

# Back to China, Seek Truth from Facts

## —Cong Xiaoping's Academic Achievements and Characteristics of Chinese Women's Liberation Studies

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**Abstract.** Cong Xiaoping is a professor of history at the University of Houston, USA and she is a member of the famous overseas Chinese research scholar- Elman. In nearly three decades of research, rigorous study and continuous exploration, She has made important achievements in Chinese society, the history of modern and modern thought, the history of modern women, and the history of modern education of the 20th century and formed her own unique style. This article mainly summarizes Professor Cong Xiaoping's academic achievements on Chinese women's liberation research and discusses its basic academic logic and path.[1]

### 1. Introduction

Cong Xiaoping, Professor of History at the University of Houston, USA, historian of contemporary overseas Chinese studies, The main research areas are concentrated in the period of modern China. This paper mainly studies Cong Xiaoping's research on Chinese women's liberation in the 20th century. She has truly and objectively restored the true face of Chinese women with a unique perspective of the binary oppositional thinking framework, which is of great significance for us to understand overseas Chinese studies.

### 2. Research on Women's Teacher Education—The establishment of the government women's normal school is rooted in the tradition of pre-modern women's studies

In the past, the research on Chinese women's teacher education believed that Chinese teacher education has had a certain single connection with the emergence and development of modern China since the modern era, and neglected the local origin of Chinese women's teacher education. Cong Xiaoping believes that "although the initial setting of the normal school was based on the Western countries and the Japanese model at the time, the starting point of the establishment of the normal colleges, the function of the normal schools, and the expectations of the society for the role of normal schools are in response to Chinese social need.."[2] She believes that modern women's education is rooted in the tradition of pre-modern female education, which is driven by the promotion of nationalism and nation-state construction. Its development was first promoted by the new literati and then by the government. Its purpose, motivation and educational content were inextricably linked with the female traditions of the Ming and Qing Dynasties and the trend of reform at that time..[3]Due to the irreplaceable role of mothers in early childhood education, the fierce competition in the late Qing Dynasty encourages gentry families to invest in women's education. By the end of the 19th century, China's reform of scholar-officials began to learn from church schools and promote the transformation of women's studies, but the driving force of this transformation came from the concept of "mother-teaching" in traditional women's studies. In the late 19th century, women's education was mainly carried out through the missionary school of the missionary and the way of studying abroad. Under the background of the need for national prosperity, women's education has gradually been widely valued. As Liang Qichao said: "Women don't learn, it's like a stranger, 'a

gathering of two million people (that is, illiterate women), national geometry without disadvantages?!'[2] It can be seen that the establishment of women's studies is an important beginning of the country's prosperity and enlightenment, and the significance of injecting women's studies into the nation-state. This concept unifies the modern and traditional organic, and breaks the rigid understanding in previous studies, that is, modernization is westernization, owing modern women's education to the initiation of the West, obliterating the former modern female school in the establishment of modern women's education.

In 1904, the "School of the School Charter" declared: "(Men-Leader Note) Mongolian Education... is the first base for national education", and three years later, in 1907, "The Charter of the School of Women" Declared: "Women's education is the foundation of national education." This shift in the perception of the "root/base" of education reflects the extension of state power to traditional family areas in the process of nation-state construction, intervention in mother-to-child education in the family, and further leads to the state's intervention in women's education. Through the establishment of the Women's Normal School, the state has incorporated women's education into the nation-state construction project, and has divided the previously dispersed private women's education into a unified national education system. In the process, driven by the nationalist trend of thought, both the elite of the scholar-officials and the state have taken over the concept of prospering the family in the traditional female school, guiding women from the mother's identity (family, private, scattered). The identity of the national teacher (social, public, and concentrated) is transformed to achieve the goal of prosperity. The establishment of the government women's normal school also opened the door for women to go to the society, legalizing the status of women in society. This transformation has far-reaching significance and affects the women of the next generation.[3]From the microscopic study of the transformation of women's education at the crossroads of women's education and the transformation of women's status as mothers and female teachers, Cong Xiaoping has restored history and established relationships between women, women's studies, and the state.

