



## Correspondence

# Distribution of the dental education institutions in China before 1949



### KEYWORDS

Republic of China;  
Taiwan;  
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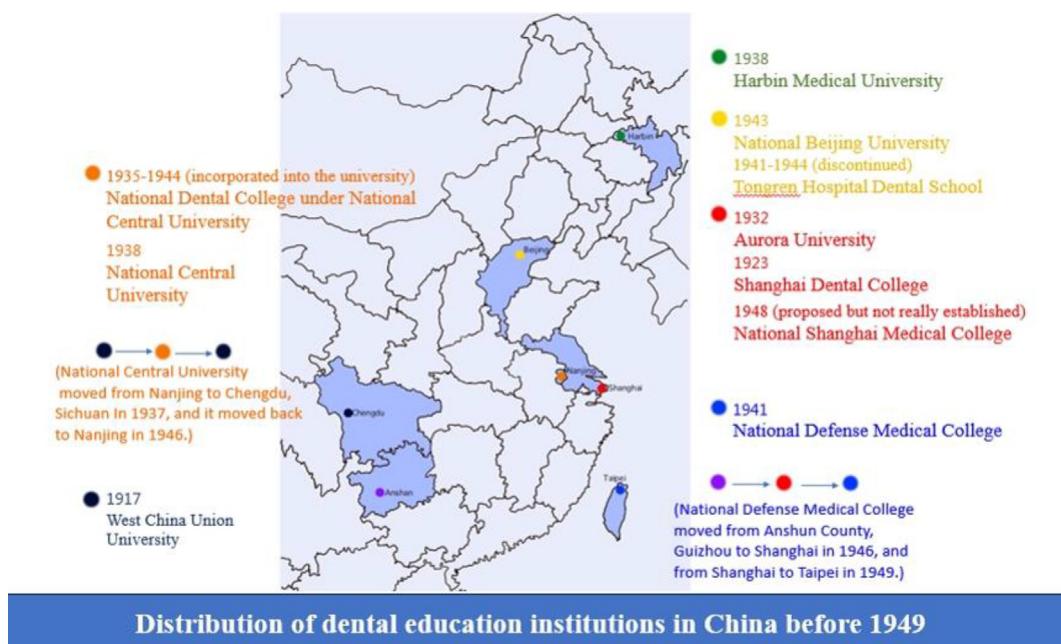
Regarding the development of dental education, the past research on the Taiwan dental history has mostly focused on the introduction of the modern medical education during the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945) as the beginning of the dental education in Taiwan. However, the only medical school in Taiwan at that time only provided the dental education for its medical students, and there was no dental school education system to truly cultivate the dentists.<sup>1,2</sup> In 1949, the National Defense Medical College moved to Taiwan with the government of the Republic of China led by the Kuomintang. Its dental school unexpectedly became the first dental education institution in Taiwan to truly cultivate the dentists.

It was not until 1953 when the National Taiwan University (NTU) established a dental school. Among its first generation of dental teachers, Dr. Hsueh-Wan Kwan (1923–2022), who graduated from the dental school of National Central University in Nanjing, later took over the dental school of NTU as the director in 1984, becoming the first female director of the dental education institution in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> The dental education institution and the dentists who came to Taiwan with the government of the Republic of China between the years after the World War II and 1949 had a great influence on the development of the post-war dentistry and dental education in Taiwan. However, there are currently few relevant studies that further analyze the specific distribution of the dental education institutions in the Republic of China before 1949. Therefore, we tried to understand the distribution of the dental education

institutions in China's territory before 1949 through the collection and analysis of the relevant historical documents.

This article used the historical research method to unearth records of the distribution of the dental education institutions in China before 1949 from the relevant documents. The most important document was the 1948 file titled "The Indian Embassy Requesting a List of Accredited Dental Colleges in China". This study also drew a distribution map of the dental education institutions in China before 1949 based on the relevant literature records, as shown in Fig. 1.

In 1948, based on the inquiry from the Indian Embassy, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China counted 6 education institutions offering dental education as follows: National Central University College of Medicine, National Beijing University College of Medicine, West China Union University College of Medicine, Aurora University College of Medicine, National Shanghai Medical College (its dental school was proposed but had not yet been established), and Shanghai Dental College. According to the findings of this study, due to different factors, there were 4 other dental education institutions as follows: National Dental College (affiliated under the National Central University College of Medicine from 1935 to 1944), National Defense Medical College (its dental school established in Anshun County, Guizhou in 1941 and under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense), Harbin Medical University (founded in Harbin in 1938 and located in the area governed by the Chinese



**Figure 1** The distribution map of the dental education institutions in China before 1949. This distribution map was based on the map of the Republic of China in 1949. This study marked the cities where each dental education institution was located on the map. In this diagram, the year listed in front of each university or school referred to the time when its dental education institution was established or the period of its existence.

Communist Party after the World War II), and Tongren Hospital Dental School (located in Beijing and only existed from 1941 to 1944).

The National Central University was the earliest official dental education institution in China. The National Dental College was established under its medical college in 1935. Due to the war, the National Dental College moved to Chengdu, Sichuan along with the medical college in 1937, and it was changed to an internal department of the medical college in 1944. Moreover, the National Central University established its dental school within the medical college in 1938. After the war, the National Central University moved back to Nanjing in 1946. In addition to the Tongren Hospital Dental School, the National Beijing University was the only dental education institution in Beijing, and its dental school was established in 1943. The West China Union University, located in Chengdu, Sichuan, established its dental school in 1917. It was the earliest dental education institution in China. The Shanghai Dental College and the dental school of Aurora University were established in 1923 and 1932, respectively, while the National Defense Medical College moved to Shanghai in 1946. This made Shanghai becoming the place with the largest number of dental education institutions at that time. Due to the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, the National Defense Medical College moved again to Taipei in 1949 as the only dental education institution from China to Taiwan.

In the early war-torn years, the dental education in China developed in a difficult environment, and few relevant historical materials have been preserved. The limited historical materials showed that there might not have been more than 10 dental education institutions in China before

1949, and they were mainly located in the large cities in eastern China, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing. Indirectly, the dental education in China before 1949 also affected the subsequent development of dental education in Taiwan. The development of dentistry and dental education in Taiwan after 1949 had a multicultural context and was deeply influenced by the following factors: (1) the continuation of dental education assets and experience in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period, (2) the immigration of the dental education institution established in China and the dental manpower cultivated in China during the Republic of China period, (3) the investment and assistance of the US-aided medical resources, and (4) the independent development of Taiwan's local dental profession.<sup>4,5</sup> In particular, the dental staff who came to Taiwan with the dental school of National Defense Medical College in 1949 laid the foundation for the dental professional and academic development in the post-war Taiwan and had a considerable impact on the early development of the dentistry in Taiwan. However, this part has received less attention in the previous studies, and it is also one of the important research topics in the Taiwan dental history.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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