Transforming Maggie May to Miss Pu:
Neocolonialism Through Missionary Nursing in North China, 1924-1943

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Introduction

Founded to bring Western medicine to non-Western countries, hospitals such as the Isabella Fisher Hospital in Tientsin, North China perpetuated allopathic principals of health care. In nursing these were often referred to as ‘Florence Nightingale Canons.’ The F.N. model became the focus of missionary nurse work far and wide. Missionaries like Maggie May viewed the Nightingale concepts of nursing as separate from medicine (physician) and of nursing being a calling.

“Margaret May Prentice” in Chinese, “Miss Pu” was given to her by Chinese nurse colleagues right before her banishment in 1937. “Pu” is a North Chinese surname indicating that she was honourably adopted.

Early History of Nursing in China

1881: I.F.H. for Women and Children founded by Canadian Dr. Leonora King, supported by the WFMS.
1888: First Chinese nursing education program based on the Florence Nightingale/ Western model was established by American nurse Ella Johnson in Fuchou, 
1912: The Nurses’ Association of China (NAC) was formalized and headed by missionary nurses.
1915: I.F.H. rebuilt, reopened, and soon became one of the largest nursing schools in China.
1920: First baccalaureate program at the Peking Union Medical College.
1930: The Chinese government opened the first public nursing school.
1930’s: As Superintendent, Maggie May forged a strong alliance between the I.F.H. and other nursing schools including the Peking Union Medical School, considered the center of nursing education in China for several decades.

References