who had

[51] One example is "Q What is the mother's name? A Young Shee, formerly bound feet, now unbound. Q Who have you been living with in China? A My husband's mother, his grandmother Wong Shee, formerly bound feet. "U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, File 4383/31, Application Case Files for Admission As Wives of Chinese Merchants, Teachers and Clergy, Honolulu District Office, RG 85 Records, National Archives and Records Administration-Pacific Region, San Francisco. (hereafter NARA, ACA-Honolulu, SF). Multiple immigration case files show this trend. File 4383/25, 4383/33, 4383/34, 4383/71, NARA, ACA-Honolulu, SF.

ultimate say in what to include in their methods and reports. To ensure successful landings, the strategies of the migrants' or immigration brokers had to conform to the existing rules, expectations and "truth," which suppressed the channeling of facts that reflected the most recent changes. That's why the interpreters who translated between two sides during the interrogation played a pivotal role in the making of immigration archives, regardless they intended to assist or thwart each case. Once the immigration bureau was charged for their maltreatment towards the immigrants or offensive screening measures in use, certain strategies to resist truth, realign facts and reorient attention would be utilized to justify the existing mechanism rather than correcting it.

The truth and complexity about Chinese women and their bodies were rendered invisible in the official exchanges of information. Because, first, the immigration authorities undoubtedly strove to defend the effectiveness of their inspection techniques, which usually resulted in the marginalization of Chinese voices. All the reports from the inspectors avoided migrants' complaints but concentrated on the authorities like Miss Greenlee who spoke for them. Meanwhile, the immigration inspection and documentation aimed for a functioning system rather than constantly catching up with the reality in China. The law makers of the Chinese exclusion acts did not envision the enormous difficulties these legislations would pose once put into practice. The enforcement officials, however, had to devise sets of rules and techniques to determine who belongs to the exempt class. Furthermore, when attempting to protest stereotypes, the Chinese leaders in the United States like Minister Wu and Mr. Ng had to make compromises when their oppositions may risk migrants' chances of new entries. The interventions of the immigration interpreters, brokers, attorneys, and migrants in a complex coaching network further blurred the distinctions among resistance, acquiescence and collaboration. A crosscutting web of interest and power dynamics restricted what counted

as knowledge and evidence in immigration screenings and what could be channeled into immigration records.

In short, the fact that the questions about the size of women's foot would appear in the interrogation questions and be used to determine admissibility of certain individuals seemed to suggest that it actually made sense to consider it an issue of class: families that cared about the look and marriageability of their daughters and confined their women to domesticity were unlikely to be members of the lower class of the society. Further, the dominant nineteenth-century U.S. gender ideology consistently associated the middle class with higher moral standing and the poorer class with promiscuity. The U.S. public concern and anxiety towards the immorality of Chinese women who would contaminate and threaten the composition and moral fiber of the nation, continued to haunt the enforcers of the exclusion laws, even though the Chinese exclusion laws did not explicitly target "immoral" women. To ensure that the immigrants would be deemed as "admissible" according to U.S. sensibilities and logics perhaps were far more important than acquiring "truth" about China. The ideal of middle-class U.S. women with its emphasis on domesticity and morality thus were conveniently applied to define Chinese admissibility. This propels us to examine the larger social milieu that granted validity to their rationales and logics, which I will proceed to articulate in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Searching for Cinderellas:

U.S. Foot Fever, Chinese Alterity and Global Beauty

U.S. operation of difference becomes apparent when we turn to examine how U.S. society posed its gaze onto the female bodies of its white population. Dorothy Ko frames the title of her book on Chinese footbinding as "Cinderella's Sister" which hints at the commonality between the two.[1] Despite rich archival resources on U.S./Western Cinderella foot fever, no scholarship attempted to fully explicate the commonalities of body ideals and gender and class ideologies in U.S./Western and Chinese societies. This chapter turns to the stories of the sisters of "golden lilies" in North America and Europe to demonstrate that the shared ideologies about women's bodies, class, and morality between China and the United States granted validity to the paradoxical inclusion of those lily-footed women at U.S. ports of entry.

This chapter contends that U.S. operation of difference manifested in the ways in which U.S. female foot was discussed in relation to European and Chinese beauty ideals respectively. By consistently associating U.S. small feet fad with European beauty, art and culture, and ignoring the resemblance between Chinese and U.S. gender ideologies and female body standards, many Americans imagined and cultivated a trans-Atlantic female bodily culture that reinscribed the binary of West versus East into the female body, no matter how ambiguous those imagined and real differences were. Chinese women were racialized and homogenized into a remote being with little subjectivity. This process of racialization neither prevented Americans and Europeans from surrendering their traditional assumptions

[1] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters.*

about female nature and its relation to the body, and also from building solidarity with Chinese and European women whose experience at times echoed theirs.

In his work on the display of a bound-footed Chinese woman in Jacksonian America, John Haddad argues that "in the 1830s, U.S. and Chinese cultures employed parallel systems of domesticity. Though the Chinese version was underpinned by Confucian principles and its U.S. counterpart by economic forces and Protestant ideals, the two resembled one another in the most basic sense: both worked to intensify the women's experience in the home."[2] Even though footbinding was not mentioned in Confucian classics and texts, the domesticity endorsed by them aided little to challenge the practice. An investigation into the small feet fever among U.S. men and women revealed that these parallel systems of domesticity continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The conflation of small feet with middle-class status, female morality and marriageability was not distinctively Chinese. It existed in North American and some other Western societies too. In spite of the variations in details of the storytelling about "Cinderella," the wide publicity and circulations of Cinderella image in forms of literature, theatre, arts, children books, and advertisements spoke to deeply-rooted, tenacious ideologies about dainty feet as part of a desirable female bodily figure to win a man of a noble background. The ending of the Brothers Grimm version that the girl whose foot fitted the slipper married the Prince strongly resembles the association of feet with marriageability in Chinese society. Modernizing forces such as urbanization, the growth of shoe manufactures, dress reform, class fluidity and the rise of consumerism in the U.S. society and the larger

[2] Haddad, "The Chinese Lady and China for the Ladies," 13.

Western world provided new opportunities and incentives for people to invoke the trope of Cinderella again and again.

This compellingly explains the social milieu in which U.S. immigration officials considered the footbound Chinese women as women of better morals and higher social class in the enforcement of the Chinese exclusion laws for decades, as opposed to overwhelming resentment towards Chinese men's queues among Americans. When shifting our attention to social and cultural ideologies and practices regarding female bodies among the white population in the United States, interesting parallels came to the fore.

U.S. Foot Fever

The nineteenth century witnessed a rapid growth of U.S. shoe industry from handcraftsmanship in small shops at the beginning of the century to the complex organization at the end which replaced mechanization emerged in the 1850s and 1860s.[3] British shoe historian June Swann notes that "nearly all technical innovation in shoemaking originated in the United States throughout the nineteenth century." The U.S. "invasion" of mass-produced shoes to Britain begun by 1885.[4] The booming shoe manufacture industries and businesses aided the movement of shoe fashion ideas not only domestically but also internationally. Shoe centers like Chicago drew celebrities from different places who were looking for fashionable shoes, which in turn, brought the fashion to other parts of the world. In 1889, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that as Chicago was growing into a great boot and shoe center, "actresses send to Chicago for supplies of footwear whenever they go out on the theatrical

[3] Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America,* 9-36.

[4] Swann, *Shoes*, 51.

road. All over the broad continent Chicago sends its notably beautiful shoes. According to the report, these actresses also brought the Chicago fashion to major European cities. "Mrs. Brega had her wee shoes sent from Chicago to Florence, Italy, when she was stopping there. Mrs. A. V. Armour had Chicago-made boots sent to her in Vienna and Mrs. C. J. O'Connell in London, England."[5] Alongside the developing shoe industry and business, advertisements of shoes, interviews with shoe merchants, and discussion of shoe fashions and bodily beauty became increasingly visible in the U.S. newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A recurring theme in those U.S. discussions was women's vanity about small and dainty feet. U.S. women often crushed their feet into smaller-sized shoes to achieve the effect of smallness. The prevalence of this practice was best articulated in people's accusation towards it. In 1883, for instance, the *Washington Post* reprinted a news story from *San Francisco Chronicle* in which one shoe merchant stated, "No city in the United States is so renowned for ladies with small feet as San Francisco, and why? Because in no other city do the ladies, as a general rule, so punish themselves as to crush a No. 5 foot into a No.3 shoe."[6] His criticism went as far as to say French shoes were worse than those worn by the Chinese, "Popular? Oh, yes, though they are the most absurd thing imaginable, and for cramping ladies' feet into all conceivable shapes of deformity they surpass those worn by the Mongolians."[7] One shoemaker assured a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter that "I'd be the most surprised man in the city myself if I found a lady without corns. One of my greatest

[5] "Studies About the City" *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1889, 26.

[6] "Deceptions in Feet: How the California Ladies Compress Their Pedal Extremities," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1883, 2.

[7] Ibid., 2.

troubles is to overcome the tenderness of swollen joints or sensitive corns without making the boots too loose."[8]

Nevertheless, pinching feet into smaller-sized shoes was neither a practice unique among San Francisco women nor the only technique to acquire an illusion of an ideal foot. One San Francisco shoe merchant mentioned a trick in shoe design to visualize smallness, saying that the heel placed in the middle of the foot "makes the deception that conveys the idea of a small foot."[9] One woman in Chicago elaborated the consequence of these excruciating shoes. She stated that in addition to wearing tight shoes, pointed shoes with "the heel (Louis Quinze) under the bridge of our foot" cramped "our feet, doubling our toes one above the other, causing corns, bunions, enlarged and misshapen joints, crippling our feet permanently."[10] The kind of shoes that projected the image of having small feet resembled a special style of shoes called platform shoes among Manchu women, the ruling class in Qing China, to create an illusion of small feet, even though Manchu women did not have the tradition of footbinding.

Even though unlike the early nineteenth century, domestic ideology had been increasingly employed by U.S. women to justify their participation in public sphere by the end of the nineteenth century, perhaps the well-alive craze for tiny feet in the early twentieth century epitomized a society that still provided fertile soil to foster domesticity as an indispensable constitute of female respectability. How to maintain small and graceful feet had been a popular topic in newspaper sections that themed bodily etiquette chiefly for ladies in

[8] "Boots For Belles," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 1, 1888, 8.

[9] "Deceptions in Feet," *Washington Post*, 2.

[10] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

juxtaposition with ads such as ladies' shoes, corsets, wrappers, hosieries, and fat reducing treatment.[11] For instance, Ruth Sloan, in a 1910 *Chicago Tribune* article, recounted her visit to a studio where the hostess offered the woman readers advice about how "to make the best of themselves." The hostess took feet as the first subject and stressed "little stage tricks" to achieve "the effect of being small." She first advised not to turn the feet out at a broad angle in walking. The second advice was to "always turn the toe down instead of up" if sitting with the feet crossed, because it "gives a pretty arch to the instep and consequently makes the foot smaller." She also suggested to purchase shoes wisely: "A long vamp will make the foot look longer and narrower, and a short vamp will have just the opposite effect. If the instep is flat have an insole put in the shoe, or get a shoe that has a well built up arch."[12]

Searching for Cinderella: Chicago Foot Contests

U.S. foot fever in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was well epitomized in foot contests in Chicago. Like other U.S. beauty contests emerging around the same time, foot contests served to attract attention and encourage consumption.[13] The organizers and promoters of the contests often strove to satisfy the tastes of the time and in turn, reinforced the dominant ideologies of race, gender and class. While entertaining, the push for womanly perfection and extreme standards *as well as* the uncritical attitudes towards prevailing ideas about female bodies left intact traditional patriarchal values in U.S. society.

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[11] A good example can be found in *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

[12] Ruth Sloan, "Small Feet with Narrow Skirt and How to Gain the 'Illusion.'" *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1910, F5.

[13] A. R. Riverol, "Miss America and Other Misses: A Second Look at American Beauty Contests," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1983): 207-217.

Dorothy Ko has researched Chinese foot contests (saijiao hui) in Northwest China and "Feet-washing Festival" (xijiao dahui) in the Southwest where "retained its centuries-old reputation as the mecca of footbinding."[14] She found "no conclusive evidence" to prove the real existence of the contests and festivals: "Feet contests belong to the realm of urban myths which everybody talks about as if they were present but no one seems to have actually seen."[15]

If Ko is right, the Chinese foot contests and foot washing festival were mysterious rumor. U.S. foot contests, however, were certainly not. A series of news articles in the *Chicago Tribune* clearly documented some well-planned contests, searching for local Cinderellas. When both the U.S. and the Chinese linked nationhood with womanhood and female bodies, U.S. women's feet had also started to bear the weight of cities' reputation in an increasingly modernized world, coinciding with the quickening pace of urbanization, industrialization and the consumerist shift of the press in the United States.

Historian Julia Guarneri maintains that "in the late nineteenth century, advertising for consumer goods and entertainment became so important to publishers' bottom lines that they reconsidered their target audiences." They purposely crafted certain features to invite "women, immigrants, teenagers, and children into their reading audience."[16] She states that by the early twentieth century, "editors sorted city dwellers into separate interest groups to whom they could pitch specific goods . . . These sections . . . wove consumer goods into

[14] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*.

[15] Ibid., 148.

[16] Julia Guarneri, *Newsprint Metropolis: City Papers and the Making of Modern Americans* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 6.

definitions of modern manhood, womanhood, middle-class respectability, and metropolitan style."[17]

The image of Chicago as a city of big footed women was wildly circulated in the late nineteenth century. In 1885, *San Francisco Chronicle* reprinted an article from the *New York Commercial Advisor* on Chicago girls' feet, quoting a shoemaker who used to live in Chicago, "The belles of that city have to some extent been slandered, but it is a fact that their pedal extremities are larger than the ordinary."[18] A 1893 *Washington Post* article asserted that "the effect of Chicago air on the pedal development" was "not fancy, but just plain fact." A Minneapolis lady had "a cute little foot," but "six months in Chicago have had such an effect that she now wears two sizes larger and two letters wider."[19]

It was reported that this characterization agitated Chicagoans. A *Chicago Tribune* journalist stated in one article on the studies about the city in 1889 that "it is outrageous to be continually misrepresented as a wilderness of flat-footed ungainliness."[20] To prove that "the average Chicago foot is as well shaped as it is diminutive," the journalist listed multiple women with slender feet of the city, including the sizes of their shoes. For example, "The most beautifully formed in all the city is probably that of Mrs. Bobert Lindblom. Her shoes are poems in footwear. Perfect models, No. 1 1/2 in length. ...Mrs. S. B. Raymond and Mrs. J.C. Keep each possesses marvelously slender feet, which are fitted by No. 2 1/2 boots." It also spotlighted that "the smallest foot possessed by Mrs. Strong on Division Street. Her

[17] Guarneri, *Newsprint Metropolis*, 7.

[18] "Chicago Girls' Feet," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 20, 1885, 11.

[19] "Chicago's Influence on the Feet," *Washington Post*, December 3, 1893, 2.

[20] "Studies About the City," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1889, 26.

shoes are No. 1 in length, with an 8 ½ instep," which appeared "as though made for a large Christmas doll."[21]

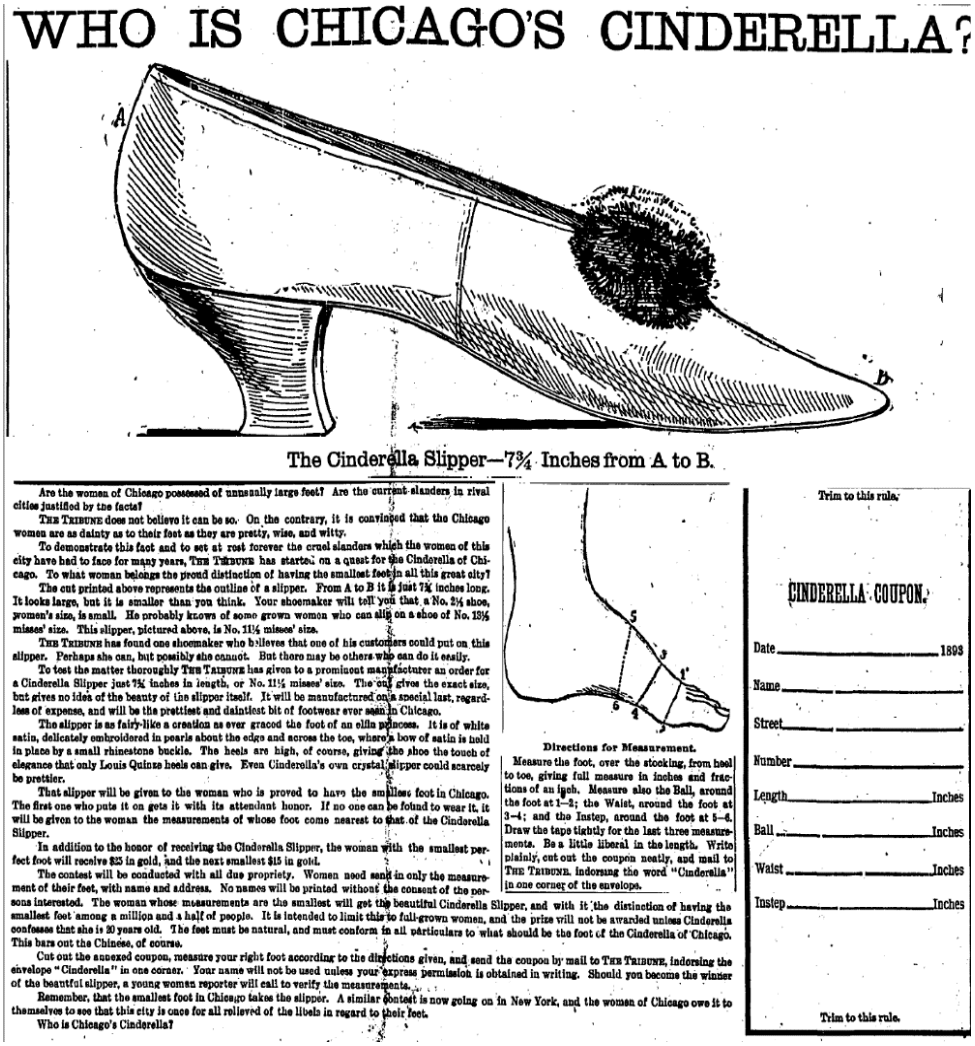
Likely part of its effort to expand its female readership and promote other forms of consumption, the editors and owners of the *Chicago Tribune* saw it a great opportunity to take the lead to challenge these "cruel slanders." They launched its search for Chicago's Cinderella who had the smallest perfect foot in the city. Starting from February 5, 1893, the *Tribune* printed "Cinderella coupons" on a daily base, requiring each contestant to send the measurements of their right foot's length, ball, waist and instep, along with illustrated directions about how the measuring should be done (Figure 4). The woman whose measurements are the smallest would win the Cinderella Slipper, 7 3/4 inches from heel to toe, produced by a prominent manufacturer. She would also be awarded $25 in gold. The next smallest would receive $15 in gold. It also printed a cut showing the size of a slipper with a careful explanation, "It looks large, but it is smaller."[22] Another article commented, "That is a slipper which would ordinarily be worn by a child 7 or 9 years old,"[23] the average age when the Chinese started to bind their daughters' feet.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 5, 1893, 33.