### **3. Research on the relationship between women's marriage and state at the bottom of the situation—Establishing the female subjective perspective and discovering the power of women in the game between local society and state power**

Studying the history of modern Chinese women and women's liberation can't be done with Cong Xiaoping. In the past, overseas Chinese women's research has popularized the view of American academic circles since the 1980s that the Communist Party of China failed to achieve its stated goal of transforming marriage and family and liberating women from patriarchy. They believe that the source of this situation lies in the retrogression of marriage reform in the 1940s, and the revolutionary regime failed to deliver on its commitment to women. For their reasons, they speculated that in the war of resistance against Japan and the war of liberation, the CCP abandoned the original idealism and radicalism principles at the expense of women's liberation in order to win the support of male peasants.[4] Some scholars believe that after the revolution, the CCP's re-establishment of patriarchal rule in the countryside is not necessarily its original intention. Only the leadership of the male dominated party within the party cannot overcome its own concept of masculinism and discriminate against women in formulating and implementing policies. Therefore, social reforms with equal gender equality have not been achieved. The author believes that both of these beliefs suggest that the CCP's policy changes in the 1940s sacrificed the goal of women's liberation so that they continue to live in the rebuilt patriarchal society. In the past two decades, a group of academic newcomers from China and the United States have re-evaluated the issue of the family and social status of Chinese women, but they have not explicitly examined the specific conditions of marriage reform during this period. Cong Xiaoping's contribution is that she is no longer entangled in whether the CCP has fulfilled its commitment to women's liberation, but from a cultural perspective to explore foreign concepts and local practices in the marriage reform in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region in the 1940s. The conflicts between them, and how such conflicts interact and reshape each other, are how to finally grow widely recognized concepts and practical principles, and eventually become the

legacy of success in the revolutionary era.[4] For example, how does the CCP reform the concept of “freedom of marriage” locally into “marriage autonomy”, making it a more suitable social practice for the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region. Moreover, in order to question the Western feminist scholars' view that the marginal government's adjustment of the marriage policy in the 1940s was the result of compromising the male patriarchal power and leading to the retreat of women's liberation, she established a female subjective perspective to analyze the marriage history case at that time. It analyzes the relationship between local practice and Marxist view of women, and uses sufficient and accurate information to prove the power exerted by women's subjectivity in the game of local society and state power. It is women's subjective activities that lead to changes in the national concept of women and policies.and adjustment.[5]

#### **4. The transformation of women's education——gave birth to women's teacher education and China's modernization**

In the past, the study of women's education in the United States and the United States focused on the literary and non-literary education within the family. The content and form were not subject to state and government intervention. It is also believed that the transformation of the late Qing women's school to the modern era is the emergence of "mother-teaching". The whole society has a more pioneering vision and more social significance for women's education. On the one hand, Liang's female scholarship inherits the leading thoughts of women's studies since the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and attaches the destiny of the nation to female studies, injecting the traditional female studies into the modern nation-state, thus creating a theoretical basis for the modern transformation of women's studies. The women's school, which is dominated by the gentry and family women, became the mainstream of women's education in the early 20th century. The girls' school run by the missionaries was only developed when they moved closer to the mainstream. With the needs of the nation-state construction at the beginning of the twentieth century and the emergence of the ideological trend of improvement, although the Qing government tried to restrict female studies to the home, the development of women's studies has completely exceeded the control of the Qing court, and its decentralization and school policy, The diversity of guiding ideology makes the central bureaucrats feel out of control. In addition, due to the consideration of the development of local education, the local officials have different pressures on the attitude towards women's studies and also put pressure on the central government. Therefore, the Qing government had to change its attitude, incorporate the development of women's studies into the unified track of national development, and train female teachers for national construction. Thus, the Qing government had to change its attitude, incorporate the development of women's studies into the unified track of national development, and train female teachers for national construction. "Ethically, the society expects students in normal schools to have a sense of social responsibility, to be able to be a teacher, and the country expects teachers to become communicators of national ideology. It is the society that has placed such high hopes on teachers and teachers. Normal students played an important role in the political and social activities of different eras." [2] Although the women's studies run by the missionaries have brought new factors to Chinese education, the new wave of scholars led by Liang Qichao and others has promoted the transformation of women's education into modern times.[2] Some researchers believe that women's liberation in China is coming out with the help of men, which is also unique to the development of Chinese women. In the efforts of national liberation, men also led women to the path of liberation. Chinese women have both active pursuit and passive leadership in their development. Women's independence is gradually generated. Although the women's education in the late Qing Dynasty was still limited to a few elite women, with the development of national primary education and women's schools, more women benefited from the national educational institutions, especially the women's normal school. Another factor driving the Qing government's participation in women's studies is the demand for women teachers in society. The problem facing the Qing government is how to provide teachers after the establishment of a monastic institution and the requirement for a family to carry out women's education.[2] In the 1910s, when the

first female students graduated from the Women's Primary School after the publication of the 1907 Constitution, the Women's Normal School became the main way for them to receive secondary education, seek careers, go to society, and win self-reliance.[3]

In Cong Xiaoping's writings, she can find that she combines women with the development of the entire Chinese nation for historical analysis. Studying the uniqueness of the history of the teacher's school allows us to make some reflections, rethinking the modernization theory, jumping out of the modern mode of thinking based on the West, and overcoming the notion that tradition is the opposite of modernization, and will replace it; At the same time, it can also encourage us to construct the discourse of Chinese social development with the uniqueness of Chinese social phenomena, and to be more conscious of the development of society and education, and to take less detours. In this sense, we can learn a lot from history.[6]

## **5. The academic rationale for women's liberation research——let history return to China**

Cong Xiaoping's research on women's liberation is based on her own profound historical literacy. She has a broad historical perspective and accurate and historical analysis of historical materials, and presents a unique philosophical speculation that goes beyond the binary opposition research that American scholars often find difficult to jump out of. The framework will carefully restore the historical field of Chinese women's survival and development, and realistically return the history of Chinese women's liberation to China.

