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Transforming childbirth practices

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Propositions

Belonging to: **Transforming childbirth practices**

New style midwifery in China, 1912 – 1949

by **Minghui Li** to defend on June 30, 2020

1. The transformation of childbirth practices in Republican China (1912-1949) was an integral part of the international trend of states' increasing interventions in reproduction and health of their populations (this thesis).
2. The diffusion of facilities and personnel of new style midwifery was uneven between regions, as well as between urban and rural areas across Republican China (this thesis).
3. New style midwifery in Republican China was effective in reducing risks of neonatal, infant and maternal mortality through lessening infection-associated diseases via biomedical methods. But its effect in preventing other obstetric complications was rather modest (this thesis).
4. While outcomes of institutional delivery in Republican China varied a great deal, giving birth at home under the assistance of a trained birth attendant was generally safe (this thesis).
5. A traditional midwife was able to become a competent and capable birth attendant if she was properly trained and if her work was carefully supervised (Contra Tina Johnson).
6. The overall improvement of women's reproductive health was not realized within a short period, as societal expectations of women's domestic functions and entrenched family relationships in Chinese households failed to change as fast as midwifery practices.
7. The American historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich says: "Well-behaved women seldom make history." It does not mean that well-behaved women (like many midwives and female birth attendants) in the distant or near past were not courageous, capable or prominent enough to make a history, but implies that their lives are too often unrecorded and that historical sources on these women are too scarce. We researchers of women's history should delve into all kinds of sources and give them a history.
8. In work I try to put my shoulders to the wheel at all times; in life I try to take things as they come (by Chinese historian Yan Gengwang). 工作随时努力，生活随遇而安——严耕望。