[23] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

Figure 4. "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?"[24]



WHO IS CHICAGO'S CINDERELLA?

The Cinderella Slipper—7¾ Inches from A to B.

Are the women of Chicago possessed of unusually large feet? Are the current slanders in rival cities justified by the facts?

THE TRIBUNE does not believe it can be so. On the contrary, it is convinced that the Chicago women are as dainty as to their feet as they are pretty, wise, and witty.

To demonstrate this fact and to set at rest forever the cruel slanders which the women of this city have had to face for many years, THE TRIBUNE has started on a quest for the Cinderella of Chicago. To what woman belongs the proud distinction of having the smallest foot in all this great city?

The cut printed above represents the outline of a slipper. From A to B it is just 7¾ inches long. It looks large, but it is smaller than you think. Your shoemaker will tell you that a No. 2½ shoe, women's size, is small. He probably knows of some grown woman who can slip on a shoe of No. 12½ misses' size. This slipper, pictured above, is No. 11½ misses' size.

THE TRIBUNE has found one shoemaker who believes that one of his customers could put on this slipper. Perhaps she can, but possibly she cannot. But there may be others who can do it easily.

To test the matter thoroughly THE TRIBUNE has given to a prominent manufacturer an order for a Cinderella Slipper just 7¾ inches in length, or No. 11½ misses' size. The cut gives the exact size, but gives no idea of the beauty of the slipper itself. It will be manufactured on a special last, regardless of expense, and will be the prettiest and daintiest bit of footwear ever seen in Chicago.

The slipper is as fairy-like a creation as ever graced the foot of an elfin princess. It is of white satin, delicately embroidered in pearls about the edge and across the toe, where a bow of satin is held in place by a small rhinestone buckle. The heels are high, of course, giving the shoe the touch of elegance that only Louis Quinze heels can give. Even Cinderella's own crystal slipper could scarcely be prettier.

That slipper will be given to the woman who is proved to have the smallest foot in Chicago. The first one who puts it on gets it with its attendant honor. If no one can be found to wear it, it will be given to the woman the measurements of whose foot come nearest to that of the Cinderella Slipper.

In addition to the honor of receiving the Cinderella Slipper, the woman with the smallest perfect foot will receive $25 in gold, and the next smallest $15 in gold.

The contest will be conducted with all due propriety. Women need send in only the measurement of their feet, with name and address. No names will be printed without the consent of the persons interested. The woman whose measurements are the smallest will get the beautiful Cinderella Slipper, and with it the distinction of having the smallest foot among a million and a half of people. It is intended to limit this to full-grown women, and the prize will not be awarded unless Cinderella confesses that she is 20 years old. The foot must be natural, and must conform in all particulars to what should be the foot of the Cinderella of Chicago. This bars out the Chinese, of course.

Cut out the annexed coupon, measure your right foot according to the directions given, and send the coupon by mail to THE TRIBUNE, indorsing the envelope "Cinderella" in one corner. Your name will not be used unless your express permission is obtained in writing. Should you become the winner of the beautiful slipper, a young woman reporter will call to verify the measurements.

Remember, that the smallest foot in Chicago takes the slipper. A similar contest is now going on in New York, and the women of Chicago owe it to themselves to see that this city is once for all relieved of the libels in regard to their feet.

Who is Chicago's Cinderella?

Directions for Measurement.

Measure the foot, over the stocking, from heel to toe, giving full measure in inches and fractions of an inch. Measure also the Ball, around the foot at 1—2; the Waist, around the foot at 3—4; and the Instep, around the foot at 5—6. Draw the tape tightly for the last three measurements. Be a little liberal in the length. Write plainly, cut out the coupon neatly, and mail to THE TRIBUNE, indorsing the word "Cinderella" in one corner of the envelope.

Trim to this rule.

CINDERELLA COUPON.

Date _____ 1893

Name _____

Street _____

Number _____

Length _____ Inches

Ball _____ Inches

Waist _____ Inches

Instep _____ Inches

Trim to this rule.

The search lasted for eight days. This event attracted considerable attention and participation locally and nationally. To showcase the nationwide attention it generated, the *Tribune* reprinted excerpts from numerous newspaper reports on it all over the country.[25] On

[24] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 5, 1893, 33.

[25] "Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 10, 1893, 4; "The Smallest Foot," *Chicago Tribune,* February 11, 1893, 12; "The Search for Chicago's Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 12, 1893, 29; "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

the day before its close, one journalist reported that "no less than 791 coupons had been received."[26] Another article proudly announced the actual number of coupons the *Tribune* office received was 1012, and "of this number 257 have measured less than eight inches in length; 673 between eight and nine inches. According to the statistics sixteen of these feet are less than seven and one-half inches, thirty-seven are just 7 1/2 inches: 135 are the requisite length, 7 1/4, and 54 are 7 7/8 inches long."[27] The verification process was described in a pleasant and entertaining tone: young women who represented the *Tribune* to pay house to house visit were "armed with tape measures, 'foot sticks,' shoe horns, boot buttoners, and, not the least, trial slippers made on the same last as the little white satin shoes."[28] Ten Cinderellas were selected at the end. According to a report in March, the white satin slippers would "be on exhibition at C. E. Wiswall Co.'s, No. 160 State street."[29]

Measurements of the women were frequently quoted in the reports. The smallest ones were put into a table (Figure 5). The head of the shoe department in one of the best known down-town stores sent in the measurements of one of his customers including not only the measurements of the length, ball, waist and instep of this young lady's foot, but also her height and weight. "I have been seven years in the shoe business and during that time I have never fitted so perfect or shapely a foot**.** The instep is very high and the shank is very hollow."[30] Some sent in the outlines of their feet accompanying the coupons, one of which

[26] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

[27] "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36. Another report noted that "no less than 198 women sent in measurements which would entitle them to consideration, while no less than sixty-three of these claimed to have feet even shorter than the Cinderella slipper." "Many Cinderellas**,"** *Chicago Tribune*, February 26, 1893, 25.

[28] "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

[29] "Have Received Their Prizes," *Chicago Tribune,* March 5, 1893, 33.

[30] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune,* February 12, 1893, 36.

was selected for reproduction in life size (Figure 6). The exact measurements of the winner, Mrs. Carson were listed in the news: "length 7 1/4, ball 6 1/8, half ball 6 1/2, instep 6 7/8, heel 9 3/8, long heel 10 3/8, ankle 6 1/8."[31]

Figure 5. Some of the smallest measurements of the contestants[32]

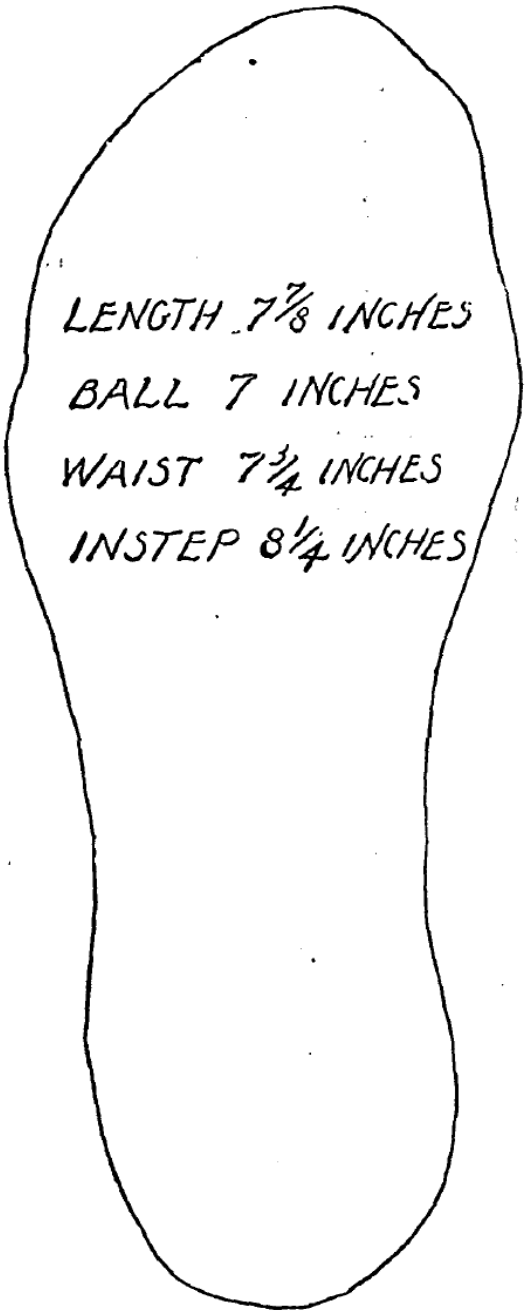
Here are some of the smallest measurements:

Number of coupon.	Length.	Ball.	Waist.	Instep.
159	7 1-8	6	6	6 1-2
814	7 1-4	6 3-4	6 3-8	7 1-2
359	7 1-4	7 1-4	7 3-4	8 1-4
514	7 1-4	6 1-2	7 1-2	8
562	7 1-4	7	6 1-2	7 3-4
607	7 1-4	6 1-4	6 3-8	7
608	8 1-4	5	6	7
51	7 3-8	7 3-8	6 7-8	7 5-8
149	7 3-8	6 1-8	6 1-4	6 3-4
236	7 3-8	6 1-2	6 1-2	7
593	7 3-8	6 1-2	7	8
611	7 7-16	6 1-2	6 1-4	7 1-4
723	7 7-16	7	7	7 1-2
2	7 1-2	6 3-4	7	8
11	7 1-2	6 1-4	6 1-4	7
22	7 1-2	6	6	7
46	7 1-2	6 3-8	6 3-4	7 1-8
47	7 1-2	7 1-2	7 3-4	8 1-4
55	7 1-2	7	7 1-2	8
33	7 1-2	6 3-4	6 7-8	7
92	7 1-2	7	7	8
112	7 1-2	6 3-4	6 3-4	7 1-2
117	7 1-2	7	7 1-4	8 1-4
127	7 1-2	7	6 1-2	7 1-4
150	7 1-2	6 1-2	6 5-8	7 1-2
212	7 1-2	6 1-4	6 1-2	7
252	7 1-2	6 1-2	6 3-8	7
291	7 1-2	7 1-4	10 3-4	8 1-4
365	7 1-3	6 3-4	6 1-2	7 1-4
423	7 1-2	6 7-8	6 7-8	8 1-2
425	7 1-2	6 1-2	6 3-4	7 3-4
488	7 1-2	5 1-2	5 3-4	6
603	7 1-2	7 3-8	7 5-8	7 3-4
522	7 1-3	6 3-4	6 5-8	7 1-2
617	7 1-2	7 1-3	7	7 1-2
621	7 1-2	7 1-4	7 3-4	8 1-8
752	7 1-2	6 3-4	7	8
4	7 5-8	6	6 1-2	7
84	7 5-8	7 1-8	7 1-4	7 3-4
193	7 5-8	6 1-2	6 3-8	6 1-2
546	7 6-8	6 5-8	6 3-4	7 1-2
624	7 5-8	6 7-8	6 7-8	7 3-8
713	7 11-16	7 1-8	7 1-8	7 3-4

[31] "Many Cinderellas," *Chicago Tribune,* February 26, 1893, 25.

[32] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

Figure 6. "Exact size of one woman's foot"[33]



EXACT SIZE OF ONE WOMAN'S FOOT.

[33] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

Women's bodies served to elaborate different cities' identities and in turn shaped people's sense of belonging. The message in the offer and other relevant reports indicated that Chicago was not the only major U.S. city to organize contests of this sort. "A similar contest under the auspices of a New York newspaper has been going on. The measurements of the New York and Chicago slippers were the same." Contention between these two rivalry cities was ignited, "At last reports the New York newspaper had not found a single woman to put on the slipper. Chicago found ten without trying a third of the list of aspirants. Will the press of New York and the country please notice?"[34] Chicago women were praised by their spirit of devotion by participating "not for self but for Chicago."[35] This report also spotlighted an anonymous correspondent who enclosed her feet measurement to "help swell the list in favor of Chicago" and to "prove us equal to any and second to no other city's feminine inhabitants in the possession of small feet."[36]

Foot contest, while entertaining, as an organized form of promoting "the extremes of daintiness" of the foot generated criticism so that the *Tribune* quickly took a defensive stance after it opened, asserting its legitimacy, yet in a self-contradictory fashion. It first affirmed that "it is as cruel to compress the feet unnaturally" and this contest did not mean to say "very small feet are even a glory to a woman. On the contrary it sees, as all must see, that a large, well formed woman must have feet calculated to bear her weight properly. If her feet be unduly small, either naturally or as the result of wearing very small shoes, she is not natural and hence not beautiful." Likely responding to proposals for well-formed feet in relation to

[34] "Many Cinderellas**,"** *Chicago Tribune,* February 26, 1893, 25.

[35] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36; "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

[36] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

the body, however, it stated, "It was impossible to arrange a table so as to award the prize to the feet best proportioned to the body. It had to take the feet as it found them, provided they were reasonably natural."[37] The use of "reasonably natural" disclosed their tolerance or even acquiesce of the unnatural "beauty." The derision of the *Tribune* editors towards the women who found it hard to put the slipper on further disclosed their facile interest in naturally-shaped feet,

> In vain they have tugged at the refractory little shoe; in vain found fault with the shoe-horn, with their clumsy fingers, with THE TRIBUNE's shoemaker.....No one has gone to the length of cutting off little slices from her heel or toes, as did the wicked sisters in the tale, although several have looked as if they wanted to.[38]

Striving to appeal to readers of different views and to show "the general interest excited by this contest," the *Tribune* published some "interesting correspondences" including an extract that "voices the general protest against giving the prize regardless of the size of the woman." In the later section, it also printed a "protest" to "do justice to all sides," and to explain that "it is not in league with the shoe-makers." Under the pen name of Emma Cripplefoot, the protestor condemned the *Tribune* as the benefactor of the competition. She demanded it to take back the prize for "suffering feet," advocated for an appreciation for "the well-formed, artistic, and useful foot our Maker originally gave us," and suggested to criminalize making or selling extremely small shoes. She, however, mainly attributed the

[37] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune,* February 12, 1893, 36.

[38] "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

small feet frenzy to the shoe businessmen who mostly reacted according the popular demand rather than initiating it.[39]

Several methods utilized by the *Tribune* editors to dodge the real challenge could be traced through the ways in which they diminished opposing voices, which in part explains the persistent existence of foot contest. The editors seemed to select this piece of protest written in a somewhat "unrealistic" tone purposefully. For instance, the letter writer asked for "a law to making it a crime punishable with death . . . for a maker or seller of shoes to make, or sell, or cause to be made, or sold, or given away, a shoe smaller than the foot . . . and incarcerate in an insane asylum the person attempting to wear such a shoe." The fake family name "Cripplefoot" was thoughtfully included to accomplish a sense of entertainment rather than serious reflection. This protestor's proposal to "offer a reward for the best well-formed foot most sensibly and practically clothed with a shoe that permits its owner" to move comfortably was responded with sarcasm: "The idea of having the feet correspond with the body is proper so far as it goes, and if it could have been done expeditiously and without calculations which would drive an astronomer crazy, it would have been done."[40]

Searching for Chicago Cinderella and Recamier:1907 Foot Contest

Foot contests apparently did not fade away amid sporadic oppositions. Fourteen years later, in 1907, the *Chicago Tribune* well documented another city-wide foot contest in its advertisements and news stories. This time the search lasted for over three weeks and occupied "special features" section in the *Sunday Tribune* (Sunday issues of the *Tribune*) in which pictures featuring female foot filled an entire page (Figure 4, 5 and 6) except the texts.