Women's studies inherently possess two main characteristics: first, women's. Given the history of women's total loss in social life, establishing a female subject has become the most basic starting point for women's studies – a consensus among women's studies around the world.[7] The study of Chinese women's liberation is deeply influenced by Western genderism and feminism. Researchers often establish a critical discourse model to criticize history and reality in an attempt to discover women from the critique of male discourse/patriarchy. Female subjectivity. The history of Chinese women has its own uniqueness in the context of China's historical development. It is by no means a theoretical framework that can be explained and defined by a certain discourse model. Cong Xiaoping's women's studies attach great importance to this theme and deeply root his research in the soil of Chinese native history, whether it is from the entry of marriage law or from the perspective of revolutionary literature, or even case studies in historical development. It is able to place the development and liberation of Chinese women in the context of Chinese history. She believes: "The historical study of "Western centralism" ignores the internal dynamics of Chinese society and the interaction of various forces." [2] Therefore, she will have her discovery of "marriage freedom" to "marriage autonomy". It has a more appropriate understanding and stronger persuasiveness for women to find themselves and play their own subjectivity in their historical environment. Responding to Li Xiaojiang's understanding of the history of Chinese women's liberation [8], In his article "The Transformation of Mother and Daughter in the 20th Century Revolutionary Literature and the Relationship between Home and Country", Cong Xiaoping said: During the 1940s and 1950s, when the rebellious daughters gradually entered the family and became mothers, in some revolutionary literature. The performance of the new mother-daughter relationship has a strong revolutionary discourse and the influence of national ideology, but still reflects the continuity of history, showing the trend of change in the country, society and family since the late Qing Dynasty. [9] In his research, Cong Xiaoping discovered that the rights of the birth mother were passed on to the social mother in the revolutionary literature, thus exploring the relationship between women and their home country through the inter-transfer of women's motherhood, sociality and class, and looking for women from the personal liberation of women. The important role of home country construction and development. The same idea appeared in her lots of research, which makes us return to history and return to China in the study of Chinese women's history. In the continuous development of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Chinese women will also embark on their own path, instead of using their own model to interpret their present and future.

## References

- [1] "The so-called academic rationality refers to the logic and path of scholarship that the rulers follow, the emphasis on the focus of study, the goal orientation, the value standard, the way of thinking and the way of operation. The academic approach can be either personalized or It is the group's common observance. The academic factions that people often talk about are actually a collection of scholars who generally follow the same academic rationale. In this connection, academic rationality is the internal academic basis for the formation of academic factions, and academic faction is the mature personalization of academic rationality. Group manifestation." (He Xiaoming: "Academic and Historical Ecology", Academic Monthly, No. 5, 2008)
- [2] Cong Xiaoping "The Normal School and China's Modernization: The Formation and Social Transformation of the Nation-State 1897-1937", The Commercial Press, March 2014 edition, page 2
- [3] Cong Xiaoping's "From Mother to National Teacher--The Construction of the National State in the Late Qing Dynasty and the Teacher Education of the Public Women", "Study of Qing History", Issue 1, February 2003
- [4] Cong Xiaoping's "From Marriage Freedom" to "Marriage Independence": The Reshaping of Marriage in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region in the 1940s was selected from "Open Age" 2015.5, p. 134.
- [5] Cong Xiaoping: "Zuo Run v. Wang Yinsuo: Women, Marriage and State Construction in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region in the 1940s."
- [6] Cong Xiaoping: "Modernization of Normal Universities and China (1897-1937)" is selected from "Open Age" 2010.01.
- [7] Li Xiaojiang, Tan Shen: Women's Studies in China, Henan People's Publishing House, 1991 edition, p. 4.
- [8] Li Xiaojiang believes: "The historical situation of Chinese women is different from that of the West. In the feudal patriarchal family system, the concept is 'female', but in life it is definitely 'mother'; in the whole of 'female' there is no 'female' in society. Women who are individuals may have 'mother power' in the family/family." (Li Xiaojiang: "The Exploration of Eve")
- [9] Cong Xiaoping: "The Transformation of Mother and Daughter in the Revolutionary Literature of the 20th Century and the Relationship between Home and Country--On Women's Writer Yuan Jing and His Works", from The Open Age, 2016, 3.