[39] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

[40] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

Likely trying to avoid the criticism that the contest possibly promoted unnaturally small feet they received in 1893 and to expand the spectrum of participants and consumers, the *Tribune* turned to stress their search for "perfect" instead of small foot. Ironically, this change of strategy prompted the competition to another kind of extreme. Their quest for perfection neither lessened the stress nor prevented the competition from subjecting women's bodies to rigid measurements. "The feet must be natural and must conform in all particulars to the ideal foot . . . The golden shoe will not stretch. The foot must be a perfect fit."[41]

The *Tribune* editors consciously glossed over their emphasis on smallness. In the first advertisement of the contest, the editors completely avoided using the word "small" in contrast to the frequent references of it in 1893. One of the later ads openly claimed that "no woman who wears tight shoes has a perfect foot."[42] It stated that painters, and sculptors, and shoemakers, and chiropodists, and physicians all agree that women's desire to wear the smallest possible shoes "makes beautiful feet so rare among the women of today."[43] A shoe saleman's words were quoted to ensure that the *Tribune* had little to do with the women's choice of too small and too narrow shoes,

> Women will make us sell them shoes which are a size too small," said a shoe salesman the other day, "and often a size too narrow. They will turn a deaf ear to our suggestions and our protests and tell us they know what they want. They will squeeze their feet into these misfitted shoes, squeeze them all out of shape, cramp their toes, and suffer torture to wear them rather than wear a comfortable shoe. It is the fear of making their feet look big.[44]

[41] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune,* September 1, 1907, G1.

[42] "No Woman Who Wears Tight Shoes Has a Perfect Foot**,"** *Chicago Tribune,* September 22, 1907, G8.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "No Woman Who Wears Tight Shoes Has a Perfect Foot**,"** *Chicago Tribune,* September 22, 1907, G8.

Further, besides the old strategy to convene attention and participation by invoking the unfavorable image of Chicago big-footed women, the editors added an aesthetic sense to the Cinderella search by referring to artistic demands for perfect foot which positioned the *Tribune* further away from possible small feet controversies. They narrated that sculptors and painters had searched in vain for Chicago's Cinderella and had to "turn to the plaster feet of the antiques such as the model "feet of the Venuses, the Psyches, and the Mineryas."[45]

Nevertheless, the 7 7/12 inches long golden slipper which was in fact shorter than the 1893 slipper (7 ¾ inches) for the perfect-footed Cinderella spoke to their consistent pursuit of smallness. The headline of a report on the result of the contest, occupying the entire front page, revealed smallness was central to their conception of "perfect" foot: "Chicago's Cinderella: Mrs. A. H. Talbot Wins the Golden Slipper Awarded for the Smallest Foot That is Most Nearly Perfect."[46]

Their later decision to award a perfect foot irrespective of the size also exposes their initial restriction on foot size in the name of searching for a perfect foot. It was not until a week after the search began that the *Tribune* announced that they would add another award of a golden slipper "to the Chicago Recamier—to the woman with the most perfectly proportioned feet, no matter what size shoes she may wear." However, by subjecting female feet to a perfectionist gaze, this newly-added award still did not relieve the Chicago women from the unnaturally beauty ideals. "To win the Recamier slipper the foot not only must be perfect in every particular, in shape, in contour, in symmetry, but it also must be in perfect

[45] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 1, 1907, G1.

[46] "Chicago's Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1907, F1.

proportion with the whole feminine figure."[47] They tried to galvanize Chicago women by asking them to "prove to Bohemia that the plaster foot of the Venus de Medici is not the only perfect foot in Chicago."[48]

Women's feet were under scrutiny in a metrical examination. "Charles J. Mulligan, the sculptor, H. G. Marrata, the painter, and L. W. Wilson, instructor in the class of life drawing at the Art institute, comprised THE TRIBUNE's commission of artists."[49] After the first round of selection, the search committee narrowed the number of contestants into eighteen among which another examination was held. Photographs of each pair of feet were "taken from every angle" and "carefully inspected and compared." After "the complete measurements of the feet were taken and compared with the measurements of the whole figure," three finalists were screened out. Besides the measurements of the foot itself, "the utility of the foot, its proportions to the body, the texture of [t]he skin—everything" were considered.[50] Eventually the Chicago Recamier Slipper went to Mrs. Chalfont whose "foot was regarded as so perfect that casts were made of it for the use of the students at the Art institute."[51] Her foot along with other mostly perfect feet were photographed and presented in a full page coverage of the "Special Features" section of the *Sunday Tribune* on December 15 (Figure 7). The display of women's body measurements was not exclusive to the news on the

[47] "Is The Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907, G1.

[48] Ibid.

[49] "The Most Perfect Foot in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune,* December 15, 1907, G1.

[50] Ibid. "It was found that Mrs. Clarence Chalfont, Miss Blanche Sabin, and Mrs. Morris Beall possessed the most perfect feet of the thousands of feet examined. Mrs. Chalfont is 5 feet 3 4/4 inches tall, her height being exactly 7 1/2 times the length of her foot, and the width of her foot being exactly in proper proportion to its length."

[51] Ibid.

foot contest. Other discussions about female feet compared the measurements of women's height, size of shoe, circumference of calf, ankle, hips, waist, bust, and shoulders.[52]

Figure 7. "The Most Perfect Foot in Chicago"[53]

The Chicago Sunday Tribune.
PART SEVEN — DECEMBER 15, 1907. — SPECIAL FEATURES

The Most Perfect Foot in Chicago
As Beautiful as That of the Venus de Medici

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52 "Chicago Feet Are Small," *Chicago Tribune,* June 9, 1902, 1.

53 "The Most Perfect Foot in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune,* December 15, 1907, G1.

Middle-Class Feet and Female Marriageability

The juxtaposition of husband's middle-class status and wife's Cinderella foot was common in the news. A 1899 *Los Angeles Times* article reprinted from *New York Telegram* started with the statement that "small feet are considered by many to be a mark of aristocracy."[54] The passionate editors of the *Tribune* further reinforced this association. Following up the life of the winner of 1893 foot contest upon the receipt of the award, one *Tribune* report recounted that her husband Mr. Carson's wealth equipped him well to cope with the demands of social life due to the attention and fame brought by his wife's well-known feet,

> So many of the notes were invitations to dinners, receptions, and balls that Dr. Carson is positively aghast at the responsibilities that must needs be shouldered by the man that bears the proud distinction of having married, although unwittingly, a Cinderella. He says that it will cost him at least $500 to get out of this affair creditably. Mrs. Carson says that he doesn't mind a bit, though, but carries himself as if he were a sure-enough Prince with a particularly long feather in his cap.[55]

Another journalist highlighted that the winner of 1907 foot contest was not a working poor but a bride married to a Chicago business man: "The slipper of sovereign gold . . . has been awarded, not to a poor chore girl . . . not to a working girl toiling at her bench; not to a shopgirl, nor to a stage girl, nor to a nonchalant debutante." The husband, Mr. Talbot was young but had "charge of the foreign exchange department of the American Express company."[56]

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[54] "Intellectual Feet," *Los Angeles Times,* September 2, 1899, 12.

[55] "Have Received Their Prizes," *Chicago Tribune,* March 5, 1893, 33.

[56] "Chicago's Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* October 27, 1907, F1.

Women's dainty foot was not only considered as an indicator of their husband's social status, but also a means to marry up. The *Tribune* editors touted the advantage of small feet in the marriage market multiple times. In the 1893 Chicago foot contest, one editor exclaimed about the gratifying results of the competition, "there are not only a few scores but many hundreds of women with feet as dainty as ever those which brought Cinderella her Prince." It also pointed to the fact that "most of these women with small feet are married," and asked, "Was it their small feet which attracted husbands to them?"[57] The dispatch of women for house to house verification was portrayed as "like the Prince's heralds in the old story."[58] After the ten Cinderellas was selected, another reporter claimed that any one of them "would be a credit to the best Prince that ever walked," and the winner of the slippers of gold Mrs. Carson "can wear them with such ease that she could almost kick them off her small feet, if in some moment of coquetry she should desire to do so."[59] This is also evident in the promotional drawings in the offer of the contest: a prince was courting to a lady displaying her foot in a slipper of gold—the reward to "the woman who has the most perfect Cinderella Foot"—with a fairy in the background (Figure 8).

[57] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella? Some Interesting Correspondence. A Protest." *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1893, 36.

[58] "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

[59] "Many Cinderellas**,"** *Chicago Tribune,* February 26, 1893, 25.

Figure 8. "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?"[60]

Who is Chicago's Cinderella?
Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Sep 1, 1907; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune
pg. G1

As early as 1874, Mrs. Jane Grey Cannon Swisshelm, an outspoken women's rights advocate articulated the close relation between foot size and marriageability that was conveyed in the story of "Cinderella,"

[60] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 1, 1907, G1.

> By it every baby-boy is taught that the standard of female perfection is small feet, or rather the ability to put on a small shoe. Each lad is fired with ambition to emulate the Prince in choosing a lady-love with the smallest possible feet. Each girl learns that dainty shoes are the title to royal bridehood.[61]

By citing an English poem by one of the oldest poets that praised the charms of a small-feet bride, Mrs. Swisshelm denounced that all English reading-people had been "taught to do homage before that wonderful bride,"

> Her feet beneath her petticoat,
> Like little mice, peeped in and out?[62]

The trope of mice foot was still seen being used by Americans decades later.[63]

Nancy Rexford explains why domesticity signified by dainty feet was closely tied to women's middle-class background in the United States: "Small feet, along with small hands, were one of the traditional attributes of a gentle woman, evidence that she did not stand all day doing laundry or working in a mill or at any other heavy labor, but that she had a husband or father to provide for her."[64] This echoed the rationale U.S. journalists expressed while discussing Chinese women's social status and their feet as we see in Chapter two. As Barbara Epstein succinctly puts, "For women of the 'middling classes' marriage meant domesticity,

[61] "Woman: Mrs. Swisshelm On The Shoe Question," *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1874, 10; "For The Ladies: The Story Of Cinderella And Female Immorality," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 20, 1874, 6.

[62] "Woman: Mrs. Swisshelm On The Shoe Question," *Chicago Tribune,* December 6, 1874, 10.

[63] "Their Rainy Day Garb: New York Dress Reform Club's Costume," *Chicago Tribune,* December 12, 1896, 10. "Chicago Feet World's Best: Expert Says New York Women Walk On Twin Suit Cases," *Chicago Tribune,* January 17, 1909, 1.

[64] Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America,* 46.

which meant economic dependence on a man."[65] Rexford also insightfully notes that the fluidity of class lines accounted for U.S. embrace of visible symbols such as tight shoes which would link them to a higher social standing, especially when the westward expansion and urban growth provided possibilities of upward mobility in new environments where people could easily "dress above one's condition" to visualize their social class.[66] The connection between small feet and white women's upper-class status helps to clarify the social and cultural niche in which the widespread of small foot fever and the admission of Chinese women who conducted the extreme version of it—footbinding—became possible.

Persistence of the Foot Fever

It seemed that although the *Tribune* did not organize the contest annually, women's feet continued to bear the weight of city's reputation. Chicago media's struggle to refute the fame of the city of the big-footed women did not cease. It hosted other Cinderella searches besides the two organized by the *Tribune*. It was reported that four months before Mrs. A. H. Talbot won the golden slipper, "Chicago's Cinderella was Dot Seaver, just out of high school and just above her teens."[67] People persistently draw the connection between small feet and high economic status. One 1913 *Washington Post* article proclaimed that "Washington's boast that Mrs. Philander C. Knox had the smallest foot in the capital city, caused the Chicago Search." Two Cinderellas, "who have smaller feet than Mrs. Knox, have been found" in Chicago, "the

[65] Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*, 2.

[66] Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America*, 51.

[67] "Chicago's Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1907, F1.

city famed for big feet." One of the women was "daughter of Henry A. Blair, the traction financier. Both are well known in social circles."[68]

Perhaps because the astute *Tribune* editors smelled the opportunity to invoke the rivalrous mentality of Chicago as a newly emerged metropolis toward a better-established one like New York, foot sizes of New York women were frequently mentioned for a comparison. In 1902, the *Tribune* announced, "There is no New York Cinderella in Chicago," proved by the failure of "two score maidens from the Eastern city" who tried to put on a pair of daily shoes made for a Chicago woman. A photograph of the actual-sized shoe was attached next to the article with the title "Shoe That Only A 'CHICAGO' FOOT WOULD FIT."[69] On January 17, 1909, a *Tribune* journalist declared, "The fond delusion that New York women have Cinderella-like feet has been shattered" in the language of Mat Grau, a New York theatrical booking agent and stage director who had to look for "chorus girls able to wear a 13A shoe for service in a forthcoming theatrical production" in Chicago. Mr. Grau said, "the New York women's feet instead of peeping in and out like mice, carry their owners like twin suitcases." This journalist affirmed that "the conclusions and starting charges of Mr. Grau are based upon the actual inspection of female feet in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Newark."[70] The next day another *Tribune* article claimed the "Chicago's Cinderella"—a

[68] "Two Chicago Cinderellas," *New York Times,* August 10, 1913, 1; "Chicago Cinderellas," *Washington Post*, August 16, 1913, 6.

[69] "Chicago Wins! 'By a Foot!'" June 10, 1902, *Chicago Tribune*, 3.

[70] "Being of a mathematical turn of mind, I have elucidated from what I have observed in the last week that only one full grown adult woman in 30,000 in Greater New York has what I call a small foot." "Out in Chicago we had no difficulty in picking up chorus girls . . . In Manhattan I have thus far succeeded in finding only two, and in Brooklyn only one." "Chicago Feet World's Best: Expert Says New York Women Walk On Twin Suit Cases," *Chicago Tribune,* January 17, 1909, 1.

woman "with the smallest perfect foot "established the record to which Mat Grau . . . would have all aspirants for the chorus in Gotham aspire."[71]

A Global Fashion

Foot contest, however, was not a Chicagoan or U.S. innovation. The Cinderella story itself originated from Europe. As early as 1867, the *Chicago Tribune* recorded a Paris foot contest which perhaps inspired its counterparts in Chicago. "In Paris there is an entire compartment devoted to some of the shoes crowned by the *Sortie des Petits Pieds*, over which the member with the smallest foot presided till she was displaced by a competitor, a Cinderella-like slipper being kept to test the qualifications of the candidates."[72]

In the summer of 1893, the year that the *Chicago Tribune* organized its city-wide foot contest, a *San Francisco Chronicle* article titled "Has The Littlest Feet: A French Cinderella Defies The World" marveled at a French woman as the only successful one in a Cinderella search through France. A trans-Atlantic foot frenzy was palpable in the lines. The correspondent asserted that "Mlle. Pia de Veriane is a Cinderella in real life," and "recently had all Paris at her feet." Her shoe was "too small for every other woman of France who tried to force her foot into it."[73]

The "littlest" feet did not just receive "delighted praise" from Parisian papers, but also invited trans-Atlantic fame and rivals. To compete with the French Cinderella feet, an U.S.

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[71] "Sets Model For Stage Feet: Mrs. A. H. Talbot Makes Record Which Chorus Girls Envy," *Chicago Tribune*, January 18, 1909, 3.

[72] "Small Feet and Shoes," *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1867, 3.

[73] "Has The Littlest Feet: A French Cinderella Defies The World," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 17, 1893, 7.

woman, Miss Kate Campbell, who claimed to have the smallest feet in the United States sent her dainty white slipper to the *Petit* Journal in France. It turned out that Miss Campbell's feet were narrower, but Pia's instep was "much higher--high enough, in fact, to hide the ugliness of a full Chicago size." Mlle. Pia attracted so much attention that she toured around the United States, spending one week or two in New York before "going to flaunt her feet in the face of Chicago." The correspondent also reproduced an outline of her foot in its life size, for U.S. Cinderellas who "may find out whether their feet are as small as those of Mlle Pia." The length of her shoe was "eighteen and a half centimeters, a little more than seven inches," usually worn by "girls 10 or 11."[74] To elaborate their marvelous smallness, the correspondent commented that they were "not much longer than those of a 'little-foot' Chinese woman."[75]

An explanatory letter attached to the Cinderella coupon in 1893 Chicago foot contest indicated Canada and another U.S. western city also held similar contests. This claimant said, "If I win this time it will not be my first prize for having the smallest foot. I went to Canada and had the credit of possessing the smallest feet they had ever shod there; also in one of the Western cities."[76] It seemed that this tradition continued well into the 1920s. In 1923, the *Tribune* reported that a woman had "won a prize in a Paris contest for having the smallest and most shapely feet in the French capital."[77]

The frequent appearances of European high cultural works and well-known European white women in U.S. newspapers discussion about female feet cultivated a middle-class

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune,* February 12, 1893, 36.

[77] "Small Feet," *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 1923, 17.

female bodily culture that encouraged women of all walks of life to follow. The small and shapely feet of well-known French women of noble birth were frequently referred to. For example, the feet of Pauline Bonaparte (1780-1825), the sister of Napoleon and the duchess of Guastalla, whose statue as Venus was built in Canova were described as "besides their smallness and exquisite shape, were plump and rosy like those of a child."[78] In the 1907 Chicago foot contest, a golden "Recamier" slipper awarded to the woman with the most perfectly proportioned feet was named after Juliette Recamier (1777-1849), one of the most famous French socialites of her time.[79] The design for the slipper was said to draw inspiration from "the dancing slippers worn in a famous painting of one of the old French queens."[80] Another ad for the contest mentioned the feet of Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), a French actress who was an international idol, were declared by a famous New York photographer as "the most perfect he ever had seen," which was nodded by the French public.[81] When explaining how to manage one's feet gracefully, the hostess of a beauty studio in Chicago stated in 1910 that the "aid to grace" used by Sarah Bernhardt was "to practice walking along a crack in the floor, or seam in the carpet, one foot each side, with toes pointed well toward the front."[82]

Women's foot became a site to articulate U.S. admiration towards European arts and popular culture and thereby to forge a trans-Atlantic female cultural bond. The editors of the

[78] "Small Feet and Shoes," *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, 1867, 3.

[79] "Is The Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907, G1.

[80] "Who is Chicago's Cinderella?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 1, 1907, G1.

[81] "The Most Famous Feet in the World," *Chicago Tribune,* September 15, 1907, G1.

[82] Ruth Sloan, "Small Feet with Narrow Skirt and How to Gain the 'Illusion,'" *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1910, F5.

Tribune shifted their promotional strategy in 1907 foot contest to insert a flavor of aesthetics by referring to French artists and printing the photographs of the foot in their works (Figure 9). In addition to the feet of the most famous works of ancient Greek and Roman sculptures such as Venus De Medici and Venus Capitolina, the feet of French sculptures such as Augustin Pajou's "Psyche," Pierre Alexandre Schoenewerk's "Au Matin," and Jean-Antoine Houdon's "Diana" were included. The editors also listed the beautiful feet painted by French painters including William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Francois Gerard and Henri Regnault.[83]

To encourage Chicagoan women to make their feet famous, the foot contest ad on September 15, 1907 listed 30 most famous feet in the world alongside some of their photographs taken in the plays and dramas when their owners performed (Figure 10). The feet of U.S.- or English-born and even Canadian-born actresses who moved back and forth on the both sides of the Atlantic and gained international fame were referred to, including Maude Adams, Annie Russell, Eleanor Robson, Mary Mannering, Elsie Irving and so forth. Likely to assert the *Tribune*'s pro-natural beauty stance and distanced it from profit-driven shoe merchants and makers, this article also detailed how being barefooted brought fame to its owner. Modern theatre and drama as part of commercial capitalism seemed to subject women's bodies to please the eyes of the consumers more than ever. This ad for instance stressed how these actresses artfully displayed their bodies to obtain the fame. "Mrs. Fiske won her place in the list of women with famous feet when she appeared barefooted in 'Magda' . . . Eleanor Robson cast aside her stockings when she assumed the leading role in 'Audrey.'"[84]

[83] "Is The Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907, G1.

[84] "The Most Famous Feet in the World," *Chicago Tribune,* September 15, 1907, G1.

Figure 9. "Is The Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?"[85]

The Chicago Sunday Tribune.

PART SEVEN — SEPTEMBER 8, 1907. — SPECIAL FEATURES

IS THE PLASTER FOOT OF THE VENUS DE MEDICI THE ONLY PERFECT FOOT IN CHICAGO

Are the feet of the nymphs and goddesses that grace the pedestals and walls of the Art Institute the only beautiful feet in Chicago? Is there no foot of blood and bones to be found in Chicago as graceful, as symmetrical, as perfect as the plaster foot of the Venus de Medici or the rosy slotted foot of the Psyche of Gerard?

THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE is searching for such a foot. It has taken up the quest for Chicago's Cinderella and whoever is found possessing her reward—The TRIBUNE'S Cinderella slipper of pure gold, ornamented with rich filigree and a diamond studded buckle. The slipper is to be given to the woman whose is for whose right foot it is the most perfect fit.

Already so many symmetrical feet have been found in Chicago that THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE has decided to give to the woman possessing the most perfectly proportioned foot, irrespective of size, a slipper as beautiful as the tiny Cinderella slipper—a slipper made to fit the most symmetrical foot in Chicago, wrought like a second slipper from sovereign gold and ornamented with a diamond studded buckle. As soon as this foot is found—the foot which, in the judgment of competent experts, is the most symmetrical in Chicago, whether it fits a No. 6 shoe or a No. 9—the golden slipper will be made to fit it.

Chicago's Cinderella Still Unknown.

Since THE TRIBUNE began the quest a week ago hundreds of letters have come forward as claimants. From all sides of the city coupons have been sent to THE TRIBUNE bearing the measurements of the right foot of Chicago woman who hope to win the coveted prize—the slipper of sovereign gold—and the distinction of being Chicago's Cinderella. As yet none of the measurements have tallied exactly with the measurements of the golden slipper, but some have come so close to it that it seemed at first glance that the slipper had been won and that Chicago's Cinderella had been discovered.

If more than one woman can wear the slipper it will be awarded to the woman whose foot, in the judgment of a competent expert, are the most perfect. If no one is found who can put the slipper on, it will be given to the woman whose right foot comes nearest to conforming to its measurements. The complete golden slipper of gold is for the most perfect Cinderella foot.

Is the plaster foot of the Venus de Medici the only perfect foot in Chicago? Chicago's sculptors and painters think that it is, and they will entertain no claim in this belief unless Chicago's Cinderella is discovered.

Helen, the Mystery Girl of the Studio.

Once there was found in Chicago a young country girl who had barefooted all her life, rambling over the countryside and through the woodlands. She was poor and ragged. One of the sculptors in Chicago's bohemia found her wandering half-clad through the streets, her feet touching the snow through her worn shoes. He told her he would give her work. He took her to his studio and posed her as the central figure in a group of water heavers in a frieze for a fountain.

This little country girl had the only perfect pair of feet that ever made their way into a Chicago studio. For two years she posed for the sculptors and painters. When they had completed the figures out of clay and were ready to do the details of the feet they called upon this girl from the countryside who had walked barefooted into womanhood; when they had painted their statues or their allegories and were ready to turn their brushes to the feet, they sent for this girl who had been found wandering aimlessly through the streets, poor, ragged, and friendless.

Helen's feet were as valuable as Miss Hitzenegger's golden fog. Soon she discarded the old clothes. For two winters she was "around the studios." Then with spring came—the spring of 1904—she was away. To bohemia she had been known only as Helen. Before she turned her back on the studios she told her benefactor that she was to be married to the approaching bridegroom. Her wanderings had given way to joy, and her tribe were wed and she would be happy. She left no name—no address. She was just Helen. She said she didn't want her husband to know that she had been a model.

Chicago Now Without a "Foot Model."

Since the day that Helen departed her new life somewhere in Chicago has been without a foot model. There are many beautiful figures in Chicago's studios, but as the figures of the Venuses; there are plenty of beautiful arms in Chicago, there are beautiful heads, beautiful faces, beautiful mouths, noses, eyes—everything but beautiful feet. The artists of bohemia have given up in despair the quest for a model with perfect feet.

Helen's perfect feet have gone. No longer do they carry the model to the studios. Instead the artists carry the feet to their studios—they carry the plaster feet of Venus de Medici. Over in the art institute when a perfect foot is needed the foot of Venus is dragged out from the "cast room" and set upon the models' platform.

Is the plaster foot of Venus de Medici the only perfect foot in Chicago?

Over and over again the question has been asked in the studios and down in the basement of the Art Institute where artists are being made. And over and over again there has been no answer.

"It is true that it is quite impossible for us to find good feet," declared Lorado Taft in his studio the other day. "Models are hard to get. They lose their feet from the ambience. The Model feet are those usually used. They are perfections. We use the Medici feet in our schools. We are unable to find living models with perfect feet. Some of the most beautiful of women have ruined their feet. There is an agate left between the toes, they have been squeezed together until all the naturalness and wholesomeness are gone.

Poetry and Expression of the Perfect Foot.

And from the ambience, the books, and their instructors the students of art are compelled to take their lessons in the proportions of the human foot. Over and over again they are told that the foot is the most expressive part of the human body, more expressive even than the face, more expressive than any other part of the human body.

The feet of the three graces in the great painting by Jean Baptiste Regnault have become famous for their grace and beauty. Students have gone into the Louvre simply to copy the feet of these beautiful graces.

The Venus Capitolina is another figure with wonderful feet. And the artists go to Rome to study. Houdon was another master who gave to the world one of the most beautiful feet ever modeled. And Canova, and so on and so on—and you've read in Picker of A. Art, Hooker's Diana, standing in the green hall of the Louvre, look at the feet—aren't they wonderful? The right foot in the figure of "Au Moins," by Schoen-werk, in the Luxembourg, is a feet that has become famous in the world of art. So are the feet of "Jesse Tike à la fontaine," another masterpiece by Schoenewerk; and the feet of Fujna's Psyche and the Psyche of Gerard in his great painting "L'Amour et Psyche" in the Louvre.

Rivals the plaster feet of the Venus de Medici, and the first modeled by Pujes and Schoenewerk, and the beautiful feet painted by Bouguereau and Regnault—are yours as perfect, as full of grace, as beautiful? Or are the feet of the Venus de Medici the only perfect feet in Chicago? The plaster feet that have taken the place of the feet of Helen, the ragged country girl, in the studios?

If you are Chicago's Cinderella the tiny slipper of gold made by a famous goldsmith and ornamented with filigree and a diamond buckle is yours. If your foot is the most perfectly proportioned foot in Chicago a duplicate slipper, exactly like the Cinderella slipper in every detail, will be made to fit your foot.

Remember, if no one can wear the Cinderella slipper it will be given to the woman whose right foot comes nearest to conforming to the measurements of the slipper, and at the same time is adjudged to be the most perfectly formed foot by a competent expert. Remember, too, that no matter how large your foot may be, if it is the most perfectly proportioned foot, the most symmetrical foot in Chicago, it will be awarded the second golden slipper. Read the directions for measuring your foot and then send the measurements to THE TRIBUNE and mark the envelope "Cinderella."

Prove to Bohemia that the plaster feet of the Venus de Medici is not the only perfect foot in Chicago.

Cinderella Coupon.
(Printed for convenience; use not obligatory.)

Date: .....1907.
Name: .....
Street: .....
Number: .....
Length: .....Inches.
Ball: .....Inches.
Waist: .....Inches.
Instep: .....Inches.

Write plainly, cut out the coupon neatly, and mail to THE TRIBUNE, indorsing the word "Cinderella" in one corner of the envelope.

DIRECTIONS FOR MEASUREMENTS.
Measure the foot, over the stocking, from heel to toe, giving full measure in inches and fraction of an inch. Measure also the ball, around the first joint of the great toe, the waist, or instep, around the foot at 3-4. Draw the tape tightly for the last three measurements. Be a little liberal in the length.

Capitoline Venus

From Bouguereau's Birth of Venus

Gerard's Psyche

Psyche of the Louvre

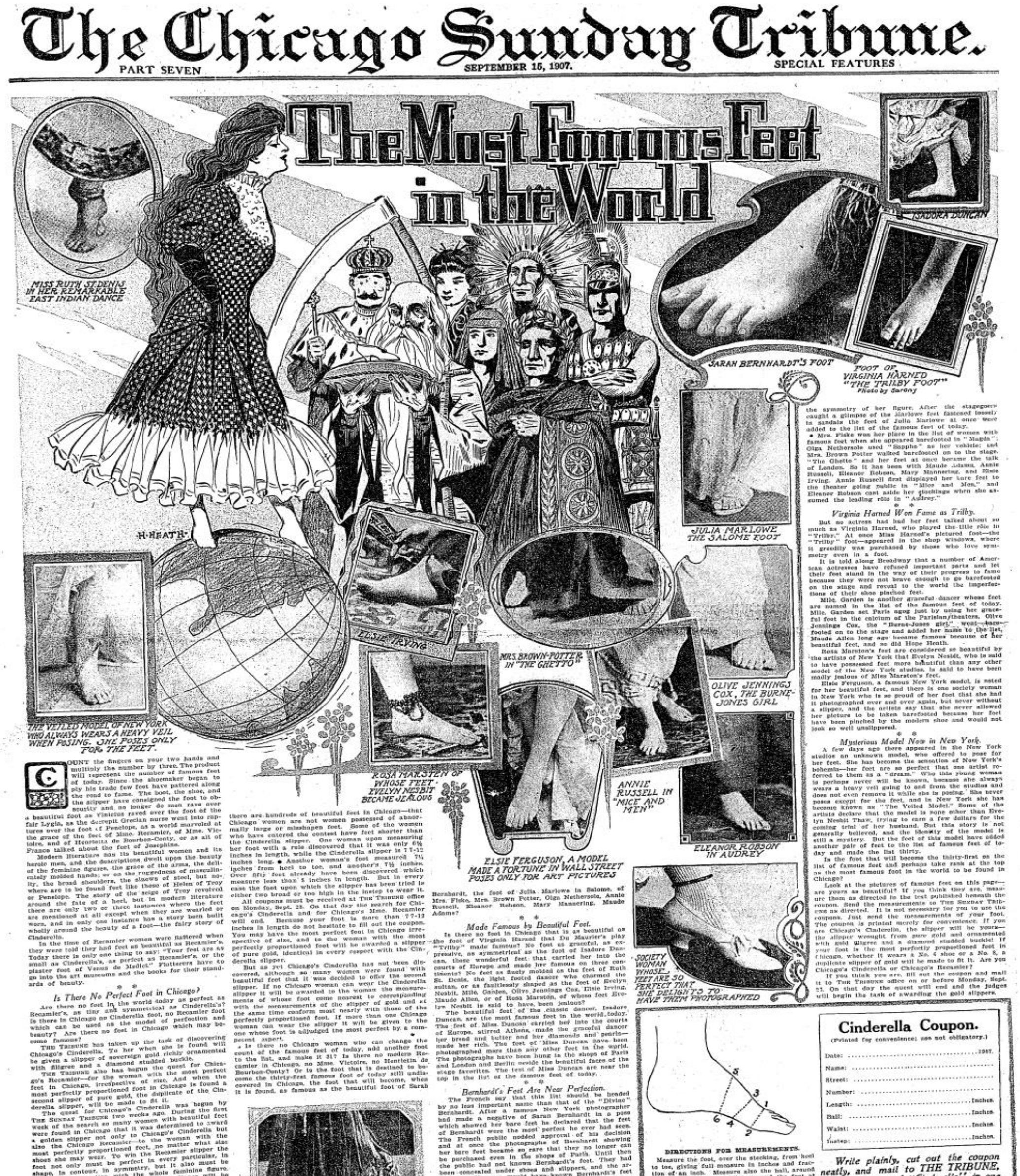
Houdon's Diana

Schoenewerk's Girl at the Fountain

Cast of Foot of Venus de Medici

[85] "Is The Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907, G1.

Figure 10. "The Most Famous Feet in the World"[86]



[86] Ibid.

[86] "The Most Famous Feet in the World," *Chicago Tribune,* September 15, 1907, G1.

Like U.S. women, one 1878 *London Reader* article noted that British women often squeezed their feet into smaller-sized shoes, stating that "for the sake of having small feet many an otherwise sensible woman will martyrise herself by pinching those plucky members of the body into boots a size too small." It also mentioned that this practice did not just cause large joints and corns "to a large class of young women," but also resulted in "crippling custom of wearing small and narrow boots is felt by children when allowed to outgrow their boots."[87] The journalist Genevieve L. Browne of *San Francisco Chronicle* commented in 1893, that "golden lilies" would be considered as beauties in the eyes of any nationalities. "Each nation has its own standard of feminine beauty and is unable to fairly judge the beauty of women of other nations, but it is safe to say that some of the Chinese women whom the writer has had the pleasure of seeing would probably be considered beautiful by connoisseurs of any nationality."[88] One middle-aged claimant of 1893 Chicago Cinderella also perceived small foot as the universal beauty standard, "I have lost the vanity of youth, but I believe no woman in the world ever gets quite over being vain of small or well-shaped foot."[89]

The popularity of small feet as the ideal of female beauty in the United States and some European countries can also be traced from the frequent ridicules towards women's obsession with small feet. In 1895, the *New York Times* reprinted one *London Truth* article that expressed admiration of small feet and revulsion toward large feet in Europe:

[87] "Small Feet," *London Reader*, June 8, 1878, 124.

[88] Genevieve L. Browne, "Fair Chinese Ladies: Visits to Our Local Golden Lilies," *San Francisco Chronicle,* August 6, 1893, 1.

[89] "Searching For The Cinderella," *Chicago Tribune,* February 19, 1893, 36.

> My saleswoman says that the Madrid ladies have the smallest feet she knows of. Peruvians and Chileans come next. American ladies from the United States are also remarkable for their small feet. The Russians have heavy splay feet . . . The best-shaped feet in Northern Europe are in Sweden. German ladies coming from Germany are generally neatly shod . . . The Belgian ladies are better off in their shoemakers; but they have large feet.[90]

One 1899 *Los Angeles Times* article revealed how the feet of women across cultures were widely judged on the both sides of the Atlantic. "The Germans and Scotch are credited with having the largest feet in Europe, and Spanish women, particularly Andalusians, the smallest." The Queen Regent, who was Austrian and of aristocratic descent was "not blessed with small feet." Her "large and broad" feet became "one of the grievances that the Spaniards have against her, for they look upon such a defect as akin to crime."[91] The corns and bunions of French women caused by wearing high heels almost in the middle of the foot with the padded instep to arch it were discussed with sneer, "a pair of good old felt slippers—her husband's preferably—are the only things she can endure with comfort, and in these she will shuffle about the house, an eyesore to everyone who sees her." The journalist also commented with a sarcastic humor that "a true French woman will suffer the tortures of the Inquisition every day of her life with all the fortitude of a saint rather than wear a sensible, low-heeled shoe that would give any idea of the real shape of her foot."[92] These perceptions of small feet craze may not be the most accurate depiction of the situation in every nation, yet illuminate that smallness had become a beauty norm across the Atlantic.

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[90] "Women and Small Feet," *New York Times*, November 5, 1895, 2.

[91] "Intellectual Feet," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1899, 12.

[92] Ibid.

U.S. women's feet and shoes captured attention on the other side of the Atlantic. In one offer of 1907 Chicago Cinderella search, the beautiful feet of U.S. classic dancer, Isadore Duncan "carried her into the courts of Europe, stirred Athens." Her feet were seen as "the most famous" and had been most photographed in the world of the day. According to the offer, "the photographs have been hung in the shops of Paris and London and Berlin beside the beautiful faces of the stage favorites."[93] In 1922, another report in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* illuminated European admiration towards U.S. small feet and the popularity of U.S. shoes among the Europeans. "American women as a class have been blessed by nature with smaller and narrower feet than most of their European sisters. This fact has been remarked on by scientists, style experts and connoisseurs of feminine beauty." When creating illusion of small feet was not sufficient to meet the desire for beauty, some people took it further to mutilate their feet. According to this report, the Western preoccupation with small and narrow feet at times resulted in surgery:

> Already two operations have taken place in exclusive London private sanitariums, and the fad is spreading. Only the little toe of each foot is sacrificed on the altar of vanity, for the purpose of the toe operation is not to shorten the foot, but merely to enable it to fit comfortably into the extremely long and narrow "toothpick" shoe which originated in America and has now become swagger in the British Isles.[94]

However, the surgery of this sort seemed not a novelty of early-twentieth-century Britain. In 1865, one article in a British magazine recorded that similar operations had

[93] "Is the Plaster Foot Of The Venus De Medici The Only Perfect Foot In Chicago?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907, G1.

[94] "Now Women Cut Off Toes to Force on 'Toothpick' Shoes," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 25, 1922.

prevailed generally in Lima, Paris and was spreading to London. It stated that the secret of the extremely small feet of the ladies of Lima lied in their tradition of amputating the little toe of each foot among their female infants. "So general is the custom, that many women think that five toes on each foot is a state of things peculiar to the male sex." It reported that "a Peruvian surgeon is coming to London and Paris, where he expects to make a fine harvest." This surgeon promised to ladies "the tiniest and most graceful foot by means of the above-named amputation, and confinement to the house of only one week."[95]

In Comparison with Chinese Alterity

The striking similarities of Chinese, U.S. and European beauty ideals in regard to female feet may have been largely forgotten in our collective memory, yet they were not entirely unnoticed by Americans and Europeans at the time.

Some U.S. Views

Apart from the ridicules and derisions, there were more critical discussions about women's shoes and feet in U.S. media. Some pointed out that Western gendered expectation about female feet were in common with that of China. In 1874, Mrs. Swisshelm in response to a man's blame on an old woman's vanity of small shoes, wrote to the *Tribune,* contending that men should be held accountable for aiding the circulation of the ideas of Cinderella feet.[96] She contended that Chinese, English and U.S. women had similar agency in the cases of Chinese footbinding and Western shoe question,

[95] "Small Feet In Peru**,"** *Bow Bells*, March 8, 1865, 133.

[96] "Woman: Mrs. Swisshelm On The Shoe Question," *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1874, 10.

> The poor Chinese women, who have next to no feet at all, are thus crippled to gratify the tastes of Chinese men--not of the common herd, but of the authors, philosophers and poets among them; and, by similar agency, our English and American women are crippled for life that they may be conformed to the task of the idiot who wrote the romance of the pumpkin-shell. Moreover, this shoe question lies at the foundation of the destitution of the women who are needing aid in all our cities to-day.[97]

One man named Sylvester Tallowbright responded to Mrs. Swisshelm in another *Tribune* article, asserting that the idealized foot sentiment existed even "before Cinderella came . . . and she was only an incidental outgrowth of the sentiment." He lamented that the negative example of Chinese footbinding would "not disenchant any man in this progressive country."[98] However, apparently these two critical engagements had little impact on most Americans in the following decades. As Tallowbright predicted, "Small feet are catalogued with bright eyes well-shaped noses, and beautiful faces. We like them on instinct, and we always will."[99]

According to U.S. Bureau of Census, only 584 Chinese were in Chicago in 1890 and the Chinese population only reached 1,179 in 1900.[100] Nonetheless, the *Tribune* organizers and editors of 1893 Chicago foot contest consciously distanced them from the Chinese smallness. In the ads on February 5 and 6, they claimed the distinction explicitly, "This bars out the Chinese, of course."[101] On February 7 and 8, they refined their description into "the

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[97] Ibid. Days later, *the San Francisco Chronicle* reprinted most part of this article "For The Ladies: The Story Of Cinderella And Female Immorality," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 20, 1874, 6.

[98] "Woman: Women's Feet and Foot-Sentiment," *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1874, 7.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community Since 1870* (Stanford University Press, 2012), 50.

[101] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 5, 1893, 33; "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 1893, 9.

feet must be natural. No Chinese monstrosity or other freak will receive attention."[102] This defense perhaps best testified to the degree in which they saw the search for Chicago Cinderella could remind people of Chinese footbinding. In 1907 contest, the *Tribune* editors further distanced themselves from the Chinese "golden lilies" by not comparing with them at all, as opposed to the explicit denunciation in 1893. By consistently associating U.S. admiration for small feet with European standard of beauty, and ignoring the resemblance between Chinese and U.S. gender ideologies and female body standards, many Americans imagined and cultivated a trans-Atlantic female bodily culture that reinscribed the binary of West versus East into the female body. This process of racialization obscured the fact that some problems Americans and Europeans saw only in those inferior racial groups in fact existed in their own societies too, and thus deflected their attention from pushing for more radical and complete reforms domestically.

The reemergence of comments like those of Mrs. Swisshelm's decades later also proved that the bad example of footbinding had helped little to change the status quo. The exclusive dispatch of *Los Angeles Times* reporting from Chicago in 1908 included excerpts from a magazine article written by a Chicago professor, W. I. Thomas. "American women have equaled the Chinese in making their feet small," Professor Thomas wrote, "the shortened length attained by Chinese women through doubling the toes back is secured by the western women by means of the high and illusorily placed heels."[103] He pointed to "the helplessness involved in lacing, high heels, undivided skirts and other impediments of

[102] "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 7, 1893, 9; "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 8, 1893, 9; "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 9, 1893, 9; "Who Is Chicago's Cinderella?*" Chicago Tribune,* February 10, 1893, 9

[103] "Fashion's Victims: Chinese Equaled In Small Feet," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 1908, 113.

women has a certain charm in the eyes of men," because it served to flatter the protective and masterful disposition of man.[104] His arguments, however, were deemed as "striking" and thereby newsworthy.

In 1919, one *New York Times* journalist in a report on the efforts of Y. W. C.A. to advocate for sensible shoes and to publicize its importance to public health called high-heeled and pointed shoes as U.S. version of "footbinding" and lamented about the slow progress in the United States as opposed to rapid changes in China,

> No other country except China has set itself up seriously as a rival to America in the business of mutilating women's feet, and China has reformed. Footbinding is obsolete there, or at least obsolescent. In the United States footbinding by a somewhat more modern process, with the aid of high-heeled and pointed shoes, continues almost unabated. The female of the species hereabouts is becoming a one-toed, sharp-footed animal.[105]

This report also inserted an illustration with the title "Can We Criticise China? The Human Foot Tilted to the Angle of a Horse's Hoof" (Figure 11).

[104] Ibid.

[105] "Putting American Women 'On Another Footing,'" *New York Times*, October 12, 1919, 73.

Figure 11. "Can We Criticise China?"[106]

Can We Criticise China? The Human Foot Tilted to the Angle of a Horse's Hoof.

It is interesting to note that starting from the 1920s, the newspapers, periodicals and magazines in China started to juxtapose Western-style high heels and "golden lilies" in similar ways as high heels successfully replaced footbinding as the modern urban fashion in Chinese cities (Figure 12 and 13). The high heels and the binding both aimed for curved arches, narrowness and smallness. The Chinese editors chiefly pointed out that both were harmful for Chinese women. In Figure 13, the editor remarked that walking with the high heels on the Nanjing Road, was perhaps more painful than with three-inch lotus feet. However, they did not intend to stress the Western origins of high heels so as to criticize Western cultures as we see from these two examples. Most articles on this topic usually did not go further than briefly stating that the high heels originated from the West.[107] One woman

[106] Ibid.

[107] For instance, one stated that high heels were imported from the West and became popular among new Chinese women who were eager to claim their modernity through their choice of shoes. Both footbinding and high heels were against nature and harmful to the body. While the old should be eradicated, the new should be

who advocated the abolishment of high heels explicitly expressed in her article a sense of helplessness toward this no turning back historical moment, remarking "are we afraid of eliminating high heels because they are European style?"[108] In fact, slippers for bound feet especially in northern China had high heels. What distinguished the Western high heels from these Chinese heels was the leather material, different economy of production and circulation.[109]

Figure 12. "Footbinding and high heels are both harmful to health"[110]

opposed as well. Qi Wen 豈文, "Cong xiaojiao shuodao gaogenxie" 從小脚說到高跟鞋 (From small feet to high heels), *Weimei* 唯美, No.11(1936): 35.

[108] Xiu Juan 秀娟, "Feichu gaogenxie" 廢除高跟鞋 (Abolishing high heels) *Weisheng bao* 卫生报 No. 21(1928):5

[109] Dorothy Ko, "Jazzing into Modernity: High Heels, Platforms, and Lotus Shoes," in *China Chic: East Meets West* ed. By Valerie Steele, John S. Major (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 145; Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters,* 48-49, 191.

[110] "Chanzu yu chuan gaogenxie shi tongyang de fanghai weisheng" 缠足与穿高跟鞋是同样的防害卫生 (Footbinding and high heels are both harmful to health), *Minjian xunkan* 民间旬刊, No. 8 (1930):12.

Figure 13. "Three-inch golden lotuses and high heels"[111]

The Chinese eventually managed to eradicate footbinding across the country in the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, they hardly turned the tide of the new fashion coming in the name of West modernity, despite public acknowledgement of its negative effect on women's bodies. As Dorothy Ko states in one article, "in the twentieth century [Chinese] fashion was widely presumed to be a western import."[112] She points to "the reason for high heels' popularity was "the seduction of foreign lifestyle and power."[113]

[111] The text below the image is: three-inch golden lotuses are unhealthy. How about high heels? I am afraid that walking with them on Nanjing Road would be more painful!" "Sancun jinlian yu gaogenxie" 三寸金蓮與高跟鞋 (Three-inch golden lotus and high heels), *Jinghua jingbao* 图画京报, No. 6 (1928):1.

[112] Ko, "Jazzing into Modernity," 144.

[113] Ibid., 149.

Mayfair Yang's conceptualization of native orientalism in China's attitudes towards its own religiosity is instrumental here for us to understand the little resistance Chinese had towards the Western high heels. Being imported with a sense of modern femininity, the Western heels signified the burial of the backward past represented by footbinding. The more China internalized Western standards of modernity to identify itself, the more it lost confidence in its own specific identity and history and in searching for other alternatives beyond the West. The Chinese who managed to end the century-old footbinding tradition ironically were unable to stem the Western high heels fashion which in fact was not entirely different from the traditional Chinese beauty standard. The high-heeled Chinese shoes for bound feet were largely forgotten in Chinese collective memory.

British Justification of Toe Amputation

Some British women's pursuit of fashion resulted in toe surgery in the early twentieth century, even though it was not remarkably widespread. In the discussion of British toe amputation, Chinese footbinding was certainly on the back of people's mind for comparison (Figure 14). The cutting was considered very mild as opposed to the Chinese practice. "Compared with what the upper-class women of China have done to their feet for more than three thousand years, the fad of the ultra-modern English woman in cutting off her little toes is as mild an operation as visiting the manicure."[114] The same report also mentioned the two young women who had their little toes removed in a private hospital were "both beautiful, both social leaders."[115] The operation they had was said to be "performed with a local anesthetic . . . painless and to leave a scar so slight as to be scarcely noticeable." The women

[114] "Now Women Cut Off Toes to Force on 'Toothpick' Shoes," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 25, 1922.

[115] Ibid.

declared that the operation did not just make them fashionable, but also enabled them to "walk with ease and comfort unknown to them for years" because "before the operation is usually found to be curled under, compressing and getting in the way of the other toes and frequently calloused and pressed out of shape."[116] Other advocates of the toe-cutting fad in England even went further to justify the amputation on the ground that the little toe "would naturally disappear or become atrophied in the course of time by natural evolution."[117]

Figure 14. "Now Women Cut Off Toes to Force on 'Toothpick' Shoes"[118]

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH: SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 1922.

Now Women Cut Off Toes to Force On "Toothpick" Shoes

Two Women in England Have Undergone Amputation of Their Small Toes and Surgeons Make the Report that They Walk "Better than Ever"

First Diagram, at Left, Shows Natural Bone Structure of Woman's Bare Foot When Walking; Note How Different Its Outline Is from that of "Toothpick" Shoe. Second Diagram Shows All of This Foot Except the Little Toe Compressed in Shoe; If the Little Toe Were Also Forced Into the Shoe, It Would Have to Be Painfully Crowded and "Lapped" or Turned Under.

Third Diagram Shows Foot Comfortably Encased in "Toothpick" Shoe After Amputation of Little Toe.

Photo of Katharine Brown, New York Women's Swimming Club, Showing the Natural Spread of the Foot When the Weight of the Body Is Upon It

A Chinese Lady with Her Young Son, Showing Her Tiny Bound Feet in Comparison with the Normal Feet of the Child.

This Type of "Toothpick" Shoe Is Now the Rage in London.

The Tiny "Golden Lily" Feet of a Chinese Lady, Deformed by Binding in Childhood and Keeping the Feet Compressed in Bandages Until She Is a Grown Woman

Remarkable X-Ray Photo of Woman's Foot Taken While Wearing a "Toothpick" Shoe. Note How the Toe Bones Are Compressed.

Making an X-Ray Compression Picture of the Feet of a Young Woman to Determine the Effect of Modern Shoes on the Bone Formation of the Toes.

Another Method of Distorting the Feminine Foot for the Sake of Style; Heels Seven Inches High Which Were Actually Worn by an Actress on the Stage.

FASHIONABLE women are cutting off their toes in order to wear narrower shoes!

Already two operations have taken place in exclusive London private sanitariums, and the fad is spreading.

Only the little toe of each foot is sacrificed on the altar of vanity, for the purpose of the toe operation is not to shorten the foot, but merely to enable it to fit comfortably into the extremely long and narrow "toothpick" shoe which originated in America and has now become swagger in the British Isles.

Two young women, both beautiful, both social leaders, had their little toes removed in the same private hospital at Mayfair. The operation, performed with a local anesthetic, is said to be painless and to leave scars so slight as to be scarcely noticeable.

The convalescents, when they have their bandages removed, believe that they will never again suffer from the disability of Cinderella's ugly sisters. They send for the narrowest pair of shoes to be found in the smart shoe shops, and discover to their intense delight that they can accommodate four toes in a shoe which would have been much too narrow for a complete five.

The women who have had their little toes removed declare that the operation, in addition to bringing them into line with the prevailing fashion, enables them to walk with ease and comfort unknown to them for years. The little toe of the woman who has been addicted to too narrow shoes before the operation is usually found to be curled under, compressing and getting in the way of the other toes and frequently calloused and pressed out of shape.

Surgeons are divided as to whether the surgical transformation of milady from a ten-toed creature into an eight-toed one will have any permanent harmful effect. Apparently, and by their own statements, women who have undergone the operation walk, stand, dance and run with as much ease afterward as before—even with more ease if the foot has been previously cramped. A number of the leading surgeons of England agree with them that the fad is harmless. Others take a different view, strongly advise against it, and declare that perfect balance, equilibrium and movement can be possible only when the foot is equipped with nature's full set of toes.

Certain it is that women golf players, athletes, professional dancers and those who for sport or business have to spend long hours on their feet, will not embrace this new vagary of fashion.

Although the fad may be followed by individuals here and there in America, there is little likelihood that it will be widely adopted "on this side of the pond."

American women as a class have been blessed by nature with smaller and narrower feet than most of their European sisters. This fact has been remarked on by scientists, style experts and connoisseurs of feminine beauty. They differ as to the reasons, but they agree on the fact. This is true even of the slender blond beauties of the British aristocracy. The most plausible reason, given by the British themselves, is that a large part of the British upper class is a country aristocracy—a race whose men and women for many generations have engaged in outdoor sports and physical exercise to an extent unparalleled until very recently in any other country.

Consequently, the long, narrow type of shoe, sensible enough for the American foot and unquestionably possessing great beauty of line when worn with certain types of costumes, presented difficulties for English wear.

English women liked the shoe. They had no criticism to make of it. They didn't want to change it. They changed their feet instead.

The only formal and official English pronouncement from medical circles on the toe-cutting fad comes from the National Orthopedic Hospital:

"Toe cutting is not dangerous if done by a competent surgeon. Sometimes it is even necessary when the toe is afflicted by disease or has been severely injured by too tight shoes. In our opinion, however, it is not justifiable to have the little toe cut off merely to follow fashion."

Whether it is "justifiable" or not, women are actually doing it—just as in all ages and all countries, civilized and uncivilized, women have voluntarily undergone fantastic tortures, mutilations and distortions to make themselves more attractive to their suitors or more pleasing to their own eyes.

Compared with what the upper-class women of China have done to their feet for more than three thousand years, the fad of the ultra-modern English woman in cutting off her little toes is as mild an operation as visiting the manicure.

The practice of foot-binding is widely discouraged now in the Chinese republic by the majority of its most beautiful and aristocratic women. Less than 100 years ago it was almost universal. To-day it is still practiced.

After a Chinese girl baby is born into an aristocratic home, if the parents are still advocates of the old standards of female beauty, she is taken when scarcely able to toddle to an expert foot-binder. At this age the tendons and muscles are still soft and the bones are not yet firmly set. Her little toes are bent backward under the instep and each foot is tightly swathed in tape bandages. From that moment on, until she reaches full womanhood, the bandages are never removed, except to be immediately replaced by equally tight or tighter ones. The feet are compressed and growth is almost completely stopped. The result is the tiny "golden lilies"—the little deformed feet less than three inches long, which mandarins for ages have regarded as an exquisite and dainty mark of feminine loveliness. An additional result is that the Chinese "beauty," by Western standards of activity, is a cripple all her life.

Extremely high heels are another instance of distortion of natural lines in civilized countries for the sake of style or beauty.

Advocates of the toe-cutting fad in England declare that because of the shape of modern shoes for women the little toe is of scarcely any use, and that it would naturally disappear or become atrophied in the course of time by natural evolution, even if it were not amputated.

"The little toe is degenerating, owing to tight-fitting shoes," says one authority, "and babies born hundreds of years hence will not have any little toes at all. What difference can it make, then, if some of our women now, for the sake of style and comfort, hasten nature's process by calling in the aid of the surgeon's knife?"

So, apparently, if you happen to fall in love with an English beauty who has particularly narrow and stylish feet, you needn't be surprised, when you take her for a day at the seashore, to find that you have fallen in love with an eight-toed Venus.

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A Missed Call: Chinese Voices

Most Chinese of the day seemed not to notice the small foot fever among Western women, but they were certainly aware of the practice of corseting which was more visible. Perhaps to add more flavor to their news stories, U.S. newspapers recorded that some Chinese brought up Western tight lacing when being confronted with the question of Chinese footbinding. For example, in May, 1918 when Mrs. Wellington Koo, wife of the Chinese ambassador to the United States, arrived in Chicago was asked how long she thought it would take to terminate footbinding, she believed that would stop before U.S. women ceased disfiguring themselves with corsets."[119] U.S. journalist and writer Frank G. Carpenter in a 1909 *Tribune* article also stated that many Chinese got even with him, denouncing that tight lacing commonly practiced among U.S. women was "worse to compress the vital organs than the feet." He continued, "They consider the small waist ugly, rather than beautiful, and say both customs have their foundation in depraved ideas of the beautiful."[120]

As mentioned in Chapter two, missionaries encountered these challenges too, yet no action was taken to directly address them. Nor did both sides acknowledge the potential to develop a trans-Pacific sisterhood based on the shared struggle of liberating women's bodies from harmful practices. These brief lines in the news chiefly aimed to entertain the readers rather than advocating for changes in the United States. Within an unequal power structure in the Pacific shaped by the colonial and imperialist interventions, China was certainly not on the minds of U.S. reformers when they were looking for inspiring models.

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[119] "Tight Shoe To Go Before Corset, Says Mrs. Koo," *Chicago Tribune,* May 5, 1918, 10.

[120] Frank G. Carpenter, "Chinese to Cease Binding of Feet: Ancient Practice Being Given Up by Many and Sentiment Against It Grows," *Chicago Tribune*, December 19, 1909, A3.

Unlike the tremendous attention that footbinding drew in the United States, corseting did not gain much publicity in China, a nation preoccupied with reinvigorating itself from national crisis. Although topics regarding U.S. women were not major interest of nineteenth century Chinese newspaper readers, by the early twentieth century representations of U.S. women in Chinese public mainly served to offer role models for the Chinese. The dominant discourse of contemporary Chinese newspapers in the early twentieth century about U.S. women concentrated on the modernization themes including U.S. women's education, suffrage movements, stories of inspiring female figures, and women's excellence in sports.[121]

The U.S. dress reforms in the nineteenth century mostly overlooked the issue of common-sense shoe reform. As one 1892 *San Francisco Chronicle* article stated, low-heeled, broad-toed shoes "are not generally considered part of the dress-reform system."[122] Although some efforts were made, critical engagements and shoe reforms that made effective changes were rare. Those who expected to rely on the shoe firms and merchants for progressive reforms did not diagnose the root cause of these harmful practices.[123] Their suggestions for criminalizing the sale, manufacturing or wearing nonsensible shoes and empty requests for selling healthier shoes largely neglected to interrogate the social milieu in which women "chose" to engage with the harmful practices.[124] Most of them failed to acknowledge the limits of the agency of U.S. women whose choices were predestined in a male-dominated society. The consumption-oriented and profit-driven institutions such as shoe industry,

[121] Based on my examination of "*Chinese Periodical Database* (1833-1949*),*" and "*Shen Bao Database* (1872-1949)*."*

[122] "Dress Reform: Now Known as High Art Costuming," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 17, 1892, 2.

[123] "Y.W.C.A. Urges Shoe Reform," *New York Times,* April 12, 1919, 13;

[124] For instance, "A New Anti-Vice Crusade," *San Francisco Chronicle,* January 2, 1921, E6.

modern press, theatre, cinema and other popular culture agencies that appealed to the mainstream taste also aided and perpetuated the Western foot fever at the turn of the twentieth century.

Like the profusion of Chinese promotion to end footbinding to some extent revealed the massive resistance against anti-footbiniding movement, the amount of derision and accusation towards the obsession for small foot in North America and Europe reflected how popular smallness of female foot as a beauty standard had become. Both societies demanded reforms that would stop harmful traditions of mutilating female bodies and hindering the development of their natural shape. Both witnessed women's self-inflicted conformity to male-centric beauty standard. However, the anti-footbinding efforts did not gain sweeping power in China until sets of modernization reforms propelled by the national crisis gained momentum nationwide. Female fashions such as tight shoes or corsets never subjected the Americans to the deep shame of being a weak race and having a "feudal" past as Chinese footbinding did. As an emerging empire that quickened its pace to play a dominant role in the Pacific, the United States confronted no external force that could thrust a tough reflection and decisive move to change the detrimental ways in which women engaged with their body. Meanwhile, U.S./Western Orientalist discourse carried by the imperialist expansion around the world was so powerful that the public discourse in China overwhelmingly shifted to be in alignment with it in order to foster progress and modernization, depicting an oversimplified image of U.S. female independence and emancipation.

Conclusion

U.S. foot fever disclosed that Americans were not entirely different from the "barbarous" Chinese who desired "golden lilies." The shared ideologies about women's bodies, class, and morality between China and the United States granted validity to the paradoxical inclusion of those lily-footed women at America's gates. These "golden lilies" were deemed as no threat to the ideal U.S. female bodily morality, or a supposed woman's position in contemporary U.S. society.

Harmful practices exist in different parts of the world, in different forms and under various historical circumstances. However, in an unequal international power structure, the more powerful had more means to claim its superiority by ignoring the commonalities they shared with Chinese women, and constructing alterity and barbarity of other cultural practices. U.S. operation of difference was achieved not only through a discourse of Chinese backwardness and otherness to bolster its racial and cultural supremacy and justify its expansion in the Pacific, but also through claiming and fortifying the bond with other Western powers in the shared ideologies about race, gender, class and female body ideals.

The United States solidified its image as a Western power in the Pacific not only through the territorial occupations, missionary proselyting and military presence as did other imperialist Western nations, but also by affirming their ties with other Western countries in intimate realms such as beauty ideals and female bodily culture. The racializing process of the Chinese female body were in tandem with a solidification of a white female culture transnationally. The prevailing fascination towards the British and the French female body ideals and Chinese Otherness weakened critical discussions of foot fever and women's rights in the United States. Thus, racializing Chinese women and objectifying their bodies did not just diminish Chinese women's subjectivity, but also had consequences for the U.S. to

identify the limits of white women's agency both in a traditional patriarchal society and in an increasingly modernized U.S. society. Very few contemporary Americans challenged U.S. operation of difference by critically pointing to the similarities. When they did, their arguments were not well received or deemed as "striking."

Ironically, Western discourse of difference had numerous currencies in the semi-colonial Chinese society where the Chinese officials and elites passionately participated in the West versus East binary construction and developed dependence on the reference system of the Western model. This did not just limit the Chinese critical reflection on U.S. and European cultures. It further restricted the possibilities of transnational feminist upsurges that had already been constrained in traditional U.S. and Chinese societies which valued women's domesticity dearly. Despite the startling similarities, the Chinese, Americans and Europeans to a large degree missed seeing a possibility of a collective fight against harmful practices which could have connected them rather than creating the separateness and difference between them.

Chapter 5: Visualizing Admissibility: Manufacturing the Body

The previous chapters have shown the immigration administration's dependence on the Chinese female bodies to sieve the admissible class from the undesirable among the Chinese migrants. The standardized practices of inquiring and documenting bound foot, however, were merely the tip of iceberg of the U.S. immigration bureaucratic mechanism that laid on the migrants' bodies. This chapter broadens the discussion to include the bodily proofs other than bound feet and clarifies the bureaucratic context in which the body including women's feet acquired their particular significance. It demonstrates how U.S. inclusion and exclusion have been intertwined with the visual and the body. The important criteria such as race, gender, and class all made their physical and visible statements through the body.

Historian Adam Mckeown points out, "The refinement of exclusion techniques was part of larger trends in scientific management and administrative expansion accompanying industrialization in the United States and around the world."[1] Although China eventually adapted a similar system of documenting and managing its population and emigration in response to this global trend, these immigrants from Qing China did not have modern documentation of birth, race and nationality during the early decades of Chinese exclusion. The physical markers aided the immigration officers who had to deal with individuals with

[1] Adam Mckeown, "Ritualization of Regulation: The Enforcement of Chinese Exclusion in the United States and China," *American Historical Review*, Volume 108, Issue 2 (April 2003), 378.

minimum identification and who wrestled with the irrationality and artificiality of racial concept embedded in the Chinese exclusion laws.[2]

Legal scholar Kitty Calavita especially stresses the paradoxes associated with the prevailing assumptions about the nature of race, class and identity implicit in the exclusion laws and their enforcement.[3] Yet, she does not exhaust the body as an analytic tool to understand the paradoxes embedded in the laws. The use of the popularly circulated terms and concepts such as race, bloodline and class were convenient for the law-makers. However, they were nightmares to the enforcers. Those self-contradictory concepts in the laws forced the officials to look for more concrete, practical tools such as evidence from the body.

The physical markers that served to establish Chinese admissibility usually can be divided into three categories: 1) the ones such as height, eye color, scars or moles which could be used as tools of identification; 2) the ones such as bound foot, clothing, calluses, and hair style, which presumably indicated immigrants' social status and morality; 3) any signs that Public Health Service personnel deemed as instrumental to make suggestions. Compared to other physical markers, the unique value of bound foot to the inspectors was the racial, social, cultural and moral meanings it implied and equally important, its visibility, and relatively fixed physicality which made it the seemingly most reliable identification vehicle.

[2] The ambiguity regarding the relationships between nationality and race was embedded in the Act of May 6, 1882. Originally it did not specify whether "Chinese" in the law referred to Chinese nationality or race. It was amended in the Act of July 5, 1884 into that "the exclusion laws apply to all persons of Chinese nationality and also to all persons of the Chinese race who are nationals of other foreign governments." In 1914, it was stipulated that "the exclusion laws apply to all persons who are wholly or chiefly of Chinese blood. Persons should be regarded as other than of Chinese descent if the admixture of Chinese blood is less than one-half." "Procedures in 'Section 6' And Other Chinese Immigration Matters for the Use of Consular Officers (1923)," *John Birge Sawyer Papers*, Folder 12, Box 1, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley; "Procedures in 'Section 6' And Other Chinese Immigration Matters for the Use of Consular Officers (1926)," *John Birge Sawyer Papers*, Folder 13, Box 1, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

The person under interrogation could make an excuse for not remembering or not paying attention to their neighbors' or friends' eye color, ear piercing, and location of scars, but bound feet were sufficiently noticeable even from a certain distance. People's height and size could change over time, but bound feet were believed to remain the same once the practice was successfully done. This explains why in the immigration inspection, women's foot type was more obsessively documented and why in those coaching letters and maps, bound feet were more frequently singled out and highlighted than other physical marks.

Furthermore, bound feet were taken as a proof of the applicant's racial identity. Historians have documented that some Chinese, often collaborating with agents, invented ingenious means to disguise their bodies as other "races," even though other racial groups were supposed to have very different physical characteristics from the assumed Chinese bodies. They passed themselves off as Canadians,[4] American Indians,[5] Mexicans,[6] and

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[3] Calavita, "The Paradoxes of Race, Class, Identity, and 'Passing'," 1–40; "Collisions at the Intersection of Gender, Race, and Class," 249-281.

[4] In 1901, the correspondent of the Los Angeles Times in Washington D.C. reported "tricks" some Chinese migrants resorted to when they attempted to come to the country through the U.S.-Canadian border. "One of the most novel disguises which has been adopted extensively," according to this correspondent was "the garb of priest or clergyman." What those Chinese immigrants did was putting "their pigtails under cover, their slanting eyes disguised by some means, and gowned in robes like those of Montreal monks." They were also "taught to act" like priests." "Chinese Tricks," *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1901, 2.

[5] It was reported that "a Chinaman is schooled to drop his natural walk and to articulate like an Indian." Authorities in Washington D. C. said this manufacturing of identity involved "prominent men in various sections of the country" who "are interested in the work of smuggling Chinese into America, and allow their agents generous amounts for purchasing disguises." Ibid.

[6] "One of the most important aspects of Chang's operation involved disguising the newly arrived Chinese as Mexican residents. The Chinese cut their queues and exchanged their 'blue jeans and felt slippers' for 'the most picturesque Mexican dress.' They received fraudulent Mexican citizenship papers, and they also learned to say a few words of Spanish, in particular 'Yo soy Mexicano'('I am Mexican'). In 1907, immigrant inspector Marcus Braun traveled to Mexico City, where he discovered Chinese immigrants using fake Mexican citizenship certificates to get into the United States. Upon examining the photographs attached to the documents, Braun expressed with some amazement that it was 'exceedingly difficult to distinguish these Chinamen from Mexicans.'" Lee, *At America's Gates*, 162.

African Americans.[7] Some even performed across genders.[8] If a person appeared with bound feet, however, her race and gender were self-evident.

The Reliance on the Body

Historians have uncovered various strategies that the Chinese utilized as U.S. immigration personnel developed, expanded, or refined burdens of proof in response to the increasingly meticulous interrogation.[9] Historians have noticed, as the Martha Gardner notes, "Immigration officials suspected oral testimony but believed the body could not lie. Anthropometry, or the careful measurement of the body, provided immigration officials with an identification system they believed could discern fact from fiction."[10] However, the roles of visual evidence and the body played in the process of establishing immigrants' admissibility beg for more in-depth exploration.

In everyday bureaucratic practice and regulation, the bodily evidence was held dearly to classify, categorize and document the migrants. Physical appearances helped to make internal external. Just as bound foot became the outward and visible sign used by popular authors and immigration authorities to reveal women inward morality and social status, visual clues

[7] Ibid.

[8] One Pullman porter reported in 1914 that two Chinese men were to enter Los Angeles from Calexico disguised as Mexican women. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 183.

[9] Lee, *At America's Gates*; Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law, Studies in Legal History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Kitty Calavita, "The Paradoxes of Race, Class, Identity, and 'Passing': Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Acts, 1882–1910," *Law and Social Inquiry* 25, No. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–40; Kitty Calavita, "Collisions at the Intersection of Gender, Race, and Class: Enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Law," *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 2006): 249-281; Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island : Immigrant Gateway to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[10] Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen*, 161-162.

assisted immigration officials in the process of identification and selection. Observing, examining, interrogating and recording the "physical particularities" of the migrants substantiated the enforcement of the exclusion laws.

Moreover, as suspicions towards Chinese frauds grew among the officials at the U.S. consulates in China and Hong Kong as well as U.S. ports of entry, these enforcers of the Chinese exclusion laws more and more resorted to bodily evidences to make their decisions. Mckeown notices U.S. consuls' growing distrust towards the evidence the applicants obtained through their own social networks and their tendency to search for proof from the body. He states that although lawyers, brokers, and middlemen continued to profit from their knowledge of migration procedures, after 1905, "they had largely been excluded from effective participation in the personal interviews that were now at the heart of the investigation." Bondsmen and personal recommendations were no longer "the best guarantee of a visa, they were now a sure way to spark the suspicion of an investigating agent."[11] He maintains,

> The proper categorization of each person was not knowable through social relationships but through marks directly perceivable in the body and bearing of each individual: his mode of speaking, expression, the condition of his hands, his gait, all the way down to the amount of dirt under his fingernails and calluses on his feet.[12]

The inspection of the body started at the U.S. consulates in Hong Kong and in China. Although the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong, with limited funding and staff, never conducted cross examination as tedious as the ways in which it operated in U.S. ports of entry, more

[11] Mckeown, "Ritualization of Regulation," 390-391.

[12] Ibid, 391.

elaborated investigation, interrogation and occasional visitation to the places of business or immigration raids gradually developed. Appearance still was a vital means for the consular officers to determine the eligibility of the applicants and for the Chinese to ensure the success of their application. Before arriving the other side of the Pacific, the pressures on how to present their bodies were palpable.

The officers, however, were not unaware of the drawback of the emphasis on visual clues. For instance, in 1897, Consul Rounsevelle Wildman of Hong Kong attacked immigration officials in California who expected merchants to wear "silken robes." He pointed out the fluidity of merchant and labor identities, stating that 65 to 85 percent of the residents in Hong Kong engaged in some kind of merchandising where the partners were proprietors, workmen, and laborers all in one.[13]

Nonetheless, in the early twentieth century, the reliance on physical looks to select the admissible became more and more institutionalized and routinized. The institutionalization was two-folded: one is that the consular officers stabilized and normalized certain sets of visual signs to substantiate their decisions regarding applicants' identity and eligibility; the other is that the agents exploited visual and bodily proofs to establish a bona fide case so as to make profits out of the system.

The importance of searching for clues from the body was commonly acknowledged among the consular officials. Although his investigation primarily depended on the recommendation of respected local Chinese, Consul Robert McWade in Canton said in 1903 that he would check the applicant's body for the "signs of the 'coolie' class" and fingerprint

[13] Ibid., 386.

him.[14] Amos P. Wilder, U.S. Consul General at Hong Kong from May 14, 1906 to April 16, 1909 had similar approaches. On January 13, 1909, Hon. F. D. Cheshire, U.S. Consul at large, warned in his reports that "only personal visitations at the shops in most cases can clinch the claims of merchants and even here there is room to deceive the consul."[15] However, an examination of the applicants' appearance was often combined with other tests in Wilder's office. According to Wilder, after a literary test, a stiff examination would be conducted to ascertain that the applicant was indeed a Hong Kong man rather than a villager, or a Canton applicant who was previously refused at the office. He noted that "villagers are often literate, but are sunburnt; have uncontrolled voices; and show dialect peculiarities." When occasionally dealing with cases where the father in the United States died and his son needed to take up the business yet did not have a merchant status, he also found visual clues quite helpful. "The practice of this office," explained Wilder, "is to judge largely by the appearance of the applicant: if he have a well born look; if his dress, manner, hands, teeth, and alertness betoken good connections, his application is already well advanced."[16]

Starting to work as U.S. consul at Hong Kong in 1911, John Birge Sawyer valued visual evidence too. On January 27, 1912, in his letter to his former colleague in Portland Immigration Service, he stated that although he tried to examine every case at the applicant's place of business, he thought highly of appearance and manners as a means to determine a case: "If such an examination and the applicant's appearance and manners make out a first

[14] Ibid.

[15] Notes of American Consulate General at Hongkong on Chinese Immigration, John Birge Sawyer Papers, Folder 3, Box 1, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

[16] Ibid.

class case, I believe he should be granted the visa of his paper, even though his place of business has not been seen."[17]

In addition to physical descriptions required in the 1882 Act, volumes of photographic documentation were produced as the immigration authorities and lawmakers amended and refined immigration legislation and documentation. Photos were required in identification cards, return and in-transit certificates, immigration case files, and Section 6 certificates for the exempt class. Sawyer stressed the importance of keeping photos of both the admitted and the rejected applicants in the consular instructional pamphlet in addition to their names and descriptions, because experience had shown that the rejected applicants "seldom apply a second time under the same name if their cases involve fraud."[18]

The Bertillon system developed in 1880s by Alphonse Bertillon to identify criminals in the Paris police department introduced techniques of identification to U.S. immigration administration including meticulous body measurements, physical description, and photographs. Chinese migrants were photographed at arrival and departure. These photographs were then used to verify applicants' identities upon readmission.[19] Although the Immigration Service stopped the use of the Bertillon system in 1906 after the Chinese boycott

[17] Correspondence to Mr. Barbour in Immigration Service in Portland, John Birge Sawyer Papers Folder 3, Box 1, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

[18] "Procedures in 'Section 6' And Other Chinese Immigration Matters for the Use of Consular Officers (1926)," *John Birge Sawyer Papers*, Folder 13, Box 1, Bancroft Library Manuscripts Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

[19] Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen*, 162; Lee, *At America's Gates*, 84-85.

of U.S. goods,[20] similar extensive measurements of the body and photographic documentation were in use up until the 1950s.[21]

Manufacturing the Admissible Body

Bureaucratic practices of identification fragmented these people's identity into various categories such as height, skin color, color of eyes and physical particularities. The bodies of the Chinese migrants were always subject to coercive official gaze. Although how their bodies related to their admissibility were at the discretion of the authorities, the bodily evidence that justified the screening practices also offered incredible opportunities for the migrants to fabricate their identity. The Chinese efforts to evade the discriminatory laws through the body, in turn, intensified the immigration authorities' surveillance and scrutiny towards the immigrant bodies. Bound foot, for instance, was among the various physical markers used to prevent impersonating. A woman with natural feet would find it hard to justify her case if the person she pretended to be was recorded as small-footed. If there was discrepancy over the type of women's size in different parties' testimonies, it would be considered as a serious point of suspicion. At the same time, however, this created a possibility for another footbound woman to claim she was the same person by demonstrating her diminutive feet.

Impersonating as their eligible Chinese fellows was an important means for the migrants to bypass the exclusionary laws. Beth Lew-Williams compellingly argues that the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was not as definitive a move toward gatekeeping as many

[20] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 211.

[21] Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen*, 162.

historians have suggested. The 1882 Act, as she puts, called by the contemporaries as Chinese Restriction Act failed to thwart Chinese migration as it intended, as the Act only suspended the coming of new Chinese laborers. Chinese continued to arrive as "returning" residents who had previously resided in the United States. The immense possibility the system left for impersonation enabled the Chinese to claim their eligibility.

After 1882, tens of thousands of Chinese laborers continued to enter California by claiming to be members of the exempt classes, "in-transit" travelers, or workers who had previously resided in the United States.[22] According to the Treasury decision of 1883, "a consular passport be issued to Chinese landing in transit, and that a full description of the Chinese landing be incorporated for identification."[23] The 1884 Amendment to the 1882 Act officially instituted a system of ''return certificates'' that was already in use and stipulated that the Chinese must carry certificate for reentry to the United States. The departing Chinese could go to the registration bureau in the Custom-house before sailing and claim a return certificate. Many Chinese who went to China took out certificates, even though they had no intention of returning, and others without plan of leaving the country sold their certificates. Some were even paid to pretend to leave for China in order to get certificates. "Some of them were measured as many as six times."[24] The written physical descriptions in those certificates and the techniques of "creating" certain physical marks enabled rather convenient impersonations.

[22] Beth Lew-Williams, "Before Restriction Became Exclusion: America's Experiment in Diplomatic Immigration Control," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (February 2014): 24-56.

[23] "The Transit Trick," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 1885, 2.

[24] "The Chinese Frauds," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 18, 1885, 8.

Some tricks practiced by the Chinese to manufacture their height were noted in the newspapers. Since the height, 5 feet 6 inches "is that of the average coolie," the reporter went on, "if it differs a little from that of the holder of the paper he had only to swear that when measured he was without his shoes, or had them on, as best might suit his case. He can also practice the tricks so commonly resorted to by Chinamen when measured in court."[25] One *Daily Alta California* article articulated the process that took place in court.

> Inspectors Hawes and Grant compared the facial peculiarities of the Mongolians, while Interpreter Kipp held the measuring stick and asked questions in Chinese. . . A side of a packing box constituted a platform upon which every Chinaman was obliged to stand in stocking feet while being measured with the stick. They differed in height from the measure stated on their papers from one eighth to three fourths of an inch.[26]

Court records utilized as supporting documents usually contained photographs and physical descriptions. With application and the payment of the prescribed fee, Chinese or their attorneys usually could easily get access to certified copies of the court record, or of court records in cases in which admission was granted. Once the record was obtained, there were two ways to utilize it as proof of identification and admission. According to one 1902 *San Francisco Call* article, "the record, with photograph attached, is sent to China and given to a Chinese who resembles the man photographed and described and with this to establish his claim to the right to be admitted."[27] The second method was to give the record to "a

[25] Ibid.

[26] "A Big Chinese Load," *Daily Alta California*, September 5, 1885.

[27] "Chinese Coolies Flocking to America Despite Laws Framed to Exclude Them," *San Francisco Call* September 26, 1902, 1.

Chinese who has entered surreptitiously across the border and is likely to be arrested at any time and deported. With this record in his possession and with witnesses ready to swear that he is the man designated in the document."[28] Numerous applications were made for the records that had no photographs attached. Some applicants sent "a photograph which he alleges is a likeness of the man whose court record he desires, asking that it be attached."[29]

Human bodies are mutable. Custom officers and immigration inspectors thus found it hard to refute alleged changes of the facial marks and peculiarities of the Chinese migrants. *Daily Alta California* reported in 1885 that "one fellow who had marks of powder explosion over his eye saying that he had them ail taken off in China."[30] One *Washington Post* journalist complained in the same year that although in large numbers of instances the description in the return certificates did not fit the bearer at all, those migrants commonly claimed that their physical marks on record had changed. The article mentioned a case of two Chinese men who were taken before Judge Sabin for examination. Their certificates indicated that "one should have had a mole on his neck and the other a hole in one of his ears." The person supposedly with the mole swore that "while in China the mole was removed by the application of a certain mystic sirup which a Mongolian physician supplied. The other fellow swore that by some mysterious process the hole in his ear had been filled up."[31] Another reporter also noted surgical means to either produce or remove moles were available in both San Francisco Chinatown and Hong Kong: "there is nothing easier than for a heathen Chinee

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] "A Big Chinese Load," *Daily Alta California*, September 5, 1885.

[31] "Chinese Immigration," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1885, 2.

with a little cosmetic, skillfully applied, to hide a trifling disfiguration. It is claimed by those who are familiar with the secrets of Chinatown that both there and in Hongkong a regular business was made of the removal and producing of moles by surgical means."[32] In one interview, a port examiner confirmed that he had noticed the existence of a bureau in Hong Kong where marks and moles were easily manufactured "with a drop of acid or the touch of a stick of caustic" or removed.[33]

The *San Francisco Chronicle* editors' discussion of physical measurement and documentation in the transit certificate of Yet You epitomized how the fear and anxiety towards Chinese immigration contributed to racialization of Chinese physicality in the immigration identification system. Although the height and the skin color varied among the Chinese, this reporter insisted, "It will not be admitted as possible by any sensible person that any John Chinaman can be so devoid of peculiarities to distinguish him from a thousand and one of his fellows."[34] Yet You was described in the passport as "complexion, brown; physical marks, none; height, five feet six inches."[35] The *Chronicle* editors held that to prevent the substitution of any other Chinese man for Yet You was impossible, because "the height given, 5 feet 6 inches, is the standard height of the Chinese, and the color brown is the complexion of the race."[36] The brown color could be "truthfully said of nearly all the inhibitors of the Flowery Kingdom."[37]

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[32] "Proof At Last," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 25, 1885, 5.

[33] "The Chinese Frauds," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1885, 3.

[34] "Proof At Last," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 25, 1885, 5.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "The Transit Trick," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 1885, 2.

[37] "Proof At Last," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 25, 1885, 5.

The necks and faces of the Chinese were regarded as "so scarred and mole-full."[38] It was believed that the scars on the Chinese bodies usually indicated "the Chinese as a nation are more afflicted with skin diseases than the majority of mankind."[39] Chinese facial appearance was deemed not easily reveal their age and thus, the Chinese could effortlessly fake their identity: "From the time a Chinaman turns the first milestone of manhood until he attains his fortieth year he does not change very much in facial appearance. An individual of 22 or of 40 can pass equally well for one of 30."[40] The mutability of "physical particularities" such as marks, scars or moles seemed to make the forcefully contracted feet of Chinese women a more reliable means.

Paper Sons/Daughters

Historians have uncovered the paper son/daughter system the Chinese developed to circumvent the exclusion laws. By utilizing the identification papers as children of the exempt classes such as merchants or U.S. citizens, paper sons or daughters could be admitted "legally" as long as they could prove their identity. Identification papers were established each time the Chinese exempt class claimed the birth of their children in China when they first came or returned to the United States. To create "slots" for prospective migrants, the Chinese usually claimed more children than they had. Historians have often focused on the fact that the migrants needed to pass interrogation and cross-examinations to prove they were indeed the individuals they claimed to be. Less attention was given to the vital role of the visual evidence in establishing the migrants' identities and exempt status.

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[38] "The Chinese Frauds," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1885, 3.

[39] "Proof At Last," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 25, 1885, 5.

[40] Ibid.

Since these cases involved family members, custom and immigration officers considered facial and other physical resemblances were crucial clues. One immigration interpreter who worked at Angel Island from 1928 to 1929 mentioned examining whether a close resemblance could be seen between the son and the father after they were questioned separately,

> there's the son and the father coming in. The inspector will also make a judgement as to are there any characters, any family resemblance, and those go on the record. Does the son actually look like the father? And those are very important, especially the resemblance, because in an appeal case, sometimes when it goes to Washington, the appeal will be based on the fact that there is a close resemblance.[41]

Lacking documentary evidence of their birth, returning former Chinese residents or Chinese Americans brought photographs of themselves taken in the United States to prove their identity and corroborate the testimony of long-time friends and neighbors. Although facial resemblance was instrumental for immigration officials to verify applicants' identities, it was never as reliable as people commonly expected especially in those cases that usually involved people who left the country for years and whose physical features had more or less changed. Immigration officials had to make arbitrary decision about whether they were the same person.

Owyang Hin, for instance, came under the name of Chang Gung in 1917 as a paper son of U.S. citizen. The physical comparison between his alleged parents and him rendered unfavorable opinions from the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, and the law officer. Nonetheless, after a comparison of their photographs in the immigration records, the

[41] Interviews with Immigration Interpreter #2, Box 1:5, Angel Island Oral History Project, Asian American Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

memorandum of the case concluded that there was "considerable resemblance" to his alleged uncle Chang him, his paternal grandfather and his alleged father. His immigration father's photo was in fact taken as a child, kept in his landing record in 1898. In 1968, under the Chinese Confession Program, Owyang confessed that his immigration father was merely a friend of his and not related to him anyway.[42]

Mr. Tsang's story also discloses the irony of the flimsy verification based on the applicants' appearance. Mr. Tsang, born in Oakland, left the U.S. in 1916 and came back with his mother, brother and wife in 1929 when he was 18. His wife easily "passed" as his sister who was going to get married and settle in Hongkong, whereas he, as a bona fide, was detained for one month in Angel Island. According to Mr. Tsang, his wife looked very much like the picture his sister left in the immigration record. He said, "Nobody noticed it. So, in many way, we—we've been—pulling the leg of the—the immigrants."[43] The immigration officials were only struck with his scar which was non-existent in the photo taken upon his departure to China. Mr. Tsang recalled, "they hold me back until–call in the doctor to check my–in that case–a cut–my left eye brow–under the eye."[44] The observation made by the inspectors was so arbitrary that it was not uncommon that real U.S. citizens were denied entry. In 1903, when Yee Lin returned to San Francisco after nine-year stay in China, she offered a photograph of herself taken as a child in San Francisco. Officials, however, deported her simply because they believed that she was not the same person.[45]

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[42] File 16288/14-15, Chinese Arrival Files, RG 85, SF.

[43] Interviews with Mr. Tsang, Box 1:28, Angel Island Oral History Project, Asian American Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen*, 161.

Since the officials had immense discretion, sometimes bribery quickly helped. Mr. Lai's father came as a paper son of U.S. citizen at the age of 30. His paper was obtained from a couple in the neighboring village whose sick son died after they returned from the United States. Their immigration papers that certified they had returned with a son along with a family picture. The officials suspected the case because the father's ear "was creased and the ear in the picture was not." The case was eventually fixed after the interpreter told Lai's granduncle that they needed to bribe the officials. The excuse they came up was that the father hurt his ear.[46]

One type of immigration records that historians have often overlooked is the Public Health Service documents on physical and medical inspection conducted to suggest the immigrants' identity and admissibility. Although they were not kept in immigration case files, these records offer insights into how the Chinese admissibility was established through more "professional" physical examination and how the Chinese bodies were subjected to meticulous medical examinations. Following the federal law in 1891, Public Health Service officers began to carry out medical inspections of all arriving immigrants and travelers. Compared to immigration officials' inspection, medical examination as a new layer of modern visual scrutiny conducted by professional physicians seemed to grant even more authority and credibility to their decisions.

Nayan Shah, in his pioneering book *Contagious Divides* discusses the role of visual observation in those medical decisions. He notes that after 1903 medical deportations rose sharply. Diseases like trachoma became one of two "contagious diseases" that would result in immediate medical deportation and exclusion, whereas the disclose was primarily based on

[46] Interviews with Mr. Lai, Box 1:26, Angel Island Oral History Project, Asian American Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

visual observation. However, there was a "wide divergence of views on trachoma" among public health service officers, depending on the personal observation and interpretation.[47] A former Angel Island detainee, Mr. Poon also recalled the process when he came over in 1927, saying that they "had to strip naked" and "if eyes were red (trachoma) person was deportable. If nails had marks, person was deportable."[48]

Even the exempt class was not free from the medical screening. In 1908, Ng Poon Chew in his booklet on mistreatment of the exempted indicated that returning merchants of high standing and large business interests in the United States were "met by a Board of Inquiry, composed of physicians from the United States Marine Hospital Service, and are rigidly examined as to whether or not they have trachoma." "A slight redness or granulation of the eyelids" would lead this Board to certify that the applicants had trachoma. Despite that they complied with all the rules and regulations before departing from the United States, and returned with a clean certificate of health by the United States Marine Hospital Surgeons, the merchants were ordered deportation without permission for appeal.[49]

Among the Public Health Service records, one series of overlooked archives catalogued as "age files" shed fresh light on the degree to which the immigrant bodies could be subjected to surveillance. These files documented the physicians' inspections and suggestions regarding those immigrants' age in order to detect immigration frauds, which were different from the observation of resemblances done by the immigration inspectors. To verify the age of the

[47] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 187-189.

[48] Interviews with Mr. Poon, Box 1:24, Angel Island Oral History Project, Asian American Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[49] Ng Poon Chew, "The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the United States," Folder 20, Carton 1, Asian American Studies Archives, U.C. Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library, 12-13.

applicants, a physical examination of the naked body was carried out. Surgeons of the U.S. Public Health Service were hired as experts on the question of the age determination. Most of the age files were "furnished the immigration authorities in the form of memoranda in answer to specific requests of the District Director of Immigration and Naturalization."[50] A routinized form was created in 1917. These descriptions about the migrants' mental, physical and medical state kept in the memoranda disclose the gruesome details about the ways in which the official, medical gaze was posed onto the migrant bodies.

These medical reports about age determination generally constituted the applicants' facial and body features, and the development of their hair, sexual organs and teeth, sometimes combined with X-ray findings. The reports on Chinese men or boys were extremely exhaustive so as to include wrinkles on forehead and corners of nose, acne on the chest, the texture, amount and distribution of caputal, pubic, axillar, anal, scrotal, arm and shin hairs, *as well as* the firmness of testes and so forth. Most extant records were produced in the last couple of years of Chinese exclusion, which make it unknown about the exact situation in earlier periods. It is clear, however, that even moving towards the repeal of Chinese exclusion, the surveillance was not lessened but even strengthened.

For example, the memorandum of Dong Doo Yuen who was examined on October 28, 1940 contained not only basic information about his height, weight, muscular development, but also his facial expression, his "heavy, symmetrical eyebrows," "high cheek bones," and the growth of his hair and sexual organs. It was recorded that "his caputal hair is thick, black, coarse and his frontal hair line is low on his forehead. He has quite long, black hair of limited

[50] The Chief Medical Officer, E. C. Kading to The Surgeon General, August 31, 1939, Immigration Hospital Matters Folder 2, San Francisco Quarantine Station, General Administrative Files 06/1916-12/1948, RG 90 Public Health Service, 1912-1968.

distribution in the public region; sparse, black hair in the axillary; a few black perianal; and no scrotal hair growth. He has a light growth of hair on the forearms and shins." They also concluded that "his sexual organs show secondary sex development and indicate that he is well beyond the age of beginning puberty, because "his scrotum is snug with deep rugae; and the testes, while of firm consistency, have not as yet reached full adult size and development."[51]

Women whose age in question went through similar procedures. The main differences as indicated in the memoranda were that their pubic hair was examined by a female attendant or staff nurse, and most time there was no examination of their genitalia. However, these physicians did not lessen the inspection of their bodies. In the case of Gee Ngoot Shem in September 1940, for example, her breasts were meticulously examined: "Her breasts are of small size, soft consistency, but not drooping, and her nipples are larger than are usually seen in nullipara. There is, however, no signs leading to the belief that she has lactated, and complete absence of striae on her abdomen leads to the presumption that she has not borne children."[52] Even the length of axillary hair could be a site of suspicion and contestation. The report of Lay Ying stated, "She has fine, black, fairly abundant, short axillary hair which gives the appearance of having been cut or shaved at some earlier date. She denies having used any form of epilation in these regions."[53]

[51] Immigration Hospital Matters, Folder 2, San Francisco Quarantine Station, General Administrative Files 06/1916-12/1948, RG 90 Public Health Service, 1912-1968.

[52] Immigration Hospital Matters, Folder 1, San Francisco Quarantine Station, General Administrative Files 06/1916-12/1948, RG 90 Public Health Service, 1912-1968.

[53] Ibid.

The physical and X-ray examinations were often seen and used as sufficiently legitimate methods to prove age. However, surgeons of Public Health Service in 1917 conceded that "there is a large opportunity for error and this division wished to go on record as disclaiming any pretense to infallibility in the matter of judging cases."[54] To refute the unfavorable age determination of the applicant, attorneys in their letter to the Immigration Commissioner cited the court decision of other cases. One case they referred to was Circuit Judge Gilbert who casted his doubt on the "scientific" value of the certificate of the surgeons. Gilbert reasoned, "It is not represented that the certificate was based upon any scientific data, or otherwise than upon the general appearance of the applicant. Upon such a question, the opinion of a surgeon is believed to be of no greater value than that of a layman, and in either case it has but little probative value to show a difference of age of only two years."[55]

However, even though the inspectors in the Board of Special Inquiry made the final decision, the medical inspection of the migrants' body in the name of modern science and technology presented a potent justification to its power regardless of its defect. In most cases, besides the designated rules, the officials at U.S. consulates and ports of entry executed the laws based on their own discretion, but now they found something more "objective" and "scientific" to substantiate their decisions. This was indicated in the Foreign Quarantine Division Circular of October 20, 1938: "It appears that, on some occasions, particularly when immigration cases are subjected to judicial review, the Immigration Service is embarrassed by lack of details in the Medical reports submitted to them, and in consequence is unable, in

[54] Surgeons F. N. W. Glover and Frank P. McKeon to the Acting Commissioner of Immigration San Francisco, in File 16288/14-15, Chinese Arrival Files, SF.

[55] Attorneys George McGowan and Alfred L. Worley to the Commissioner of Immigration, San Francisco, July 3, 1917, in File 16288/14-15, Chinese Arrival Files, SF.

many cases, to adequately prepare their defense."[56] Nonetheless, these lengthy files and reports, although helped to stem fraudulent claims, could not guarantee the admitted bodies was in fact "admissible," and largely failed the original aims of the Chinese exclusion laws.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the importance of the body as an analytic tool for us to unravel the paradoxes of U.S. inclusion and U.S. sense of national boundaries. This is not to say other categories such as race, gender, class are less important, but to stress how visually-oriented people were in perceiving and deciding who could be included in their country. The assumptions and ideologies regarding visuality and physical appearances in relation to race, gender and class did not just sustain the problematic screening practices of questioning and recording bound feet for decades, but also legitimated the Chinese exclusion that rested on the racialized bodies and a larger immigration bureaucracy and networks developed to institutionalize those ideas. It interrogates the admissibility promised in the Chinese exclusion laws and its administration. The selection of the immigrants which built on the assumption that race, class and morality are outwardly inscribed onto the body and thus could be visually identified, were consistently at odds with the fluidity and changeability of the body, class and morals.

The Chinese exclusion acts divided the Chinese immigrants into laboring and exempt classes and treated them with differential degrees of discrimination. However, although terms such as race, class, gender, nationality, and bloodline were conveniently naturalized and circulated in popular discourse, all these concepts and categories became sites of

[56] C. L. Williams Assistant Surgeon General to Medical Officers Engaged in the Medical Inspection of Aliens and Others Concerned, Immigration Hospital Matters Folder 2, San Francisco Quarantine Station,

contestations while enforcing the laws. The real process of determining migrants' eligibility for admission was always chaotic and inconsistent because those concepts were so fluid, nebulous, and artificial. The institutional application of these terms was bound to depend on more tangible clues.

To the immigration law enforcers, among those methods developed to ascertain each applicant's identity, questioning about women's foot became especially instrumental and valuable. Firstly, it only required an effortless observation, which was less costly and time-consuming as opposed to medical inspection. Secondly, compared to other meaning-free or easily mutable bodily signs, it was considered to be far more effective both in cross examination and in determining the exempted status of the applicants.

Beliefs that race, class, gender, and moral worth could be detected from physical characteristics were convenient and appealing, because it validated visual evidence such as skin color, hair, eyes, and the size and shape of body parts as natural or scientifically-proven markers of admissibility. The body served as a unique and vital vehicle for the officers at the U.S. consulates and ports of entry to track, classify, and control the influx of migrants. Racial, classist, and gendered schema of the body went hand in hand with the development of modern medical science and modern bureaucratic documentation and apparatus to justify these operations.

As U.S. selective inclusion of the Chinese migrants had been largely visualized as a set of physical characteristics in daily practices of Immigration Service, the migrants also performed and articulated their identity through their bodies, circumventing the restrictive immigration laws. No matter how "scientific" this mechanism of visual codification of racist,

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General Administrative *Files 06/1916-12/1948*, RG 90 Public Health Service, 1912-1968.

gendered, and classist subjectivities appeared, the immigration control operated among people with cross-cutting interests, unavoidably let to a performative process that codified physical features into “fitness.” This, paradoxically, eroded the lines between admissible and inadmissible, which was central to the enforcement of Chinese exclusion laws.

Conclusion

Constructed as a visual metaphor of Chinese cruelty, traditionalism, patriarchal oppression of women, footbinding functioned as a crucial and classic orientalist site in which U.S. and other Western countries asserted their supremacy. Even though often with "anti-colonial" slogans, the Chinese, in their struggles for modernization including the abolishment of footbinding, unwittingly ended up reiterating the binary construction of backward China versus modern U.S./West. The visibility and visuality of bound feet and other physical markers enabled them to function as not just powerful discursive categories but also important and unique bureaucratic vehicles in the making of modern U.S. immigration screening. The collective memory shaped by the past misrepresentations and seemingly rational official discourse of footbinding has been so powerful that the stereotypes continue to emerge in today's scholarly works and media in the United States. Although actual footbinding disappeared as a viable practice, the metaphorical use of it first pioneered in the late nineteenth century to construct U.S. national identity and boundary continues today. Orientalism is not a historical past; it continues to search for new imageries, tropes, cultural practices and often denies the coevalness with the Other.

This dissertation has demonstrated the hegemony of the visual as a mode of knowing in the contexts of trans-Pacific public sphere and U.S. immigration screening. The body in general was perceived as if it could visualize a culture and broadcast essentialized identities. Thus, as an important analytic tool, the body helps to unravel U.S. sense of national boundary and how the bureaucratic gaze was laid on the Chinese physical "particularities." In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bound feet acquired a conspicuous place in

bolstering a modern, civilized U.S. national identity and articulating U.S. anxieties and desires towards what bodies should be included or not. Everyday U.S. immigration control consisted of mundane human encounters in which what people physically observed mattered.

The paradoxes of U.S. inclusion lie in multiple ironies we see throughout the dissertation. I started Chapter one with the paradoxical admission of the Other at U.S. ports of entry. Even though the discursive condemnation of footbinding as Chinese barbarism was widespread, it did not account for the decisions made by the enforcers of the Chinese exclusion laws. For Chinese men and women, migrating to the United States was not a singular progression from "oppression" to "liberation." The modern U.S. immigration identification and screening system invented new significances and roles for bound feet. Privileged as a proof of exempted status, the highly stigmatized bound feet in China rediscovered their social value at U.S. gates. Paradoxically, Chinese women and men had to rely on a backward label of their home country rather than their modernizing selves to claim their admissibility to an advanced, modern nation. The construction of immigration records systematically refused to meet the Chinese Other at the same time. The inspection of Chinese bodies in modern U.S. immigration administration especially the "scientific" medical screening shows that modernity could not simply be equated with progress but a question of who has the power to define and claim progress. This study has shown how modern immigration bureaucracy could serve as a unique dehumanizing force and a domain of U.S. orientalism.

While I shift the lens back and forth across the Pacific, more ironies emerged through the conflicting views in newspapers regarding footbinding, the recurring stories of lily-footed merchant wives in the Chinatowns which sustained a more traditional Chinese masculinity, the challenges the Chinese posed to the women missionaries who sought to stop footbinding

while practicing “waist-binding” themselves, and white women’s fervent pursuits of the beauty and fashion in Cinderella feet and shoes. Shared foot beauty standards and more broadly, standards of an ideal female body across cultures undermines the narratives of differences over footbinding which have been constructed for so long by Europeans, Americans and the Chinese themselves.

The official discourse of footbinding powerfully held on to it as a timeless oriental middle-class practice and reinforced the difference with their would-be domestic Other. Nonetheless, the immigration networks generated a lucrative business of coaching and brokering on the both sides of the Pacific, which involved people from different racial backgrounds and reshaped the existing racial, class and gender boundaries. Within the complex web of interest in facilitating migration from China, ironically, the apparatus developed to close the doors of the United States provided fertile soil to foster the collaboration, however fragile it was, across the national boundaries and racial lines.

The self-orientalization and self-racialization in the Chinese nationalist discussions of footbinding especially in the Chinese reports on the displays of the footbound women in the 1904 World’s Fair indicated the degree to which the Pacific power paradigm had shifted by the early twentieth century, even though the Chinese did not just passively accept the U.S./Western thoughts and concepts, but reformulated them to their own ends. As the male Chinese elites struggled to emulate the U.S./West, they largely marginalized Chinese women’s voices in the anti-footbinding movements and developed a dependence on Western models. The knowledge about the United States produced by the Chinese was often filtered through their native orientalism which upheld the binary of the modern West versus the backward East. U.S. women were commonly portrayed as independent and liberated, overlooking the restrictions posed by traditional aspects of U.S. gender ideologies. The

Western high heels had become the embodiment of modern female fashion in urban China since the 1920s.

A comparative framework of this dissertation allows multiple fields to make dialogues with each other. This approach does not just shed fresh light into the historical moments we study but also reminds us where we are in the writings of U.S. and Chinese American histories. The neglect of small foot fever among white women and the little attention given to the literature of Chinese history written in English offer a glimpse of the degree to which the fields of U.S. and Asian American histories have been colonized or at least still informed and limited by U.S. exceptionalism and assimilation paradigm.[1] Despite a number of scholars' efforts to utilize Chinese sources in reconstructing Chinese American history, the lack of engagement with Chinese primary sources and Chinese historiography is still salient, let alone the very limited amount of attention given to the works written by scholars in China. This dissertation seeks to show that this kind of engagement does make a difference.

Tracing the historical construction of footbinding in the Pacific world functions as a microscopic lens through which we gain a detailed magnification of the interplay of both societies' organization of gender, class and race and the ways in which the ideas and discourses regarding the body, fashion, and female morality were channeled into specific institutional arrangements such as immigration screening in the United States. The paradoxes of U.S. inclusion expose the vulnerabilities of U.S. orientalism. The immigrant body was a contested terrain in which both countries' race, gender, class, and body ideologies collided, overlapped and renegotiated. Accordingly, the lines between inclusion and exclusion,

[1] Ngai, "Promises and Perils of Transnational History," 52.

modernity and tradition, and globalization and nationalism were rearticulated, redrawn and obscured. The consequences of operations of difference did not just lie in the fact that they artificially and arbitrarily solidified separateness and borders between peoples and cultures, but also the fact they blocked people from seeing themselves and their societies as they were. I hope this dissertation can serve as a reminder of what we have missed by investing so much into the constructed racial, gender, class and bodily differences in the age of modern nation-states which only has occupied a short period of human history.

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